

An Era of Expansion in Manhattan and Westchester: Growth Around New York City



*For those places where ministers are settled I must do
the gentlemen settled there the justice to say that
they have behaved themselves with great zeal . . .*

—LORD CORNBURY, 1705

Now that the SPG provided the means for supervised missionary activity, let us see how the localities mentioned in Fletcher's Ministries Act fared. The act anticipated six clergymen deployed as follows: one man to serve New York town, one to serve Richmond (Staten Island), one to serve the villages of Westchester, Eastchester, Yonkers, and Pelham; another to serve Rye, Mamaroneck, and Bedford; one man for Jamaica "and adjacent Towns and Farms"; and one for Hempstead and "next adjoining Towns and Farms." It will be noticed that, apart from the congregation in New York town which already existed in the fort there, these are locations where the Dutch Reformed and Lutheran churches did not have well-settled congregations. Fletcher's act may have been directed at those places thought soon to see growth from immigration; certainly, Connecticut was already sending its people across the border, a border that was in contest between the two colonies. Brooklyn and Albany—both old Dutch settlements—were not to be troubled by the Ministries Act.

Trinity Church in New York had already instituted Vesey as rector when the first SPG missionaries arrived. At a very early stage, Trinity ceased receiving aid from England if, indeed, it had ever received grants. Quite naturally, the English Church in the English port took on a prominent position, promoted by Vesey's acting as commissary, which gave him an opportunity to direct SPG funds in the province. One gathers that Vesey's ambitions sometimes led him to speculate

that if the Bishop of London was made Archbishop for the colonies, with power to appoint his suffragans, the name of Vesey might well be prominently mentioned, despite the fact that he was not uniformly esteemed by his colleagues.¹

Staten Island welcomed the Rev. Aeneas MacKenzie in 1704. In a short time he was able to report that the parish possessed a parsonage, glebe, and "a pretty handsome church."² Queen Anne presented the church on Staten Island with a "Large Bible, Prayer Book, Book of Homilies, clothes for Pulpit and Holy Table, and a silver chalice and paten," gifts sometimes bestowed upon other churches. These were the barest necessities of Episcopal worship. Bibles were still hard to come by, and a large one for pulpit use was especially desirable. The Prayer Book would have been somewhat smaller, bound in red tooled leather. The Book of Homilies was probably limited to that published in the reign of Edward VI (a "Second Book" appeared in the reign of Elizabeth I). The homilies were sermons by eminent English divines approved to be read by less literate clergymen. The "clothes" for the pulpit and holy table were, probably, lengths of a woolen or felt material which could be tailored into a full cover for the altar, and book cushions for the reading desk. These were generally of a rich red hue, from which descends that color for carpeting and pew cushions many of us know so well nearly three hundred years later. The rubric, since 1552, required "a fair white linen cloth," but one finds few references to any linen in the early American records. (It is possible that, since linen was more available in America than wool, and more readily fashioned into altar cloths, there would be scant mention of a linen cloth covered by the imported wool.)

Much of the early history of the Church in Staten Island is lost to us, and it is perhaps worth noting that though St. Andrew's was one of the first dozen Episcopal churches founded in New York, the *Centennial History* of 1886 awards it but eleven lines, with no mention of anything prior to 1785. History seems to award the palm to those who come forward to grasp it. Take the Westchester parishes, for instance. They enjoyed the attention of the Rev. Robert Bolton of Pelham, who, in 1855, published their stories. Bolton gives much of the missionary credit to a layman, Col. Caleb Heathcote of the Manor of Scarsdale.

Heathcote was an ardent Episcopalian. He was born in 1663 in Chesterfield, England, and came to New York about 1692. By 1700 he had a house in Mamaroneck and also was hand-in-glove with New York City political, military, and mercantile persons. He served as a judge in Westchester, was mayor of New York, and an officer of the garrison forces. Commercial life was accelerating in New York, and Heathcote,

already enriched by his English shipping investments, probably fared very well in the Port of New York. He was a founding vestryman of Trinity, serving until 1714, and also a member of the SPG. His name is frequently found among the earliest records and letters pertaining to the Episcopal Church. If there had been more laymen of his stripe, and fewer of the Fletcher sort, the Episcopal Church might have grown faster in the early 1700s. Which is not to say that Caleb Heathcote was not as able as any man to turn a quick profit.

It is said that Caleb Heathcote came to America because he had been jilted by his fiancée. That may be so, but he recovered sufficiently to marry Martha Smith of Long Island soon after his arrival; their eldest daughter married James DeLancey, and from that couple descended William Heathcote DeLancey, founding Bishop of Western New York. Col. Heathcote died in 1721, and was buried in Trinity Church. James Fenimore Cooper married a Heathcote descendant, and more than a century later the novelist liked to tell his friends he owned a ninety-year lease on a Westchester farm that stipulated the tenant shall "frequent divine service according to the Church of England when opportunity offers."³ At the time of his death, each of the Episcopal churches in Westchester counted Heathcote as their benefactor.

Fletcher's Act of 1693 provided for two ministers in Westchester. The year before, a man named Mather was discouraged from beginning a ministry there because Col. Heathcote objected that he was not a priest of the Church of England. The colonel could be a patient man: he waited ten years until SPG missionary John Bartow arrived. Bartow's parish ranged across the county from Yonkers to Rye, and included the present-day "Westchester Square" in the Bronx. Very soon he was in trouble with the Presbyterians, who, quite understandably, resented the aggressive Church policies of Governor Cornbury: the governor would supplant every Nonconformist minister with a Church of England parson. One recorded episode is probably typical of the tension that then existed. Bartow was officiating in the church in Jamaica at a time when a Presbyterian minister thought he should be preaching there. Turned away at the door, the Presbyterian (according to Bartow),

went aside to an orchard hard by, and sent in some to give word that Mr. Hobbart would preach under a tree. Then I perceived a whispering through the church, and an uneasiness of many people, some going out . . . some that were gone out returned again for their seats, and then we had a shameful disturbance, hawling and tugging of seats, shoving one the other off, carrying them out and returning again for more.⁴

A Boston visitor, stopping near Rye in 1704, recorded that

they told me that one Church of England parson officiated in all those three towns once every Sunday in turns throughout the year, and that they all could but poorly maintain him, which they grudged to do, being a poor and quarrelsome crew as I understand by our Host, then Quarreling about their choice of Minister they choose to have here—but caused the Government to send this Gentleman to them.⁵

“Poor and quarrelsome crew” must have been a local watchword, for in the same year, 1704, those very words were used by Thomas Pritchard, rector of Rye, in describing his congregation.⁶ Yet Pritchard wasn’t in despair. “The Minister preaches in the Townhouse,” he said, “and the parish is divided into three districts, viz, Rye, Bedford, and Mamaroneck. . . . The number of communicants are considerably increased, since the celebration of the Sacraments . . .”⁷

The Presbyterians who carried the seats out of the church did not discourage Bartow. He was able to report for the year 1704 that

I have been instrumental in making many Proselyts to our Holy Religion who are very constant and devout in, and at their attendance on Divine Service; those who were enemies at my first coming are now zealous professors of the ordinances of our Church.⁸

Bartow considered Lord Cornbury a great help to the Church, but many observers then and since dispute that view. Nor were Presbyterians likely to be happily affected by Cornbury’s posturings and questionable mode of life. For his part, Cornbury declared that the Episcopal clergy of New York, Jamaica, Hempstead, Westchester, and Rye “have behaved themselves with great zeal.”⁹ Mutual cordiality between the governor and the Episcopal clergy in a colony heretofore so thoroughly Dutch and Nonconformist was a dangerous thing. The personal characteristics of Lord Cornbury (who sometimes appeared in women’s clothing) were not helpful to the Episcopalians, who hoped to see their Church firmly rooted in New York soil, however much they might bask in the favor he bestowed upon the Church. When Cornbury returned to England, he left behind a reputation for irritability, arrogance, and eccentricity that is hard for us to explain away, inasmuch as these peculiarities put at discount the sacrifices of many Episcopal clergymen whose labors and sacrifices were sincere and devoted.

