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The Beginnings



Here there bee not many people.

—ROBERT JUET

The geographical area of the original Diocese of New York was the entire state. It was not until 1838, and then only after profound misgivings, that the laws of the Episcopal Church were altered to permit the subdivision of dioceses within the state. Thus, the Diocese of New York was all that territory from Long Island's wave-washed tip to Niagara's steady roar. Within this vast space lay the Adirondack Mountains, whose forests sloped northward to the St. Lawrence plains. Further west were the high fields surrounding the Finger Lakes, where the curved horizon makes a man know that he truly inhabits a spherical earth. Below these lakes is the Southern Tier, lonely and grim-gray in winter, benign and balmy in summer. The state diocese knew all the moods and variations of nature. No citizen of the new nation would know them better than Hobart and Onderdonk, the much-traveled third and fourth bishops of the Diocese of New York.

Their predecessors, Samuel Provoost and Benjamin Moore, never saw the broad varieties of New York. They were town men, born and bred in Manhattan. It is one of the ironies of history that these men, the first bishops of the diocese, conceived their diocese more nearly as we do today: a jurisdiction flowing from the City of New York, dependent upon the metropolis, yet offering it the gifts and produce a city always requires from its rural surroundings.

The men and women who perceived the early fortunes of the Diocese of New York may have seen the state as a builder's square. The short arm is the Hudson Valley, stretching from Manhattan northward to Albany. The longer arm of the square reaches westward from Albany through the fertile valleys that summoned the white man, as they had the Indian. Except for the hamlets just beyond Brooklyn on Long Island, the Church in colonial New York was dependent upon rivers. The Dutch always preferred to settle on riverbanks or near small streams.¹ The great Hudson provided cheap transportation to Albany. The Post

Road—little more than a path in the early days of our history—was used only when necessary. At Albany, the Mohawk River led to the west; its valley would one day give the route for the canal whose commerce made the Port of New York the unquestioned mercantile capital of the young nation. Men of business would thereafter rush to the city, as their fathers had been tempted to do when the seat of national government left Philadelphia and established itself in Washington.

Our story begins much earlier, however. Indeed, it begins not on the land but on the sea. All the early voyagers and discoverers, including Columbus, shared a common goal: the enrichment of their sponsors. The financiers of expeditions to the Americas expected vast returns. Religious sentiments were, nevertheless, more in the forefront than is generally supposed; Columbus was a "proud, sensitive man who *knew* that his project would open fresh paths to wealth and the advancement of Christ's kingdom."² Upon his return to Spain, he addressed a letter to the Sovereigns in which he congratulated their majesties (after the manner of the age) for their being the instruments for "turning so many peoples to our holy faith, and afterwards for material benefits since not only Spain but all Christians will hence have refreshment and profit."³ God and Caesar were to be coinheritors.

But when faith and profit set out together on a journey, faith is likely to be the tardy arrival. Religion played a conspicuous role in some North American settlements from Europe, but in other places mercantile interests were primary. And in yet other places (Jamestown comes to mind), where the principle was stated "to recover [the natives] out of the arms of the devil," religion seems to have been in fact something of a useful tool in the furtherance of the empire.

Manhattan Island is never fairer than in spring. It was, we like to think, at its very finest when, on April 17, 1524, Verrazano's *La Dauphine* came into New York Bay. He and his crew were probably the first white men to see New York.⁴ They saw "the natives come toward us very cheerfully, making great shouts of admiration, showing us where we might come to land." But Verrazano didn't set foot on the land he so obviously admired. He probably feared the friendly natives might have second thoughts about the intruders. The discoverer turned about and sailed off into the Atlantic. But he marked on his map the name he had given the beautiful place he had just seen: "Angoulême," after Louise, the Queen Mother of France.

Neither that generation of natives, nor their children, need have feared white intrusion. For it was not until 1624 that the white man came into the harbor to stay.

