

## The Reign of Manning



*Bishop Manning extended his religious ministry beyond the walls of his beautiful cathedral, and beyond the confines of his denomination. He brought the message of religion to our city, and to our country as a whole.*

—RABBI DAVID DESOLA POOL

Bishop Burch had given promise that the Diocese of New York would cease its "policy of drift"—these words occur forcefully in the record—and enter upon a new era. His death seemed to end these auguries of improvement. The picture probably appeared bleak to some observers: postwar changes in conduct, signs of urban disintegration, the antique modes of Church management, the faltering of once-prominent city parishes (Epiphany and Calvary come immediately to mind)—these certainly troubled anyone concerned with the Church's future in Manhattan. As for the rest of the diocese, much promise had yet to be translated into reality. The delegates who gathered in January 1921 on Morningside Heights to elect Burch's successor seemed to have been charged with one great task: choose a man who will stop this drift.

### THE ELECTION

Three Manhattan candidates were waiting to do that: William Thomas Manning, rector of Trinity Church; Charles Lewis Slattery, rector of Grace Church; and Ernest M. Stires, rector of St. Thomas. All were capable, and all would soon be bishops of great dioceses. The Special Convention was scheduled for January 26, less than five weeks after Bishop Burch died. Manning led early and was elected on the third ballot after the Stires enthusiasts threw their votes in his direction. Though Slattery had been their candidate, intense Low Church people never forgave him for not withdrawing: "his faculty for political adventure in the

church was highly developed, due perhaps to his Irish lineage," sniffed a critic long after.<sup>1</sup>

The argument was that, had Slattery withdrawn, Stires would have been elected. But others said Manning's triumph was due to the affront offered convention delegates when minions of William Randolph Hearst handed them newspaper editorials condemning Manning. During the war, Manning had fiercely criticized the Hearst papers for their neutral stand at a time when the future bishop urged the United States to assist the Allies. One thing was sure: Manning was not entirely the candidate of the High Church people. He had "lost much of the Catholic vote: because of his interest in the Faith and Order movement which, in time, developed into the World Council of Churches."<sup>2</sup> On the whole, when the convention adjourned, church people of every shade of belief were quite sure the right man had been elected.

Who was this man who would dominate the Church in New York in such a manner that reasonable observers a generation after his time would speak of his twenty-six-year "reign"? What qualities in him led men and women either to adore or to detest him? He was indeed most remarkable, though not all would agree even there; "a little man in a big job," commented one critical colleague. "I venerate his memory," says another. Between these extreme assessments might be found the opinions of many who, especially on Monday mornings after the newspapers had been delivered, read what the bishop had said or done the day before. Bishop Manning recognized the importance of the city's flourishing newspapers. He was skilled at publicity releases, and was an energetic writer of letters to the editor. His cathedral sermons were often printed and available beforehand to the reporters who sat at a large table near the pulpit.

There was near unanimity that Bishop Manning was remote, inaccessible, forbidding. One man, today a judge, says he will never forget the Sunday he was an acolyte in his Mt. Vernon parish when the bishop made a visitation. The dignified wardens, themselves so intimidating, trembled as they handed the alms basins to the bishop at the Offertory. Perhaps it was the bishop's appearance. He was short (five feet four and a half inches) and slight (130 pounds), astonishingly so for a man of his reputation, but his frame was well put together and in the early days of his episcopate suggested the muscular agility one associates with the Hobart portraits. His skull seemed oversized, but it was his death-mask visage that made him look like a censuring prelate who would be more at home in the fourteenth century than in New York in the 1920s.

The comparison is not far from the mark, for the new bishop would insist on orthodoxy, as he understood it. "If you threatened him or his convictions, you were in trouble," recalls one admirer.<sup>3</sup> He used the

word "catholic" rather more often, and somewhat more particularly, than his predecessors had done. A leading Evangelical layman, banker Stephen Baker, wrote to congratulate Manning on his election, stating that the new bishop's businesslike methods were much needed by the diocese, but Manning himself saw his task of tightening up ecclesiastical practices as equally important. Two famous examples will interest us here, for they confronted Manning—or rather, Manning confronted *them*—soon after his consecration.

#### EARLY CONFLICTS

At St. Mark's-in-the-Bouwerie the rector, William Norman Guthrie, had promoted what seemed to many people to be strange liturgical practices, accompanied by harp. "There, over the graves of some of the city's most esteemed forefathers," the services were "danced out" by professional artists, who, coached by Guthrie, saw their roles as an authentic religious expression. Many people in the congregation thought otherwise. When these liturgical oscillations came to the notice of Bishop Greer, he remonstrated with the rector—unsuccessfully. Manning, however, was not to be so easily deterred. He and Guthrie had known each other at Sewanee and in Cincinnati. Guthrie came to downtown St. Mark's when Manning had been rector of Trinity three years. It is doubtful that they were congenial colleagues. The battle lines, then, were probably already drawn when the bishop was consecrated. Though Guthrie was a prolific writer, he never offered the public a cogent apologia for the goings-on he promoted at St. Mark's, and therefore the matter was publicly reduced to Manning vs. Dancing-barefoot-in-church. Today, such art forms are frequently accepted in liturgical settings, but in 1921 the public was decidedly on the Manning side of the argument, and enjoyed the quarrel, too. Guthrie wouldn't promise to end the dancing, and Bishop Manning refused to visit St. Mark's for some years.

