

## Potter the Magnificent



*Dr. Potter's elevation to the bishopric marked the beginning of what might be called the Golden Age of Episcopalianism.*

—VALENTINE'S MANUAL

Time does not seem able to dull the luster of Henry Codman Potter's fabled years as Bishop of New York. The years of his episcopate are almost exactly those when the Episcopal Church enjoyed its storied impact upon a nation which, in fact, could record that only one out of perhaps one hundred twenty people were Episcopalians. This disproportionate share of public limelight, and perhaps even public acclaim, is due to a series of conditions favorable to the historic Church of the English-speaking people. The British Empire, despite the repeated failure of English agriculture in the waning years of the nineteenth century, was at its zenith. Prayer Book churches were to be found all over the globe. Americans had always longed for an antiquity they could claim as their own; the search for a secure past could easily be satisfied in the cadences of Cranmer accompanied by chants said to be regularly heard in the moss-covered churches of England.

### THE CHURCH IMPECCABLE

The Episcopal Church was attractive. The weavers of Wappingers said it was theirs, for were they not newly arrived from the Lancashire mills? The girl who sang in Calvary Chapel's choir, and taught Sunday school there, was the daughter of a horse importer who could point to a boyhood in a parish in Westmoreland, and boast that his people had prayed there for five hundred years, and now prayed similarly in 23d Street. The seaman on the Church Institute's floating chapel *Sentinel* likewise knew the Prayer Book from birth; it was his way of worship.

English immigration, though diminished after the Civil War, re-

mained a factor in filling Episcopal churches. But, as is well-known, other forces were perhaps even more active in encouraging the growth of the Episcopal Church in the East. Congregationalism, and then Unitarianism, had been dominant in Boston, just as Quakerism had once claimed Philadelphia. The Presbyterian Church in New York City benefited from its staunch patriotic record in the Revolutionary War and, under such leaders as John Mason, the reputation weathered well in the early years of the nineteenth century. In these three leading seaboard cities of the North, however, the Episcopal Church soon presented credentials admitting it to a favorable position. Native-born Philadelphian William White was patently good, wise, and able; his long years as community leader entitled him to an enviable, deserved reverence. Perhaps no other man was as responsible as Bishop White for the rebirth of the Episcopal Church in the United States following the War of Independence. Later in the nineteenth century, Phillips Brooks (after a brief time in Philadelphia) hugely commended the Episcopal Church to his own Boston. And we have already seen that Bishop Provoost sounded a positive, patriotic note for the Episcopal Church in New York. In succeeding years, immigration, the romantic revival, and the American longing for an antiquity in which it could participate—to say nothing of what came to be considered the *sensibility* of the Episcopal Church—provided an undeniable attractiveness. For these and other reasons that elude sharp description, by 1880 it was the Church of the Four Hundred (at least in New York City, where the Four Hundred were said to dwell) and, to our latter-day embarrassment, the Church basked somewhat overlong in that exalted position. Edith Wharton, baptized in her ancestors' Grace Church and introduced to Episcopal manners in a flourishing Calvary, was speaking of Henry Codman Potter's time when she wondered

... if those old New Yorkers did not owe their greater suavity and tolerance to the fact that the Church of England (so little changed under its later name of Episcopal Church in America) provided from the first their prevalent form of worship. . . . Apart from some of the old Dutch colonial families who continued to follow the Dutch Reformed rite, the New York of my youth was distinctly Episcopalian; and to this happy chance I owe my early saturation with the noble cadences of the Book of Common Prayer, and my reverence for an orderly ritual in which the officiant's personality is strictly subordinated to the rite he performs.<sup>1</sup>

The piety enjoined by Hobart had probably given way to the form and prescribed rules of the later day, but even these were conducive to making the Church mystic, yet approved. The Episcopal Lent set the

partying seasons, firmly. The calendar on the businessman's desk told him it was the Fourth Sunday after Trinity, as if every citizen of Gotham used the Episcopal variation of the Christian year. And Episcopalians, unlike their Presbyterian neighbors, gladly agreed that the twenty-fifth day of December was Christmas Day, though the Prayer Book in use for most of the nineteenth century seems to have preferred the title "Nativity of our Lord, or Birth-Day of Christ" over the Romish-sounding popular name.

Very memorable it is, then, that over this vaunted supremacy and popular regard for the Episcopal Church there was a man, Henry Codman Potter, who was not for one moment deceived by the appearances.

Maybe it was his Quaker background. The Potters came to New England in 1634, the same year as the Hutchisons, with whom they soon moved to Rhode Island. Anne Hutchison's enemies "were the hypocrites who masqueraded as God's elect." Henry Potter would similarly discern the hypocrites and *poseurs* of life. The family moved in 1792 to LaGrange, New York, a rural community of Hicksite Quakers near Poughkeepsie. On his mother's side were the Notts, a family of able persons presided over by the celebrated Eliphalet Nott, president of Union College in Schenectady. Henry's father, Alonzo (who later became third Bishop of Pennsylvania), married Sarah Maria Nott and was a professor at the college. An academic detachment always characterized the family. The Potters wrote and spoke with passion and conviction, but acted with the smoothness of cold steel. Young Henry was brought up in a family where the revolutions in Europe, the slavery dilemma in America, and the ritualism question in the Episcopal Church made dinner-table conversation. Later, as was then expected, Henry Potter wrote about his "conversion" and decision in 1854 to be ordained, but we are surely not far wrong when we suppose he was always destined for a life of Christian leadership.

When he went to Virginia Seminary, his father told him to beware of narrow piety; Potters never liked to be boxed and labeled. Henry filed the advice in his storehouse of wisdom, and never allowed churchmanship to overwhelm his reason or sense of perspective. Balance was his stance. His seminary days were enlightened by the stalwart professors whose Low Church reasonings were more attractive to him than the bigotry of Virginia's Bishop Meade, who had the crosses sawn off the seminary's chapel pews. One learns from such things.

Henry C. Potter was ordained in 1857, and his first assignment was in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, where he recognized his inability to readily identify with rural people—a deficiency that, as we shall see, he always tried to correct. Leaving Greensburg, he was soon in Potter country, Troy, New York. There he made a name for himself. His out-

standing good looks helped; he and his wife were a remarkably handsome couple. And he did the right things at the right time: rescued a runaway slave from a Troy mob, and visited Gettysburg "before the dead were buried."<sup>2</sup> Many earnest people joined St. Paul's, the Troy parish, and already Henry Codman Potter was a marked man. Kenyon College asked him to be its president in 1865, but he surely knew his lot would be cast in a larger field. It was indeed. The next year, 1866, two bids assured his future: he was made Secretary of the House of Bishops, and went to Boston as assistant at Trinity Church, where the aged bishop, Manton Eastburn, still threw cold water on High Church pretensions. Within two years Potter was rector of prestigious Grace Church in Manhattan.

### SOME CITY CHURCHES

Grace Church had enjoyed a lengthy time of lavish prosperity, but its reputation for opulence was somewhat belied by the fact that in 1868 it numbered only 268 communicants.<sup>3</sup> Thomas House Taylor had been rector there for many years. He had emphasized the sense of elitist family community at Grace Church. Potter aimed at making Grace Church a force in the broader community. His colleagues in the city at that time were outstanding. "Ministers stood high in the community, and most of them deserved their position," declared a knowledgeable critic some years later.<sup>4</sup> There was the Congregationalist Lyman Abbott, and the celebrated Presbyterian John Hall. Henry Ward Beecher maintained his popularity in Brooklyn. In the Episcopal churches close to Grace there was the erudite scholar John Cotton Brown at Ascension. Edward A. Washburn was at Calvary. Just south of Calvary was St. George's. Its rector, Stephen H. Tyng, was fierce and forensic and unbending in his presentation of the Gospel. The Tyngs formed a clerical dynasty; firm in their beliefs, they welcomed every challenge to their Pauline certainties as if doing battle for the Lord.

St. Thomas Church was still on Broadway at Houston Street, but about to move far up Fifth Avenue, for its rector, William F. Morgan, rightly sensed the Episcopal Church's appeal to the parvenus who would soon build notable houses along that avenue. At the Church of the Transfiguration was its founding rector, George H. Houghton. His readiness to officiate at the burial of an actor marked only one of the peculiarities of that parish, for the church was open every day and clergy available to assist anyone who came by. Such things were uncommon in city churches in mid-century. The character of the Episcopal Church then "was distinguished to a marked degree by strict con-

servatism, a dignified respectability, an acknowledged exclusiveness. It stood with emphasis for what it represented, but there was little concern for Church extension."<sup>5</sup> At least, it was remembered so. But at venerable Trinity, the rector, Morgan Dix, presided over a wealthy corporation already committed to building new chapels in an effort to reach Episcopalians and others who moved hither and thither in the ever growing city. Trinity Chapel in 25th Street had long and successfully challenged the prominence of its downtown mother.

The Bishop of New York was, of course, uncle to the new rector of Grace Church. Perhaps young Henry cooperated very early with his uncle in making plans and policies for the diocese. The Potters' abilities and quick rise in the Episcopal Church gave them a self-confidence and sense of mastery that probably irritated other men. For their part, both uncle and nephew had a certain disdain for clergy gatherings and clergy-inspired groups. Horatio Potter opposed the Church Congress—"a crowd of excited and declamatory spirits," he said—and issued a pastoral Letter against it in 1874. But in his dealings with the clergy, Henry C. Potter tended to be a beneficent general, organizing, directing. A story was later told of a typical evening party the bishop gave for some city clergy. When his guests assembled before dinner, the bishop announced there would be a musicale. After dinner the guests supposed there would be an opportunity to indulge in that favorite of clerical pastimes, talk; but no! Again the bishop announced music. And with the last note still in the air, he rose to bid them all good night.<sup>6</sup>

Henry Potter looked like a bishop. This was of great importance in a city whose citizens tended to familiarize themselves with public leaders whom they frequently saw at civic functions. New York still had a small-town feel for many of its people in the nineteenth century. Far better than his appearance, however, was the fact that Henry C. Potter had a self-assurance in the role necessarily lacking in Horatio Potter, who, after all, entered upon his episcopate with the dubious title of Provisional Bishop of New York. It was not until Onderdonk's death, in 1861, that Horatio Potter could see himself as alone on the stage; always, there was the disabled bishop who might possibly be restored.

#### THE POTTER PERSONALITY

Henry C. Potter never needed to pose, never needed to trim. His vision was incredibly wide, and sometimes far ahead of his own time. He could not be slotted a Low Churchman or a High Churchman, and this was a time when such labels were practically required in the Episcopal Church. Like his friend Phillips Brooks, he appreciated color in a

church, and encouraged craftsmanship that might have been mistaken as supporting ritualism. In an early sermon at Grace Church he asked, "Why should not we, too, have sisters of charity?"<sup>7</sup> for he saw beyond his fashionable congregation to those who needed instruction, medical care, and recreation in New York slums. Ever the practical Potter, he knew the Church hadn't resources to pay salaried persons: a Sisterhood might be the answer. Yet he was not sentimental about poverty: "the deserving poor are almost as hard to find as the deserving rich," he declared.<sup>8</sup> He wasn't very much interested in ritual, and probably preferred the minimal ceremony found in Grace Church. As one soundly self-assured, he could welcome breadth of thought and action, but in his later years he tended to be suspicious of flamboyance or anything smacking of questionable taste. Thus, he found himself unable to encourage the Rev. Robert Paddock's methods of political and social quarreling at the Church of the Holy Apostles on Ninth Avenue.