The sailor is ever religious, at least when at sea. And, considering the dangers, it was with good reason that religious observance was

steady and fervent in those early voyages. If the first services according to the Book of Common Prayer in New York were held in a military garrison, as we may suppose they were, then the first such services near New York were on shipboard, perhaps in the harbor itself. We are told that

to avoid affronting God to the point of His becoming indifferent to a ship's fate, Sebastian Cabot charged that "no blaspheming of God, or detestable swearing be used . . . nor communication of ribaldrie filthy tales, or ungodly talke to be suffered in the company . . . neither dic-ing carding, tabling or other divelish games to be frequented, whereby ensueth not only povertie to the players, but also strif, variance, brauling . . . and provoking of God's most just wrath, and sworde of vengeance." Sebastian insists "that morning and evening prayer, with the common services appointed by the king's Majestie be read dayly by the chaplain or some other person learned," and "the Bible or paraphrases to be read devoutly and Christianly to God's honour, and for His grace to be obtained." As this indicates, every shipmaster provided himself with an Edward VI Book of Common Prayer.⁵

It is safe to say, then, that the Prayer Book and its observances accompanied the first English explorers and settlers in the New World.

However, the first white settlers in what is now New York City were not Englishmen, but Dutch. And, strange as it seems to us now, Manhattan Island was not the major place of settlement: it came after present-day Albany and Governors Island, as we shall see.

THE DUTCH CULTURE

Henry Hudson explored his river in 1609. He was then in the employ of the Dutch East India Company, which, on the strength of this and other explorations, claimed all the land between the Connecticut and Delaware rivers. A fort, named Nassau, was built 150 miles up the river, and when it was destroyed by flood in 1617, Fort Orange (now Albany) was built near by. The first settlers arrived in 1624: thirty families and some single men. They were Walloons and Huguenots. Most of them settled near Fort Orange, but a few remained on what is now Governors Island.

The West India Company, a newer enterprise, ordered forts to be built wherever expedient, and thus in 1625 a fort was built on Manhattan. As a precaution, and because it was general practice, Governor Pieter Minuit concluded a purchase of the island from the Indians in what has gone down in history as one of the better bargains ever made. The cost of the entire island of Manhattan was 60 guilders' worth of

blankets, kettles, and trinkets. Within a year thirty houses and two hundred people were on the island.

The Dutch found the patroon system the easiest way to settle the land. Soon after 1629 large areas of land were awarded Dutchmen of good credit; their responsibility was to encourage settlement and improvement quickly. By far the most successful patroon was Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, a rich diamond merchant, landowner, and director of the West India Company; he wisely sent an able relative to New Amsterdam to develop the newly acquired property there. The Dutch were also willing to grant land patents to New England people of promise. Thus Hempstead (1643), Gravesend (1645), and Jamaica (1655) were settled and developed by families of English descent.

Dutch settlements included Esopus (now Kingston) and Schenectady; both had churches by 1657. The growth of New Amsterdam surrounding the fort there was steady, and at the northern end of the island Nieuw Haarlem was established in 1658, with an understanding that there would soon be a "good pious orthodox Minister" when the settlement numbered more than twenty families.

New Amsterdam fell to the English in 1664. The English were better colonizers than the Dutch, many of whom had chosen to return to their native land, whereas, during the middle years of the seventeenth century, troubles in England favored migration to the New World. For instance, New England grew from 20,000 people in 1640 to 50,000 in 1664; New Netherlands (which included all the Dutch settlements in and near New Amsterdam) numbered fewer than 10,000. On the whole, the Dutch in Holland had enjoyed unaccustomed religious toleration.

After the Duke of York accepted the gift of New Amsterdam from his brother, King Charles II, and renamed his possessions, there was little overt Dutch discontent. Even the Dutch Church seemed unthreatened in those first years. A steady flow of Dutch immigrants continued to enter the province, but it was noted that they preferred to live apart from the English. More interested in good fertile farmland, the Dutch spread throughout the Hudson Valley, New Jersey, northern Pennsylvania, and Long Island. The founding of churches is always a good indicator of permanent settlement, and thus we note with interest that the Dutch church in Kingston was founded in 1659, in Kinderhook in 1712, Claverack, Poughkeepsie, and Fishkill in 1716, Rhinebeck in 1731, Catskill and Cossackie in 1732.

Two inheritances of Dutch rule were regrettable. The first was slavery. Dutch farmers employed numerous Negro slaves on their lands; 10 percent of Ulster County was reported to be slave in 1790. The other doubtful introduction was the patroon system. Though intended to be a means of quickly and profitably settling vacant land, it often resulted in

the opposite. The system gave rich men great parcels of real estate and also conferred upon them certain rights and privileges. In practice, people of ability learned to avoid settling where they could never be freeholders, but only mere tenants.

