

Twentieth Century Developments

One who observes the situation from the vantage point of 1953 can see reasons why the good days of Bishop Perry did not return. In 1898 two widely differing ideas of the function of the Church prevailed in Iowa; one might almost say that the state had two Episcopal churches. From this point of view, the distressing events that followed the death of Bishop Perry can be understood and regretted.

Bishop Perry's High Churchmanship had been widely accepted in Iowa. A sincere and, in the minds of many, a bigoted and unlovely devotion to the historic Church, its claims and practices was strong in many parishes. To those who held it, a Christian was primarily a Churchman.

Those who held this view had moved away from the view of liberal Protestants, on whom denominationalism was relaxing its grip. Upon certain Episcopalians, Churchmanship was likewise losing its hold. The prestige of the "Broad Church" of Phillips Brooks and his friends was still great. Their followers in Iowa regarded the Episcopal Church as a channel through which cultured worship and enlightening preaching might reach the people, but were by no means certain

about the channeling of any other form of grace. In this they were quite like most humane Protestants.

This group had an able champion in Dr. Thomas Green, who in 1898 completed his tenth year of service in Grace Church, Cedar Rapids. Dr. Green was a popular preacher, well liked in his community. He was tolerant in his views and active in civic affairs. It fell to him, as chairman of the Standing Committee, to administer the diocese after the death of Bishop Perry. To that end, Dr. Green resigned as chaplain of a regiment called into service — the Spanish-American War was in progress — and devoted himself to serving the diocese.

This action, which was generally approved in his own community, he justified by a commendable effort to build up the various parishes throughout the state. When the special convention met at Davenport on September 6, 1898, Dr. Green was elected bishop on the eighth ballot.

The margin of victory was small; the election was not made unanimous; rumors circulated that protests would be made. Dr. Green, therefore, entered a "nolle episcopari." But he permitted his name to be placed in nomination at the annual convention held in his own parish church on November 29. To have done anything else would have appeared at the time as a weak surrender, for the word had gone out that Dr. Green's oppo-

nents were prepared to attack his character on the floor of the convention. A withdrawal of his name would be equivalent to a plea of guilty. So he and his friends believed. The attack was made; the tactics employed in defeating him were deplorable. The convention finally elected the Rev. Theodore N. Morrison of Chicago. Dr. Green, whose conduct was eminently correct, moved a unanimous vote.

The election of 1898 and the subsequent career of Dr. Green set into clear focus a weakening of loyalty of grave consequence to all churches. After five years more at Cedar Rapids, Dr. Green left the active ministry to enter organizational work that was at first interdenominational in character and then definitely secular. For thirty years before his death in 1941 he served the Red Cross, winning noteworthy recognition at home and abroad.

The position of such persons, who usually would object to being called irreligious or even non-religious, is set forth mordantly by Gamaliel Bradford, himself no great friend of churches:

The followers of William James
Still let the Lord exist,
And call him by imposing names,
A venerable list.
But nerve and muscle only count,
Gray matter of the brain,
And an astonishing amount
Of inconvenient pain.

Some less rigidly thoughtful persons were uncertain about the permanence of pain, and sang:

O, beautiful for patriot's dream
That sees beyond the years,
Thine alabaster cities gleam,
Undimmed by human tears.

From toils of theology and ecclesiasticism many were to take refuge with Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
When just the art of being kind
Is all this sad world needs.

Thinking and feeling like that suggested in these three lyrical quotations on quite different levels of literary merit held sway over many persons in the years when Bishop Morrison faced the difficulties of a weak diocese upset by a contentious election. He was to guide the Episcopal Church in Iowa from 1899 to 1929, during a period of thirty years in which the movement toward interdenominationalism and even secularism continued. At its beginning, much of the training of youth in religion was passing from the churches to groups like the Y. M. C. A. Presently there was a shift toward groups like the Scouts without formal religious connection. And most Christian people accepted the transfer with no grave protest. Many rather liked it.

Bishop Morrison was in his fiftieth year at the time of his election. In appearance and manner,

he was austere. In personality, he was gracious and even winning. In earnestness and zeal, he was exemplary. In any special skill in the means by which a sick diocese might be restored to health, he was no more lacking than many zealous priests called to be bishop in disturbing times. Such skill is not given to all men of God.