While the province was experiencing the civil administration (or circus) of Cornbury, William Vesey in the city was exercising his duties as Church commissary. Vesey, vicar of Trinity Church (the Bishop of London was rector), was an assiduous servant of the SPG. He met with

the few Episcopal clergymen in New York in October 1704, and subsequently reported to the SPG the "story of the Church's introduction and progress on every side."¹⁰ The words are important, for they suggest that until that time the Church of England was unknown in much of the province. Beginning with his own parish, Vesey relates a condition most satisfactory to himself: "The Rector of this church is maintained by a tax levied upon all the Inhabitants of the City," he declares; and an additional grant is assured "during the life and residence of the incumbent." That is to say, Vesey had friends in high places. The Assembly voted him an annuity of £60 for life. Clearly, Cornbury and Vesey worked in harmony. It is equally clear that Trinity Church was already, in 1704, in the position to be a benefactor to Episcopalians in New York. "If God pleases to continue his Excellency [Lord Cornbury] in the Administration of this Government, [Trinity] Church is a fair way of becoming the greatest Congregation upon the Continent," wrote Vesey as he listed the assets of his parish. Since "the parishioners have been, and still are at, raising the Ediface and Steeple to that perfection they designed it," the governor had urged Queen Anne "to bestow a farm within the bounds of the said City known by the name of the Kings Farm" upon Trinity Church. About the same time, June 1704, ardent churchman Lewis Morris wrote to London recommending that the "Queen's Farm" be given to Trinity Church.¹¹ Thus, the lands Fletcher had leased to Trinity Church were more firmly placed in the church's possession. Hastening on (perhaps because there would be questions about that farm for a very long time), Vesey assured the authorities that Trinity is working to "train up youth" and "discourage Vice in the said Province." Furthermore, the governor had contributed to the building of a French church, with hopes that a clergyman of English orders would become minister there. The Trinity report concludes with a complaint about "the pious and deserving Mr. Elias Neau who was brought up a Merchant and in good business." Vesey thought it would be better if the Society would underwrite "the worthy and ingenious Mr. Muirson, who is now going to England in the hopes of being admitted into Holy Orders."¹²

ELIAS NEAU AND THE SLAVES

In such a gloss will annals conceal a saint! Elias Neau deserves a day in the calendar, and it may be that, even after almost three hundred years, he holds some kind of record as New York's most colorful layman. Born in France, Neau had for a time been a galley slave as retribution for his Protestant faith. Like many French Protestants in New York—the Bards,

Bayards, and Lorillards come to mind—Neau had a knack for business. He did well in mercantile circles after he came to New York, but he who had once been a slave because of religious allegiance now looked in compassion upon others who were slaves because of their race: Negroes in New York. Their number was increasing; in 1715 there were 4,000 slaves in the province, and 27,000 white persons.¹³ Between 1703 and his death in 1722, Neau conducted his classes, often encountering bitter opposition from clergy and church people. William Vesey allowed Neau space for catechetical classes in Trinity Church, but his encouragement was no better than lukewarm.

As long as slavery existed people who offered Negroes the amenities of a Christian civilization had to contend with others who thought their education would inevitably bring trouble. When there was a slave uprising in the city in 1712, the expected sentiments resulted. There was terror among white people, and harsh reprisals against identifiable black leaders. Of course, there were those who blamed the schools engaged in teaching slaves to read and write. The clergy generally supported Neau against criticism, but public opinion was made clear when eighteen Negroes were hanged, and the Common Council passed a regulation that Negroes must carry lanterns when walking abroad at night. Some people regarded Neau's efforts to teach slaves as an invasion of their property rights. In mid-century, religious revivals made slaveholders more amenable to education for their chattels. Neau's record cannot be acclaimed a success, as the world counts the things of success, and he knew his adversaries were powerful. He said it is hard to be a Christian when you are a slave.¹⁴ Even some of his supporters considered it sufficient for slaves to learn the Christian religion by hearing the Book of Common Prayer read at family services at home—not a bad idea, really, if all Episcopalians undertook to do the same.¹⁵ It is an unfortunate truth that few New York Episcopalians ever wrestled with their consciences about slavery.

Long after Neau had passed from the scene, the Rev. James Wetmore had as many as two hundred slave catechumens, but he noted the reluctance of their owners to send them to church. He also shared the common belief that to congregate the slaves together was to court danger. Nevertheless, the SPG was asked to furnish Bibles and prayer books for them.

Neau's dedication to the black slaves ran counter to Trinity's rector, Vesey, who probably reflected the views of his privileged vestry. But at first, Cornbury and Vesey supported Neau.¹⁶ It was announced that at Trinity Church slaves would be catechized every Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday at five in the afternoon. Subsequent baptisms were rites that, it was said, made the slaves think they were free. Trouble

followed. Discontent among the slaves was traced to Neau's classes at Trinity. The rector trimmed his sails, but Neau did not. In a letter to Bishop Robinson, Neau complained that the local clergy were at best lukewarm about educating Negroes.¹⁷ It was this uneasy situation that led Vesey to encourage the SPG to support Muirson, later rector of Rye. Muirson's sympathy with the slaves may be gauged by his 1708 statement about the Indians as "a decaying people [who] say they will not be Christians nor do they see the necessity for so being, because we do not live according to the precepts of our religion."¹⁸ Today, we read this as a prophetic statement; in that era of English ascendancy it was seen as something quite different.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN WESTCHESTER

New York's port town was beginning to be something far more than a garrison settlement. Names and events and dates flow lavishly now, as from a cornucopia. Even though New York Province in 1700 had merely 19,000 people—many fewer than Connecticut, Maryland, or Virginia—visitors began to reckon its importance seriously. "The Cittie of New York is a pleasant, well compacted place, situated on a Commodious River which is a fine harbour for shipping," wrote Madam Knight from Boston in 1704. She continued:

The buildings brick generally, very stately and high, though not altogether like ours in Boston. The Bricks in some of the Houses are of divers Coullers and laid in Checkers, being glazed look very agreeable. The inside of them are neat to admiration, the wooden work, for only the walls are plastered, and the Sumers and Girt [beams] are planed and kept very white scour'd as so is all the partittion if made of Bords. The fire places have no Jambs (as ours have). . . . Their Diversion in the Winter is riding Sleys about three or four miles out of Town where they have their Houses of entertainment at a place called the Bowery, and some go to friends Houses who handsomely treat them . . . Madame Dowes, a Gentlewoman . . . gave us a handsome Entertainment of five or six Dishes and choice Beer and metheglin Cyder, etc. all which she said was the produce of her farm. I believe we mett fifty or sixty Slays that day—they with great swiftness and some are so furious that they'll turn out of the path for none save a Loaden cart.¹⁹

New York town, then, was growing. This meant that the Church of England congregations would increase, though, as was often said, New Yorkers were not notable for churchgoing. Let us now look at an outlying community, the hamlet of Westchester.

The word Westchester means three things to us. First of all, it was, and is, a county, whose present dimensions are somewhat smaller than they were originally. Secondly, Westchester in 1700 was a hamlet: the place now sometimes called Westchester Square. Thirdly, Westchester implies a parish of perhaps as many as six church buildings and congregations under the care of one or more priests of the Church of England.

The hamlet called Westchester was far more important than its scattering of dwellings would suggest. It was the county seat, and thus had the drawing power enjoyed by all places where law courts and clerks and public meetings are centered. In 1687 Col. Heathcote exercised his capacities as magistrate and churchman by designing a "Town House built, to keep courts in, and for the publick worship of God." These plans, which included a jail, were unfulfilled. Several years later, probably in 1701, a church was built. It was twenty-eight feet square, of frame construction, and had two large sash windows on each of three sides, and a wide door on the fourth side. Its hipped roof was topped by a bell "turet."²⁰ This is the building where Samuel Seabury officiated during the Revolutionary War; by that time, it had much deteriorated, for in 1788 it was found unworthy of repair, and was sold and moved to a neighboring farm. We are told that while the new church was still abuilding, a Presbyterian minister named Morgan occupied it for services several times before John Bartow came from Rye to claim the church for himself.