The Dutch Church emphasized the importance of sermons, and these very often ran to more than two hours. The Dutch Church also took its teaching responsibilities seriously; the *voorlezer* combined the functions of sermon reader and schoolteacher. Liquor and tobacco were commonly used: "I frequently saw about a dozen old ladies sitting about the fire smoking," reported one visitor to a Dutch house. And another wrote that "it was a sad breach of politeness not to furnish the dominies when they made their pastoral visits with the choicest brew."

It has been said that the greatest influence of the Dutch upon New York was made after their surrender in 1664. As we have seen, Dutch immigration continued. "And they multiply more rapidly here than anywhere," commented one observer. Their language, in common use until after the Revolutionary War, gave household words and place-names we all know. Some are of interest in this history: Tarrytown is probably named for the wheat mill built there by Frederick Philipse soon after 1647; the Dutch word for wheat is *Tarwe*. Adrian Vander-Donck (an ancestor of Bishop Onderdonk) owned land on the banks of the Hudson north of New York City; "DeJonkheer Landt" means "estate of a gentleman"—in this case at what we now call Yonkers. The Bronx is named after Jonas Bronck.⁶

THE ENGLISH ASCENDANCY

The fort at New Amsterdam had been necessary to support the presence of the Dutch, and, subsequently, the English. It was a display of muscle, a focal center of the ascendant power. It was also the place where the people of the settlement would gather for accurate news. There they would see their neighbors in a setting that would at almost any time include the authorities of the province. Moreover, the fort, like the present day PX's, would always have the flavor of home.

This would include the Church, the Church of the Prayer Book, restored after Charles Stuart (King Charles II) "returned from his travels." The religious altercations of the Commonwealth hadn't deeply affected the colonies, which had, after all, been settled largely by people discontent with religion at home. But Restoration sentiment was apt to provide provincial governors with a piety and an enthusiasm for the Church of England that would be threatening for Puritans in Amer-

ica. The king's brother, James, Duke of York, had been far more affected by his mother's Roman Catholicism than had Charles. When the Duke was given a large portion of North America, he knew he must reckon with the predominant religions of the colonies there. James insisted that the Prayer Book be available to all who might desire its services, but there was no ducal command that those services were required. At least for the time being, the Calvinism of the Hudson Valley Dutch might coexist harmoniously with Congregationalism of New England, the developing Presbyterianism of New Jersey, the Quakers in Pennsylvania, and the Roman Catholics and Episcopalians of Maryland and Virginia. London seems to have pursued a policy of minimizing religious differences in order to consolidate English claims in North America. The Stuarts had indeed learned their lesson!

Richard Nicolls was the Duke's agent. His demand that the Dutch surrender New Amsterdam was softened by the assurance that the British contemplated religious toleration. The Dutch believed this, for it was agreeable to statements King Charles had made from Holland as he waited to return to the English throne in 1660. We may assume that after Peter Stuyvesant capitulated to Nicolls's demand, September 7, 1664, the usual place of worship at the fort became available to Nicolls's chaplain. This is to assume, also, that a chaplain did accompany Nicolls across the Atlantic when the governor came to claim the Duke's territory. Not every important voyage had a chaplain. We do know that in New Amsterdam (now called New York) the surplice was discouraged as being too distinct from the black gowns of the Calvinists. This and other salutary attitudes enabled the English officiants of those first days to initiate Prayer Book services at the fort on Sundays, following the hour of the Dutch service. This cooperative use of the fort continued until the Dutch church was built, in 1693. Thus, for more than a quarter of a century after the English ousted Stuyvesant from New Amsterdam, the Dutch Reformed and the Episcopal services were held in the garrison. Meanwhile, Episcopal churches were built in Boston, Perth Amboy, Philadelphia, and Charleston, South Carolina. The only conclusion possible is that despite royal rule in New York, the royal Church was very weak there. This view is supported by the Venerable Society's later declaration that "there was little sense of religion and a most notorious corruption of manners" in New York.