Even more troublesome for the bishop and equally diverting to the public was Percy Stickney Grant, at the Church of the Ascension on Fifth Avenue. Here was a longtime rector who, for years, had publicly advocated some ideas the bishop was bound to oppose. Grant had followed E. Winchester Donald at Ascension. Donald was a most capable man whose succession to Phillips Brooks at Trinity, Boston, undid his fine reputation (for who *could* follow Brooks?). While at Ascension, Donald had firmly set that parish toward social action, discussion of contemporary problems, and bringing the Gospel to bear upon modern

developments, as Brooks had long done at Boston. It was later said of Dr. Donald, "Of the Church as an institution whose object it is to keep the Spirit of Jesus Christ in touch with human life, and to put as much goodness into life as possible, he was tremendously hopeful."<sup>4</sup> Percy Stickney Grant enlarged upon this ideal at the Church of the Ascension. He had begun by refusing to come to the parish unless the vestry declared the pews free. Almost immediately after, Grant moved toward merging some of the weak neighboring Episcopal parishes with the Ascension. He was a decisive leader who spoke often about the Gospel and society.

He was apt to be impatient with Episcopal customs. For instance, he advocated the use of little cups for the Communion.<sup>5</sup> This would have been enough to arouse Bishop Manning, but it was Grant's strong and strange views of Christian marriage that brought him into direct conflict with the bishops of New York. He favored the marriage of divorced persons, and was thought to have officiated at such services. Bishop Greer had confronted him about this.

Now, Percy Stickney Grant was himself handsome, popular—and unmarried. Romantic stories had long circulated about him, and from the record it looks as if he enjoyed being the talked-of Fifth Avenue bachelor rector. If this is true, he received full measure for his taste when it was announced that he would soon marry a divorced "New York Society Beauty." The city papers assumed at first an unwonted discretion, despite the news value of orthodoxy vs. liberal views in the 1920s. The newspapers in distant places, however, were soon in full cry, for this was the era of the Scopes Trial, and a time when indecency was said to have invaded even the churches: was not New Jersey's Reverend Mr. Hall recently found murdered with his mistress? The headlines told what editors thought of Percy Stickney Grant: A GOOD MAN GONE WRONG, lamented the *Lockport Journal*; another *Journal* (Spartanburg, South Carolina) simply said, KICK HIM OUT, BISHOP. Many people wrote to Manning and demanded that Grant be deposed. It was remembered that he seemed to deny the divinity of Christ, had scoffed at such ecclesiastical practices as the consecration of church buildings, and had implied the New Testament miracles were mere autosuggestion. The Walden (N.Y.) *Herald* declared, THE MAN SHOULD RESIGN. Father Huntington of the Order of the Holy Cross volunteered to present Grant for trial; Billy Sunday wrote, praising Bishop Manning's soundness.

The bishop, who relished publicity as much as the rector of Ascension did, resorted to what became a characteristic approach: he sent Grant a list of questions, demanding either satisfactory answers to each

or a resignation, and the letter appeared in the New York papers the next morning. Grant outwitted the bishop by replying in a defense so lengthy that it bored the public and took the sting out of the bishop's confrontation. The bishop then adopted an attitude of waiting to review Grant's future "conduct"—meaning, of course, would he or would he not marry the Society Beauty. The bishop further righted himself by challenging Grant, at a Church Club dinner address, to deny the Creeds flatly and make himself clear.<sup>6</sup> The antagonism ended in a standoff in which neither principal was the winner. That means, in effect, the bishop was the loser, for he would have to bear the burden of the trouble, while Grant, soon to retire, could bask in the delights of a joust with the Bishop of New York. A sagacious observer was accurate when he wrote, "When the Rev. Dr. Grant created so much excitement on Fifth Ave. he finally wrote a rather vaguely worded letter to Bishop Manning, saving the bishop's face for not proceeding against him as a "contumacious heretic and defiler of the shrine.""<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the persona of Bishop Manning was so indelibly cast in his confrontations with Guthrie and Grant that it ever after tended to place him in the role of an unbending and rigid monarch of a diocese. This was commonly perceived by those who knew Manning's strict views on divorce and remarriage, and his firm refusal to allow non-Episcopal clergymen to participate in marriage services in Episcopal churches. When in 1926 he declared that the Marlborough-Vanderbilt marriage performed in St. Thomas Church in 1895 was still valid, despite a much publicized Vatican decree to the contrary, he was generally applauded. But, again, Manning's apparent severity was the enduring memory. And, after the Judge Lindsay controversy, Bishop Manning's reputation was forever tarnished.

#### THE REGRETTABLE MOMENT

Ben Lindsay was an elderly jurist and Methodist layman whose humanness and experience at the bar led him to sympathize with those people who, in increasing numbers, were seeking divorce. His remedy was a legally respected period of "trial marriage," a solution that brought him the dubious "appreciation" of Havelock Ellis.<sup>8</sup> Lindsay's writings and speeches had received national notoriety for four years when, early in 1930, the Churchman's Association in New York City asked him to be a luncheon speaker on December 1 of that year. "The Institution of Marriage" was the announced title of Lindsay's address. Bishop Manning heard that the judge would speak to the association of Episcopal

clergymen. He demanded that the engagement be canceled, and even announced that he and Bishop Gilbert would be the speakers that day. The Association's program chairman, the Rev. Eliot White, refused to accede to the bishop's demand, whereupon the truculent Manning girded himself for battle. It was the most unfortunate single event of his episcopate.