Bishop Morrison, after a brief time in a small mission, had served for twenty-four years at the Church of the Epiphany in Chicago. It is possible that he lacked understanding of work in small parishes. He came to a diocese in which he found 47 parishes, 30 organized missions, and 27 unorganized. These were served by 50 priests and deacons, of whom all but 6 had some cure of souls.

He found also that 9 of his parishes and 21 of his organized missions had less than 25 communicants, and that 6 of the parishes and 24 of the missions were contributing less, in the case of most of the latter, far less, than \$250 a year in total giving. All but one of the parishes and about one-half of the missions had church buildings in different states of repair. He was further confronted by an absence of 21 of his 50 clergy at his first convention, perhaps as a result of the conflict of 1898.

A survey of the past, which he surely made, showed that, except for attendance of clergy, conditions had been no better even at the best times of Bishop Perry. Fluctuations both in membership

and in giving had appeared, but these were too few to seem significant. Bishop Morrison was certainly confronted with a diocese in which the evidence of the persistent presence of "deadwood" seemed very strong.

Under the terms of his election, Bishop Morrison was bound to consider the High Church answer to this problem. His own training and conviction, moreover, would permit no other course. The Church would survive if people realized the importance of its ministrations and sacraments in fitting them to live well and to die well. In the cities, the appeal of High Churchmanship was increasing, not as rapidly as might be hoped, but still enough to be encouraging. The bishop and those of his clergy on whom he relied, believed that in God's own time similar gains might come in Iowa.

The majority of Iowans in the first quarter of the twentieth century set little store by Churchmanship of any sort. All Protestant bodies were weakened. The Lutherans with their strong inherited loyalty fared the best. The closing of small churches with a transfer of membership to other denominations was common throughout the state. Perhaps no ecclesiastical body suffered the immediate strain put upon the Episcopal Church.

The prominence given by the Episcopal organization to the bishop, even though his acts were subject to review by his conventions and other

bodies, led those whose churches were closed or denied support to lay much of the blame on the person by whose official pronouncements aid was given or denied. Furthermore, the fact that in the Episcopal Church alone, a central personal authority existed for the entire body throughout the state, created the feeling that this authority had in himself the power to make or break not only his diocese, but also each individual parish or mission. Unreasonable as this feeling could be in its disregard of local attitudes and forces that might strengthen or weaken a local religious body, the feeling persisted through the administration of Bishop Morrison and of Bishop Longley, in turn his suffragan, coadjutor, and successor.

In 1906 Bishop Morrison's health broke, and for about a year the diocese was without his services. In 1912 the diocese was able to find the funds to furnish him with the assistance of a suffragan, assistance that it had been unable to grant to Bishop Perry, who had desired it.

Bishop Harry Sherman Longley, chosen in 1912 as suffragan, was then forty-three years old. He came from St. Mark's Church in Evanston, Illinois, where he had served for about a year. He had had a long term as a successful pastor in New York. The diocese felt the burden of maintaining two bishops.

It was the conviction of Bishop Morrison, shared by Bishop Longley, that the Church gained

rather than lost by ceasing to maintain itself in places where it had apparently failed to gain any effective local support. The people in these places did not desire the ministrations of the Episcopal Church strongly enough to make such ministrations possible. By eliminating such Laodiceas, the Church could gain a sure strength elsewhere.

Naturally, this policy was not popular with the so-called Laodiceans. Nor did it appeal to aggressive clergy and laymen. On the basis of the information now available, this judgment must be given on the wisdom of the policy. It is evident that few of the eighteen parishes and missions dropped between 1899 and 1943, the term of the bishops, had demonstrated any sure reason for existing for ten years prior to 1899. A few were probably started in the spurt of activity that marked the term of Dr. Green as a quasi-acting bishop. At least four parishes were dropped because of union with another in their community. And the membership and the giving of the surviving parishes and missions generally gained.

The division of labor between Bishop Morrison and Bishop Longley, who was elected coadjutor in 1917, was never clearly defined. Nor were any of the reorganizations of diocesan work specially significant. At no time was there any sharply apparent change in policy or conditions.