The Dutch regained New Amsterdam for seven months in 1673-74, and then lost that possession forever. The new English governor, Edmund Andros, arrived with a disciplined eye to appraise, and a memory to correct, the faults he found. The fruits of toleration in New Amsterdam may be weighed by his statement, "Ministers have been so scarce and Religions so many." A Church of England minister's stipend of

£21.68 is recorded for 1674, but the name of its claimant is unknown. He may well have been the first priest in what is now the Diocese of New York.

English ascendance in New York was certain after 1674. The global prominence of the Dutch diminished. Britain now entered upon its great period of colonial development. The effects of this English predominance have vast importance in our history; strong English influence is to be found in the lives of New Yorkers long after the colonies won independence from Britain.

Colonial development was slow because North America was far removed across the ocean from the mother country and, once here, adventurers knew they would have a hard lot. Even so, we will see a slow but persistent trickle of English clergymen disembark at New York, and with greater or lesser success enter upon the work of their calling. In August 1678, the Reverend Charles Woolley arrived. He found a Lutheran and a Reformed minister who disdained speaking to each other. Woolley later told the story that he invited the pair, and their wives, to dinner with the understanding that whoever spoke Low Dutch would forfeit a bottle of good Madeira; they must converse in the theological tongues of German or Latin. The clergy went home late that evening good friends. (But what about their wives?)⁸

It would be false to suggest that such camaraderie between the clergy of various national churches was widely counted a desirable thing in the seventeenth century. Religious pluralism then was almost untried. When Charles II proposed a limited toleration at the eve of his restoration he was soon disappointed by a Parliament unpersuaded that it was a good—or practicable—thing. For some, toleration amounted to a weakness of conviction; moreover, it might admit Roman Catholic missionaries into Protestant territory. As early as 1584 Richard Hakluyt, a Church of England priest and author whose name we all remember from schooldays, submitted to the government of Elizabeth I *A Discourse on Western Planting*, which was mainly a proposal for presenting the Gospel to the American Indians before the Roman Catholics could meddle with them.⁹ This theme of preempting Roman Catholic efforts will recur in our narrative. Until modern times the Roman Catholic presence appeared as a threat to the political and social as well as the religious settlement of the Protestant world. Thus, authority conveyed by episcopal ordination was sometimes winked at by the English missionaries: the fact that a missionary was sent over from the Established Church meant more than apostolic succession. State approval took precedence over ecclesiastic credentials.¹⁰ Satan's politics were those of the Bishop of Rome, especially after the Scottish uprisings of 1715 and 1745.

Soon after his convivial dinner party, Woolley sailed up the Hudson and visited the English garrison at Albany. This may have been the first attempt by a Manhattan-based English clergyman to discover what responsibilities awaited him upriver. Before many more years a goodly number of Church of England clergymen would pass through the Highlands and under the "Blue Mountains" (as the Catskills were known universally until the mid-nineteenth century) en route to the frontier settlements at Albany, Schenectady, and Fort Hunter. The river was their easiest thoroughfare for nearly two hundred years.

At Albany, Woolley would have found a town of no more than 4,000 people with loyalties to their former Dutch rulers. His arrival there would have gone unremarked except for those who feared, rightly, that the Episcopal presence in this hitherto Dutch province would increase, accompanied by the authority of the new sovereign. For the Dutch Reformed Church, of course, this meant diminished prestige. The question, spoken or not, was plainly this: What would hereafter be the rights and privileges of the other churches? How far would the Church of England press its claim to be the established religion of the province?

EARLY TROUBLES IN CHURCH AND STATE

The initial difficulties did not arise from the zeal of English clergy, but from the political expediencies perceived by the royal governors. Thomas Dongan, a Roman Catholic, was appointed governor in 1683. He arrived in Manhattan with a Church of England chaplain—and also a Jesuit priest. Like any sound political practitioner of his time, the governor believed that the national Church could promote peace and unity in the province. When Dongan said, "Every town ought to have a minister"¹¹ he meant an Episcopal minister. Perhaps he aimed at something else, too: he may have realized that most people in the colony had no church loyalties whatever,¹² something unheard-of in Europe. It is said there were usually only twenty-five or thirty people at the English service in the fort on a Sunday morning, a poor showing considering the Church was then a social as well as a religious meeting place.¹³