Only rarely did Potter resort to disciplining his clergy. He insisted that political righteousness was possible in New York if leaders would use Christian conscience, and he was quick to point out that new wealth and new power seemed to prefer ostentation over decency.<sup>9</sup> Probably oftener than people knew, Potter was disappointed by church-people whom he hoped he could depend upon in his well-known efforts to make New York a better city. There is a poignant plea in his words, "No rich man has yet been found willing to try the effect of putting within reach of our poorer classes decently constructed and adequately lighted, drained and ventilated houses."<sup>10</sup> He doubtless had read of the indomitable English churchwoman Countess Burdett-Coutts and her housing projects in industrial England. Perhaps his loftiest view is expressed when he said his vision for all Christian churches in New York was that they "be intent not on the advancement of the parish, nor even of the denomination, nor even of the Christian Church, but on the realization of the City of God in the health, the character, and the happiness of all the citizens."<sup>11</sup> "Did Christ come only to teach us how to build handsome churches?" he would ask. Though he read widely, his biographer tells us Potter "had no profound social theories, but he had a firm and unflinching conviction that the parable was right when it reprobated the men who passed by on the other side."<sup>12</sup> The *New York Tribune* said, when he was elected bishop, that Henry C. Potter "will try to make the Episcopal Church not only the Church of the rich and learned, but the Church as well of the poor and simple." A critical, but fair, observer of the scene later wrote:

When Potter was proposed for the bishopric some of the clergy opposed his candidacy because he went to too many afternoon teas. This was not a fair criticism because Potter liked the poor as well as

the rich . . . He frankly liked society and saw "no virtue in a life which keeps a minister apart from his neighbors." A natural capacity for work enabled him to dine out after an active day, and he was in great demand for both public and private dinners as he had a charming personality and was an able public speaker.<sup>13</sup>

#### ORDER OF THE HOLY CROSS

Quite soon after Henry C. Potter's consecration he was called upon to approve and preside at the profession of James Otis Sargent Huntington as first member of the Order of the Holy Cross. This young man Huntington—he was then thirty years old—was already on his way to becoming one of the better-known Episcopal clergymen. His father, formerly a Unitarian minister in Boston (where James was born), became an Episcopalian in 1860 and founding rector of Emmanuel Church, Boston. In 1869 he was elected first Bishop of Central New York. Young James was educated at Harvard and in his father's diocesan seminary, St. Andrew's Divinity School in Syracuse. He was ordained in 1880. Bishop Huntington assigned him to a working-class parish in Syracuse in recognition of his son's preference for that kind of ministry. But James Huntington's concerns were not fulfilled by general parish work among factory workers. He sought not to alleviate the poverty he saw, but to eradicate it by striking at its causes. He was an early single-tax enthusiast (and remained so all his life). Since the Syracuse parish did not provide the experiences of acute poverty Huntington thought he needed, in 1881 he moved to the already long-fabled Lower East Side, where the Sisters of St. John Baptist had begun their work sixteen years earlier. Bishop Huntington, partly in anguish, and partly in pride, wrote:

James, dear boy, has gone on his way, as he believed for years God called him. With two young priests of about his own age, filled with the same purpose, he has taken an old cheap house . . . How could I hold him back, knowing his heart, seeing what he has done for me and fully believing with him that the Church sorely needs both a standard of holy living in the Ministry, and a leaven of Evangelization, supplementing our miserable, halting, half-secular Parochial system? They live in Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, with bare floors, no table cloths, scanty furniture, plain food, and seem content.<sup>14</sup>

It was the beginning of the Order of the Holy Cross. The Rev. Robert S. Dod and the Rev. James G. Cameron were the other two priests, but they found it necessary to drop away, so that when it came time for Huntington's formal profession he was alone. Bishop Potter

agreed to preside at the ceremony; Dr. Houghton of Transfiguration was "director" of the proposed Order. The profession took place in the mission chapel of the Community of St. John Baptist, opposite Stuyvesant Square, on November 25, 1884. "Many priests and seminary students and friends of the laity quite filled the chapel. The service was most impressive," a witness reported. "The Sisters of St. John Baptist sent a wedding cake to manifest their fellowship in our joy."<sup>15</sup>

The new monks had the blessing of such an unexpected person as William S. Rainsford of St. George's. Most Episcopalians, however, were puzzled or dismayed by the idea of a monastery in their communion. It should not be beyond our notice that no such antagonism met the Sisters of St. John Baptist or the Sisters of St. Mary as greeted news of Huntington's profession. Episcopalians may not have relished the communities for women, arguing that Sisters would promote High Church notions. People who could accept "pious ladies saved from wasting their time by being nuns" (it is, unfortunately, a quote from James Huntington himself!) were outraged when a man, and a very gifted, well-connected man at that, took monastic vows. "An incident is reported from the Diocese of New York that has filled the hearts of many Churchmen with anxiety and sorrow," said a Church newspaper. Another critic saw the traditional vow of chastity as an aspersion upon "the sacred mystery of marriage," and by strange logic declared that Huntington had delivered "an indirect insult to the womanhood of our mothers."<sup>16</sup> The new monk's kinsman William Reed Huntington, Potter's successor at Grace Church, wrote to deplore the "transaction" recently made at Holy Cross chapel. The *New York Times* ingenuously pleaded that monasteries need not be so terrible in Protestant America for "there are also monasteries in Thibet."

It must be said that Bishop Potter handled the "transaction" gingerly. He saw a social and practical value in James Huntington's proposed Order. Like the earlier Potter he saw that much of the Church's work simply wasn't being done because the Episcopal Church had neither the interest nor the personnel. If the idea of *someone else* working with the poor was a salve to the American conscience, at least here was a priest who *was* working in the slums of New York. For Potter, that was enough. He would give the project a chance. So, for a time, Huntington was alone. Then, with the few men who joined him there on the East Side, he worked with the Community of St. John Baptist. He was also active (disruptingly so, sometimes) in the Church Association for the Interests of Labor (CAIL). And, as was later claimed, he was "in at the birth of nearly all the social reforms safely accredited" and applauded by a later age. Distrustful of the state (but very patriotic), dramatic, romantic, occasionally playful (he was a skilled ventrilo-



quist), something of a faddist, given to simplicity (yet remarking the minutiae of every liturgical innovation), pragmatic yet mystical, insisting on taking his meals at the kitchen table with the help, yet rejoicing in his membership in the Harvard Club: this was James Otis Sargent Huntington, prime monk of the Episcopal Church. For fifty years he was revered in the Episcopal Church by people of all shades of opinion.

But Mr. Huntington—it was only at the turn of the century that the diocesan journal allowed the “Father”—disappointed Bishop Potter. The trouble may have begun with the Sisters of St. John Baptist whose foundress had brought to the Community some family property on the East Side. Huntington questioned the Sisters’ use of tenement real estate, just as he once criticized Trinity Church—everyone did—as being a slumlord corporation. More to the point, however, was the plain fact that the Order of the Holy Cross was not recruiting members. The original idea of improving the condition of the East Side poor found expression in such practical programs as Father Huntington’s organization of guilds whose men members would meet shopgirls and see them safely home from work late at night. It was a program that kept the girls out of danger, but seemed far removed from the enriched “interior life” sought by the young monastics. Huntington was perhaps too practical in those days. There hadn’t been enough time for the Order to become strong, to know the Eternal Will—the words are the Founder’s. Therefore, to Bishop Potter’s regret, in 1892 Father Huntington and the two other monks then associated with him moved to a house near 125th Street. Perhaps from there, they said, they could develop a firm communal life, explain their vocation to others, and enlist men in the Order of the Holy Cross. Thereafter the bishop was cool to the Order. When, in 1904, the monks moved into their permanent house in West Park (after some years in Maryland) it was Bishop Whitehead of Pittsburgh, not Bishop Potter, who dedicated the austere monastery designed by the gifted Henry Vaughan.

That dedication was a major, triumphal event among Anglo-Catholics. They considered it an important milestone in the developing awareness of the Church’s rich and rightful heritage. Priests from all over the nation looked forward to that day in May 1904 when the monastery would be dedicated. A special train was appointed. It was filled with the leading Anglo-Catholics in the American Church, each eagerly anticipating the rites at West Park, and their enthusiasm was only temporarily dampened when a fellow passenger wondered aloud what would “happen to the Catholic movement if there should be a train wreck.”<sup>17</sup>

It should be mentioned that while the Order of the Holy Cross ceased institutional ties in the City of New York (as, eventually, did the

Community of St. John Baptist and the Community of St. Mary), its members found individual work in the diocese, notably in Sing Sing and other prisons. And, in recent years, new work has opened. In the meantime, the legendary Father Huntington and the equally legendary Father Hughson and Father Whittemore—and many others granted grace if not legends—blessed the diocese and the Church at large with the gifts they shared.

#### POTTER REALISM

Henry C. Potter liked to think of himself as an “old-fashioned” American. He valued foreign traditions but believed immigrants should adjust quickly and totally to the ways of his own Anglo-Saxon forebears. This attitude is part of an emerging paternalism and, of course, it militated against the very thing that the *Tribune* writer had hoped. For most newcomers to New York now were not from the British Isles. As the origins of immigration moved more and more toward Central Europe and Russia, the ghettos of the Old World were duplicated in Manhattan. Potter thought the Jews—but not only they—were responsible for the decline in the “American Sunday.” Some ecclesiastics then (and now) would have left the matter there, but not Bishop Potter. Instead of leaving the blame for desecrated Sabbaths with the new immigrants, he, very typically, made it clear that Episcopalians should set an example by walking to church on Sunday, and forgoing the huge midday meal whose preparation was often in the hands of servants. “There is a difference between Sunday and other days,” he said. “In our eagerness to prove we are no longer Puritans, Sunday is less and less observed.”<sup>18</sup> But toward the end of his life, he gave up this battle, declaring that since the population of New York City was no longer Christian, its people could not be expected to observe Sundays; the recourse lay not in legislation, he said; the fault was that of Christians who expect others to work on Sundays.<sup>19</sup>

Here we have an outstanding example of Potter’s thinking. His native American preferences are plainly stated. Perhaps there is even a wearied satisfaction that the modes of his childhood are superior. But then there is Potter’s candor: the blame isn’t entirely upon the new immigrants: Episcopalians have been complacent and arrogant in their ascendancy. Potter had conscience, and he was superb at inquiring into the conscience of others. And here, too, is his common sense. He knew when the battle was lost. Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Henry C. Potter’s leadership is this: he was a man of New York, able to assess the realities of its people accurately. It was not in his nature to seclude

himself in the groves of academic ecclesiasticism, or to assuage his goodwill in social service, or to presume that Manhattan was an emerging City of God.