The records state that as late as 1706 the windows hadn't been fitted in the Westchester church. It was named St. Peter's about 1710. Otherwise, the *Records of the Combined Parishes*, of Westchester, Eastchester, New Rochelle, Yonkers, Pelham, and Morrisania are of very great value to us today because they reveal one instance in the province where the civil and ecclesiastical authority were agreeably yoked together—at least for a time. From the beginning, St. Peter's enjoyed (or endured) the town vestry imagined by Fletcher. The town justices, the wardens, and the vestrymen met together, and sometimes the civil power merged with ecclesiastical matters on the same page of the record books. Thus we read on the flyleaf:

Agreed that Warrants shall be issued to the several Constables from the Year 1702 till the present Yr 1706 in Westchester County to fetch the money due to the Minister's Rate for Morrisania.²¹

Such a perfunctory entry records for us several points of historic interest. We will not see frequent mixings of civil and ecclesiastical authority in New York. The province never experienced the domination of church over state as did say the neighboring colony of New Haven, or the Newark experiment of the 1660s. Perhaps the Arminianism born in

the Netherlands had deeply influenced the Dutch Church after all, and discouraged close civil ties in New York.

Another arresting point about this flyleaf entry is the reference to Morrisania, the home place of Lewis Morris. Though originally of Cromwellian persuasion, the Morris family was now loyal to the Church of England. Morris contemplated a chapel nearer his home. He was thus reluctant to pay an assigned quota to St. Peter's, arguing that "his Mannor" was not within the boundaries of the Westchester church. The tension between Morrisania and Westchester prevailed for several years; things moved much more slowly in those days, including a predisposition to reconcile differences. It may be that the Lord of Morrisania (for such he was) expected more prominence in St. Peter's than the parish authorities were willing to grant, for in 1710 it is recited that Lewis Morris had earlier wanted to set up

at his own Proper Charge a Convenient Seat Plan or Pew In some Suitable Part of ye Church in This Town for ye accommodation of himself and family which Generous offer was by Some (tho a deminitive number) of ye then Vestry Rejected yet notwithstanding did Conclude them all by a Tacit Aqiuessency to ye have Negative voice of but two of them who not well weighing ye Consequences nor seriously Considering ye Rationality of ye offer Did Refuse giving ye Liberty to that Worthy Gentleman which ye Vestry in yt perticular (wich Indeed Did look little Better than Black Ingratitude) Have Unanimously agreed and Concluded that ye said Mr. Lewis Morris may if he sees Caus at his own Proper Cost and Charge . . . ²²

This is neither the first nor the last time in the annals of New York that wealth and prestige won the day—and extracted an apology from those who dared deny their privileges.

Turning from the pretensions of the quality, we may note a different sort of Westchester record preserved for us. Seaman Charles Williams of the *Pink Blossom*, Mariner Captain Daskins, Commander, sued the captain for wages allegedly withheld. Churchwarden Josiah Hunt was appointed power-of-attorney for the sailor—and the affidavit is duly included in the church records. The line between Episcopal Church and state was a thin line in Westchester Square. The Presbyterians seemed to keep their distance—or perhaps the "Convenient Seat" of Lewis Morris in St. Peter's Church scared them off.

The rector, John Bartow, served the Westchester church from 1702 until his death in 1725. The Society had questioned his quick removal from Rye to Westchester, and Bartow defended his action by claiming the prior importance of Westchester. Did he also suspect there would be less trouble from the Independents farther away from the Connecticut border? He certainly stated that Lord Cornbury wanted him to be in

Westchester. The appointment by Bishop Compton hadn't specified where in the Province of New York Bartow was to minister, and most important, Heathcote approved Bartow's move. That should have ended the matter. He lived near St. Peter's, Westchester, on five acres in a house he had purchased. For many of his years there he officiated at St. Peter's only "every fourth Sabbath day, wick is Condescended to by Mr. Bartow."²³ It is perhaps revealing that, of a Sunday, he ranged about Westchester or "in the Jerseys" holding services. In doing so he was bound to meet preachers of other loyalties: "I can't repeat to you the many janglings and contentions I have had with Quakers and Dissenters, nay I may say with Atheists and Deists," he wrote to the SPG.²⁴ But at the same time he was glad to report that at Westchester all was satisfactory. The church was now wainscoted, ceiled overhead, "and more decently seated, and the communion table enclosed with rails and bannisters" (sic; surely he meant balusters). But there was cause to lament "that great loss we had at sea of church ornament, not knowing how it may be repaired but by the same gracious donors."²⁵

Bartow's Westchester parish included, besides the church in Westchester Square, the communities of Eastchester, New Rochelle, Yonkers, Pelham, and Morrisania. Eastchester generally preferred the ministrations of Independent clergy, but with the heavy-handedness that characterized most of his Church acts, Governor Cornbury insinuated Bartow into that place in 1702. There was already a church building, which means that various clergy would have considered it a potential place for themselves. Somehow, Bartow ingratiated himself with the existing congregation at Eastchester, hitherto Presbyterian, so that (as he states) "they were so well satisfied with the liturgy and doctrine of the Church that they forsook their minister [Joseph Morgan] and conformed to the Church of England."²⁶ But the Presbyterian menace was never far from Bartow's door! "Some of their main agents have been with me and signified their design" for a separate church, wrote Bartow to the Society. They would have Bartow, or a Presbyterian minister: none other, he said. But he was determined no Presbyterian would preach in Eastchester church.²⁷

New Rochelle, another of Bartow's charges, had much different beginnings than any other of the Westchester churches. It was established by French Protestants who were fleeing persecution, and were accompanied to New York by a minister, the Rev. David DeBonrepos. John Pell of Pelham assisted them, and by 1693 a church was built. DeBonrepos was succeeded by the Rev. David Bondet, who had been ordained by the Bishop of London,²⁸ but did not use the Book of Common Prayer, preferring the French Protestant services of the Huguenots. Col. Heathcote had always believed the Westchester parish

required more than one parson. He hoped that Dr. Bondet might eventually be associated with the Westchester rector and be paid by the SPG. Perhaps Bondet (who preceded the SPG missionaries) thought it wise for the French church in New Rochelle to stand somewhat apart from the Church of England; certainly the English Church seemed to invite contention through its connections with the government. He sought SPG maintenance without the possible embarrassment a subsidy might bring. And in this he was successful; by 1707 Bondet was receiving SPG support. The price he had to pay was changing from the French liturgy to the Book of Common Prayer. Col. Heathcote was insistent about this, and was scheming to find "the properest ways not only for improving Dr. Bondet, but likewise at the same time think of the most effective means for taking care [of unchurched parts of the county]." ²⁹ Two years later, in 1709, the French church of New Rochelle conformed to the Church of England; the church then numbered more than a hundred communicants. Henceforth they were expected to use the Prayer Book. Very soon, a new church was planned. The list of subscribers included the governor, twelve clergy, and names that then, or soon after, would be familiar in the annals of the Episcopal Church in New York: Laurens, Bayley, Morris, Neau, Clark, Read, Heathcote, Cromelin, Livingston ("a mayor of Albany"), Jay, and Watts. But even more important is the fact observed years later by Robert Bolton: "the first settled Episcopal minister was a French refugee." ³⁰ Since David Bondet came to New Rochelle in 1695 and was supported by John Pell, this may give credence to the statement sometimes made that the earliest Episcopal congregation with a church in the province was at Pelham. Robert Bolton, rector of Pelham and credible historian, had no doubts: "As early as 1695 a clergyman of the Church of England was settled in the manor of Pelham," he wrote in 1855. ³¹

COLONIAL CHURCH CUSTOMS

In 1702 Lord Cornbury had ordered "the Book of Common Prayer, as by law established, to be read each Sunday and Holyday and the Blessed Sacrament be administered according to the rites of the Church of England." ³² It was an instance of his lofty contempt for the other churches in the province. In light of the English minority, his order could only militate against the interests of the Church he hoped would benefit from his commands. Cornbury further said that existing churches were to be well kept, new ones were to be built, and the minister was to have a house and glebe lands. The glebe was, by English and Scots ecclesiastical law, the land belonging to the parish set apart for the maintenance

of the minister. He might cultivate it himself, or lease it to a tenant. When the governor enjoined a glebe, he was simply transferring to the province the custom of the mother country. Many of the early New York parishes acquired glebe lands but, needless to say, none was as princely as that duly presented to Trinity Church in New York City.