Several years later, in 1692, the Reverend John Miller arrived in New York with two companies of soldiers. He reported ninety Church of England families who worshiped at the fort, certainly a significant increase over the twenty-five to thirty persons reported earlier. He further said that there were 450 Dutch Reformed families, thirty "Dutch" (that is, German) Lutheran, 200 Huguenot, and twenty Jewish families in the town. In 1686 Governor Andros had directed that worship according to the Book of Common Prayer be maintained every

Sunday and Holy Day, and "the Blessed Sacrament administered 'regularly.'"¹⁴ It was assumed that the other churches were free to continue as long as they did not disturb the peace—words not unlike the liberal declaration of Charles from Holland in 1660. There was also provision by Andros that clergy and schoolmasters would be licensed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Clearly, the English Church was not now merely one church among equals. The Church espoused by the sovereign was to be the preferred religion of the colony.

CONTEMPORARY CHURCHMANSHIP

What kind of religious thinking was now predominant in the mother country? With the restoration, Crown and Church had resumed their former positions but, despite the hopes and promises of both, it was a flawed partnership. The new king, Charles II, was not the churchman his father had been. For its part, the Church of England was exhausted by theological controversy. There was an inevitable reaction against Calvinism and "spiritual" preaching. Furthermore, the writings of continental theologians had come to the attention of the university faculties. By the last decades of the seventeenth century Calvinism seemed dated, out of touch. This was partly due to the subtle growth of a new discipline that came to be called science. The king was an enthusiastic supporter of the Royal Society; his interests embraced marine life, plants, and astronomy. The Calvinists disdained such preoccupations.

And there was another competitor on the religious scene. Now that all Cavalier things shone with new luster, it was remembered that many Roman Catholics had heroically supported the old king and had, in fact, even sheltered his son, the present sovereign. The country at large was fiercely anti-Roman (Fox's *Book of Martyrs* saw to that), but Roman Catholicism in the court was an open secret. Charles II received the ministrations of his old friend Father Huddleston only on his deathbed, but very soon it was clear that James II intended to foster the Roman position in England. The court was both a receiver of trends and a pacesetter for new things in the air. In Elizabethan times the Church of England had chosen a unique middle way between papal Catholicism and Genevan Protestantism. Now, in all this Restoration ferment, a re-statement, a new settlement of position, was much needed. This was all the more crucial because there appeared a division in the national Church quite unlike anything experienced before. On the whole, the English country clergy were old-fashioned high churchmen of the Laudian school. Many of them had wrested their parishes from Independent clergy who had benefited by the Commonwealth proscription of

Episcopalians. On the other hand, the bishops and urban clergy tended to a wider view of the Church and its role in national life. They were much influenced by the Platonists of Cambridge, who, avoiding the rigidities of the schoolmen and Calvin, prized tolerance, advocated comprehension within the English Church, and elevated the reasoning ability of man as a useful theological apparatus.

This was to be the prevailing characteristic of eighteenth century religion and, of course, it would have an impact upon the Church in the American colonies. This new line of thought was useful in meeting the needs of the age and, in any case, was a natural development away from exhausted former loyalties. Though much maligned in subsequent generations, there were values in this peculiarly English theological stance. In a time of wide philosophic speculation (Locke, Hobbes, Descartes), exciting scientific invention (the telescope, barometer, thermometer, and microscope), and poetic humanism (Addison, Dryden, Pope), the state Church flourished partly because it appeared able happily to assimilate and rejoice in the intellectual probings of its time. In addition, there was an attractiveness about what the new thinkers were saying. The Englishman's religion had always tended to condense his belief into the "godly, righteous and sober life," enjoined by the epistle and the Prayer Book. Whichcote of Cambridge saw the Christian religion as sent to man from God "to elevate and sweeten human nature."¹⁵ A most pleasant statement, but was anything more contrary to Calvin?