Canceling his participation in a memorial service for the Rev. Dr. Mottet, for fifty years Muhlenberg's successor at the Church of the Holy Communion on Sixth Avenue, the bishop made it known that he would preach about Judge Lindsay's notions at the afternoon service in the cathedral. The nave was well filled, and the congregation expectant. The bishop began his sermon by denouncing those who had been cordial to Judge Lindsay: "There is in this diocese a little group of churchmen who, with what motive I do not venture to say, have been doing whatever lay in their power to make difficulties for their Bishop, and to place him in embarrassing situations," he declared.<sup>9</sup>

The London *Times* reported what followed:

At Sunday morning's [sic] service, detectives mingled with the congregation and stationed themselves near Judge Lindsay, who took up a position immediately behind a press table. Hardly had Bishop Manning begun the Benediction after the sermon when the Judge leaped on the press table and began shouting at Bishop Manning, demanding five minutes to refute "the lies" levelled at him. Members of the congregation (of 3,000) began to shout, urging those in front to kick the Judge and throw him out. Detectives removed the judge from the cathedral and took him to the police station where, in the absence of anyone willing to charge him with disorderly conduct, he was released and ordered to appear in court on the following morning. Judge Lindsay showed signs of the beating he received in the cathedral.<sup>10</sup>

The bishop was not spared excoriation. The conservative New York *Herald Tribune* said, "There has seldom been an episode in the city more completely disheartening than the Manning-Lindsay confrontation in the cathedral . . . Bishop Manning's unseemly utterance was a grievous wrong to the communion and to the community which he serves."<sup>11</sup> Heywood Broun, then columnist on the *Telegram*, came down hard on the bishop:

Dr. Manning was at his worst, moved to undignified fury by a revolt within the clergy of his diocese. . . . The quality of the bishop's spiritual leadership may be checked by the fact that members of his congregation cried out "Lynch him" (i.e. Lindsay) and that several beat a small, defenceless man severely. . . . The edifice which was to be a

place where all might come to find spiritual solace, according to their lights, has become all too palpably the lodge room of one of the smallest bishops who ever issued an imperial edict.<sup>12</sup>

It was not true that there was a "revolt" in the Diocese of New York. Rather, the bishop had several able, vocal challengers. Among them at the beginning of his episcopate were Leighton Parks and Robert Norwood, rectors of St. Bartholomew's Church on Park Avenue. Another was that one clergyman who was ever a thorn for Manning: the celebrated Rev. Dr. Alexander Griswold Cummins of Christ Church in Poughkeepsie. Cummins had been rector there for twenty years before Manning became Bishop of New York. Many people considered him "First Citizen" of Poughkeepsie, as Potter had been similarly regarded in New York City. He was usually in the foreground of every worthy civic movement. An outdoorsman, Cummins seemed more at home with his English rifles and bird dogs than in ecclesiastical councils. Cummins delighted in showing off his bird dogs. Meeting a visitor, he would say to the setter on his left side, "What does Bishop Manning think of Dr. Cummins?" and the dog would give a piteous wail. Turning to the dog on his right, he would say, "And what does Dr. Cummins think of Bishop Manning?" and that dog would growl ferociously.<sup>13</sup>

Cummins was nevertheless remarkably akin to Manning on many issues. This is amply proved by reading his editorials in his *Chronicle*, a church magazine he published monthly for many years. Ostensibly aimed at preserving Low Church verities endangered by the Manning onslaught, the *Chronicle* and its editor were exactly and early right as regards Prohibition, some Anglo-Catholic schemes for "reunion" with the Roman Catholic Church, Soviet despotism, the rise of Hitler ("an Austrian military adventurer"), Buckmanism, and Father Coughlin. Bishop Manning would have nodded agreement, if indeed he ever perused the *Chronicle*. There was a conflict of personalities as well as churchmanship. Cummins wrote of the indecencies of injustice while Bishop Manning often preached against the sweatshop, racial prejudice, and persecution in Europe that both he and Cummins perceived early.

It was Cummins's practice to send "spies" (as some people said) to evaluate what was happening in the New York churches now exposed to the influence of Manning's alleged High Church intolerance. It is fortunate for us that he did so, because if the aforementioned spies counted correctly, we have an important picture of church life in the city. The following is what the *Chronicle* reported in 1930:

	<i>Communicants Reported</i>	<i>Summer Attendance</i>	<i>Winter Attendance</i>
Church of the Heavenly Rest	989	120	350
St. James'	1206	52	400
St. Bartholomew's	3825	106	2000
St. Thomas	1915	450	500
St. Mary the Virgin	1040	330	450
Transfiguration	682	450	500
Calvary	741	104	250
St. George's	2518	54	400
Grace	1947	150	550
Trinity	1179	200	150
Intercession	3322	200	600

If this table does nothing else, it suggests which Manhattan churches continued to be attractive to visitors to the city. And it is worth mentioning in this history where we have already noted prolonged slights to the Negro churches, that Cummins overlooks in his list St. Philip's, though by 1930 that parish was probably already larger than any other in the diocese, excluding only the sum of Trinity and its chapels and possibly St. Bartholomew's.

It has been necessary for us to consider the early controversies of the Manning episcopate. Our digressions, however, neglected two important events which must now be discussed: the election of two suffragans, and progress toward completing the cathedral.

#### TWO SUFFRAGANS

Bishop Manning's concept of an adequate episcopate for New York required two suffragans. Remembering that Bishop Burch's death was hastened by the lack of episcopal assistance, the diocese readily provided for two suffragan bishops in a resolution at the 1921 convention which followed immediately the consecration of Manning. Bishop Arthur Seldon Lloyd was easily elected. The second man elected that day was Herbert Shipman, who had been rector of the Church of the Heavenly Rest since 1907, and before that one of the long line of chaplains at West Point in the days when the military academy seemed to appoint only Episcopalians as chaplains. Shipman's election as a suffragan for New York occasioned something of a mild outcry among some church-people because he had officiated at the marriage of a divorced person; Shipman also served on the board of the *Chronicle*. He was elected on the fifth ballot, and the election prompted a pamphlet war about the "Case Against Herbert Shipman." Bishop Manning, however, seemed



satisfied with Shipman, and he was duly consecrated.<sup>14</sup>

It is worth noting that neither suffragan held Manning's rigid views. And, as the years went on, neither suffragan found his work entirely congenial. No administrative responsibilities were given these men, though both had proved to be supremely able in their former work. Moreover, Bishop Manning had a flair for the dramatic (which he was the first to acknowledge). He besought himself readily to the cathedral pulpit or some other public rostrum on a Sunday when his appointments lay elsewhere. This meant that the suffragans might receive last-minute calls to adjust their own scheduled appointments. And, since the bishop was *the* bishop, "he had to authorize everything," recalls one observer.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes the suffragan learned of appointments by happening to read the daily papers.<sup>16</sup> This was frustrating. And, of course, there were those who tried to drive a wedge between Manning and his assistant bishops for their own purposes; fortunately, neither encouraged this. But Bishop Shipman broke down at least once under the strain before he died in 1930, while Bishop Lloyd (who died in 1936) maintained a stoic resignation. "Lloyd's unqualified support of Bishop Manning against all detractors played a considerable part in preserving the unity of the diocese in the troubled first years of the Manning episcopate," declares one historian.<sup>17</sup>