Cornbury's order that the Book of Common Prayer be used every Sunday and holy day leads us to consider the services held in the churches he so ardently promoted. What were they like? It is safe to say that the services and the architectural arrangement of the churches followed closely those then prevailing in Britain. Most of the clergy had been educated there. In the absence of a bishop in America, all of them had been ordained there. Returning to New York, they would naturally follow what they had observed abroad, using whatever similar ornaments and "customary requisites" they could obtain. "Good Queen Anne" is credited with many gifts of silver to New York churches. Money was scarce, and the churches tended to be careful of the chalices and bread plates they received. They would be kept under lock and key in a chest, usually in the rector's house; this practice was maintained in many places until living memory. A quantity of fine seventeenth-century silver remains in the diocese. But there was much more, made in England or by the excellent New York silversmiths, that later fell victim to Victorian taste and changes in church customs. It is probable that the records of every old parish in New York tell of a vestry, influenced by the rector, ordering that the old altar service be sold or melted down in exchange for a newer sort.

An example of silver discarded because of altered customs may be of interest. The chalice of Queen Anne's time was a deep goblet, with perhaps a fitted cover that might be used separately as a bread plate. The communicant was given the chalice, which he held in both hands, and took a deep draft. He then handed the chalice back to the minister or, perhaps, to the next communicant. This practice was changed in the nineteenth century, when an increased sense of the sacramental act indicated that a mere sip of the wine was sufficient. Thereafter, less wine was consumed and chalices were shallower and wider. The "old-fashioned" goblets and their accompanying great flagons were no longer convenient.

The Word and the sacraments were held as a two-edged sword in the post-Reformation settlement of the Church of England. But in the eighteenth century, emphasis was on preaching rather than on sacrament. When Christopher Wren and his followers were engaged in rebuilding London after the fire of 1666, they designed glorious preaching halls, not somber edifices for Christian mysteries. Light flooded in through great sash windows. Gilt and light pastel tints were freely used

on walls and columns. Carved putti scrambled after birds and beasts, fruits and flowers. Stalls were copied from the best Renaissance creations, and even the pulpit's sounding board could be made a thing of beauty. The floor was often a lively checkerboard of black and white marble squares. Viewed from afar, the steeple may have ascended in classic stages as orderly as the preacher's theology. This is the modish church the ordinand sought out when he was in London. Gothic architecture lingered as a possibility and never died out completely, but it was not the preferred style of Queen Anne and her immediate successors. The priest who returned from England remembered the new and wonderful churches he had seen. Who could blame him for desiring something like St. Martin's-in-the-Fields for himself and his people in America, especially when these buildings could conveniently be built of wood and brick?

Our returning ordinand would have seen in London the altars often covered by fine silk-and-tassel covers, or by a Persian carpet. This was required by canon law, but such coverings were almost impossible to come by in America. The seat cushions were often upholstered. In some English churches there were candlesticks on or near the altar. Brass branched chandeliers may have hung suspended from the ceiling. Early altars had been destroyed in the Reformation or during the Commonwealth. Archbishop Laud had expected the table altars of his time to be set apart by rails, but such emphasis on the place of the sacrament was offensive to the Puritans, and most altar rails had been destroyed. The altar could be moved. Where no rails existed, the communicants would kneel scattered near the altar. The celebrant would distribute the sacred elements for the communicants, who, at his bidding, "drew near with faith." A cross on or behind the altar was almost unknown in England and America.

The pews were no longer simple benches. Now, they were enclosed, an innovation especially welcome in cold North American winters. Somehow, the privileged people felt it their due to "set up a Commodious Seat" for themselves. When Lewis Morris claimed the right to do so in Westchester church, he was following an honorable custom long established in England.

The celebrated three-decker pulpit set in the middle aisle in front of and obscuring the holy table is said to have been a mid-eighteenth-century development, but surely these great structures, with the altar on the floor in front, were known very early in New York. Our churches were small, and the high pulpit saved room. On the floor level there would be a seat and book rest for the clerk. It was his duty to say the responses of the Prayer Book service, and perhaps pitch the tune and "line out" the psalm, if one was sung. On the next level above was the

officiant's seat and desk; the morning and evening offices, litany and ante-communion were read here, facing the congregation. Topping all was the pulpit for the sermon; an hourglass would often be attached to the wall or the pulpit rail and sometimes (often, in the Dutch Church) it was turned twice before the sermon ended. In some places the pulpit was also used as the reading desk. There were invariably hangings and upholstered cushions in the desks and pulpit for the books to rest on; these are the "pulpit cloths" so often mentioned in the early records. Crimson was the preferred color.

In front of this high desk-pulpit structure, on the floor, was the altar. Sometimes it was flanked by two or more good chairs. The altar itself was small and low, usually a table with a wood top. But sometimes it was a wooden frame on which was placed a marble slab. "A table for the communion was given me by a joiner,"³³ said the rector of Westchester in a report that was probably duplicated by a dozen other clergymen during the early days of the Episcopal Church in New York.

On Sunday, the church was opened by the sexton or a lay assistant, who was often the grave digger and the keeper of some church records. The service would perhaps be announced by the beating of a drum, or if the church was so fortunate as to possess one, the ringing of a bell.

Nowadays, we are accustomed to entering a church and waiting for the service to begin. That was not the custom of an earlier day. In the Dutch Church (which doubtless had some effect on Episcopalians), a part of the service was under way before the dominie entered.

Beneath the pulpit, in a position similar to but not parallel with the Episcopalians' clerk, sat the *voorlezer*. He was "almost as important as the minister himself in the appropriate carrying on of the service. This dignitary began the services by reading the scriptures, including the Commandments, after which he gave out a psalm and pitched the tune . . . The Dominie himself entered at this point. He advanced up the aisle, bowing courteously to the right and to the left, then paused at the front of the pulpit stairs for a moment of prayer."³⁴

The Reformed dominie probably was clad in the black Geneva gown. But the Episcopal minister

would arrive in his ordinary habit (or street attire) which consisted of a long cassock, sash, gown, tippet . . . He would also wear a wig and "bands"—a soft white linen neckcloth (later starched to become the modern clerical collar) with two pendent tabs. [Entering the church he would] remove his hat and walk informally down the aisle, pausing perhaps to greet parishioners and inquire of ill relatives . . .³⁵

Once near the desk pulpit, the officiant would put on a very ample surplice which, between services, was often kept hanging on a peg

behind the wainscoting, or perhaps folded over a frame made for that purpose, and begin Morning or Evening Prayer. The clerk would lead in the responses. The congregation brought prayer books. None would be provided in the pews until Victorian piety demanded such propriety.

In the period under survey, there were no organs in most Episcopal churches. The psalms were sung, in meter:

The Lord's my shepherd; I'll not want:
He makes me down to lie

In Pastures green he leadeth me,
The quiet waters by

Canticles wouldn't be chanted until about 1800, and then only in the larger churches.³⁶ The congregation sat while singing.³⁷ Trinity Church, New York, adapted the Tate and Brady psalms as early as 1707; this work (which went through several hundred editions, enduring till the mid-nineteenth century) included the beloved "While shepherds watched their flock by night." But in 1720 hymnody was still far in the future in the Episcopal Church.

All musical instruments had met with Puritan wrath, but the Restoration in England was fortunate to have great musicians whose anthems enhanced the reputation of English music. Naturally, this development of music in the churches would be acknowledged in New York, and it isn't a surprise for us to learn that Trinity Church ordered an organ in 1733 from John Clemm of Philadelphia, and a better one a bare six years later. An organ at that early date was used primarily for preludes and voluntaries, and possibly for an occasional anthem. Episcopalians would wait for another century or more before hymns would be regularly included in services.

When it came time for the sermon, the rector would descend the few steps from the desk, remove his surplice and put on his black preaching gown. This was the "academic gown" of today. It is shown in most early clerical portraits. In changing vestments, it was usually necessary to remove his wig, and a wig stand would have been handy.

Since the changing of vestments is always awkward in church services, we can understand that the clergy soon insisted upon a retiring place where he could doff and don robes. The word "wainscot" which appears in so many records is a clue, for it suggests a concealed space where the officiant changed. In fact, we are told that a New York church as late as 1838, though refurbished, retained its three-decker pulpit and the "hole where the clergyman could go and change his surplice for a black gown between the service and the sermon."³⁸ The sermon was lengthy: "Our Colonial ancestors had stronger stomachs than modern congregations for long and meaty sermons, and they

would have been deeply offended if the preacher gave them nothing more than a fifteen minute discourse.”³⁹ The service would be Morning Prayer with Litany and Ante-Communion. The Eucharist was celebrated quarterly, or sometimes as often as once a month, in spite of the Prayer Book provisions for Epistle and Gospel for every Sunday.