In a few years, the successors of the Cambridge Platonists would be called Latitude Men because, to many, the parameters of their doctrine were practically nonexistent. They appealed to reason as secondary only to the Bible: "To go against reason is to go against God," they said. They gladly followed the path blazed earlier by the man we know as Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), who declared that Christ died for all, not only for the elect. But that was only part of their positive line of thought. Dismissing the Early Church Fathers, much of tradition, and the methods of the schoolmen of the past, they perceived an immanent moral law within mankind which, when consulted, vitalized the Christian's everyday life. "The Spirit of man is the candle of the Lord" was their celebrated slogan. They saw religion as a spontaneous, cheerful human endeavor, possible, even natural, for all. The Prayer Book was as good a handbook as any devised by man. And, there was no better corporate statement of God's beneficence than the English Church.

The Latitudinarians were loyal to Church order. Perhaps the combination of attendance at court and the burdens of strengthening the position of the state Church, plus the reason and orderliness they so highly valued, led them to prefer the ordinances and customs of the

Church established in England. While never exactly *champions* of Episcopacy and the Book of Common Prayer (for they disdained enthusiasm), they were *advocates* of these national inheritances. They liked the liturgy, its "solemnity, gravity and primitive simplicity, its freedom from affected phrases or mixture of vain and doubtful opinions."¹⁶ The Articles, Book of Homilies, the Three Creeds—and now, nature—formed the reference points of Latitudinarian thinking. They assumed a world where parts of Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer, with Bible reading, were routine in religious households. Theirs was the Englishman's Church that

brought little compulsion to bear on him, but it continually taught him the concept of duty, of personal responsibility for right decisions with regard to his conduct, and for a moral life.¹⁷

It is probably true that the Latitudinarians had jettisoned too much history, too much of religious mystery. It is certainly true that comprehension eventually became overly cordial to Deism and Unitarianism. If many of our Episcopal founding fathers are accused of imprecision of belief, they can easily retort that they had worthy teachers in their religious background. Nevertheless, Norman Sykes is surely right when he appraises the Latitudinarians as men

called upon to face both a revolutionary change in the intellectual outlook of educated Englishmen and a condition of post-Restoration society characterized by a disregard for morality and the restraints of good conduct. Against this dual challenge they struggled with courage, sincerity and ability; and if the degree of their success in both spheres was partial and qualified, the difficulty of their task should be remembered in extenuation of their failure.¹⁸

The English Church, then, was characterized by a broad, Latitudinarian view of the world and religion in the last years of the seventeenth century and the first decades of the next. The Low Churchmen, descendants of the Puritans, were now disorganized, their Calvinism discredited in the wake of Restoration ebullience. The High Church party saw their victory at the return of the sovereign in 1660 confirmed in the Prayer Book of 1662. But these men, too, felt the sands of time running against them as events unfolded. When in 1689 Parliament promoted the abdication of King James II and invited his daughter Mary and her husband William the Dutchman to take his place, six bishops and about four hundred other clergy found they could not in conscience acquiesce in the arrangement because they had taken an oath to James II. They departed from the Church of England and were henceforth regarded as schismatics—and dangerous ones at that, after

the Scottish uprisings. Their leaving the Church of England had two notable effects upon the Church in America. First, it further weakened the High Church emphasis in England; and, secondly, it was at the hands of the successors of bishops of this line that Samuel Seabury would be consecrated almost one hundred years later.

If Latitudinarianism appears to be the growing and dominant theme in English Church life, its very drawbacks fostered remedies in the persons of the earnest young men whose "blooming piety"¹⁹ led them to form small groups aimed at the bettering of religious practice, especially in the London churches. The prevailing Latitudinarianism placed little emphasis on missionary work, for instance; these "clubs," as we shall see, regarded Christian missions as of first importance. Flourishing in the shadow of the Latitude men, the groups of laymen (often guided by parish priests) reasserted the high traditions of the Laudians and emerged as a force within the national Church. But there was little friction between the Latitudinarians and these High Churchmen as, for instance, they contemplated the Church's role in the Americas. The High Churchmen simply went forth to do what their Latitudinarian friends did not care to do. Chaplain John Miller was one of the early English clergymen who had definite ideas about promoting the Church, and he had no illusions about what he saw in New York. He reported that people, as we have already suspected, attended service at the fort as a social excursion. He recognized that the frontier situation then (1692) existing in New York province demanded more clergy from England; doubtless, he hoped some would replace those of whom he thoroughly disapproved.