When, in 1883, the infirm Horatio Potter asked the diocesan convention to give the diocese an assistant bishop, the bishop stated he intended a "complete withdrawal from the administration of the diocese." Today, businessmen and bishops are expected, even required, to resign their responsibilities at some age tacitly understood or actually stated. In an earlier day, the resignation of a bishop implied desertion; there was something almost cowardly in the act. Even parochial clergy expected to remain in harness until they died, but in their case it was usually necessary because until the Church Pension Fund was formed in 1918 there was no adequate retirement provision for Episcopal clergy. Moreover, in the Diocese of New York, there had already been two contretemps: Bishop Provoost's resignation (never really accepted by the House of Bishops) and, of course, Bishop Onderdonk's prolonged and costly suspension. The canny Horatio Potter managed to avoid all difficulties and assured an easy transfer of office to his nephew. He was not present at the consecration in Grace Church on October 20, 1883—and it was thereafter clear that though Horatio Potter lived on, the de facto Bishop of New York would now be Henry C. Potter.

#### A DIOCESAN OFFICE

The Potters moved from the fabulous Grace Church Rectory to 160 West 59th Street. (It may perhaps be of interest to note here that the new rector of Grace Church, the celebrated William Reed Huntington, was already one of the prime men of the Episcopal Church in that era of Prayer Book revision and glimmerings of social awareness; and perhaps even more interesting here to note that he was among the first to locate and champion the career of a future Bishop of New York, William T. Manning.) The bishop's office—imagine Provoost or Hobart having an *office*—was at 29 (later 416) Lafayette Place, a splendid late Federal town house that, once, proudly elbowed itself up to La Grange Terrace, the colonnaded houses built there in 1833. By the 1880s, of course, society was decidedly headed northward. Lafayette Place house became offices. *The Churchman* magazine occupied one house; the Diocese of New York was its neighbor, in the house given and endowed by Catherine Lorillard Wolfe.

Diocesan office work was minimal. Clergy and laity did not expect to meet in offices, but in churches. The bishop and his secretary (for now there *was* a secretary, the Rev. George Nelson, who served for

many years) would write to the parishes of the diocese to make visitation appointments. Everything was done by letter, or by personal interview; the word "telephone" does not appear on the records until 1901. When the bishop went off to visit and confirm in upriver areas, he would use public transportation, now the railroads more than the steamboats. And many they were! It is difficult for us now to realize how effective was the complicated system of small railroads crisscrossing the rural parts of the diocese. Bishop Potter would probably be amazed by our present network of superhighways. (Though, when he saw the automobile beginning to come into use he probably predicted that someday soon such roads would be necessary; did he also foresee the disappearance of the Hudson River steamboats?)

#### POTTER VISITATIONS

Bishop Potter liked to leave New York City for remote places, and his visitations seem unhurried because they were dependent upon the timetable of the train, day boat, or the convenience of whoever would be taking him to the next station. (We may be certain that Henry C. Potter never used the infamous night boats; a man as wary as he knew what their reputation could do to an unescorted man of the cloth.) Let us go with the bishop on a visitation to the Church of the Regeneration in Pine Plains. He would take the New York Central to Poughkeepsie, and then after a considerable wait (with perhaps a look-in at the Church of the Holy Comforter near the station; if there was time, he would surely walk across town to call at Christ Church, the Potters' original Episcopal parish) would board a train of the Central New England Railroad, which would stop frequently between Poughkeepsie and Pittsfield. The bishop would step off at the Pine Plains station and probably be met by the rector and the wardens. He would dine at the rectory, and be shown to his room by the light of a kerosene lamp. In the morning there would be an ample country breakfast and time for a leisurely conversation with the rector; there would probably be no "early" celebration of the Holy Communion until that became a general custom about the turn of the century. The service would probably be Morning Prayer and the Order of Confirmation; the bishop's sermon would be lengthy. After the service there would be another sizable meal at the rectory or perhaps at the home of the prosperous senior warden. The entire village knew the Bishop of New York was present, and here is the reminiscence many years later of a Presbyterian child:

Bishop Potter came to confirm Fannie Eno, and a few others, too, I guess. We all attended the service as Mr. and Mrs. Eno were good

friends of Papa and Mama. Papa was then teaching in New York, coming up for weekends via Central New England, returning via the Sunday afternoon train. We always went down to the station to see him off. The Rev. Mr. Burroughs was at the station as he had accompanied Bishop Potter, who was on the train. Mr. Burroughs insisted we meet the bishop, so we all climbed aboard with Papa and were introduced. My memory of Bishop Potter is of an elderly gentleman wearing a funny (to me) little black cap like a rabbi. Mama said he probably put it on for traveling.<sup>20</sup>

Then, as now, it was often necessary for the bishop to remain overnight when he visited parishes far beyond New York City. Needless to say, over the years he might accumulate a fund of anecdotes connected with these visits. Hamilton Fish Armstrong never forgot an episode when Bishop Potter came to Christ Church, Marlboro, and dined with the Armstrongs after the service. The little boy had been warned to be particularly good and so, trying hard, "I turned to the bishop after grace and said, 'Please pass the butter for Jesus Christ's sake.'"<sup>21</sup>

More widely told about the diocese was the terrible time a hostess found the silver bureau set in the bishop's room missing after his departure. Finally appealing to the bishop for its return, she received a wire: "Poor but honest. Look in the wash stand."<sup>22</sup>

### THE CITY CHURCHES

Some of the city parishes had begun one or more chapels on the East Side when Bishop Potter was consecrated. It was generally understood, and said to be mutually agreed, that poorer people would be more comfortable in "their own" chapels. Such charity-minded people as the rector might find expended their energies working with the chapel people. Nathalie Smith Dana was succinct about the arrangement. "The poor were handled separately," she said:

Prosperous New York parishes had missionary churches suitably situated on the East Side, while the well-to-do, assisted by professional singers, worshiped in handsome edifices on Fifth or Madison Avenues. In St. James' Church the poor could sit in the gallery, but there was no room for them downstairs, as all but the back pews were rented . . . It seemed a pity that there were so many poor people, but as that was part of God's own plan what could one do about it but send them turkeys at Thanksgiving and blankets at Christmas?<sup>23</sup>

As might be expected, the chapels were often better attended and more active through the week than the mother churches. Work among the young was always significant. Calvary Chapel in 23d Street had sev-

en hundred children in its Sunday school in 1890. Tenement mothers and their children were sent off to the country for a two-week "fresh air outing." Boardinghouses—every upstate village had a dozen of them—were rented for Calvary's people. Later, a site on Long Island was purchased for a hostel. The Rev. John Henry Hopkins has left a record of his brief curacy at Calvary Chapel. While he was studying at the General Theological Seminary, Hopkins worked at Calvary Church and found the rector and people there congenial. Therefore, after ordination he gladly accepted an appointment to Calvary Chapel. He was disappointed that the social attention that would be extended to an assistant at the church was not forthcoming to an assistant at the chapel.<sup>24</sup> The rector, Henry Yates Satterlee (the future founding Bishop of Washington), summered in Europe, with side trips to Twilight Park in the Catskills. He had little to do with the day-to-day functions of Calvary Chapel. A reasonable excuse for this might be found in Satterlee's well-known total reliance upon able persons whom he carefully selected to do the work at hand and then allowed free rein. Apart from the busy chapel, Calvary maintained Galilee Rescue Mission for hoboes and alcoholics who, in return for temporary board and lodging, were asked to pledge total abstinence. There was also a flourishing Sunday school for Chinese children. A special committee was formed to visit Blackwell's Island and treat the inmates there to tea with milk and sugar; it was said there was never milk or sugar with tea at Blackwell's unless brought by the women of Calvary.

In the years 1880 until about 1920 the large Manhattan parishes published yearbooks outlining the work of the past twelve months, and describing what might be done in the year ahead. These are fat books. Apart from the usual financial report and rector's letter, page after page lists schools, clubs, organizations, and committees engaged in a wide variety of good works. The long lists of volunteers are invariably women, married or unmarried, who found deep satisfaction, and spent long hours, in work where thanks were sparse. The rector received the acclaim, and his more able clergy assistants may have found their positions in great parishes the gateway to future advancement. In the heady forward rush of the Church's life in the late nineteenth century the work of countless women volunteers received little more than perfunctory mention in a parish yearbook or a rector's thanks at the chancel steps. Yet who can say that the strength of the Diocese in New York in its most prosperous years was not based largely on the endless work of these lay volunteers?

If Hopkins felt that he and his wife were socially neglected by the people of Calvary Church, he was thoroughly satisfied about the work done there. He was even more satisfied with his salary of \$1,800 and, in

addition, the allowance of \$22 granted him each month for rental of a four-room apartment on Lexington Avenue. The usual salary at that time for a city curate was about \$1,000 without housing allowance,<sup>25</sup> which was approximately the pay of a New York City policeman. In the country, a similar stipend with rectory was regarded as quite ample.

The usual Episcopal Sunday morning schedule, in city and country, was Morning Prayer, Ante-Communion, Litany, and Sermon at ten-thirty. Some churches had an early service in Lent. When travel became easier, and Sunday observance less restrictive, people wanted an early service scheduled permanently. Sunday school was, for the same reason, gradually moved from Sunday afternoon at three to a morning hour. Evening Prayer with choir and sermon were part of the Episcopal scene until the 1920s. There were few large vested choirs in New York City when Henry C. Potter became bishop of the diocese. Choral music was rendered (judging from complaints in vestry minutes, the word is apt) by men and women choristers who formed a quartet or double quartet. In churches where the budget permitted, the singers were paid. In some churches the women were summarily replaced by boy sopranos in the now-familiar black and white vestments that the late Victorians suddenly discovered to be approximations of ancient choir garb. At the big churches the organists were apt to be celebrated musicians: Mosenthal at Calvary, Warren and Helfenstein at Grace, LeJeune and Hall at St. John's Chapel, Messiter at Trinity, and Stubbs at St. Agnes' Chapel are a few. Perhaps even more renowned in Potter's time were the sextons, who, apart from keeping the church tidy, often served as collectors of pew rents and were despotic managers of weddings and funerals. No sexton, however, achieved the status of Brown of Grace, who held that church, congregation and clergy, in thrall for thirty-five years. Sextons were nothing less than overseers who attended to the desires of the pewholders, indicated what limited seating might be available to a worthy-appearing transient who appeared unannounced at the church door at service time, and conveyed messages to the rector, upon whose stall he kept an anxious eye during the service.

Perhaps the most enhancing role of the sexton was that of parish undertaker. One is perhaps more solicitous of a man whom he will meet some day in that capacity. Vestries often allocated a room in the church cellar where the sexton could embalm and coffin a deceased parishioner, whose remains would then be returned to the residence. Funerals were generally held in houses or tenements; church funerals were, until the end of the century, rare except for prominent people. Interments in the city were, by 1880, restricted to a few churchyards and cemeteries where the family already owned lots or vaults. Episco-

pal burials now were likely to be in the large cemetery Trinity Parish had laid out on Broadway at 155th Street at mid-century, or in the celebrated Greenwood in Brooklyn. Cemeteries had once surrounded the original edifices of St. Bartholomew's in Lafayette Street, St. Stephen's in Chrystie Street, and St. Luke's, Hudson Street, but the difficult process of their removal warned vestries against the time-honored practice of burying the dead near their church building. Municipal regulations also prohibited new cemeteries within the city limits, where, in any case, land was too expensive for that use. Thus, burial in the shadow of the church, so dear to Gothic revival sentiment, was eventually not practicable in the City of New York.