“Collections” of money were rare, and only for specific, immediate needs. Everyone expected the church to be supported mainly by a few rich and dedicated persons. Much later “subscription papers” were distributed for parishioners to signify what might be expected toward church repairs, rector’s salary, and so forth. The glebe was often the parson’s chief income. In the first years of the Ministries Act, tax money was designated for church maintenance, as well as for the poor. The “offertory procession” we all know so well of vestrymen carrying alms basons down the aisle was unknown in the eighteenth century; “ushers” at the door would have been an impertinence.

How did the service end? We are not certain. After the sermon, the officiant probably closed the service with a general benediction. Maybe a final psalm was sung, or (in churches fortunate to own an organ), a voluntary was played as the people departed. After the regular service there was often a baptism or a marriage. Almost certainly there would be a gathering of the congregation, for many of the people had come a distance, and might not see each other again soon.

The missionary’s stipend was paid by the Society in London, but it was often augmented by further sums provided by the laity in the parish. Then and later, prominent men of the locality signed a subscription paper on which they wrote the amount they expected to contribute. Such a paper, circulated for the benefit of Newburgh’s missionary from 1768 to 1775, is probably typical. A group of laymen there pledged to

the support of the Reverend Mr. John Sayre the Societies Missionary to Newburgh and the parts adjacent on Condition that the said Mr. Sayre continue to officiate in each of the divisions of his Mission, viz, Newburgh, the Orrerkill Division, and the Walkill Division, that is to say one Sunday in every three weeks during his residence in this mission, Health and other circumstances permitting save that the said Mr. Sayre shall be at liberty to officiate one Sunday in every three months at Warwick for promoting the good of the church in that settlement.⁴⁰

It should be pointed out that the permission allowing Mr. Sayre to take services in Warwick was a perquisite commonly extended to clergy. It gave them a chance to earn a little extra money and it promoted Church growth.⁴¹

The Venerable Society required its missionaries to answer and return for official perusal a long series of questions about their parishes. Thus, an approximate account of the Church in America was presented for review in London.

Between 1745 and 1781, the Bishop of London licensed at least 378 clergymen to be missionaries in America. New York Province received the least number, 17, while 20 went to New Jersey, 21 to Pennsylvania, 46 to Maryland, 142 to Virginia, 93 south of Virginia, and 39 to New England.⁴²

The "frontier" situation of Westchester County in the early years of the eighteenth century was not unlike that encountered by missionaries in the West many decades later. People often lived very far from the church. At best, they could attend public services only on occasion. This led to one more novel custom for Episcopalians, as was recorded in a Victorian diary:

The Venerable Society sent out a few missionaries who settled here and there and on occasion made tours of mission work much as our Bishops do at the present time [1889]. The good parson in wig and cocked hat, armed with his certificate of ordination and the Society's recommendatory letters, mounted his good, ambling nag, and seated on saddle bags, went through the Colony, stopping here and there, now in this village, now in that, and depending on the hospitality of the higher class Church of England families as might be found in each neighborhood he proposed to visit. Well, the good parson having arrived, a visitation was made by him from house to house, and such as had not been baptized were prepared for the rite and the children and the infants were included in its administration. In anticipation of these visits, each Church of England family owned a bowl originally obtained, carefully preserved, and solely devoted for and to this purpose.⁴³

THE GOSPEL AND THE INDIANS

The original Americans whom we call Indians were frequently in the forefront of SPG concern. In the first place, there was the sincere conviction that the Indians had the right to know the Gospel. Secondly, there was the somewhat less altruistic conviction that the Gospel had best be presented by the Church of England rather than the Jesuits of France, England's traditional enemy. Let the flag and the religion of Britain be known in the farthest reaches of the province: that was the practical sentiment, and that is substantially the reason why the Rev. Thoroughgood Moore, was, in 1704, appointed missionary to the Indians north and west of Albany. He arrived with the highest ideals, but

was soon discouraged because the fur traders used rum overmuch in their dealings with the Indians. Cornbury's self-serving policy was to cooperate with the merchants (as long as they cooperated with him), and so Thoroughgood Moore's complaints about the rum quickly put him afoul of the eccentric governor. He embarked for England, probably intending to give the Society a firsthand report of life among Cornbury's friends, but, unfortunately, his ship was lost and thus history was deprived of that particular glimpse into American colonial history.

Some clergy were persuaded that the spiritual health of the white man should be addressed before that of the Indians. Therefore, the SPG received the petition, "We humbly supplicate that the children first be satisfied, and the lost sheep recovered who have gone astray among hereticks and Quakers who have denyed the Faith and are worse than Infidels and Indians who never knew it."⁴⁴ Does this better indicate a snobbish dismissal of the Indians, or an evaluation of the Englishmen's religion in the province?

Thomas Barclay, educated in New York City, was appointed a missionary to the Albany area in 1709. He soon showed much promise (but ten years later was declared to be hopelessly mad). In 1710, William Andrews was sent to assist; people complained that he was too profound. Soon thereafter, four Iroquois sachems are said to have appeared before pious Queen Anne, entreating her to promote the Church of England lest "French Priests and Presents" get the upper hand.⁴⁵ Perhaps it was this dramatic epiphany in the English court (but more likely it was the ill will generated by Fletcher and Cornbury) that led the Society to reiterate its primary aim of "conversion of the heathen and infidels," and that "a stop be put to the sending any more missionaries among Christians" such as Presbyterians and Reformed.⁴⁶

In 1710 the Crown ordered a church built in Albany. The Queen presented the Communion plate, and the Archbishop of Canterbury supplied twelve large Bibles and the tablets of Decalogue, Creed, and the Lord's Prayer canonically required in eighteenth-century chancels. Albany was thought to be the gateway to the New York wilderness, and the Society sent missionaries to the Indians until the outbreak of the War of Independence, with varying results. "Heathen they are, and heathen they still will be," declared the profound William Andrews. John Miln was more positive about his endeavors at Fort Hunter, 1727-35. But even Miln soon wanted to leave: "the climate of Albany is too cold, the Society is crude, the work is discouraging and the salary irregularly paid."⁴⁷ Henry Barclay, son of the unfortunate Thomas, went from his Yale graduation to be the catechist at Fort Hunter in 1735. He was tutored in the Indian languages by Andrews and Ogilvie,⁴⁸ and was ordained in England three years later, returning to serve the white con-

gregation and the Indian school at the fort. In 1745 Barclay went downriver to succeed William Vesey as rector of Trinity Church and bestow his family's name upon one of Manhattan's oldest thoroughfares. John Ogilvie, J. J. Oel, Thomas Brown, Henry Munro, and John Stuart were outstanding missionaries in the Albany area prior to the war. But it was the legendary Sir William Johnson who "probably exercised a greater influence over the Indians than any other Englishman."⁴⁹

While the new landed magnates to the south were busy consolidating their holdings and waiting for new opportunities that might come their way, Johnson was hugely enjoying his life in the Mohawk Valley, near present-day Amsterdam, and in Johnstown. He came from England in 1738. His first wife died soon after and he purchased from a neighbor a German girl to be his housekeeper. They were married by Henry Barclay about 1740, but since Sir William maintained two houses and preferred that they both be well managed, he soon installed the distinguished Indian Mollie Brant as his mistress in Fort Johnson. This did not diminish his reputation with the Indians, and they conferred upon him the rank of a chief of the Mohawks. Johnson deserved the honor. For fair treatment of the Indian his name stands almost alone in the annals of early New York: "While frauds were being practiced on the Indians by the land-grafting officials at Albany and elsewhere, Johnson was firm in his desire that the Indians should not be cheated."⁵⁰

William Johnson was conspicuously loyal to the Church of England, a fact that, together with his marital irregularities, did not commend him to historians of Puritan leanings. For his part, Johnson believed that Indians taught by dissenting divines usually "lost their abilities for hunting." Mollie Brant's brother, the noted Joseph, became an enthusiastic communicant and lay reader in Episcopal churches and, thanks to Sir William, there were now churches where he could officiate in the absence of an ordained missionary. Apart from offering his own houses for services, Sir William encouraged the building of churches at Fort Hunter, Canajoharie, Schenectady, and Johnstown. He died in 1774, just prior to the Revolutionary War, and was thus spared seeing his Loyalist Indians pitted against the patriots, a tragedy that Sir William might have been able to prevent had he lived.