Most novel of ideas, John Miller suggested that a suffragan bishop be sent from England to oversee the Church in the new world.²⁰ We are tempted to guess what might have happened had a suffragan arrived then. A suffragan is another bishop who acts in the name, and at the pleasure, of *the* bishop of the diocese. Thus, the Bishop of London might have suffragans appointed to carry out his responsibilities in America. Perhaps this might have been successfully managed in the 1690s. The throne then seemed safely Protestant. Stuart Catholicism (no longer a secret) was now no threat so long as Protestant Stuarts were closer in succession. There would have been minimal Puritan opposition in New York at that time, though subsequent claims made in the name of the Church of England would, in the near future, strengthen Congregational and Presbyterian opposition in New England and in New Jersey. Before the next century was half finished the sense of independence in the colonies had developed so that every sign of interference from Westminster would be challenged. When,

some years later, there was a possibility that a bishop might be sent across the Atlantic, dissenting opposition in the colonies frightened the government from acting. In any event, when John Miller spoke of the need for a bishop in America in 1692, it is doubtful that the Church of England had any notion of how a bishop could be exported to America. The Church's failure at first, the government's unwillingness later on, and the inevitable involvement of the one with the other all along prevented any bishop of the English line from claiming New York until Samuel Provoost disembarked on Easter Day, 1787.

THE MINISTRIES ACT

The same year (1692) that John Miller made his recommendation about a suffragan bishop for the colonies, Governor Benjamin Fletcher of New York believed he threw down the gauntlet in a move that was nothing less than a challenge to the integrity of the other churches in New York. Fletcher was a professional soldier. He wanted things done according to the rules, especially if he made them or if they were laws congenial to him. Like many colonial officers, he flourished in the presence of the powerful and rich; thus he was content to continue Dongan's policy of granting large tracts of land in the province to favored people. He was thoroughly Church of England and was probably uncomfortable with the variety of churches he saw in New York. He planned to enact a law that would provide Church of England clergy in specified places in New York City and three adjacent counties. It has been said that Fletcher was both reckless and careless. These are grave defects in a provincial governor who is about to insist upon an unpopular act. The Provincial Assembly reluctantly passed the law subsequently known as the Ministries Act (or sometimes the Settlement Act) in 1693. It provided public support for a "sufficient Protestant minister" in the counties of New York, Richmond, Westchester, and Queens. To the governor, as to any English official, the words *Protestant minister* in an English province implied a clergyman of the Church of England. Dissenters in America thought otherwise. They, also, claimed the name Protestant.²¹ The Assembly had given the governor the bill he required of them, but in his carelessness (and possibly the Assembly's wiliness) the law was fatally nonspecific. It had stated that a minister was to be settled and maintained in Westchester, Eastchester, Yonkers, Pelham Manor, Rye, Mamaroneck, and Bedford: all north of New York town, where also there was to be a Church of England minister, according to Fletcher's plan. In addition, there would be ministers in or near Ja-

maica, Hempstead, and Staten Island. Their salaries were to be paid by tax. Two wardens and ten vestrymen for each church were to be elected by the local freeholders.

Fletcher had hoped for a stricter act, but the Assembly's delay forced him to gamble on what he could get. And he supposed he had done quite well. Amazing as it seems, he thought every Church body in the four counties would conform to the worship of the Church of England. It has been asserted that the Crown's instructions to the governor included his appointing ministers to the churches. Since the governor would be expected to approve only Episcopal clergy, some sagacious Dissenters welcomed the "Ministry's Act" because it conferred the right of appointment upon local persons.²² As it turned out, this reasoning was far more cogent than the governor's, who was perhaps beaten at his own game.

Fletcher was dreaming! In 1692 there were not more than one or two Episcopal congregations in the entire Province of New York, while the Dutch Reformed congregations may have numbered as many as fifty.²³ Fletcher's scheme was soon shown to be faulty.