#### THE CATHEDRAL

The greatest portion of Manning's energies in those "troubled first years" were devoted to completing the cathedral. It has been noted that to this man of strikingly small, almost gnomelike stature, fell the task of building one of the world's largest cathedrals. He always said he was reluctant to enter upon the work, that it was something handed on to him by his predecessors.<sup>18</sup> It was often remembered and held against him that, while rector of Trinity, Manning had shown singular lack of interest in the cathedral. But no one who reads his convention addresses can doubt his dedication to a task that soon became nothing less than devotion to the cathedral and all it might represent in the great city of New York. "It will speak to men of the permanent amid the transitory," he said.<sup>19</sup> One of the means used to communicate the "cathedral idea" to the diocese was the beginning of the *Diocesan Bulletin* in April 1924; at first, it was edited by the bishop himself.

When Manning became the Bishop of New York in 1921, the cathedral consisted of an unfinished choir and the great dome executed according to the plans of the initial architects, Heins and La Farge. The choir and two ambulatory chapels had been consecrated April 19, 1911;

soon after, the trustees exercised the rights accorded them by the original contract and terminated the appointment of La Farge (Heins having died). Ralph Adams Cram was thereupon engaged as architect, and his designs envisioned a great Gothic structure rather than the "Romanesque, with a Byzantine influence," earlier contemplated. Other notable architects had done work on the cathedral. The firms of Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, Carrere and Hastings, Warren and Wetmore, and Henry Vaughan designed parts that were built. But the new Cram drawings provided a cathedral larger and far different from that proposed in July 1891 when the cathedral's Committee on Architecture accepted the competitive designs of Heins and La Farge.

In 1921, the west end of the dome area was walled off; outside lay little more than the rough foundations of the nave. Among the cathedral trustees were James Roosevelt and his half-brother Franklin, now stricken by infantile paralysis. This was not the future President's first involvement with Episcopal business; he was elected a vestryman of St. James' Church, Hyde Park, in 1906 and a cathedral trustee as early as 1911. Franklin Roosevelt managed the great mass meeting at Madison Square Garden in January 1925 that initiated the funds appeal when building recommenced. Now that the original LaFarge plans had been abandoned in favor of those by Ralph Adams Cram, it was expected that the great Gustavini dome would be removed so that the redesigned upper ranges of the choir might result in a vaulted ceiling flowing from altar to the completed west end. It was said that \$15,000,000 was needed to finish the entire cathedral; in 1925 Bishop Manning declared that two-thirds of that sum was "assured."<sup>20</sup> Work on the nave had then begun, and the bishop expected it would be completed in 1929. Each year, convention delegates heard the bishop's view of cathedral progress, and it was not a view unanimously shared by those present. In 1925, Bishop Manning thought it necessary to defend the costly project because "some have feared that our work for the cathedral" diminished the receipts for other Church organizations. Two years later, he noted signs that contributions to the cathedral had begun to dwindle. The rector of St. James' Church, the Rev. Frank W. Crowder, was urged by his vestry to move that building be suspended when the funds already in hand were exhausted, but the convention proved docile to the known will of Bishop Manning, and he was able to announce in 1926 that both towers had been promised—a gift unfulfilled when the stock market collapsed in late 1929 developed into the Great Depression.

The Depression slowed, but did not stop, work on the cathedral. When people questioned spending money on bricks and mortar while people were homeless, it was argued that construction gave employment to men who would otherwise be out of work. But the bishop's

optimism about those towers, the uninterrupted nave, and the "women's transept" faded as, year after year, he had to reckon with lessened contributions. But the construction work never ceased. The west front rose fairly rapidly, the Amsterdam Avenue steps were finally set in place and, in a great service on the last Sunday in November 1941, the long cathedral nave was opened in a triumphant service. Events the next Sunday meant that Bishop Manning would never see a completed cathedral.

For the first ten years of Manning's episcopate, the cathedral dean was the gifted Howard Chandler Robbins; formerly rector of Manhattan's Church of the Incarnation, he was appointed in 1917. Robbins's intellect was congenial with Bishop Greer's wide-ranging mind of inquiry. He was impatient with what he considered Manning's cut-and-dried orthodoxy. Having been longer on the close, and probably rankling because of the bishop's obvious lack of interest in the cathedral prior to his consecration, Robbins bristled at the new bishop's ecclesiasticisms. That there was a great gulf fixed between Manning and his dean was implied in a letter James O. S. Huntington wrote the bishop at the time of his election; he said, "Who but you could save us from Dr. Stires or Dr. Robbins?"<sup>21</sup> Several contretemps widened the breach between the two men. One is worth relating because it is one of the cathedral legends that happens to be true. The Deanery had been built by funds given by Mrs. Clinton Ogilvie as a memorial to her husband. His sculptured bust was to be enshrined in a niche over the drawing room portal. But other people's ancestors are not always pleasant to live with, and it became the custom in the Deanery to remove the portrait bust, replacing it when Mrs. Ogilvie announced a forthcoming call. As always happens when we "practice to deceive," the arrangement led to trouble. One afternoon, Mrs. Ogilvie came, unannounced, with her daughter Ida (a distinguished anthropologist who, unfortunately for the Diocese of New York, was concerned for ancestors remote as well as near). The Robbinses were not at home, and the maid, when asked about the empty niche, gave the honest but lamentable explanation that "the statue is *never* there." The Ogilvies left.