William A. Muhlenberg ("that grand old man who, more than any other, taught us all, minister and layman," said Henry C. Potter)<sup>26</sup> had been one of the foremost clergymen in advocating free churches where there was no pew rent. His Church of the Holy Communion was not alone, however. St. Mary's, Manhattanville, and the Church of the Transfiguration in East 29th Street were also early free churches. But most of the city's churches found it necessary to rent pews. Often, the family's name was engraved on a silver-plated plaque on the end, or door, of the pew. It was the custom to "sell" pews at auction when the church was built. Inclement weather or poor attendance at such a sale could be disastrous to the fortunes of a new church. Successful bidders had their choice of pews (plural here, because sometimes a second pew was selected for relatives or servants). There would be an assessment of a percentage of the purchase price each year, usually 8 percent. The proceeds were used for the basic requirements: heat, repairs, cleaning, oil or kerosene for the lamps, and so forth. Clergy salaries and other expenses were often met by special subscription. A vestryman would circulate through the households of the parish and write in a book the names of the subscribers and the amounts they intended to give for the rector's salary in the new year. The organist and choristers might be included in this book, or perhaps in a separate subscription. Offerings for urgent causes were announced and collected as needed; the "Sufferers of Kansas," for instance, was a notable special collection just before the Civil War, when the Kansas-Nebraska Act resulted in bloodshed. And, of course, the custom of holding fairs and bazaars reaches far back in Church history.

The rector was usually conceded his canonical right to use the Communion offerings. This was the primary source of what we today call the discretionary fund. Since most churches probably ended the fiscal year in deficit, the time-worn tale of the rich vestrymen dividing the red-ink sum is accurate. And it is precisely here that the city church could, and often did, succumb. For the church depended upon such



frail factors as the rector's popularity, the neighborhood, one or more rich families and, above all, on its particular gifts. Among this latter might be congenial ceremony, or lack of it, remarkable music, unusually profound preaching, or spectacular philanthropic outreach. A change in rectors, the death, departure, or business reverses of a leading parishioner, or an unsightly building rising nearby could spell the doom of a city church. This instability of neighborhood is still found in Manhattan, and there are on the island former Episcopal churches now used for religious purposes by other denominations.

There were two main methods of dealing with failing churches: merger, or a move farther uptown. Thus it was that St. Luke's Church on Hudson Street became a chapel of Trinity Church. St. Luke's congregation had moved far uptown by the time of the Civil War. For many years it was assisted by Trinity, and finally taken over as a chapel when the corporation of St. Luke's decided to build a new church on 141st Street. The fine old building and its rectory were saved, and in recent years St. Luke's has again become an independent parish. This had been a pleasant episode in diocesan life despite a disastrous fire, but many parish stories are decidedly not pleasant. When a church found itself with a fine building in a good location, but with a superannuated, beloved rector who couldn't afford to retire, trouble resulted. Another parish might find itself in a soured location, but just now possessing an outstanding rector whom it didn't want to lose. Could the older man be induced to retire? Could the other congregation be persuaded to abandon their building? Truly, the gift of diplomacy was never more necessary. In the nature of things, such negotiations are left unrecorded and therefore the tangled dealings of Bishop Potter and countless committees, families, and rectors will never be known.

From the earliest times of the diocese, the Manhattan parishes adopted the simple procedure of following their notable families in their move from neighborhood to neighborhood. This usually meant a move northward, and it became risky business in the city. By Bishop Potter's time, the opportunities were nearly exhausted. Erstwhile "country" churches—and even St. Luke's, Hudson Street, had once been a country church on the outskirts of the city—now found themselves surrounded by brownstone residences built quickly by speculators. Old St. Michael's in Bloomingdale remained at the same location, but now it was called Amsterdam Avenue and 99th Street. Its church was a splendid white-framed Gothic revival building designed by the short-lived genius John W. Priest, in 1852. St. Michael's had begun in 1809 as a summer chapel for wealthy New Yorkers who fled the heat and disease of the downriver city each year. The upper part of Manhattan island was then dotted with fine Federal houses whose lawns

stretched down toward the Hudson. Now, toward the end of the nineteenth century, the West Side was developing into what promised to be the fashionable side of town; even Bishop Potter moved to Riverside Drive. St. Michael's now found itself a major church, and rebuilt.

St. James' across town could tell almost the same story. Founded in 1810, and often sharing ministers and parishioners with St. Michael's, it was a chapel for families who summered on the East River bank. St. James' barely survived after the old estates were abandoned and sold. Fortunately, after a succession of rectors, the vestry invited the Rev. Cornelius B. Smith to take charge. Under his gentle, steadfast ministry St. James' was enabled to meet the flood of "chocolate sauce," as Edith Wharton described the brownstone houses she deplored. The original church on Hamilton Square was abandoned for a new one on 72d Street designed by James Renwick. Soon this was too small and a third church, designed by Robert H. Robertson, was built on Madison Avenue (the architect's idea for an extremely high tower never materialized).

#### A COUNTRY CHURCH

This, then, was the Episcopal Church Henry C. Potter knew in New York City. Let us now turn to the country churches as they might have been in the 1880s. Remember that suburbia and commuting businessmen as we know them were yet things of the future. A commuting man in those years lived no farther away than Brooklyn or East Orange, and it was only a man well advanced in his business who "took the cars" into the city each day. Consider a parish in a village, say, eighty-five miles from New York. Its church was, and is, small. Its architect, the elder Upjohn, was inveigled by an important and able founding rector to supply plans when the parish was formed in 1855. By 1880 the church is already cluttered by some of the wares of the oak and brass craftsmen which would soon, and permanently, inundate the Episcopal Church with an incredible wash of harsh metal and grotesque woodwork. St. Luke's (as we shall call it) had a rector and vestry who already, in 1880, had seen fit to mutilate Upjohn's handsome wineglass pulpit. Now there was talk of replacing his half-circle mahogany Communion rail with a straight one made of—yes, brass and oak.

The church is illuminated by kerosene lamps that hang from the ceiling. They are lowered every Saturday to be cleaned and trimmed. In the chancel is a pair of elaborate candelabra. These are there strictly for illumination, and are lit only for Evening Prayer. There is no suggestion of their being altar lights, for while the people of St. Luke's may *think*

High Church (because some of them remembered Bishop Hobart), they and their rector do not like that label. There is no cross on the wooden altar (it *is* called an altar now) but the clever Upjohn anticipated this and provided a stained window with a clear red cross in its center immediately above the altar. The Communion plate came from Cooper of Amity Street, a firm that enjoyed Episcopal patronage for some years. The set consists of two Gothic-style chalices (as distinguished from the deeper goblet earlier used), and there are blue enamel designs on the base, with a delicate filigree in the knop. The set also includes a footed paten, and a tall wine flagon. A pair of alms basins are inscribed, "Freely Ye Have Received, Freely Give." All this is encased in a sound mahogany box kept next door in the rectory. For the Holy Communion is celebrated only once a month in this, and most, Episcopal churches.

Just south of the chancel, which Upjohn placed facing the East though the orientation was an inconvenience to parishioners, is a small room called the vestry. It takes its name from its use: here hang the rector's vestments, his short black cassock on one peg and his ankle-length surplice on another. From yet another peg depends his black stole (it is not the tippet of today), which the rector thinks he may soon retire from service. For he is hearing more and more of his clerical brethren using "preaching stoles" whose colors denote the season of the Church year. He isn't sure, however, that either he or St. Luke's is yet ready for such "advanced churchmanship." There is a small worktable in the vestry. It is covered with a white tablecloth, and on it, leaning against the wall, is a breadboard; in the drawer is a bread knife which is used, each month, to cut the bread loaf into cubes for the Communion. Wafer bread will not come into use in the Episcopal Church until well in the twentieth century—and as a matter of historic fact, at St. Luke's not until 1935, and then only over the heated objections of a prominent member of the vestry.

There is a Heppelwhite washstand in the corner, a castoff used by the leading family before taste led them to discard their mahogany in favor of oak. The rector brings water to the vestry room each Saturday afternoon, even when there is no Communion next day, because he believes there should be washing water available in the building. But the crockery pitcher on the stand is cracked because the water in it froze when the sexton, drunk again, hadn't tended the furnace in the cellar. In the other corner are two simple benches with handholds cut in the tops. These hold a coffin in the church aisle, and can be spaced according to the size of the coffin.

The sexton is expected to mow the small lawn around the church and in winter to remove the snow before service time. His wife laun-

ders and irons the rector's surplice, and for this she is paid ten dollars a year. The church has a hot-air furnace that pours its heat up through a large elaborate iron register in the aisle, and the vestrymen hope the sexton is always careful about where he puts the hot ashes. They wish they could have such confidence in the man that, like their New York City friends, they could station him near the front door on Sundays in order to remind some of the congregation that they have not yet handed in their subscriptions for the year.

There is church music of good quality, for St. Luke's has the 1874 Hymnal, and the organ is a fine Johnson, a golden-throated thing of two manuals and sixteen stops installed several years back. Its bellows are pumped by a boy who may earn as much as \$20 a year for his labor. He is on the job twice every Sunday. The (unpaid) organist is very able and determined; fifty years and three rectors later she will retire. A quartet sometimes complements her ministrations, but an anthem is rendered only on special occasions, such as when the bishop visits. There is no chancel choir because the leading family in the parish has made it known it objects to anyone but the rector occupying an elevated position in the church.

Next door is the rectory, and though it wasn't designed by Upjohn it attempts to be a worthy adjunct to his church. It has suitable jigsawn bargeboards and several pointed windows. It is a large house, perhaps larger than the rector can afford. For he is expected to heat, furnish, and maintain the place from a salary of \$900 a year. He must also keep the stable, for the extent of his country parish requires a horse and carriage. The rector is paid in cash by the treasurer promptly on the first day of the month and gives the treasurer a receipt in exchange. He is thankful each time that, unlike some of his brethren, he receives his salary regularly. He is also grateful that occasionally clothes and roasts and extra pocket money come his way from members of the parish who prefer to "support the church" in that way.

The rector is satisfied with his role in life. He expects the village people to defer to him and, in turn, he defers ever so slightly to the two or three estate families nearby. He is ambivalent about whether or not he should remain at St. Luke's for the rest of his life. He has put down roots in the community. There is now a public high school for his four children. His adequate salary is sufficiently augmented by gifts, and his wife finds an agreeable social life in the community, which includes frequent invitations to the big houses. The rector wonders if his friends in richer, more prominent parishes are really compensated for the additional burdens placed upon them, the books they must buy, the servants they are expected to hire and train. He has, however, one constant worry: What will happen to his family if he dies or if he is

incapacitated? There is a New York Diocesan Fund for Aged and Infirm Clergy which, he knows, parcels out slim sums to disabled ministers and, sometimes, to their widows and younger orphans. But it is a hand-to-mouth affair. If anything happens to him he knows his children will not be able to complete high school. Nor is he cheered by recalling that at each diocesan convention the Fund's low resources and the many demands upon it are mentioned. But it seems that no one (not even Bishop Potter) is very much exercised about the matter, except Arthur Ritchie of Manhattan's Church of St. Ignatius, whose committee hoped that a Retiring Fund could be joined to the Fund for Aged and Infirm Clergy. That had been declared impossible by the trustees. Ritchie had responded by asking the trustees to produce "a scheme" that would commend itself to the General Convention in order that all Episcopal clergy might be protected. But this would take a long time, and the problem of money is always a present-day affair.

