

# An Epilogue: Paul, Our Bishop



*He is the man for New York.*

—J. STUART WETMORE

The chronicler of the distant past tends to become less a historian and more an editor as his narrative approaches recent times. He hastens to appraise events and decisions that have not yet had time to resolve themselves, and he is likely to do this by a rigid interpretation, using the history he has been writing. This is unjust to the subject, and unfair to the trusting reader. It is particularly hazardous in the case of the current Bishop of New York, Paul Moore, Jr., who is probably the most controversial man on the bench. This chapter, then, will attempt little more than a description of what has so far happened in the current episcopate. Perhaps the historian who writes about the next century of the Church in New York will find the few tentative statements here helpful a hundred years from now.

When Paul Moore came to New York as coadjutor in 1970, he had credentials that immediately invited interest, beginning with an ancestor who was a Trinity vestryman in the mid eighteenth century. The future bishop was born near Morristown, New Jersey, in 1919, educated in a somewhat prim local school there, and went on to St. Paul's, Concord, New Hampshire, and then to Yale. While at St. Paul's he perceived and pondered the disparity between the goodness ascribed to the Creator and the suffering in creation. Five years' military service in the Marine Corps during World War II (in which he was seriously wounded) deepened Moore's reflection, as it did to many other men, who, weighing the alternatives, saw the Church's ministry as their most positive response to the human predicament they surveyed. For at St. Paul's School a remarkable master, Frederick Fox Bartrop, aroused in Paul Moore a vocation to the priesthood. In 1946 he entered the General Theological Seminary in downtown New York City.

At the seminary, then in the last year of the redoubtable Dean Hughell E. W. Fosbroke and the first years of his able successor, Law-

rence A. Rose, Moore's vocation became focused on work with people who lived in what were then called slums, but which soon came to be known, more accurately, as the inner city. For it was already plain that rich cities were neglecting conditions at their core. The inner city was deteriorating, and so were the lives of the people who lived there. The seminary's Chelsea area was identifiably shabby, but there were much worse conditions in other parts of the city, and in most cities across the land. It happened that two young members of the faculty were also drawn to inner city work. Together with Paul Moore, Kilmer Myers and Robert Pegram believed the only authentic ministry in decayed urban areas was to live with the people in those poor neighborhoods. If the priests were married, as was Paul Moore, then their families would become part of the neighborhood.

The three men sought an existing church in a run-down urban area by inquiring of those bishops whose jurisdictions included cities that might have such a church. It is perhaps indicative of the Episcopal Church at that time that there were few responses. The only viable reply came from right across the Hudson River. Bishop Washburn of Newark had, in Jersey City, exactly the place the men were looking for: Grace Church in the VanVorst section of that decayed, politics-racked city.

The rest of the story has become an epic in the Episcopal Church. Those of us who worked at "Grace, VanVorst" recall an excitement and sense of purpose that neither scrutiny of method nor archcriticism can diminish. Very soon, the parish came alive with all manner of activity; even more, however, it was a respected statement of purpose. Episcopalians need not abandon their old churches in the dark streets. Paul Moore remained in Jersey City eight years, went on to be Dean of Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis, and, in 1963, was elected Suffragan Bishop of Washington. As we have seen, he was elected Bishop Donegan's coadjutor and came to New York in 1970.

Paul Moore was installed thirteenth Bishop of New York on September 23, 1972. The city then was a dispirited place. Whole neighborhoods in the Bronx were a wasteland. Apartment house after apartment house was abandoned, burned out, which meant less tax revenue for municipal purposes. Businesses threatened to leave the city, and many had already done so. The city's credit rating slipped downward. There were few newspapers, crime statistics mounted, and one failure seemed to follow another. The pervasive discouragement invaded the churches. In more than one city parish, the forbidden question was at last spoken: How long can this church survive?

Others were asking an even bolder question: *Should* the Church survive? Maybe there *ought* to be empty pews in American churches,

perhaps bare ruin is deserved in those old choirs that lulled a citizenry into a pretense of a religion whose God must be dead: so ran the general argument of some thinkers. The nation's spiritual fabric took on a tougher, less comforting texture in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Traditional American Christianity was cross-examined as perhaps never before in our history. There was a new, optimistic, and often naive interest in other religious traditions, particularly those of the East. Astrology assumed an unwonted respectability. The older professions of ministry, law, and medicine began to question basic premises and practices; in the Episcopal Church, people even began to ask what theological reason prevented women from ordination.