Somewhat less amusing was the matter of a large bequest to Dean Robbins. Bishop Manning was convinced it rightfully belonged to the cathedral, that Robbins had influenced the testator to leave the money to him, not to the Church. But the intention of the deceased was plain: the money was indeed left to the Dean; "Now I can have a new razor blade every morning," he exclaimed. Bishop Manning was not amused. This is not to say the bishop was without a sense of humor. He delighted in showing callers the letter addressed to him: "Dear Bishop Manning: I am a Christian woman, which it is obvious you are not . . ." <sup>22</sup>

In the 1920s many Episcopalians moved from lower Manhattan into the northwest quadrant of the island and found in the cathedral services similar to those they had known in their former churches. Dean Robbins's ecclesiastical preferences, and those of his predecessors, Grosvenor and Gates, were generally central—neither High nor Low. The bishops wore black chimeres until Bishop Gilbert's consecration in 1930, when Bishop Manning wore a red chimere—and preached a sermon on “apostolic succession” that many people in and beyond the Episcopal Church found offensive. White linen chasubles were used in the cathedral services soon after Manning's consecration.<sup>23</sup> Toward the end of his episcopate he wore cope and miter, sparingly.<sup>24</sup> Even Bishop Lloyd could sometimes be persuaded to wear the full Episcopal vestments. Bishop Manning was often accused of promoting Anglo-Catholicism in the diocese. This was untrue. He was thoroughly “Prayer Book” in taste and belief, cared little for ceremony one way or the other, and was far quicker to attack what he held to be wrong thinking than he was to lay siege upon chancel peculiarities.

#### THE DIOCESE IN 1926

Now let us turn to the Diocese of New York as it appeared to the general public in the late 1920s. Everyone knew a cathedral was abuilding, and that it was probably not quite as fully a “House of Prayer for All People” as its proprietors claimed. And every reader of the daily press was aware that Bishop Manning was in frequent debate with his clergy or with others whom he considered to be public malefactors. One reporter, giving his opinion about the Diocese of New York in 1926, wrote:

No one has been openly called heretical, no one has held Morris dances in sacred buildings, there have been no open rows between bishops and clergy; there has been a temporary let-up in propaganda. In fact, everybody has been quiet and outwardly peace-loving and well-behaved.<sup>25</sup>

Just a month before this appraisal, the *American Mercury*, edited by H. L. Mencken, printed a memorable article about “that most baffling of all mysteries, the Protestant Episcopal Church.”<sup>26</sup> It was asserted that only one out of every seventy New York City persons was an Episcopalian, and though numerically weak, “the Episcopalians are the religious aristocrats. Just as the hoi polloi cannot hope to contend with the 400 in the Sunday supplements, so neither can the outcast religions cope with the Church of the Vanderbilts and Morgans.” In New York City “there are a number of parishes paying their rectors well over

\$10,000 a year," though the average salary in the East was \$1,500 (if married), plus rectory and a car. New York City was seen as the fountainhead of Episcopalianism because here, at 281 Fourth Avenue, "the budget is made out, and the sums to be raised apportioned among the dioceses."

Not everything in 1926 was "peace-loving and well-behaved" among Episcopalians in New York, however. Bishop Manning was opposed to any anti-evolution law. He, with Bishop Brent, urged President Coolidge to join the Permanent Court for International Justice, and continued (with Greer and Burch) Potter's sympathy with CAIL. Charles Slattery of Grace Church opposed ousting elected Socialists from the legislature in 1920, and his successor, Walter Russell Bowie, questioned the true patriotism of the DAR and other organizations, and was active in the Scottsboro Case. Bishop Shipman said white people owe the Negro a great debt, and Bishop Manning demanded the impeachment of the California governor who excused a lynching. This was what the Episcopal Church in New York looked like to the *American Mercury* reporter.

In 1926, our pilot year, there were 409 clergy connected with the Diocese of New York, 272 parishes and chapels, 4,492 confirmations, and 93,387 communicants. There were thirty diocesan organizations and institutions. Among them were the cathedral, Trinity School, St. Agatha's School for Girls on West End Avenue, St. Stephen's College, St. Luke's Home for Aged Women, the Sheltering Arms on Amsterdam Avenue at 129th Street, the Home for Incurables on Third Avenue at 182d Street, the Hospital of Rest for Consumptives on 209th Street, the House of the Annunciation for incurable and crippled girls on Grey-stone Avenue, St. Faith's House in Tarrytown "for the rescue, shelter and training of young girls who have fallen for the first time," the Home for Old Men and Aged Couples across the avenue from the cathedral, the Peabody Home for Aged and Indigent Women, the Orphan's Home and Asylum on Convent Avenue at 135th Street, the Society for the Relief of the Destitute Blind on Grand Avenue, and the City Mission of Help. In addition, there were the Seamen's Church Institute and the Episcopal City Mission Society, which traced their histories back to Onderdonk's time. The Community of St. Mary had its motherhouse at Peekskill, and maintained its schools and its hospital in the city; the St. John Baptist Sisters had long since moved motherhouse and school to Mendham, New Jersey, but in the 1920s still continued some of the work they had begun in New York many years before. St. Faith's House on the cathedral close, designed to be a training school for the Order of Deaconesses also continued, but there were signs that its great days were past, partly because the Episcopal Church

as a whole had never fully accepted this type of women's ministry.