The rector sees as his chief duty writing good sermons for the morning and evening services every Sunday. He is particularly conscientious about preparing lectures for weekday evenings in Lent. The Sunday school meets at two thirty on Sunday afternoons. He looks in on the classes, which are held in the pews, but his wife is more directly associated with the Sunday school than he is. She is also the untitled leader of the Ladies' Group that sends boxes of handmade clothing to missionaries in Colorado. The rector is glad not to have very much to do with this group, and somewhat regrets that his wife has to bear the brunt of what is about as near to a High/Low Church argument as has yet appeared in St. Luke's. For a newcomer whose sympathies are decidedly Low Church has challenged the practice of always sending boxes to domestic missions of the Protestant Episcopal Church which are known to be in the hands of High Churchmen, and never sending boxes to foreign missions, which are usually Low Church concerns. A vote overwhelmingly confirmed the practice of sending the boxes to Colorado, but it had been unpleasant, and the matter will surely come up again.

Most marriages take place in the rectory, either in the study or in front of the parlor fireplace. There were five marriages in the years 1880-1885. Some prominent families like marriages to be in their own homes, but so far there have been very few weddings in the church itself. Baptisms are always private affairs in the church, usually following Sunday morning service. The rector tries to be conscientious about the rubric against home baptisms, but admits he has in weaker moments, agreed to baptize the grandchildren of his landed families in their libraries. He is uncomfortable about thus practicing dual regulations, but finds adequate excuse in the fact that he actually performs

many home baptisms. For some of the infants of the parish never leave the houses in which they were born. He cannot think of a family in his parish that has not lost by death at least one young person.

Funerals are generally held in the houses. The undertaker comes, embalms the body in the bedroom, and disappears. Neighbors, who arrived earlier, remain to do the cooking and washing and barn chores, and some spell each other taking charge at the door. When the undertaker returns with the coffin, which he bought from a nearby carpenter but upholstered himself, the corpse is placed in it and "laid out" in the parlor. The coffin will rest on kitchen chairs, or on a pair of saw horses. The funeral service will be in the afternoon, and the house will be crowded: terribly hot in summer, and perhaps worse in winter when the wood stoves are going. Sometimes a photographer takes a picture of the deceased just before the coffin lid is screwed down for the last time. This is more often done when a child has died, and though the rector doesn't think much of the custom, it is something entirely beyond his responsibility. Then the coffin is placed in the richly decorated hearse and the long procession of horse-drawn vehicles takes its slow way to the cemetery. In the years 1880-1885, the rector has baptized thirty-four children and buried five. He is grateful that none of his own children have died young.

The clergy were careful to list the cause of death in the parish register. In the first part of the 1880s, when fifteen were buried, "congestion of the lungs" appears most frequently, followed by "Old Age," "Consumption," "Pneumonia," and "Liver Trouble." He knows these causes of death either by hearsay or personal observation; a small community soon knows what carried off its members, and the local physician rarely troubles to provide a medical name for the maladies that come to his attention.

This vignette of parish life in one New York church (which today, apart from early mortality, is remarkably like a hundred years ago) may be supplemented by recollections which have already been shared in print. At Christ Church, Marlboro, for instance, a lay reader often took the entire service of Morning Prayer in the absence of a rector. He would read one of Canon Farrar's sermons, with some portions deleted. There was

a black walnut altar; over it a window of Faith, a long way after Reynolds; no hangings, no flowers, no ornaments . . . in the pew in front sat a large old lady in the venerable clothes of her youth—bustles, overskirts, and bonnet with streamers. She was redolent of St. Jacob's oil, supposedly potent against rheumatism, and Papa had to wear a marigold in his buttonhole and pinch it at intervals to drown the smell.<sup>27</sup>

We have already noted Bishop Potter's insistence upon Sunday observance. A few households tried to follow him in this, and one member of an ultra Episcopal family later recalled that on Sunday

there were meals to cook and beds to make, but early in the day all the servants were in their Sunday best. We were not allowed to pull the bell-rope except for firewood. Servants' time was their own; they were not on call. They received family friends, they were sent to church, of course; horses were harnessed only for that purpose.<sup>28</sup>

In one enlightened city parish, the Ascension on Fifth Avenue:

There was church and there was Sunday School beforehand. Sunday afternoons were sedate; games were not played . . . Lent was a slim period; candy was out for the season, but there was always the mite-box to be fed so that it would make a respectable thud when put in the plate at Sunday school on Easter morning.<sup>29</sup>

Another memoir sums it up decisively: "As we were an Episcopal household, formal social life was discontinued after Ash Wednesday."<sup>30</sup>

These quotations are from three adults who recalled the Episcopal Church of their privileged childhoods. We may be sure, however, that somber Sundays and the Lenten gloom were similarly observed in less affluent houses, for this was the teaching in the Sunday schools whose numbers increased year after year in Potter's time. And, in all probability, it was through those same Sunday schools, many of them on the East Side of New York City, that the first lapses in Sunday observance threatened the bishop's "old-fashioned American Sunday." For the dour Sunday was something purely Anglo-Saxon, and as the nineteenth century drew to a close the Sunday school rosters of St. George's, Grace Chapel, Calvary Chapel, St. Thomas Chapel, and the chapel of the Incarnation—all of these far east of Fifth Avenue—show a decided prominence of names originating in continental Europe.

The Diocese of New York was, in the 1880s, dominated by burgeoning Manhattan churches—fifty of them—and included other large well-run parish churches in such outlying communities as Newburgh, Poughkeepsie, Yonkers, and White Plains. The average number of communicants in each of the remaining churches (not counting very new missions or preaching stations) was, in 1885, probably not more than fifty. Representatives of them all gathered annually as delegates to diocesan convention. The bishop would select the meeting place, and it was now no longer the lovely St. John's, for Hudson Park had been sold to become Hudson Terminal, and the old church found itself facing a dreary railroad depot, flanked by tenements and lofts. Diocesan con-

ventions were held in such places as St. George's Church, St. Augustine's, St. Bartholomew's on Madison Avenue, Holy Trinity on 42d Street, the Church of the Incarnation (cheek by jowl with three other Episcopal churches on Madison Avenue), or the Church of the Heavenly Rest on Fifth Avenue. The conventions ordinarily lasted two days, obliging out-of-town delegates to find lodgings. This inconvenience and expense resulted in many upstate parishes not participating in the second day of business. Clergy who attended received adequate compensation for mileage, but nothing for hotel expenses. The convention would open with Morning Prayer and the Communion. There was always a sermon by a preacher selected by the bishop. Late in the morning the convention would organize for business, and for several years after Henry C. Potter became bishop there was difficulty, as in the parable, about who should have the chief seats. While the records don't say so, it appears that the large Manhattan churches expected to sit foremost, while others, prevented from arriving early because of railroad schedules, were expected to take the remaining pews. It was once proposed that seating be by seniority. When this failed, Arthur Brooks, brother of Phillips, and beloved rector of the Incarnation until his untimely death, proposed in 1889 that seating be by lots cast. The matter seems trivial to us from this distance, but it was then something that rankled the smaller churches. It is one more indication of the tension that has always existed in a diocese as varied as New York must be.

#### CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

In Horatio C. Potter's last year as Bishop of New York, 1886, the diocese marked its centennial. The occasion was fully anticipated, since people well remembered the nation's centennial, only a decade earlier. The centennial heightened an interest in history, in national origins, in ancient places and customs. Now the Diocese of New York could take a backward glance over one hundred years. Suddenly it seemed to have been nothing but a century of advance and—a word one uses with extreme caution in discussing the fortunes of the Church—*success*. Historic embarrassments had been generously compensated. The questionable patriotism of some early leaders of the diocese was forgotten. Provoost's alleged lethargy was, for the moment, never mentioned and, in any event, was seen as handily corrected by Hobart's energies. The Onderdonk troubles were not mentioned in the *Centennial History*, which hastened on to depict the heroic labors and early death of Bishop Wainwright, followed by the wise direction of Horatio Potter. Apart from the luster shed by this procession of notable bishops, Manhattan's own floundering General Theological Seminary (which wouldn't pro-



duce a Bishop of New York until 1947!) seemed assured a better future now that its new dean was the very rich and very generous Eugene Augustus Hoffman. It is of interest to social historians that Hoffman's importance to the seminary lay not so much with his own checkbook, but in the fact that he, of an old New York family, was able to attract less-well-connected newly rich New Yorkers who were glad, in association with him, to support the seminary. The centennial of the diocese was also satisfying to the ecclesiastical historians who, though perhaps complaining that no bishop had ever been able to oversee the Church in New York State, the territory had, by 1886, been amicably divided into five dioceses, each prospering. And also, if anyone pointed to parishes now defunct, they could now point to many more new ones that were flourishing. There were, that year, 331 clergy in the diocese, and an astounding 11,132 confirmations.

The Centennial Committee consisted of Bishop Potter, Morgan Dix of Trinity (who was then about to embark upon his own monumental history of that parish), General James Grant Wilson, Francis Lobdell, J. P. Morgan, and William H. Benjamin. Wilson had just edited Appleton's *Cyclopedia of American Biography*, and now most of the work involved in compiling a history for the diocese fell to him. Despite "the surprising apathy and neglect of a large portion of the clergy,"<sup>31</sup> he produced on June 1, 1886, a *Centennial History* of nearly 500 pages. It was, and remains, a most valuable book, for it has biographical sketches of the diocesan bishops, a historical essay read by the Rev. Bernard F. DeCosta at ceremonies in St. Thomas Church on Fifth Avenue, and brief histories of each parish and chapel in the diocese. General Wilson, who "liked to use the title he had picked up during the Civil War,"<sup>32</sup> expected the rectors to rally to his orders. He was disappointed. It seems that the clergy in the 1880s weren't very much interested in diocesan or parochial history. The general had to do what the troops wouldn't do; he rifled through diocesan journals and manufactured snippets of data for churches whose rectors had not done their homework. The result, a book of much information, causes us to forgive whatever personal foibles General Wilson may have had. It sold for \$4.00 (\$7.00 in half-calf) at diocesan conventions, and also at the Church bookstore, Pott and Gorham. Four dollars was a high price for any book in 1886, and the Centennial Committee members were disappointed at the slow sale of their history.

#### ALBANY CLAIM SETTLED

Almost as soon as Henry C. Potter became the Bishop of New York it was necessary for him to wrestle with the Albany Claim. It will be

remembered that Horatio Potter (formerly of Albany) was reluctant to separate that area from the New York diocese because he doubted a new northern diocese would find adequate resources to maintain itself. He particularly feared that a disproportionate burden would be placed upon St. Peter's, his old parish. When the new diocese was formed, it was agreed that \$25,000 would be given it from New York. This sum was, however, not to come from existing moneys but from donations for this special purpose. A dubious decision! Nothing is more difficult than raising money for old and, as some thought, unnecessary purposes. The Albany Claim had never been paid, though in 1886 it was nearly twenty years since the pledge had been given. But the obligation hadn't been forgotten, either, and was on the agenda for successive conventions. Surely the new bishop would not let the matter sink into oblivion, because it had been a major concern of his uncle and sponsor. Perhaps it was because of this personal anxiety of the bishop that J. P. Morgan and Cornelius Vanderbilt agreed to give the last \$1,146.60 to make the Albany fund reach the required \$25,000. In a moment of such playfulness as the diocese had seen before, and would see again, Vanderbilt gave one cent more than Morgan so that he could claim to be the greater benefactor. The Albany Claim was finally satisfied on November 12, 1890.<sup>33</sup>

#### ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE

Another perennial problem was St. Stephen's College in the hamlet of Annandale, one hundred miles up the Hudson River. The college was the ill-conceived brainchild of John McVickar, who, in his closing years, envisioned a "training school" where young men could prepare for whatever academic rigors the General Seminary might provide. Now, it happened that McVickar's nephew, John Bard, had married the very rich Margaret Johnston. The couple established themselves on a fine estate in Annandale and, by 1855, had built two schools for neighborhood children who otherwise were without any free education. Bard was a loyal, but somewhat wooly-headed, churchman, the son and grandson of distinguished New Yorkers. His wife was a true bluestocking and was ready to use her fortune in good works for the Church. In addition to the two schools, the Bards began to build an outstanding stone Gothic church designed by the noted architect Frank Wills. Bishop Wainwright had encouraged Bard to build his schoolhouses, and now his successor, Horatio Potter (with John McVickar's nudging), suggested that the Bards undertake the training school project. They agreed. A young and able priest, George Seymour, was engaged to take charge,

and by 1860 there was a board of trustees, a charter from the state, and a handful of students intended for the ministry of the Episcopal Church. The Bards gave land for the college and included one of the school-houses and the Church of the Holy Innocents as well as the promise of a generous yearly grant.