The Episcopal Church was not alone in feeling the cold winds of unfavorable change. All the mainline denominations, not excluding Roman Catholic, could look back to those recent days that now seemed better than they probably were, and most certainly appeared to be fast fading in a remote past. The Episcopal Church, however, probably had more than its share of troubles because, at this most inopportune time, it was in the midst of a long-projected revision of the Prayer Book. The revisions of 1892 and 1928 had been mild updatings of the 1789 book, which itself wasn't far different from the English Prayer Book of 1662. Even so, 1892 and 1928 had seen some reluctant rectors and sullen laypeople who did not want public worship altered in any direction. Now, in the 1970s, it was plain that the revisions were going much further than most Episcopalians at first realized, and would add to the anxieties of the times. Then there was the sexual revolution everyone was, at last, talking about openly: clergy divorcing and remarrying, homosexuality identified, churchgoers living together without benefit of the marriage vows. If ghosts laugh, there was a constant chortle from the shade of old Onderdonk.

Paul Moore moved into this farrago when he succeeded Bishop Donegan in 1972. A large portion of the new bishop's first problems were, inevitably, inherited from an old past, and they often involved a sensitive issue: parish loyalty. While our religion presupposes the use of buildings, our Lord never promised lovely structures in perpetuity. The historian is especially aware of this as he reviews what once was and today is not. The disappearance of old St. John's Chapel, one of the finest buildings ever put up in New York City, must always be an embarrassment to us. Its destruction in 1918 was a mistake.

The disappearance of Christ Church as a separate parish placed in jeopardy its fine building at Broadway and 71st Street. The church was designed by Charles C. Haight. The parish itself laid claim to be the second oldest of the city's Episcopal churches. It had had its share of migrations: from Ann Street to Worth Street, then to 18th Street, and on

again to Fifth Avenue. Finally, in 1886, the vestry of Christ Church chose a site on Upper Broadway. The new and expensive location seemed worth the gamble, but Christ Church never enjoyed the flood-tide of West Side prosperity. It was in decline by the 1920s, and finally merged with St. Stephen's Church, several blocks away. The church building was left to whatever fate might befall it. Those who are intrigued by Episcopal Church peregrinations will be interested to know that Christ Church, begun in 1793 by a former Methodist itinerant minister, Joseph Pilmore, was the congregation from which in 1871 the rector, Ferdinand Ewer, led a group of people to found the Church of St. Ignatius.

Of parallel interest is the fate of the Church of the Holy Communion on Sixth Avenue. This was the church of William Augustus Muhlenberg. The building was one of the elder Upjohn's finest town churches. In the 1840s that part of Sixth Avenue did have a small-town flavor about it, but quite soon this was succeeded by fashionable stores that, in time, became lofts and warehouses: not a promising neighborhood for a parish church. Nevertheless, Muhlenberg's spiritual legacy, the loyalty of the small congregation, the extraordinarily long rectorate of Dr. Mottet, and a substantial endowment kept the church alive. During the 1920s the Canadian virtuoso organist W. Lynwood Farnum attracted crowds of people to the old church (which must have tried Dr. Mottet's patience, because rectors never like to have congregations gathered for that sole purpose). Farnham and Mottet died about the same time, in 1930, and there remained only a dwindling congregation. Soon after Bishop Moore came to New York there were conversations between the authorities of the Church of the Holy Communion and Calvary Church, which was then in process of merging with old St. George's, Stuyvesant Square. The result was a combination of the three congregations under one rector. The old church on Sixth Avenue was sold and, eventually, the name Holy Communion ceased to be listed with the associated parishes. It is a poignant loss, made harder by the subsequent use of Upjohn's exquisite building as a disco. But it is further proof that very few churches can escape the plain fact that they must be located in an area where people live. It is a principle directly related to the idea of the Incarnation itself.

These are examples of two old and prominent city parishes that ceased to exist as separate corporations. Their disappearance is not necessarily the result of modern faithlessness. The latter-day disappearance of Episcopal churches is small compared to the rise and fall of parishes in what we wistfully suppose was the heyday of churchgoing. The diocesan historiographer in 1910, E. Clowes Chorley, declared that in the past fifty years—that is, between 1860 and 1910—forty-four Epis-

copal congregations in the Diocese of New York became extinct. In addition, ninety-one chapels, missions, and preaching stations were similarly pronounced defunct in that fifty-year period. These statistics should silence those who pine for the good old days.

The fact is that the first archdeacons of the diocese did their work too assiduously. They established places of worship where they supposed Episcopalians might be found. They themselves officiated at, or persuaded neighboring clergy to take charge of, what they optimistically declared would probably become a full-fledged parish. Their hopes led them to establish missions in such unheard-of places as Princes Bay, Garrettson's, Linoleumville, Hitchcock's Corners, Mabbettsville, Quaker Hill, Rochdale, Bangall, Spuykenkill, Tioranda, Reynoldsville, Attlebury, Vosburgh, Chapel Corners, Satterlytown, Sparrowbush, Huguenot, Moodna, Lincolnville, Montana Mills, Pochuck, Dean's Corners, Breakneck, Milltown, New Landing, Mead's Corners, Chichester, LeFever Falls, Gleneria, and Centerville. What antiquarian today can identify half of these places? Many were rural railroad stops, soon to be ended by the automobile.