When Bishop Morrison was struck by a car and killed in 1929, Bishop Longley was sixty-one

years of age. He became sole bishop shortly after the official beginning of the "Depression," which had been manifest in Iowa far earlier. If he had any expectation of taking new departures in policy, the year 1929 was hardly the time to initiate them. In the main, he continued the practices that had been established.

After the middle 1930's, however, economic conditions and mental attitudes grew more favorable for advances in the work of the Episcopal Church. More communities could maintain parishes or help to maintain missions. And more people had a wish for the special type of ministrations given by the Episcopal Church. An important group among the clergy in the diocese found that laymen were listening more attentively to teaching and attending more regularly upon services that were alike more "churchly." Among both clergy and laity there was a wish for an advance.

When Bishop Longley retired in 1943 — he did not long survive that retirement — the desire for more aggressive action expressed itself in the election of Father Ernest V. Kennan, who had just gone to Baltimore from St. Paul's in Des Moines. The other leading candidates were clergymen still resident in the diocese. Both clergy and laity showed signs of feeling that leadership for an advance might come from within the diocese.

This feeling persisted among the clergy when Father Kennan unexpectedly declined the election.

But a majority of the laity had come to the opinion that no man elected from priests already resident in the diocese could escape from difficulties created by his past work. Consequently, at the diocesan convention in 1944, a majority of the laity consistently voted for the Very Reverend Elwood Lindsay Haines of Louisville, Kentucky. On the seventeenth ballot the clergy concurred, and thus on March 8 Haines was elected bishop.

Bishop Haines was then a man of fifty. He had a record of activity and success. He accepted his election as an obvious mandate to lead an advance. He came to his task with strong enthusiasm and vigorous energy. He felt with reason that he could count upon effective support from his laity; he expressed no doubts of his power to win leadership among the clergy, even though the various priests and deacons might feel that he had been forced on them. His confidence was justified.

At first, Bishop Haines followed a policy not inconsistent with that professed by Bishops Morrison and Longley, a policy that to some degree had been initiated by Bishop Perry. Each of these men had declared that, after a wise consolidation of strength, the Church could advance to regain abandoned, and to win new, positions. Bishop Perry had seen such a turn of the tide, only to see it reverse.

Bishop Haines made a careful personal survey of the diocese, and by the end of his first year prob-

ably knew and understood its life better than any of his predecessors had known and understood it. Bishop Haines had fewer prepossessions to guard against and was freer to act in his own way than any earlier Iowa bishop. He accepted the principle, stated clearly and firmly by every bishop since the time of Bishop Lee, that no good came from establishing parishes and missions where there was little prospect of sure local support. He was ready to extend additional help and to resume work in towns where opportunity appeared. His nature was such that he was not over-cautious, and on occasion he was willing to interpret "opportunity" as a "sporting chance." In this attitude, he had the support of the laity responsible for his election.

The bishop's plans were far-reaching. They called for money, some of which he was able to raise. They called for the coming of more clergy, some of whom he was able to attract to Iowa. They called for a better organization of the laity, which he was in part able to effect. They called for his gaining from the clergy who were in the diocese an increasing loyalty and enthusiasm, some of which he was able to win. The spirit of his term may be well illustrated by a few words selected from his *Address* to the 93rd Annual Convention of the Diocese of Iowa in 1945: "I have fallen an easy and willing victim to the contagion of progressive-mindedness which marks the church in

Iowa. Each day I find myself increasingly happy that you called me to cast my lot with yours." Bishop Haines's plans called also for some break with the past, of which his moving his seat from Davenport to Des Moines for efficiency of administration was typical.

The plans also called for a normal expectation of life for him who made them and strove to bring them into effect. This was denied to Bishop Haines. By the beginning of 1949 the bishop was obviously very ill. On October 28, shortly after attending General Convention, he died at Los Angeles, California, where he had gone for treatment. He had been bishop for less than six years, but he had left a deep impress on the life of Iowa.

Perhaps the best evidence that Bishop Haines had brought a new spirit to the diocese was seen in the convention that named his successor. The only two candidates that showed any real strength when that convention met were both clergymen resident in the state. When, on the second ballot, the Rev. Gordon V. Smith of St. Paul's, Des Moines, was chosen, no bitterness developed. The contrast with earlier elections is sharp, but cheering.

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