All of this was delightful and perhaps even promising, almost a page from the English landscape so beloved by the Bards: a manor house, church, grateful villagers, diligent students, a cause nothing less than the Church of Christ—all of it woven into the fabric of high Victorianism, and in a region (the Hudson River Valley) where large land-owners consciously imitated English country life. Add a bishop or two, and the scene is perfect. But this Eden, too, had a serpent. Within a few years Mrs. Bard's fortune was exhausted. American education provided more and more opportunities that obviated the need of a training school. Other tasks claimed Horatio Potter's attention, and Henry C. Potter was never enthusiastic about St. Stephen's College. Nevertheless, it could not be gainsaid that by 1889 two hundred graduates of the college were ministers of the Episcopal Church.

Nor did the college do much to commend itself to laymen aware of educational trends in America. The faculty insisted on a form of classical curriculum that was of debatable value to a man entering seminary. Its longtime warden, Robert Fairbairn, was outpaced by educational progress elsewhere; when he retired in 1898 after nearly forty years as head of St. Stephen's, the college was hopelessly behind the times. But, "sir, there are those who love it" was as stirring a cry for St. Stephen's as it was for Dartmouth, and as alumni of the college became priests and bishops they occasionally induced wealthy Episcopalians to take up the cause. Sometimes there were as many as ninety students at the college, most of them graduating on to the General Seminary.<sup>34</sup> Clerical alumni are seldom able to give much financial support to their alma mater, and the conspicuous supporter of St. Stephen's was not an alumnus. The Rev. Charles F. Hoffman had been rector of St. Philip's Church in Garrison in the early years of the college. Whatever interest began then was probably later encouraged by his brother, Eugene, the fabled dean of General Seminary. Charles Hoffman gave much money for the college buildings, for endowment, and sometimes just to keep the college going one more month. Fairbairn's annual reports to the diocesan convention were faint appeals for assistance; upon reading them, one gathers the college was wary of diocesan interference and preferred to rely on the haphazard munificence of the few donors like Hoffman, or upon the steadier but limited grants provided by the Society for the Promotion of Religion and Learning in the State of New York. The SPRL was of ancient origin. No one seemed to know exactly when it began,

but its roots lay in diocesan education efforts prior to Hobart's burst of energy for religious education. Some critics said that the Society was far too liberal in its grants to St. Stephen's College, and in one diocesan convention a thorough review of matters was requested.

We shall later follow the fortunes of St. Stephen's College, but for now one thing is clear: Henry C. Potter was not much exercised about its future. Why? Because he thought there was little value in a rural, poor, cloistered college. Potter was a realist. He knew what was happening in the city. Between the lines of his speeches and writings he seems to repeat the theme that "the desirable is not necessarily the vital." St. Stephen's was never one of his major concerns, and this view would be corroborated by his successors, as we shall see.

#### PRACTICES AND POLICIES

In his twenty-five years as Bishop of New York, Henry C. Potter never cared to create a diocesan staff. His loyal secretary-cum-chaplain, George F. Nelson, superintended what little office work Potter's style required. James Pott was treasurer of the diocese for forty years until his death in 1905; when money was short, Pott simply appealed to rich acquaintances. Various Church organizations, then as now, managed their own affairs and found their own funds. These included the City Mission Society, the Seamen's Church Institute, the Sunday School Union, and the Society for the Promotion of Religion and Learning in the State of New York. Like many of the city merchants of an earlier time, Potter seemed to "keep all his business in his head."

In 1886, a year before Henry C. Potter became *the* Bishop of New York (for Horatio Potter lingered on in an invalid state until his death on January 2, 1887), there was a diocesan convention of extraordinary activity. One of the first matters to come to the delegates' attention was the prevailing practice of city churches that were caught in deteriorating neighborhoods moving uncomfortably close to parishes already established in "safe" areas. Thus, for instance, St. James' on Madison Avenue awoke one day to the news that another vestry had quietly negotiated to purchase a lot only two blocks away. A resolution in the 1886 convention attempted to control this by requiring that hereafter the three nearest churches must assent to the "intrusion" before the bishop and Standing Committee could give approval.

A Diocesan Missionary Society was outlined in the bishop's address, and was unanimously supported by the convention. That is, it was supported in principle: no funding was asked or given. Five archdeacons were to be chosen by the bishop, and the appointments con-

firmed by the clergy in the proposed archdeaconries. Each archdeaconry was to find its own funds, and manage them in whatever mode of Church extension they agreed upon. Despite obvious drawbacks, this scheme enabled the diocese to embark upon considerable growth as improved rail service opened new residential areas and as people with newfound leisure were able to spend time in the fields of Westchester or the hills and mountains in Ramapo and Ulster.

The City Mission Society came in for special notice in that 1886 convention. In the previous year, 1,163 people had been received into St. Barnabas' House in Bleecker Street. Scarcity of money prevented serving more. "With all her claims, her wealth, her prominence," Bishop Potter said in the 1886 convention, "it is impossible that the Episcopal Church of the Diocese and in the City of New York should carry on a *little* City Mission—a little war against the vast host which Satan is daily training in our midst in the dexterous use of his own deadly weapons, is impossible for us." The appeal is ever a familiar one whenever Christian benevolences attempt to bridge the gap between the needs perceived and the funds required. But now, in the 1880s, there was an urgency, almost a despair, because the City of New York contained as much human misery as any metropolis of the Old World, and *conscientious men and women knew it*. As early as 1866—twenty years before Bishop Potter decried the notion of a *little* Episcopal City Mission—a writer had described conditions:

Persons who perambulate Broadway on a pleasant day and who look on the elegantly-dressed throng that crowd the pavement, and through the costly plate-glass at the rich goods displayed, would be slow to believe that within a stone's throw squalid want and criminal woe have their abode. Here, in the Fourth and Sixth Wards, so famous in the history of crime in New York . . . no pen can describe the homes of the lowly where the New York poor lodge. It is a region of wickedness, filth and woe. Lodging houses are often under ground, foul and slimy, without ventilation, and often without windows, and overrun with rats and every species of vermin . . . Children are born in sorrow, and raised in reeking vice and bestiality that no heathen degradation can exceed.

This is the familiar Victorian, practically exulting in the poverty that might be found, and yet, at the same time, wishing it were not so. Perhaps accepting facts supplied by a neighborhood rescue mission, our journalist claimed that:

Of religious faith, 118 represented the Protestant, 287 were Jews, 160 Catholics; but of 614 children, only one in sixty-six attended any school. Out of 916 adults, 605 could neither read nor write. In the

same block there were thirty-three underground lodging-houses, ten feet below the sidewalk, and twenty of the vilest grogshops were visited by 1054 persons—450 men and 445 women, 91 boys and 68 girls.

Henry C. Potter seems to have been the first Bishop of New York who sensed the magnitude of New York's poverty; his uncle, Bishop Horatio, was sensitive to the problem but preferred confining the Church's work to alleviation. For this reason he had promoted the Sisterhoods. The younger Potter resented (and perhaps oversimplified) the *causes* of poverty in New York.

Much closer to the diocesan convention, as it was thought, was the condition of clergymen and their families. Most clergy salaries were modest. An average rector must needs stay at his job until death, hoping to save something for his widow's maintenance—and maintenance was all it would probably be. There was no nationwide pension system, nothing resembling latter-day Social Security. Furthermore, many an aging rectory couple lived to see their children die, which meant that grandchildren would have to be brought in and cared for. It was announced in the 1886 convention that provisions in the Diocesan Fund for Aged and Infirm Clergymen might now be extended to such grandchildren.

The rectors' wives were often more heroic than their husbands (an arrangement not unknown even in these latter days). Unlike many of the rectors' "willing workers," they had to subsist on clergy stipends that were, at best, modest. But very often in the records we will find it intimated that the lady of the rectory was a skilled (and unpaid) parish worker. Sometimes they were the main evangelizing energy of the local church. In one suburb, the scholarly rector, as well as the parish, enjoyed the ministrations of the rector's wife, who was a wise and indefatigable pastoral aide. In the 1890s there occurred an episode (surely one of many) that was vividly recalled half a century later, for Katherine Hoxie Hughes was not easily forgotten. She knocked at the door of a ramshackle house in a slovenly street. There was no response until a neighbor flung up her window and said, "If it's Mrs. Riley you're after, she's in the jail."

"Very well," said Mrs. Hughes, "I'll call on her there." And she did. We may be sure parallel episodes took place in many a parish in the Diocese of New York.

Bishop Potter casually mentioned in his 1886 address that he had "opened and set apart" the House and Oratory of the Sisterhood of the Good Shepherd on Ninth Avenue just north of the General Theological Seminary. This new (and short-lived) Order was committed to work in St. Barnabas' House. (In 1900 the surviving Sisters were set apart as

deaconesses, a possibility not available to them in 1886.) Bishop Potter mentioned the good work of the Community of St. John Baptist in their Midnight Mission (a somewhat misleading name for what was in fact a twenty-four-hour refuge for destitute women). And he said he had again "visited the House of the Brotherhood of the Holy Cross."

Lest these allusions cause alarm among sensitive Protestants, Bishop Potter reminded the delegates of the recent death of the Rev. John Murray Forbes. Now, *there* was a name from the past that would remind the convention of bitter battles. Forbes was, in 1848, the rector of St. Luke's Church in Hudson Street. His gifts indicated that he was destined for a significant career—and indeed he was, though not of anyone's imagining. His admirers, and there were many in those immediate post-Onderdonk years, were dismayed when John Murray Forbes announced his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. (They were further discomfited at reports that, the now Roman Catholic widower enlisted his sons to serve as acolytes: a pretty picture of an erstwhile Episcopal family!) Nor were Episcopalians happy to hear that Forbes's predecessor at St. Luke's, Levi Silliman Ives, Bishop of North Carolina and son-in-law of Bishop Hobart, had departed with his family to the Church of Rome. Then, years later, and after receiving singular honors in the Roman Catholic Church, John Murray Forbes returned to the Episcopal Church and, in 1869, became dean of the General Theological Seminary. It was an unfortunate appointment. Forbes's intellectual rigidity and his natural austerity, tintured now by his disappointment with Roman Catholicism, led him to believe his greatest service to the Church of his birth would be to discover and root out anything in the seminary he thought alien to Anglican tradition. His reaction to the Roman Church was extreme, and so his deanship was a stormy three years at Chelsea Square. But he certainly managed in that brief time to assure Protestant Episcopalians that he had abandoned Romanism forever.