For by 1910 the motorcar had begun to change church life. Churchgoing thereafter was more and more restricted to Sunday mornings. Families could now drive past the once-dear mission chapel at Budds Corners and worship in a larger church where there was a choir, electricity, and central heating. In one rural area, there were in 1910 *nine* Episcopal churches and missions within a radius of ten miles. Eight of them existed until Bishop Donegan's time, and it was his distasteful task to urge the cessation of four; those surviving seem to have a viable future.

This digression concerning the rise and fall of churches in the Diocese of New York has been necessary because each bishop as he arrives at the responsibility to which he has been elected must grasp the salient facts underlying every congregation. The other clergy, too, must be aware of history. In 1983 an assortment of priests thought to be representative of diocesan clergy were asked to look back across the years since they began their ministries in the diocese and list what they believed to be "the most important developments." The responses were remarkably similar. Most important seemed to be the reorganization of the diocese in Bishop Donegan's final years. A few respondents thought reorganization was important because it was a mistake, but most were convinced it did something to correct long-standing problems.

Those who were thus polled thought the ordination of women to the priesthood ("which did not upset the diocese") a major event. The introduction of the 1979 Prayer Book was seen to be of only slightly

less importance than reorganization and women's ordination, and it *has* been somewhat unsettling, a few parishes (encouraged by recalcitrant rectors) refusing to discard their 1928 books.

Slightly less significant also seemed to be the choice of a black suffragan bishop in 1974, when Harold L. Wright was elected and consecrated. His early and unexpected death occurred in 1978; he was succeeded by Walter D. Dennis, also black. The resumed building of the cathedral was also seen as important. This decision was announced by Bishop Moore in a letter sent to the clergy in December 1978. He said, "The Trustees of the Cathedral have just met in special session to take an extraordinary and historic step: to resume construction of our Cathedral after a cessation of 37 years." The plan was—and still is—to employ young people as apprentice and expert stonemasons working under the direction of J. R. Bambridge, who had just finished working on Liverpool Cathedral. Completing the southwest tower of the cathedral was to have priority, and by our Bicentennial year one could see the new courses rising high above Amsterdam Avenue.

Also offered as important recent events were social concerns "in all areas of our diocese": the Gay Movement, the trend away from conservatism, the heightened city ministry, the abolition of "aided" parishes ("no more second-class citizens"), crises in the lives of the clergy such as low salaries, decline in their prestige, and especially a perceived "decline in the morality and integrity of the clergy." The Church was seen as hard hit by the rise in oil prices and the economic malaise of the Northeast. And there was said to be a "liberalization" of the life of the clergy inasmuch as they are (if only because of the ordination of women!) no longer obliged to fulfill the role of the correct man in the dark gray flannel suit.

Each bishop who has been called to lead the Diocese of New York has probably had an aim which compelled him to work toward a goal. Samuel Provoost, for instance, saw his task as saving the Episcopal Church in New York from the ravages of the Revolutionary War, and in this he succeeded admirably. Hobart popularized the Church and promoted its historic claims; Onderdonk had a genius for administration and organized Hobart's legacy. The Potters, each in his own way, sought to widen the Church's social influence, just as Greer, also a superb administrator, strove to provide an intellectual apologia for the Church. Manning insisted that the age-old Church had a right to speak to modern times, and was jealous that spiritual prerogatives not be neglected. Bishop Donegan had thrust upon him the need to reconcile diverse Protestant and Catholic points of view in his diocese, while at the same time streamlining its administration.

What, then, was the goal of Paul Moore when he accepted election

as New York's thirteenth bishop? There is no question that it was an effective ministry to the poor. He was convinced that the Church should do its utmost to expose reasons for poverty, and then go on to alleviate the results of poverty. This should be achieved in the parishes, expected by the diocese, and made exemplary in the cathedral and the Episcopal City Mission Society.

Almost as important for Bishop Moore was his belief that, as he said, there must be "a continual hammering away for justice and peace" in the world. If his celebrated visit to Vietnam (1970) and to the Soviet Union (1982) failed to make clear his ideal of negotiated *détente* and the employment of international resources to promote human welfare, the giant Peace Rally at the cathedral in June 1982 made his mind plain to all observers. The Diocese of New York is on record about these things. If those who responded to the question about important developments failed to be explicit about Bishop Moore's well-known beliefs, it is probably because they are so obvious—and have roots in the words and acts of former bishops.