The year 1926 might also be called the peak year for St. Stephen's College in Annandale as far as its connection with the Church is concerned. In 1919 the Rev. Bernard Iddings Bell had become president. His energy, intelligence, and nationwide reputation brought immediate results. Within a year the college had begun a building program that vastly increased its potential; leading laypeople argued for the college, and Bell himself challenged the diocese to support what he insisted was a major Church institution. Unfortunately, Bell also insisted that the small college be run entirely according to his own will, a policy that tended to exclude able people who desired to help the school. It is ironic that at the very time Bell should have been able to congratulate himself on his undeniable building success, he met his Waterloo in the form of a student strike. It was springtime 1926, and the president found occasion to offend the students in an impromptu speech. They directed their exuberance to cutting classes and chapel; it became front-page news and in the end the college trustees (including Franklin D. Roosevelt) were obliged to step in and make peace. Bell believed it was all caused by two or three disgruntled faculty members bent on his removal, and he was perhaps partly right. In any event, two years later St. Stephen's College became part of Columbia University. It is said that Nicholas Murray Butler had long wanted a campus of Columbia to be located in a pleasant rural area to attract again the "sons of New York gentlemen" who were now forsaking the university for other Ivy League colleges. Bell became warden of the absorbed college, and resigned five years later. In 1934 the name was changed to Bard in honor of its founders, and ten years later the connection with Columbia was severed. The college continues its Episcopal Church connection by means of its chapel and chaplain; and its education system, tracing its ideas back to those of Bell, is now widely shared by other colleges.

Did the Church withdraw from the college or did the college withdraw from the Church? Both. Episcopalians are not notably enthusiastic about Church institutions. They support their home parish and whatever charities appeal to their interests. St. Stephen's College was unable to command the attention of a wide circle of churchpeople. A noted Anglo-Catholic, Bernard Iddings Bell, alienated many alumni and erstwhile loyal supporters; his temperament alienated many others. The college found funding elsewhere and gradually drifted away from Church auspices, though all the bishops of New York have been trustees. The same process might be seen in others of the "Church" institutions listed above; they were established by Church people, were known as Church organizations, and over the years drifted away from Church control. The real cause is the lack of Episcopal Church money:

but some people found it easier to blame Bishop Manning. It was thought he wanted funds for the cathedral instead of various institutions, a charge he refuted annually in his convention addresses.

In a 1920s survey of the Episcopal Church in New York City, E. Clowes Chorley, rector of St. Philip's, Garrison, and longtime historiographer of the diocese, asserted that "*The Church has gradually withdrawn, or has been driven out* from the still densely-populated territory below 14th Street" (italics original). Why? Mainly because "the privileged classes moved uptown and then parish churches followed them."<sup>27</sup> In all, twenty-one Episcopal churches south of 14th Street had disappeared: between 15th and 72d Streets, eight had gone, plus five north of 72d Street. These figures do not include churches merged with others, nor do they include the ten churches, quickly defunct, that were organized soon after Bishop Onderdonk's suspension. (Lack of episcopal authority and admonition appear to have permeated new churches that probably had better not have been formed.)

In 1926 St. Bartholomew's Church on Park Avenue was the largest congregation in the diocese, claiming 4,000 members. Grace Church, St. George's St. Philip's, the Chapel of the Intercession, and St. Agnes Chapel each listed nearly 3,000, while other Manhattan parishes reported numbers nearly as impressive: St. Andrew's, 1,193; St. James', 1,050; Holy Trinity Chapel, 1,000; St. Mark's (now recovering from the dance), 1,543; St. Mary the Virgin, 1,447; St. Michael's, 1,157; St. Thomas, 1,322; and Trinity Church, 1,100.

Parishes of noteworthy size outside the city were St. Luke's, Beacon (542); Christ Church, Bronxville (902); Grace Church, Middletown (545); Ascension, Mt. Vernon (998); Trinity, Mt. Vernon (840); Christ Church, Poughkeepsie (901); Holy Comforter, Poughkeepsie (512); St. Paul's, Poughkeepsie (634); Good Shepherd, Newburgh (986); St. George's, Newburgh (584); Trinity, New Rochelle (935); Grace Church, Nyack (600); Trinity, Ossining (525); St. Peter's, Peekskill (651); St. Peter's, Portchester (801); Grace Church, White Plains (980); St. Andrew's, Yonkers (1,096); and St. John's, Yonkers (1,658). The fact that each of these parishes now reports significantly fewer members is due in part to the redefinition of the word "communicant" and the new custom of charging \$2.00 for each communicant: parish treasurers tend to make rectors honest! While it is true that these parishes now record fewer members, there are other churches in the Diocese of New York, small in 1926 and much larger now. Nonetheless, the diocese listed 93,387 communicants in 1925 and 47,846 in 1980. And more than forty chapels and churches outside the city listed in 1926 have since then been merged with other churches and are now nonexistent. In 1925, 272 were reported in the Diocese of New York; in 1980, 190.<sup>28</sup> The national Church

in 1925 claimed 1,193,321 communicants, and 2,018,870 in 1980.

People always want to be shown the high peaks of a storied past. The ferment and creativity abounding in New York City in the 1920s are generally acknowledged, perhaps not so much for the cathedral abuilding on Morningside Heights, as for Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald's celebrated plunge in the fountain on Grand Army Plaza. It was now a city of wonderful buildings, imposing civic monuments, manicured parks; there were even "parkways" for automobiles. Though the predicted demise of the East Side never took place, there was a persistent airy luxurious ambience about Riverside Drive, not far from the cathedral. In 1926, the Diocese of New York was creeping toward its largest number of communicants, which would be reported at 112,174 ten years later in 1936, when the world was much changed by Depression. Confirmations in the 1920s never quite reached their consistently high level of the early years of the century.

#### THE DEPRESSION OF THE 1930s

The Great Depression that began soon after the Wall Street collapse of October 1929 is clearly reflected in the annals of the Episcopal Church.

Parish after parish report financial agony. In many cases rectors are taking a voluntary cut, or are being forced to take a 10% reduction of salary. Many parishes carrying a debt were having a hard struggle in good times but now their position parallels the experience of many business and industrial organizations. Frequently we hear of parishes that are defaulting on their rectors' salaries. In not a few instances, parishes will probably have to go into mission status.