All this would have been known to the delegates in the 1886 convention who heard Bishop Potter speak of this "conspicuous figure in the history of this Diocese, in connection with events of which I know only the tradition."<sup>35</sup>

Potter's ceremonial preferences were distinctly Low, and thus he was wary of officiating in the Church of St. Mary the Virgin in New York City, where, as the diocese's *Centennial History* gingerly recorded, there was "at least one celebration of the Holy Communion every day, and where the chief service on Sunday is the high celebration of the Holy Communion." This had been the practice almost from the founding of St. Mary's in 1867. In that year the Rev. Thomas McKee Brown and Henry Kingsland Leonard, a fervent Anglo-Catholic layman, set out

to establish a "Catholic Free Church." John Jacob Astor gave them three lots, with the understanding that the new church would be "free and positively orthodox." In this case, "free" meant exempt from diocesan oversight as well as having no rented pews. St. Mary's was organized under a Board of Trustees in an instrument approved by Horatio Potter on June 27, 1874. The younger Potter, like his uncle, was enthusiastic about urban Church work accomplished by any responsible Christian agency. But it was difficult for him to translate his broad-mindedness into the liturgical procedures St. Mary's people might expect when their new church, designed by LeBrun and Sons, was opened in 1895. So Bishop Henry C. Potter permitted the Bishop of Fond du Lac to preside at the Sunday service, while Potter consecrated the great new church the following Thursday. Everyone was pleased with this happy and characteristically Episcopalian solution.

Another vignette of Church life in the 1880s may be found in Bishop Potter's commendation of parochial missions. A notable mission had been held at St. Mary's Church in Cold Spring early in 1886. The bishop himself had already begun his practice of inviting his seminarians to retreats at nearby St. Philip's in Garrison at Whitsuntide. Canon W. J. Knox-Little, the celebrated retreat leader whose preaching at St. Clement's Church, Philadelphia, immediately led to James Huntington's decision to become a monk, had held a retreat in Garrison as early as 1880. "This was the first 'retreat' held in the American Church," according to a note by a later rector of that church, the historian E. Clowes Chorley.

When Henry C. Potter became the Bishop of New York, in 1887, he had been the Assistant Bishop for four years, and rector of Grace Church fifteen years prior to that. Once bishop, he moved quickly toward a position of prestige which has perhaps never been equaled by any other citizen of the city. If at one time people could say that New York stood upon the tripod of Clinton, Hosack, and Hobart, it might soon be said that now one man commanded similar respect: Henry C. Potter. And he was surrounded by able clergymen in the churches, beginning with his successor at Grace Church, William Reed Huntington. At Trinity, Morgan Dix had, as a young clergyman with excellent connections, mastered the complexities of Trinity Church and, to the astonishment of his covetous fellow curates, obtained the rectorship when ancient Dr. Berrian died. Henry L. Ziegenfuss, though received only lately from the Dutch Reformed ministry to be rector of Christ Church, Poughkeepsie, was increasingly prominent in diocesan affairs. J. Shaw Shipman, David H. Greer, Henry Yates Satterlee—all Manhattan rectors—were the rising stars. Vocal laymen included Columbia's Professor Henry Drisler, George Macculloch Miller, the now aged John Jay,



Jr., and Hamilton Fish, who, in 1890, startled people by stating that he had been at every diocesan convention since 1835.

#### RURAL GROWTH

The novel scheme of appointing archdeacons to plan and promote mission programs in their respective areas was initially successful, though in 1890 Bishop Potter was constrained to say "we must prosecute the work in the rural portions of the diocese with more energy." In 1890 there were eleven mission stations in Dutchess County; most of these were eventually abandoned. St. David's, Otterkill, the site of an original SPG outpost dating from 1729, was revived. There were new missions in Rifton and Rosendale for families whose breadwinners worked in the booming cement plants there. New "preaching stations" were reported in Pine Hill and Greenwood Lake. These two places were among the many developing summer resorts made accessible by superior railroad service and newfound leisure time among some people, for this was the heyday of the small woodland hotel and the rural boardinghouse. Anyone who had been aboard a Hudson River excursion boat—and many New York City people had—wondered what lay across the fields, or what was hidden in the dark, cool mountain coves they saw from deck. The dayboats and the railroads, sensing untapped wealth from vacationers, were glad to supply the answers by way of booklets and maps that were circulated on the docks and rail stations. Hudson Valley farmers and Catskill Mountain tanners whose fields and hills had been exhausted now found profits in taking in summer boarders. For thirty years this was nothing less than an industry, a reliable source of income, providing work for neighbor "help" and recreation for tired New Yorkers. Episcopal chapels and missions were well attended by that new American genus, the "summer people."

Not exactly summer people, but predominantly Episcopalian, were the inhabitants of Tuxedo Park, an "ideal" community patterned after the much older Llewellyn Park in Orange, New Jersey. The mammoth houses in rock-strewn Tuxedo had hardly recovered from their inaugural balls before St. Mary's Church, designed by the bishop's brother, was built and consecrated in 1888. Tuxedo village had an Episcopal mission for Italian laborers specially brought there to build and landscape the park. Nearby, the Harriman family soon built Arden, which had its chapel. And not far away was St. John's-in-the-Wilderness, built, maintained, and endowed by Margaret Furness Zimmerman.

A note informs us that "from Spring Valley, the Missionary extends his ministrations to the inmates of the County Poor House, and, in

order to reach and touch the scattered lambs of his flock, has established a Sunday School in the woods."<sup>36</sup> Each archdeaconry was still expected to find funding for whatever mission work it cared to fulfill within its boundaries. This was supposed to be done through assessment of the neighboring parishes; "the apportionments are often tardily paid," said the bishop.

#### CHURCH IN THE CITY

About this time, the Church Club, begun about 1889, had gained a reputation sufficient to cause Bishop Potter's qualified utterance that it was an organization of "possible usefulness." The Club had already sponsored the East Side House, a "settlement" agency complete with reading rooms and gymnasium. The Church Club itself maintained clubhouse rooms, with a library for its lay members.

Three constant themes run through the later years of Henry C. Potter: the ever changing city, Church growth, and the development of the cathedral. Immigration from Europe continued, but now the newcomers were from eastern Europe, many of them fleeing persecution. Few of these immigrants had ever heard of the Episcopal Church. When, in 1901, Bishop Potter spoke of "phenomenal growth" of the city demanding new church sites he had in mind not necessarily places of worship for immigrants (such as had been Onderdonk's legitimate concern), but, rather, churches for the neighborhoods where Episcopalians were fast moving. When those summer vacationers returned from their week's sojourn in the country, they chafed under the changing conditions in their old neighborhoods. They reasoned they could "move uptown," maybe as far as Webster Avenue, and find there less congestion, more congenial people. Vacations are apt to do more to us than we realize. Now even people with modest incomes could imitate the quality, who had long ago formed the fashion of looking northward on Manhattan Island.

Toward the end of his life, Bishop Potter stated publicly what he had long known: most downtown churches faced disaster and their fate must soon be the concern of all. (Perhaps, he said in 1906, even Diocesan House in Lafayette Street should be sold because it was so far from the center of a "ganglionic city.") Changing neighborhoods, different complexions and customs, a definite alteration in accepted manners upset many churchfolk. But, at least in public, Potter showed them no sympathy: "We may look back with longing to the days and the ways of our fathers. They are passed and ended, and we shall never see them again."<sup>37</sup> The bishop was indisputably right, but it would seem that

New York City Episcopalians anticipated him. The sole Manhattan church to cease in his time was the Church of the Annunciation on 14th Street—ironically, it was the church Bishop Onderdonk attended regularly during his suspension. All the other churches threatened by area changes moved uptown or negotiated redemptive consolidation. The most outstanding example of consolidation is the Church of the Holy Trinity's merger with St. James' Church.

If this book had been planned along different lines, Holy Trinity would occupy at least one separate chapter. It was a pace-setting parish in all ways: pace-setting in overnight rapid growth, manner and variety of ministry, and, alas, pace-setting in decline. It was an Evangelical parish, established by Stephen H. Tyng, Jr., in 1863. Tyng seems to have thought that High Church principles were once again taking the honors after Horatio Potter became Bishop of New York. Thus, he sought by old-time Evangelicalism, and by parish programs, to build a great church in 42d Street. His efforts enjoyed (and deserved) spectacular success, perhaps unique and certainly pioneering. A year after the Church of the Holy Trinity was founded it had itself established five chapels throughout the city. But Tyng didn't end there; he

was a forerunner of what soon came to be called the "institutional parish," and he led in the organization of an orphanage and a training school for lay preachers called the House of the Evangelists. There were also dispensaries and infirmaries, a lodging house in the city and a convalescent house in the country.<sup>38</sup>

In 1873, a large church designed by Cyrus L. Eidlitz (often called the Church of the Holy Oilcloth because of its fanciful red-and-yellow brickwork) was built across from Grand Central Station and was for some years filled by the 2,000 communicants of the parish. But the ominous signs were there. Hotels, competing for railroad patronage, took the places of private dwellings. Tyng resigned, believing that Horatio Potter had won the battle for Onderdonk after all. His successors were unable to maintain the house of cards he had built—the chapels, nursing homes, manual training shops, the House of the Evangelists fell one by one. Instead of all those mini-institutions, Holy Trinity now attempted the Victorian expedient of notable preachers. This failed. Luckily for the Church of the Holy Trinity, the very rich Miss Serena Rhinelander desired to build on a family property she owned uptown a church "for the poor." She had in mind a large lot of land in 88th Street, and might be induced to name the new church Holy Trinity, but the able rector of the existing parish could not be expected to move to that deprived part of the city. So, by what we may safely assume was a series of dinner-table conversations after the ladies had left the room, it

was intimated to the much-loved Cornelius B. Smith, longtime rector and builder of St. James' Church on Madison Avenue, that his resignation would make it possible for Holy Trinity's rector, E. Walpole Warren, to move up to St. James'. The sale of Holy Trinity's valuable property would be an endowment for St. James', and Mr. Warren would agree to superintend the new church "for the poor" in 88th Street. It would be named the Chapel of the Holy Trinity, and would assimilate work St. James' Church had already begun in 78th Street. Perhaps the most amazing aspect of these gentlemanly dealings was the grace with which Dr. Smith and his loyal parishioners of St. James' accepted the propositions. Dr. Smith went so far as to state that he and "Bishop Potter would greatly regret to have the large value of the 42nd Street property used simply to make one rich church for rich people, with rented pews," and insisted that half the sale proceeds be used in the new Church of the Holy Trinity which Miss Rhinelanders was abuilding in 88th Street (again there were notable architects at work: the firm of Barney and Chapman was engaged to do Holy Trinity).