The historian of the next hundred years will note that his century began soon after two epochal moments in Episcopal Church history: the ordination of women, and the settlement of the 1979 Prayer Book. Bishop Moore's apparent casual manner, complemented by a barbed directness, will be seen to have helped New York steer a remarkably steady and tranquil course throughout these proceedings. He did not ordain women until it was permitted by canon law, though some people predicted he would be among those who acted before the appropriate legislation was enacted. The new Prayer Book has been accepted in the Diocese of New York with far less difficulty than that experienced by many other dioceses. In this connection, it is worth noting that New York has had no conspicuous defections to "Anglican" splinter churches, despite the fact that its bishop is generally considered a protagonist of that which has disturbed the peace of the national Church in his generation.

Perhaps one reason for New York's sparse defection to those other churches may be that the Episcopal Church here has been both sophisticated and wounded. Sophisticated, because of cosmopolitan Manhattan; wounded, because (as we have already noted) the tide of statistics has been running against the Diocese of New York since the late 1930s. When the communicant lists of the Diocese of New York slipped year by year, those of the dioceses in New Jersey, Long Island, and Connecticut grew. The graphs marking the post-World War II "return to religion" simply don't show growth in New York's communicant strength, though it is indisputable that in some Manhattan parishes *attendance* improved in those years. A special committee appointed by Bishop

Moore was charged with probing the patterns and reasons for growth and decline in the diocese. It reported in October 1983 that, while baptisms in the diocese have lately kept up at the same rate, communicant numbers have decreased in all three regions. Surprisingly, the decrease rate is less in Manhattan, where there has been a notable resurgence and activity in such parishes as Trinity, Grace Church, St. Thomas, Heavenly Rest, St. Bartholomew's, and St. Michael's—all of them old-line churches hard hit by the times. Ironically, All Angels' Church razed its building of absurd proportions, and presently finds itself very much in need of some of the space thus destroyed. The National Council of Churches noted at the end of 1983 that membership in the Diocese of New York had probably bottomed out in 1981–82 while other mainline denominations continued to decline.

Our historiographer of the year 2085 will weigh these facts, and will know better than we how deep was a sense of despair in the late twentieth century. The apparent faithlessness and dominant materialism of our century will be seen in perspective then. On the other hand, it will be easier then to assess the long-range appeal of the Fundamental churches. The future historian may also be able to provide reasonable answers to questions that have been only implicit in this history: How important has "class" been in the life of the Episcopal Church in New York? How much did the distinctive teachings of the Episcopal Church foster its growth and retain the loyalty of its adherents? How much did the fortunes of the Episcopal Church depend upon its traditional liturgy? Was the "bridge church" ideal nurtured by Bishop Manning a reality or an illusion? These are moot points today; the future will reveal their answers.

Much more certain, as these pages have implied, in a sense of unity in the Diocese of New York as it approaches the beginning of its third century. The future historian may identify the reasons for this: the bishops are accessible to all the people of the diocese, the Interparish Councils appear to be excellent modes of communication, the old "churchmanship" tensions are gone, and there is a sense of having weathered the worst of the storm—indeed, at this writing signs are good.

As for us who have been writing and reading this history of the first two centuries and more, we can look back across that expanse of time to a distant day when some unnamed Englishman had in his kit a Prayer Book as his ship came up the Narrows toward Manhattan. From that moment on, there has been a long procession of people, men and women, who worshiped "according to the usage" of that book, and so planted the Church in this place. That procession has included gover-



nors and missionaries whom we have named: bishops, other clergy, prominent layfolk (including a criminal or two) by whom the Church spread from the banks of the Hudson to the Falls of the Niagara. We have seen varying modes of worship, a few of the customs, and some of the varying degrees of concern for human need felt by these church-people. We began with a near-wilderness and saw it become an Empire State; with a handful of Church of England people who must have been aware that their prestige was far less than that of their brothers and sisters in the province of Virginia, but who built the Church here into what they liked to think was a premier diocese. We have seen our share of failure, and remembered that, by God's grace, the future builds on mistakes, too. Inspired human gifts such as music, sculpture, architecture, and scholarship have accompanied our story, for people of diverse and great ability have been in that long column. Whether or not they have been adequately noted here is not our present concern.

For what has been inadequately described, and perhaps must always remain so, are the countless unnamed people who are the substance of the history of the Diocese of New York. Whoever writes this history is constantly aware of that which is not, can not, be written: the prayers gone up, the lives enriched, wrongs confessed, compassion enacted, human dignity asserted, wisdom gained, the Christ seen and God praised. That is, and must ever be, the history of the Diocese of New York.