Such was the gloomy assessment of one knowledgeable reporter, in 1932.<sup>29</sup>

In one church, the deaconess was funded by a wealthy layman who, when his textile-related firm was shaken (but by no means toppled) by the crash, simply went to the rector and said, "Get rid of her." Since those in the Order of Deaconesses had no job security, they were often the first casualty of the Depression in the Church. It may be said that one of the significant effects of the Depression on the Episcopal Church was the demoralization it wrought among many of those selfless women who had given their entire working lives to the Church, and could be dismissed so easily. It is no wonder, then, that St. Faith's House—the "training school" for deaconesses on the cathedral close—barely survived the Great Depression, and soon after closed forever.



## THE BISHOP IN A CHANGING DIOCESE

In the 1930s, two main facts were clear to anyone who observed the Episcopal Church in New York: its bishop made frequent pronouncements, and its parishes were undergoing rapid change. In 1937, even before the nave was opened, Bishop Manning proved the potential importance of the cathedral as an awakener of the public conscience by having an authentic slum flat set up in the cathedral. New Yorkers flocked to see how their neighbors were living. Several years later, the bishop again conspicuously displayed a righteousness he genuinely felt. The story is well-known. When a Bronx rector welcomed black worshipers with a cordiality whose warmth dismayed his vestrymen, those gentlemen attempted to prevent the new neighbors from worshipping in that church by declaring the building closed for redecoration; the locks were changed and the rector was not given a new key. This was entirely uncanonical as well as patently un-Christian. Therefore, when the rector appealed to Bishop Manning, the bishop was at his most resourceful. He canceled existing Sunday appointments and, by prior arrangement, met a locksmith—and a corps of press men!—at the church steps. The church doors were opened, and the divine worship was uninterrupted.

Changes in the churches? Probably no more change, by proportion, than in the nation. But Manning's character was such that he stood to be blamed for anything that struck an unaccustomed note among churchpeople. Intinction, for instance, remained a sensitive Episcopal issue. Bishop Manning would not approve intinction, but permitted communion in one kind.<sup>30</sup> Was not this sheer Romanism? people asked. Similarly, Manning's reluctance to allow ministers of other churches to participate in Episcopal services was reminiscent of Hobart. The appearance of red chimeres, or purple cassocks, upset some people. And, when the church furnishings house, Morehouse-Gorham in 41st Street, published the *American Missal* in 1931, Bishop Manning was thought to be a promoter, though in reality he discountenanced anything other than the Book of Common Prayer. (Those who knew the bishop best were well aware that, when officiating, his practice was always to insist upon holding the Prayer Book, or appearing to be reading from it, even though he knew its words by heart—for *this was the book of the Church*.) The fact that Manning showed sympathy with the Oxford Group in its earlier manifestations, that he rehired as secretary a priest he had just deposed, and as early as 1921 approved the removal of the word "male" from the legal clauses providing parochial electors shows a breadth of mind his detractors often denied. Nevertheless, he

*did* seem forbidding, remote, dictatorial. And the public never forgot those early skirmishes he had seemed to relish heartily.

One more fact caused observers to think Bishop Manning espoused Anglo-Catholicism in the diocese, and that was his knowledge of Catholic practice, and his willingness to participate in any ceremony not inimical to the Book of Common Prayer. In this he differed from the Potters, or Bishop Greer, who were simply uninformed about some traditions, and preferred to remain uninformed. Manning, for instance, knew how to consecrate holy oil, and was willing to supply it to parishes when requested.

Manning's rigidity may be seen in the following anecdote. A rector, new in his Manhattan parish, discovered many of the members had never been confirmed. When the bishop came for the rite, more than one hundred persons came forward, and the rector announced that after the first two candidates had been confirmed the congregation—many of them elderly—might be seated. Later, in the sacristy, the rector waited for Bishop Manning to commend him upon such a large confirmation class. Instead, Manning demanded to know "who gave you permission to evade the rubric and allow the people to be seated, Mr. Donegan?" The bishop was emphatic about this. "If there are more than 150 candidates, the class can be divided and the two sections can be confirmed on different days or at different hours on the same day, but it will be understood that the congregation should stand," he declared in a *Bulletin* editorial.<sup>31</sup>

After his death, an editorial said that despite the bishop's many controversies, time usually proved he was right in his stands. This generous appraisal is probably true. One of the gentler skirmishes involved the relocation of the Church of the Epiphany. Here was a midtown parish that traced its beginnings to City Mission enterprise under Onderdonk. The loyal congregation, living in other neighborhoods, in 1937 determined to sell the old church and build elsewhere. The bishop agreed that Epiphany should move, but refused permission for the proposed site. He wanted an Episcopal church on the far East Side near the York Avenue hospitals. "Your arguments leave me decidedly unconvinced," the bishop told Epiphany's vestry, and those gentlemen eventually capitulated to the bishop's requirements. The new church, designed by Wyeth and King, was built on York Avenue.