#### VICTORIAN CONTENTIONS

In the 1890s biblical criticism and the implications of what was known as Darwinism replaced ritualism as a threat to the peace of the Church. Many people feared the basic things of Christianity were under assault. Nor were they placated when the clergy began to wrestle with the new thinking. Soon after Henry C. Potter became bishop, the rector of All Souls', New York City, R. Heber Newton, received considerable notoriety when he delivered a series of lectures which seemed to accept many of the conclusions of current German biblical scholarship. Bishop Potter recognized that much of the uproar that followed was the result of sensational reportage, but he was sufficiently alarmed to request that the lectures be terminated. He ignored the formal complaint lodged against Newton by Bernard DeCosta, a neighboring rector prominent just then as diocesan historian; Dr. Buel of General Seminary joined in the complaint.

At the same time, there was the Ritchie Case. Arthur Ritchie was rector of the Church of St. Ignatius and promoted ceremonies there involving sanctus bells, incense, candles, and acolytes. Potter refused to visit St. Ignatius' until Ritchie promised to desist from the service of Benediction. This "Case" also received more than its share of publicity, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Bishop Potter, like Manning a generation later, enjoyed the headlines. Certainly his sojourn at the procathedral the "diocesan church" in Stanton Street in the sum-

mer of 1895 brought considerable notice. It was reported that the bishop, despite his statement, "I don't like slumming," lived among the poor for a month, taking a share of the services at the church. The episcopal diary published in the *Journal* is not clear about the event, but public attention was aroused by the unusual episode.

But perhaps the greatest publicity was reserved for the Briggs affair in 1898-99. Charles A. Briggs, a Presbyterian minister, was a professor at the Union Theological Seminary whose biblical studies led him to a point of view incompatible with those of his colleagues (one gathers that Briggs's personality could add to that incompatibility). He was suspended from the ministry by the General Assembly of his church in 1893. Several years later it was announced that Dr. Briggs was seeking ordination at the hands of Bishop Potter. This was challenged by several prominent churchpeople, including, again, Dr. DaCosta and Admiral Mahan. They were countered by Dr. Huntington, who offered Grace Church for the occasion. Dr. Smith, retired rector of St. James', Madison Avenue, renewed his proposal to present Briggs for ordination. The shrewd bishop archly noted that the canon stated the bishop, after appropriate approvals had been received, *shall*, not *may*, proceed to ordination. This was the line Onderdonk had taken, with somewhat less success, at the Carey ordination. The rite accordingly took place in the procathedral on May 14, 1899; the ensuing uproar carried DaCosta into the Roman Catholic Church.

Bishop Potter's oft-stated preference for simpler days and an uncomplicated life contrast with his amazing forcefulness in a city where he moved among an opulence and power he frequently criticized. He was not afraid to lash out at the Republican Party, American "imperialism," race prejudice, and the evils of company towns. He believed in consumers' leagues, trade unions, the complete assimilation of immigrants in the social fabric. He believed with Tocqueville that American mobility fostered envy and competition resulting in a "brutal and socially destructive" civilization. His participation in the Church Association for the Interest of Labor (CAIL) is well-known. He served as chairman of the mediation board which ended the New York lithographers' strike in 1896 by setting a minimum wage and abolishing piece work. At the same time, he was president of the Century Club!

#### ANOTHER DIVISION?

Public transportation was well developed in the Diocese of New York by 1900. Telegraph service had long been efficient, and was now gradually supplanted by telephones: that word first appears in diocesan re-

cords in 1901.<sup>39</sup> The Hudson River passenger boats were a leisurely convenience between all major river docksites. The 391 clergymen serving 239 churches and chapels in 1900 would seem united by such excellent communication in a diocese led by one of the most respected bishops in the United States. But in the 1900 diocesan convention there was a resolution, followed by "considerable discussion," that the diocese be divided yet again. The motion aimed at exactly what Professor Samuel Roosevelt Johnson of General Seminary predicted in 1865: the Diocese of New York would be reduced by division to "the city and its vicinity."<sup>40</sup> The motion was not carried, but it is evident that then, as later, the idea had been privately argued and favorably received by many New York churchmen. One plan called for the Diocese of Albany to relinquish some of its vast territory in the creation of a new Episcopal Diocese of Ogdensburg. Then, perhaps, Albany could extend itself downriver, leaving the Diocese of New York with Manhattan and Westchester. So persuaded were many delegates that a motion advising new boundaries was carried, and a committee appointed. The next year, 1901, no one troubled to revive the question or the committee. Why? Probably because Henry C. Potter had quashed the idea. *He* had no difficulties with a populous diocese that stretched a hundred miles upriver and as far west as Pike County in Pennsylvania—he and the visiting bishops he called in to assist him: the Bishop of Nebraska was in New York every winter and spring. In the 1890s there had been an average of 4,315 confirmations each year. The Potters always had things very much under control. Very adroitly, the bishop vested a sense of responsibility and prestige in his archdeacons. They responded by extending the diocesan presence in their five regions. Why, then, should the Diocese of New York be divided in 1900?

But William Reed Huntington of Grace Church, Manhattan, was adamant. In 1902 he moved that division again be pursued, and correspondence be initiated with other dioceses. The old committee was reactivated and, in 1903, reported division inadvisable. Huntington gamely presented a minority report. He said that if all the territory beyond the city limits were made into a separate diocese, that diocese would rank twelfth in the American Church. So cogent was Huntington's argument that the committee was yet again continued, and four more members added to it. In 1905, thirty-six clergy (of more than 400 in convention that year) presented a petition that General Convention be asked to take preliminary steps for a new diocese. A long debate ended in a refusal to comply with the request. It is noteworthy that in this 1905 convention there were almost as many non-Manhattan clerical delegates present as there were city clergy. And in that year lay delegates from upstate outnumbered those from Manhattan. One of the

reasons Manhattan was not made into a separate diocese was later touched upon by the bishop coadjutor when he said, "Rapid transit to the Bronx is now an accomplished fact." Nonetheless, the question of dividing the diocese would arise again and again.

#### THE BISHOP NEEDS ASSISTANCE

The growth of the Church required sustained assistance to Bishop Potter. Mention of a bishop coadjutor brings to the fore the question, When would there be adequate episcopal help? In 1902 Henry C. Potter was sixty-seven years of age and had been Bishop of New York for fifteen years—and what halcyon years they had been! Potter was called upon for hundreds of tasks never contemplated by the canons of the Church. No cornerstone was set in place, no public building opened, no civic meeting gathered, without the bishop's presence. Editors were keen to hear Potter's pronouncements upon political and social upheavals. He was known to walk with the great. Thus, when the 1901 convention met just after the assassination of President McKinley, the delegates thrilled to hear the kind words of Potter, who, of course, had been an intimate of the man everyone now mourned. The bishop spoke of the President's "dignity of presence, and a candor, openness, and sympathy of mind which made his personality one of charm and loveliness." The bishop confined himself to McKinley's personal characteristics and never touched upon the public ones. But he did enlarge upon the somberness of the moment to say that

the assassination of three presidents in less than forty years, however different may have been their immediate causes, presents a situation that practically arraigns before the bar of the world's judgement civic and social conditions that we dare not ignore.<sup>41</sup>

It was the next year, 1902, when the convention was sitting in Holy Trinity Chapel, 88th Street, that Bishop Potter asked that a coadjutor be considered. He offered one-half his salary to meet the increased expenses. (This, too, was a Potter trait: the gratuitous gesture in the presence of fifty millionaires who, the bishop knew, would instantly see that funds for a coadjutor would be forthcoming: Potter, with his astuteness, could afford to be playful.) A committee was formed to facilitate the bishop's request. The idea of a coadjutor, an assistant bishop who automatically succeeds, was not then fully acceptable in the American Church. The following year, in the Church of the Heavenly Rest, then at 551 Fifth Avenue, Bishop Potter referred to the matter, and the committee moved the convention proceed that day to an election. Upon

motion, nominations were made "without any debate, in accord with the precedent of the Convention of 1883."<sup>42</sup> After silent prayer, five names were placed in nomination.

Those five may serve as a summary of prevailing concerns in the Diocese of New York toward the end of its era of greatest prominence and influence. First, as was expected, the name of David Hummel Greer was heard. He had been rector of St. Bartholomew's in 42d Street since 1888. Here he had developed the "parish house movement" into one of the city's great institutions. St. Bartholomew's classrooms, gymnasias, and medical clinics were known far and wide. Greer's preaching was said to be intellectual and up to date. He was a much respected man.

William Reed Huntington of Grace Church was also nominated. Often mentioned for the episcopate in scattered dioceses, he fell more comfortably into the role of "first presbyter" of the Episcopal Church. Though his forcefulness was well appreciated in New York, Huntington seems never to have separated himself from the New England background that bade him stand independent, perhaps aloof, from the everyday concerns of a great diocese.

William Mercer Grosvenor, rector of the Church of the Incarnation, was nominated and many people believed him to be Potter's choice. Grosvenor was then forty years old, and had been rector of the Incarnation for six years, and had already received an honorary doctorate from the University of New York and been elected a deputy to General Convention; obviously, a comer.

The Rev. John C. Roper, slightly younger than Grosvenor, was a Canadian who had come to the General Theological Seminary as a professor in 1897. His ability brought him to notice sufficient to nomination. (In 1912 he became Bishop of British Columbia.)

We have already met the fifth nominee: Archdeacon George F. Nelson. He had long been Bishop Potter's lieutenant, having been a curate of Grace Church, and secretary in what passed for a diocesan office. Both he and Huntington withdrew their names—and then Greer proceeded to take the election in both orders on the first ballot. By any standard, New York was indeed a unified diocese in an age when electing conventions were frequently prolonged and acrimonious; that same year, 1903, the Diocese of Newark across the river endured its "all night" convention in which, finally, Low Church Edwin S. Lines was elected bishop of a diocese hitherto decidedly otherwise marked.

Nowadays, the election of a coadjutor bishop signals the last act of the bishop of the diocese. For a coadjutor has the right to succeed, unlike a suffragan, whose functions are those assigned from time to time by *the* bishop. The Episcopal Church was slow to adopt the princi-



ple of assisting bishops. No diocese was more reluctant than the Diocese of New York, whose corporate memory harkened to the time of Benjamin Moore, when three bishops claimed authority, or, later, when visiting bishops and "provisionals" invited near anarchy.

Potter's decision to ask for a coadjutor was based on the clear fact that as he aged he needed episcopal assistance in a diocese too large for one bishop, and too small to be divided again. He had suffered some kind of collapse about 1900<sup>43</sup> and now that Greer was there to visit churches and confirm, Potter assigned him the oversight of the city churches, while he, Potter, would look after those in the rural sections. This peculiar arrangement, which was entirely satisfactory to Greer, worked well, and made all the more certain the statement that "the country clergy knew Potter best"<sup>44</sup>—a strange assessment of the man who was generally considered Manhattan's first citizen.

Honors had come abundantly to Henry C. Potter. Apart from the constant flood of invitations to be present at every significant civic occasion in New York City, he received doctorates from Cambridge, Oxford, and St. Andrew's, as well as from American colleges. It was coincidental that he delivered his last sermon in the Church of the Incarnation, Madison Avenue, where his uncle's last public appearance had been in 1883. He died, quite unexpectedly, in Cooperstown, where he was vacationing, on July 21, 1908. Since Bishop Greer was then in England and many prominent people out of the city, there was a small burial service in the crypt of the cathedral; a great public funeral was held at Grace Church in October. Potter's sarcophagus is now in St. James' Chapel, a portion of the cathedral built in his memory and consecrated in 1916.