TRINITY CHURCH, GODMOTHER OF THE DIOCESE

At the New York town elections of January 1694, the freeholders elected three Episcopalians and nine Dissenters to the vestry; the majority claimed the right to appoint a minister of their own choice—a Dissenter, of course. The next year's election saw only one Episcopalian elected. By this time, it was clear that the Ministries Act would never create Church of England parishes of the existing Dissenting ones, and so, for a time, the law was forgotten while a far more interesting drama unfolded in New York. The town vestry, though predominantly Dissenting in sympathy, appointed to their as yet church-less cure a man named William Vesey. He had been educated at Harvard and was for some years a lay leader in Congregational churches. He had also served at Kings Chapel, Boston, and seems to have longed to return to the Church of his "Jacobite" father. In 1696 he was lay reader in Hempstead.²⁴ When he was called to be the town rector in New York in November of that year, he was eager to cross the ocean for ordination in the Church of England. This he did, and was made deacon on July 25, 1697, and ordained priest the following August 2. When he returned for his induction by Governor Fletcher on Christmas Day, 1697, he found an English church formed in New York. It was named Trinity.

Fletcher's ill-conceived attempt to force the English Church on all

the communities near New York town thus bore a strange (and increasingly rich) fruit. When it became apparent that the Dissenters could prevent or delay the appointment of Church of England clergy by the very provisions of Fletcher's Ministries Act, the Episcopalians of New York chose a much easier way: instead of intruding themselves into existing Dissenting parishes, they would circumvent the entire vestry provision, name their governing body "managers," and begin a new and distinctly separate church, Episcopal from its beginning. Forgetting for a moment the Ministries Act, Fletcher seized upon this plan as a face-saving alternative. He encouraged the "managers" of Trinity Church by giving them the right to collect money for a church building. He further endowed them with all "weifts, wrecks, Drift whales and whatsoever else Drives from the high sea and is then lost below high water mark" as a further aid in building the contemplated church. There was also in the governor's mind a certain farm of sixty-two acres recently escheated to the Crown, which might be leased on favorable terms to the new church. This was the Bogardus Land, variously known as the Queen's Farm or the King's Farm. In 1705 it was actually given to Trinity Church, a munificence that in subsequent years would be challenged unsuccessfully in the courts. Fletcher's generosity, which was never considered either reckless or careless by the Trinity officials, has made that man somewhat more of a hero to New York Episcopalians than he otherwise deserves to be.

This was the beginning of a church corporation whose importance in the Diocese of New York will cause us to examine its records again and again in this history. Vesey's induction as first rector took place in the Dutch church—and two Dutch Reformed ministers served as witnesses. In so doing, these dominies lent a gentle touch to proceedings which must otherwise have been abrasive to the Dutch consciousness in New York. Their presence also demonstrates again the necessary political involvement of the churches in the province.

The managers of Trinity (soon they would finally adopt the title wardens and vestry) were eager to engage William Vesey, who was "then with them." They lent him £95 for his passage to England. Perhaps the fact that he had been a year at Kings Chapel led the managers to think Vesey would be an able rector in a town situation. Or perhaps they chose a clergyman not already in the Province of New York in order to avoid entanglements with the difficulties inherent in the Ministries Act. The wardens were Thomas Wenham and Robert Lurting, and they appear to have been far wiser men than was the governor.

The new Trinity Church was something of a showplace in New York and would have been exhibited with pride by its adherents. Thus

a Boston visitor recorded her 1704 stay with friends in New York, who are generally of the Church of England and have a New England Gentleman for their minister, and a very fine church set out with all Customary requisites. There are also a Dutch church and Divers Conventicles as they call them, viz, Baptist, Quakers, etc. They are not strict in keeping the Sabbath as in Boston and other places . . .²⁵

The first Trinity vestrymen were Caleb Heathcote, William Mercet, John Tudor, James Emott, William Morris, Thomas Clark, Ebenezer Wilson, Samuel Burt, James Evets, Nathaniel Marston, Michael Howden, John Croke, William Sharpas, Lawrence Read, David Jamison, William Huddleston, Gabriel Ludlow, Thomas Burroughs, William Janeway, and John Merret—merely a list of twenty names, some not ever significant in the annals of the Church or the City of New York, but others very much involved in the fortunes of generation after generation until the present day.

In the years 1697–1700 there was only one Episcopal church formally organized and denominated as such in the Province of New York, and but three others north of Maryland. It is probable that the Pell family had already gathered a church at their manor in Westchester. In the ten years following 1700 ten congregations were formed in the Province of New York, and they were, for the most part, at exactly those places mentioned by Fletcher in the Ministries Act. But they owed their existence not to that martinet, but rather to something entirely remote from him: the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.