All the churches were called to broader considerations in World War II. Again, as in the First World War, Manning was truculent. The bishop's well-known disgust with Hitlerism won him notice in *Der Stuermer* in 1937 as "a two-fold child of hell, and a wolf in sheep's clothing." The United States is "directly concerned" with the Allied

cause, he told the convention delegates in 1940. He urged that "fullest help, at once" be offered England. "There can be no compromise between Democracy and Hitlerism—we are already in the war," he declared the next year. He decided not to spend his vacation in Soamesville in 1941, preferring to remain close to the city. Despite his age, the world crisis was bracing to him. War meant extraordinary decisions: there would be no more building at the cathedral, and the steel scaffolding was eventually given to "the war effort"; there would be a one-day diocesan convention. Bishop Manning was aware that there was a fresh importance of New York's Negro Episcopalians, many newly arrived in the city. He urged housing and health and recreational facilities for "our Negro population" (though in his own manuscripts, the bishop wrote "Coloured"). There were then more than 10,000 black communicants in the diocese.<sup>32</sup>

Another minority (at least as far as the franchise was concerned) were Episcopal Church women. When, in 1942, Mrs. E. H. Paddock was listed on the printed ballot as a candidate for the diocesan Board of Religious Education, it was probably the first time a woman was accorded that privilege. Her election merely pointed out that in times of national emergency decent things can happen. War has its uses. One wonders now at the absurdity of reading off, year after year in diocesan convention, the names of prominent Episcopal laymen who had died in the previous twelve months, with no mention of lay women who (as everyone present knew) meant so much to the diocese. Yet it was not until 1954 that women were allowed on mission advisory committees, 1957 allowed on vestries in the Diocese of New York, and 1958 permitted to be delegates to diocesan conventions. "The Vestry is the last vestige of the male sex in this day and age," declared the Rev. Dr. Fleming of Trinity Church in 1935.<sup>33</sup> "Soon there would be nothing to stop them from the priest's office," warned another observer, who was wiser than he knew.<sup>34</sup>

Nonetheless, if the Diocese of New York deprived itself of recognizing the long years of women's service, full acknowledgment was given the men who annually appeared in convention. Monell Sayre, Stephen Baker, and R. Fulton Cutting were diocesan familiars; Baker's Church responsibilities began in the old Church of the Holy Trinity in 42d Street, and ended just about the time his rector, Horace W. B. Donegan of St. James', was elected suffragan bishop of New York in 1946. In the 1930s the diocesan business structure was reorganized by Edward K. Warren (whose father had also been rector, successively of Holy Trinity and St. James'), Richard Mansfield, G. Forrest Butterworth, and Clarence Michaelis.

## NOTABLE CLERGY AND LAITY

The New York Episcopal clergy in Bishop Manning's time, apart from the controversial Guthrie and Grant, included an assortment of notable scholars, preachers, and pastors. At the General Seminary there was Hughell E. W. Fosbroke, formidable dean and teacher of Old Testament; his celebrated profundity seldom appeared in bound books, much to the loss of Christendom. Burton Scott Easton, General's New Testament giant, was a recognized author. At Union Seminary there was the great Folkes-Jackson, whom generations of seminarians learned to know early in studying for the ministry. Robert Norwood held crowds at St. Bartholomew's spellbound; rumor said he went directly from the pulpit to a couch in his study where a masseur stood ready to massage and relax his taut body. At St. George's there was Karl Reiland; he was skilled at extemporaneous preaching, and lost no opportunity to goad Manning into controversy. He was one of those "always gunning for Manning," as Bishop Donegan remarked later. Frank Crowder, rector of St. James', and Donald Aldrich of Ascension were skilled and beloved pastors; when Aldrich resigned to enter the navy as a chaplain in World War II, his parishioners thought they had done far more than their duty to their country in allowing him to leave them.

Interesting lay persons helped promote the Episcopal Church's "image" throughout Manning's time. Apart from the old Knickerbocker families (whose prominence and ability to bestow funds steadily declined toward mid-century), there was, for instance, the longtime mayor, Fiorello La Guardia. He was an Episcopalian, as truculent as the bishop, and of about the same stature. Together they engaged in some badinage about their similar height on the dais of Synod Hall when the mayor appealed to diocesan convention to have the cathedral nave open for public symphonies by the time of the 1939-1940 World's Fair. Very soon after this, the appointment of Bertrand Russell as a professor in the city's college aroused the bishop's opposition; blasts from the close were a major factor in preventing the British philosopher from coming to New York. And, in 1944, two New York Episcopalians opposed each other for the Presidency: Franklin D. Roosevelt and Thomas E. Dewey were from the same county and archdeaconry.

## RETIREMENT?

The question of Bishop Manning's retirement was discussed even before World War II. Once, in a pointed reference to President Roose-

velt's attempt to "pack" the Supreme Court, the bishop told convention delegates that neither judges nor bishops need retire because they had passed a certain age. The convention applauded. From time to time, he would declare that he had no retirement plans, and at least once he was given a standing ovation when he said he expected to remain bishop indefinitely. But General Convention had other plans; in 1943 the convention passed the first reading of a new canon obliging bishops to retire at age seventy-two; if passed in the succeeding General Convention, it would be the rule of the Church. Bishop Manning was extraordinarily hale and hearty in 1943, and he fought against the new canon, arguing that the national Church's organization was subsidiary to the diocese which had elected and supported its bishop as father-in-God. He never regarded the national Church as having special sanctity. In his view, the bishop-diocese relationship, and the priest-parish bond were of divine provenance and must be safeguarded, a view in which he was supported by a varied group in the House of Bishops. But the new canon passed into law after the 1946 General Convention. Bishop Manning was advised that the canon couldn't be made retroactive, but as the year drew toward its close he announced he would retire at the end of December.

The bishop's resignation was sudden, and his departure quiet. He moved to a house in Washington Mews owned by Bishop Gilbert (who, in turn, moved to Ogilvie House on the close). There, in that tiny house in the Mews, Manning continued to be active. He wrote spirited letters to the *Herald Tribune* and the *Times*, explaining why a Unitarian ought not to read the Epistle in an Episcopal church, or why the ambience of Washington Square must be preserved. His study was cluttered with mementos of his busy life, and above his desk was an altar that had been designed by Canon West; it could readily be lowered into position for daily use. Nearby on the wall was a photograph of a large confirmation class prepared by the bishop back in his Sewanee days—"and they knew their catechism," he would tell a visitor, for the bishop was ever a teacher.<sup>35</sup> And of equal significance, there was a photo of William Thomas Manning in World War I uniform. He lived nearly three years after his resignation.