THE QUEST FOR A BISHOP

If there was one constant problem in our colonial history it was the difficulty and dangers a candidate must surmount to be ordained in the Church. There were no bishops in the colonies, and no institution where an ordinand might be prepared specifically for Episcopal

priesthood. An English youth had both university and bishop at hand, and even if he was unable to matriculate at Oxford or Cambridge, he could study with any of the neighboring clergy who were willing to be his tutor. In America, and especially in New York, Episcopal clergy were rare. Books were hard to come by and expensive, though William Bradford was publishing the Bible, the Prayer Book, and other volumes in New York City as early as 1724. Once ready to appear before a bishop, the ordinand was obliged to sail to England (where, quite probably, he would be friendless) and somehow gain the attention of a bishop after producing testimonial letters. He then had to wait until the bishop was ready to proceed to ordain him to the diaconate, and then the priesthood. The two ordinations were customarily set close together (sometimes only a day or two intervening), but the whole process was costly in time and money, and often fatal: for the voyages were perilous. A Congregationalist thought long before seeking orders in the Church of England! So did a young man born and brought up in the Episcopal Church.

A bishop for the colonies was an idea cherished by some Episcopalians. Others, such as staunch layman Caleb Heathcote, thought it just as well not to invite supervision; hierarchy would bring more discipline than many colonial churchmen desired. Furthermore, many colonists held that bishops in America would mean one more official tie with Whitehall. Political overtones were inevitable in discussions about resident bishops. The Church of England was lukewarm in promoting the idea, and Parliament was reluctant. Dissenters in the colonies declared they would actively oppose bishops in America. A contemporary cartoon shows a properly garbed bishop improperly tarred and feathered and escorted back on to the ship from which he has just disembarked. The king's Church simply wasn't trusted in colonies largely populated by descendants of men and women who had been glad to leave the land of that Church, or by others who recalled the iniquities of Fletcher and the inanities of Cornbury, or by yet others who proudly clung to the Dutch Reformed Church of their forebears and loathed Episcopal pretensions in New York. The Church and politics: it is ever a threatening combination beloved of Satan!

KING'S COLLEGE

This was the firm view of some prominent New Yorkers who participated in the founding of King's College in 1754. It is thought that the Episcopalians hoped to establish a college in the city much earlier in the century⁵¹ but were unable to do so. Boston and the Congregational-

ists had their Harvard; Connecticut's Congregationalists had their Yale. Across the river, in Elizabethtown, the Presbyterians in 1747 founded the College of New Jersey (it was later moved to Princeton), and elsewhere in New Jersey the Dutch Reformed had their college—Queen's—in New Brunswick (now Rutgers). Was it not time for the Episcopalians to establish a college? Others asked quite another question: Was it not time that New York had a college?

Toward the end of 1751 the legislature authorized a lottery for a New York college. This was not entirely satisfactory to those who envisioned a college under Episcopal control, and they knew that if they were to grasp the opportunity they must act quickly. The authorities of Trinity Church were prevailed upon to step forward with land for the college, providing that its presiding officer be Episcopalian, and its chapel conform to the Book of Common Prayer. The college was duly chartered, in 1754, but the involvement of Trinity Church, and the names of the trustees (predominantly Episcopalian) "attracted attention," as a polite historian puts it.⁵² In a short time, the founding and control of King's College brought to the fore two contending factions in New York life which were not irrelevant when the war came, and both are vividly represented in the personalities of two able men, Samuel Johnson and William Livingston.

Samuel Johnson was known to New York Episcopalians long before he came to King's College because he was a participant in what became known as "the Dark Day at Yale," September 22, 1722. On that day, the president of Yale and five other Congregationalist ministers of the faculty presented the college trustees a memorial in which they said they doubted the validity of their ordination and lamented that they were not "in visible communion with an Episcopal Church."⁵³ The Yale authorities were understandably aghast at this announcement. Four of the signers sailed to England for Episcopal ordination. One of these disturbing individuals was the Rev. James Wetmore, hitherto respected pastor of North Haven; in time, he became rector of Rye in New York Province. The people of Rye liked Wetmore because he was from adjoining Connecticut and spoke the New England "dialect," whereas the people of New York City preferred a missionary named Colgan, who was more polite. Thus there was an exchange of churches in 1726, and thereafter Wetmore flourished in Rye.⁵⁴ The Wetmores were obliged to flee New York after the Declaration of Independence (but, much later, a descendant returned to New York to serve the longest term of any New York suffragan bishop; history has its moments of rich compensation).

Another Yale dissident of interest to us was Samuel Johnson, pastor of West Haven. Together with Timothy Cutler (who became rector of

Christ Church, Boston) and David Brown (who died in London soon after ordination), Johnson had been ordained in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields (where most SPG meetings were held) on March 31, 1723. It has been said that these Connecticut Yankee Congregational ministers declared "for episcopal polity and order, which had no relationship at all to the pattern of worship they had conducted as Congregationalist and Presbyterian clergy." It says something about the strength and attractiveness of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut that these prominent ministers were led to seek ordination in England.

Samuel Johnson displays other characteristics germane to our story. He commended himself as a scholar sufficiently so that, after thirty years as rector of Stratford, Connecticut, he was called to be president of the new college in New York. *The New York Gazette or Weekly Post Boy* printed a notice on July 1, 1754, in which Samuel Johnson desired to

acquaint whom it may concern that I shall attend at the Vestry room in the school house, near the English Church, on Tuesday and Thursday every week between the hours of nine and twelve, to examine such as offer themselves to be admitted to the college.⁵⁵

Among those who early availed themselves of this new opportunity in New York were young men who bore such names as Verplanck, Bayard, Cruger, Johnson, dePeyster, Hoffman, Roosevelt, DeLancey, Rutgers, Lisenard, Brownjohn, Schuyler, Floyd, Watts, VanHorn, Benson, Bard, and Punderson. Every one of these would later be conspicuous in the annals of the Episcopal Church in New York. There was yet another young man who probably met with aging Samuel Johnson in the vestry room: Samuel Provost (as he then spelled his name). He was Dutch Reformed by baptism, but the family was related to Episcopalians, and while at King's College Samuel determined to be ordained in the Episcopal Church. We shall hear more of him very soon.

The Book of Common Prayer seems to have been about the only point of agreement between Johnson and Provost; in almost every other aspect they were at opposite poles. Samuel Johnson was conservative by nature, an Anglophile who found refuge in believing that New England was a corner of Great Britain, a view one sometimes encounters in surveying the Episcopal Church in America. It was said of him (as it would later be said of Hobart) that he became "very English in England."⁵⁶ He tended to look upon America as backward. Needless to say, then, he disliked evangelical enthusiasm. He decried the flamboyance of his ecclesiastical brother, George Whitefield, who, he said, "broke through all rule and order." Rule and order: these are the operative words in Johnson's life. Early on, he admired Locke and Newton and

the milder Deists. Later, he found High Church rigorism attractive, possibly because it was readily adaptable in parochial life in Stratford.⁵⁷

Johnson was one of the enthusiastic supporters of an American episcopate: "We wish we may live to see an establishment whereby the Bishop of London may become Archbishop of the American colonies, with at least three resident bishops as his suffragans in these remote provinces where the Church extremely suffers for want of her due government," he said in 1762. He thought it would be wise to have bishops in Albany, Canada, Manhattan, New England, Virginia, and the Caribbean Islands.⁵⁸ If no bishops were provided for the colonies, "the Church, and with it the interests of true religion must dwindle, while we suffer the contempt and triumph of our neighbors"—almost exactly what John Frederick Haeger had written to the SPG fifty years earlier. Always the Episcopal Church, so favorably situated in England, was seen much less favorably when contrasted with its neighbors in America because it lacked the very authority implied in its name: bishops. Samuel Johnson, however, was capable of a strange optimism, as when, in July 1760, he informed the Archbishop of Canterbury that the Church in America "is generally in a very flourishing and increasing condition, and much more so on occasion of the virulent contentions of the dissenters among themselves."⁵⁹

He was thinking more, perhaps, of feuding among Connecticut Congregationalists. But the disruptions in Protestant thinking, the incursions of Whitefield, and intimations of diminished control of society by the clergy could be seen in New York, too. Johnson's solution was, characteristically, Rule and Order. In King's College, students were fined if they were not at morning and evening prayers. On Sunday, they were expected to attend the church of their parents' choice. There was never to be such "indecent behaviour as talking, laughing, jostling, winking, etc." in the college chapel.

But how often was the president himself in that chapel? From all appearances, Samuel Johnson spent much of his time in Westchester County in the earliest years of the college. His autobiography tells us that he came to King's College at the age of fifty-seven with the clear understanding that during periods of smallpox in town he could reside elsewhere. He moved into the college building, which he had helped design in 1760. Soon after, his wife died (of smallpox) and Johnson retired to Stratford, happy in the knowledge that he had been able to withstand William Livingston, who, as he said, "with other leading Presbyterians and free thinkers" had been his opponents when he first came to King's College.

William Livingston could indeed be a formidable opponent. Born in Albany and baptized in the Dutch Church there, he graduated from

Yale in 1741. Much later, Livingston remembered that when he came to New York to prepare for the bar he was one of only six college graduates in the city. He joined the Presbyterian church in Wall Street, partly in recognition of his Scotch Presbyterian minister progenitor, and partly because the Reformed Church in New York stubbornly held to the Dutch language (as it would do for yet many years to come). Nor was William Livingston unaware of family prerogatives. When his father, Philip, died in 1749,

in the city, the lower rooms of most of the houses in Broad Street where he resided were thrown open to receive the assemblage. A pipe of wine was spiced for the occasion, and to each of the eight bearers a pair of gloves, a mourning ring, scarf and handkerchief and a monkey spoon was given. At the manor [110 miles up the North River] the whole ceremony was repeated, another pipe of wine was spiced, and beside the same presents to the bearers, a pair of black gloves and handkerchief were given to each of the tenants. The whole expenses were said to amount to five hundred pounds.⁶⁰

It is a mark of William Livingston that, though born to privilege, he was fully a son of the eighteenth century inasmuch as he was quick to perceive and resent any intrusion upon human freedom. Mercurial and impatient, he dismissed as outdated, irrelevant, and intrusive the politics and practices of the Episcopal Church in New York. The ecclesiastical ties of King's College were an affront to William Livingston, but in view of Trinity's generous land grants he, and like-minded people, were powerless to do much more than demand that public aid to the college be reduced, and complain that not enough influential men had acted to curb Trinity's ascendancy. To one friend he noted that the

college was opened last June in the vestryroom of the schoolhouse belonging to Trinity Church. It consists of seven students, the majority of whom were admitted though utterly unqualified, in order to make a flourish. They meet for morning prayers in the church, and are like to make as great progress in the liturgy as in the sciences.⁶¹

Livingston hoped the Dutch Reformed leaders would be successful in their request for their own professor of divinity at King's College, which would "diminish that badge of distinction to which the Episcopalians are so zealously aspiring," he said. He was ever fearful of what mischief the Episcopalians would inflict upon the community if their rise to prominence remained unchecked. He wrote:

As I sat the other evening, smoking my pipe, and ruminating in the elbow chair on what would probably be the situation of the province twenty years hence, should a certain faction succeed in their mediated encroachments on our liberties, I fell into a methodical dream. . . .

in which there is (horrors!) a Bishop of New York who takes "vigorous measures to reduce the obstinate clergy to the obedience of his church," there are acts prohibiting Dissenters in the provincial Assembly, the old Dutch Reformed church is reduced to 150 adults, and a professor of King's College was "deposed from his office for saying, in one of his lectures, that Christ is the supream [sic] head of the Christian Church."

His dream illustrates fears of Episcopal power, but Livingston's exuberance and energy often led him to overstate his case. He believed that the Episcopal clergy were little better than the Roman Catholic missionaries in Canada. When, in 1769, the Bishop of Llandaff preached his celebrated sermon before the SPG urging the case for a bishop in America, William Livingston quickly made much of the bishop's reference to the low moral state prevailing in the colonies. William Livingston was one of those snipers who, at the most, are a nuisance to their enemies and an eventual bore to their friends. He would have earned only passing mention in our narrative had not his agitation against the Episcopal Church been remembered when the Revolutionary War broke out. Then he climbed to heroic heights, was repeatedly elected governor of New Jersey, his adopted state, and was recognized as a man who had been in the fight long before there was a war. When we recall that sometimes the contending parties of the Revolution were known as Presbyterians opposed to Episcopalians, we see how popular a man like William Livingston could become.

REVOLUTION COMES TO NEW YORK

The uproar concerning Trinity Church's involvement with King's College might seem at first to be a footnote to New York's history, but in 1770 the sentiments of the church's opponents were still very evident. The English Church seemed similar to Mr. Murdstone: the nasty stepfather, always ready to summon to accounts after a pleasant afternoon of freedom. It was an agency that automatically blessed the civil authority. The Church was associated in the popular mind with policies emanating from London, and those policies seemed more and more intrusive. The official mercantile system restricted the selling power of colonial businessmen. Many of these merchants, or their fathers, had sought in America opportunities to ship and trade and sell freely. They were not mistaken when they believed they could do well in New York. Developing colonial business fostered a sense of independence, a proud independence based upon accomplishments of which the Crown itself should be proud. Instead the Tories, who replaced the Whigs after the

accession of King George III in 1760, enacted regulations and taxes that hampered colonial commerce. The presence of English soldiers in Manhattan had always been expected, even appreciated, because of occasional Indian troubles upriver, and also because New York's harbor was vital to commerce.⁶² But by 1770 there was for some people a new and ominous meaning to the presence of the lobsterbacks, as English soldiers were often called. Nonetheless New York was undeniably the Loyalist stronghold.⁶³

If hostilities broke out between the colonies and the Crown, the Church of England was bound to suffer whether or not it had the protection of government troops. In the first place, it *was* the Church of England and most of its ministers continually made that plain. Many of the New York clergy were missionaries supplied and supported by the SPG. They were thus "official," part of the established order of things, and appropriately loyal to the sovereign. It is worth noting that those clergy who received their stipends from local subscriptions tended to be less loyal to the king.

There were, by 1770, four centers of the Episcopal Church in the city of New York: Trinity Church, St. Paul's Chapel (built by Thomas McBean in 1766), St. George's Chapel (1749), and King's College. The rector of Trinity and its chapels when war came was Samuel Auchmuty. He was in poor health, fled to New Jersey when the patriots entered the city, and returned only after the British had driven the Americans upriver. Auchmuty died soon after, in 1777. In that same year, a great fire destroyed much of the city, including Trinity Church.

The new rector-apparent was Charles Inglis and "as soon as decency permitted" he was commended to the Bishop of London, who in response was pleased to "highly applaud" the election of Inglis to the rectorate of a church whose principal building now lay in ashes, in a city soon to be renowned for immorality and graft. There is something very symbolic in hearing that the new rector "was conducted to the ruins of the church and, placing his hands on the blackened walls, was inducted by Elias Desbrosses, one of the church wardens."⁶⁴ Inglis was born in Ireland in 1734 and came to America when about twenty years old. He taught school in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for three years and then returned to London to be ordained. The SPG sent him to Delaware, but in 1765 he accepted a second call to be the assistant minister of New York's Trinity Church. He was soon joined by another assistant, the Rev. Samuel Provoost, and it is this enigmatic, gifted man who will occupy much of our attention as the story of the Diocese of New York unfolds. If ever two men were misyoked, it was Inglis, the High Tory to whom was given a credulity sometimes leading to near hysteria, and Provoost, scornful Whig, "heavy Dutch," and philosophical. Provoost

had one advantage over his colleagues and his rector, however: he was a native New Yorker, related to the most prominent families in the city, and blessed with an independent income. In 1771 Samuel Provoost left Trinity for reasons that will never be fully explained. He recalled, later, that some of the congregation were displeased because he refused to preach the "enthusiastic" sermons they would hear at the Methodistical John Street Chapel. Wesleyan piety naturally attached itself to the Great Awakening, but a Latitudinarian such as Provoost viewed those things with disdain. He said his sermons preached "the plain doctrine of religion and morality."⁶⁵

There was perhaps another reason why Samuel Provoost departed from Trinity, and it would have taken shape when, two years after becoming an assistant there, he sailed to Ireland to attend to business with his wife's family. When he returned, he "found that there was a feeling in the Parish against him."⁶⁶ This "feeling" was perhaps because Provoost had not spared the congregation his political opinions, and in the months of his absence, the congregation—encouraged by Auchmuty and Inglis—discovered they could do without Mr. Provoost's politics. As a scion of prosperous merchants, he knew about English interference in colonial commerce. From all accounts, his studies with John Jebb at Cambridge reinforced leanings to American independence. He was early to discern the state of affairs in New York: "We are now fighting for our laws and our liberties, for our friends, family and country," he said as early as 1767. These words must have made the rector apoplectic.⁶⁷ When Provoost returned from Ireland he soon found that there was an "insufficiency of the Corporation funds to support him" and that whatever salary he thereafter received must be from "subscriptions only." In other words, if Provoost's friends wanted him at Trinity, let them pay him. Therefore, Provoost resigned in 1771. He was then twenty-nine years of age, and able to occupy himself with other concerns. His family's wealth—grandmother was a smuggler!—freed him from the necessity (if not the honor) of Trinity's stipend. His wife's health had always been poor—indeed, uncertain health runs like a fugue through the Provoost records—and the tensions in Trinity didn't help. Country life among the Livingstons, his kinsmen, seemed a logical escape from the political and ecclesiastical dilemma. The facts are not clear, but it appears that Samuel Provoost bought a farm upriver in what is now Germantown, exactly where the Palatines under John Frederick Haeger had been settled. Provoost's life there was not very much pleasanter than that of his German predecessors, for most of his income derived from city property and was terminated during the war.

Samuel Provoost was the least self-assertive of mortals. He seems to have preserved no personal records, never kept a diary, and seldom

related to his family and friends any wartime experiences. His reticence, and his family's subsequent destruction of his papers, is history's loss, for in the years 1771 through 1783 he rubbed elbows with, and was the esteemed friend of, many of the aborning nation's leading people. The Hudson River Valley was the strategic corridor of the war; whoever controlled it would win the war, for it was the vital link between the Middle Colonies and New England. Most of the Revolutionary army leaders passed up and down the river. New York merchants thought it wise to live quietly in the houses they found available upriver. Provoost would have dined with Washington at Clermont in 1782 after that house had been speedily rebuilt following its burning by the British in 1777. General Putnam had his quarters a few miles from Provoost's house. But, inexplicable to us, Tories might also be met at the tea table, for sometimes a leading Loyalist was "interned" in the country. When this happened he would often be welcome in the big houses if he was discreet about politics. No one fits this description better than the intrepid William Smith, who, fortunately, did keep a diary. Smith was a moderate Tory and a Presbyterian. He was persuaded "that the Episcopal Clergy and the Zealots [should] incur Censure as Exciters of these Troubles" and was pleased to record that Sir Henry Clinton had even kept Tory Beardsley of Christ Church, Poughkeepsie, waiting three hours before seeing him. This convinced Smith that even the English military were aware of the clergy's troublemaking.⁶⁸ Early in the war, Smith

sent a Note to Parson Provoost desiring to know whether he will sell his Villa on York Island—He sends me an answer by Walter Livingston last Night—That he would if he knew what to do with so much Continental Money. This marks the Fear of the greatest Zelot for Independency.⁶⁹

As long as Smith was detained in "the manor of Livingston" he complained of his clerical neighbor: Provoost "continues his attachment to Congress"⁷⁰; "Mr. Provoost the Episcopal Minister drank Tea here—he is greatly elated [because Burgoyne appeared to be surrounded by American forces]."⁷¹ Smith thought Provoost was "much influenced by" Robert R. Livingston, a member of the committee charged with drafting the Declaration of Independence.

Whatever information came to Provoost about the Church in New York City was likely to be inaccurate (though, again inexplicably, some of his patriot friends appear to have visited Manhattan frequently). War-time news is proverbially biased by excitement as well as by individual conviction. For instance, Luke Babcock, rector of Yonkers, wrote to the Society on March 22, 1776:

Soon after the receipt of your letter the troubles of this country were multiplied. There was the fever excited in men's minds by the late battle of Lexington. Then the affairs of Bunker Hill next came, and the Continental Fast, which may be considered as a trial by ordeal of the ministers of the Church of England in America. . . . I have been threatened with mutilation and death if I go into New England.⁷²

Inglis of Trinity, likewise, was led to believe all manner of wrongdoings by patriot soldiers, including the fictitious murder of a New York clergyman. We do not know if during the war Provoost was fully aware of the pamphleteering of his Episcopal colleagues, though we may be sure that eventually he heard of their writings. New Jersey's Thomas Bradbury Chandler wrote *What Think Ye Of Congress Now?* (1775). In it he postulated an incipient American nobility in those persons assembled in Philadelphia. "Oh! how we shall shine with dukes in America! There will be no less than fifty three of them," crowed Chandler.⁷³ Chandler, like that other pamphleteer Samuel Seabury, later learned to live at ease in an independent America, but he was far more clever in his tracts than was Seabury.⁷⁴ More conciliatory, too: in his *Friendly Address* (1774), he envisioned the American colonies as part of an English family of dominions somewhat presaging the British Commonwealth.

Seabury, who was rector of Westchester, tended to be shrill. He feared that the English court system, the mainstay of ordered society, would be overturned by mobs who would see their Loyalist opponents "tarred, feathered, hanged, drawn, quartered and burnt."⁷⁵ At the same time, Seabury wondered how "half a dozen fools in your neighborhood" could cause this war against the Crown. In a more idyllic mood, Seabury described England as "a vigorous matron, just approaching a green old age; and with spirit and strength sufficient to chastise her undutiful and rebellious children," to which Alexander Hamilton gleefully replied that, in fact, England was "an old, wrinkled, withered, worn-out hag."⁷⁶

Chandler, President Myles Cooper of King's College, Inglis of Trinity, and Seabury had earlier agreed to write pamphlets to counter "all the publications disrespectful to government and the Parental State."⁷⁷ Inglis dashed off several tracts, but lacked the energy required to make quick replies, and soon quit the field. Myles Cooper, following the example of Governor Tryon, fled to a ship in the harbor, and then sailed to England where he took a parish. Provoost had known these men. He would have heard early that Auchmuty had died in New Jersey in March 1777, and that Charles Inglis had succeeded him as rector of Trinity. Other Episcopal clergymen were less fortunate than Inglis in 1777. John Doty of Schenectady went to Canada. John Sayre of New-

burgh fled to New Brunswick Province. John Beardsley of Poughkeepsie was arrested by the patriots for general troublemaking; he had already written that "many of my brethren are in exile."⁷⁸ After Beardsley was moved to New York, Provoost went downriver from Germantown for some baptisms in Poughkeepsie and, it is said, a Christmas service. He also officiated at Catskill during the war.

Of course, Provoost had heard about the fires in the city, the first of which had swept away Trinity Church (and probably some of Provoost's commercial property, too). Inglis was among those who believed the rumor that American patriots had fired the city. The blaze soon destroyed the church "and its excellent Organ, which cost £850 Sterling and was otherwise ornamental . . . the Rector's House and the Charity School, the two latter large expensive buildings were burned. St. Paul's Chapel and Kings College had shared the same Fate being directly in the line of Fire had I not been providentially on the Spot, and sent a number of people on the Roof of each," declared Inglis.⁷⁹

Far sadder was the plight of the Mohawk Indians at Fort Johnson. Loyal to Crown and Church, and deprived of Sir William Johnson's wise counsel by his death in 1774, they were firmly on the side of the Tories. Stories of Indian outrages multiplied. Their alleged cruelties encouraged by Johnson's sons were said to even exceed the Hessians' legendary brutalities. Some Indians joined Burgoyne and went with him to Canada. Others remained in New York and were a threat to the patriots until General Sullivan set out with an expeditionary force bent on slaughter readily consummated. The only positive result of this disgrace was that, after the war, soldiers who had seen those lush lands in the Indian territory of western New York ventured back to homestead upon them.