

Beginnings in Iowa

The Right Reverend Jackson Kemper had been chosen by General Convention, meeting at Philadelphia in 1835, as missionary bishop of Indiana and Missouri. (Illinois, lying between, was already a diocese under Bishop Philander Chase.) In 1836, Wisconsin, then including Iowa, Minnesota, and parts west, was added to the sprawling jurisdiction of the missionary bishop for the Northwest.

Perhaps none of the heroes of the Church in the mid-nineteenth century was as effective and as attractive as Bishop Kemper. Unfortunately, Iowa felt but little of his influence. Though he was in control from 1836 to the beginning of 1854, Bishop Kemper was to see the state taken from his control, by agents of a group whom he distrusted, and made the testing ground of an attempt to discredit his activities and to counteract his policy.

The first services of the Episcopal Church had been held at Dubuque in the fall of 1835 by the Rev. Henry Tullidge, rector at Galena. Other clergymen from Illinois read prayers occasionally in 1836, 1837, and 1838, and Bishop Chase visited the state at least once.

Of Bishop Kemper's clergy, only the Rev. Richard Cadle, at Dubuque in 1836, is surely known to have read prayer in Iowa. Bishop Kemper visited Iowa in 1838 and secured a promise from the missionary committee of men for Burlington, Fort Madison, and Davenport, but it was not until 1839 that the first permanent missionary arrived.

In the fall of that year the Rev. John Batchelder, who had founded the first parish in Illinois, came to Burlington, where he organized St. John's Church, the first parish in Iowa. In 1842 the first Episcopal church building in Iowa was completed at Bloomington, present-day Muscatine. It had been promised to Bishop Kemper by Matthew Matthews. Tradition tells that the first service in the church was the funeral of the donor.

Muscatine also has the distinction of having built the first of the churches still in use in the diocese. The convention that organized the diocese met in the "new" church, which is now Trinity Church in Muscatine. The first church building that Bishop Kemper was able to dedicate was St. John's in Dubuque in 1851. St. John's was the first parish in Iowa to be self-sustaining.

In 1851 Bishop Kemper reported active missions at Burlington, Davenport, Dubuque, Keokuk, and Muscatine, with the prospect that work would be resumed at Fort Madison and begun at Cedar Rapids and Iowa City. Progress in Iowa had been slow; neither the number nor the quality

of his clergy had been adequate to the task. Two of the first three to come to Iowa had been deposed by sentence of ecclesiastical courts, and others had shown themselves to be erratic and uncertain. But in Alfred Louderback, a recent arrival at Davenport, the bishop had a man after his own heart, and the prospect of getting other such men was better than it had been. The bishop felt quite optimistic about Iowa.

In the same year the Episcopal Missionary Association for the West was organized in Philadelphia and announced its intention of giving special attention to Iowa, "hoping, under God's grace, that its virgin soil may receive now through us the indelible impress of Gospel Faith."

An essential preliminary step to bestowing the "indelible impress" was the removal of Iowa from the jurisdiction of Bishop Kemper. Bishop Kemper and the Western Society were on opposite sides of a conflict then distressing the Church. The issues of that conflict ran deep, and in it were foreshadowed other conflicts that were at a later time and in a less public fashion to distress other Protestant groups.

The fear of the Evangelicals that High Churchmen might lose their grip on the vital doctrines of Protestantism as interpreted in America in the early nineteenth century was justified far sooner than most Evangelicals could have anticipated. In the late 1830's and the early 1840's two strong

movements, each destined to become stronger with the years, appeared both in America and in England.

The first of these, Anglo-Catholicism, concerned itself primarily with the history and the teachings of the Church. In England its most influential leader was Edward Pusey, though the one best known today is John Henry Newman. Both men may have been influenced by acquaintance with American bishops. Anglo-Catholics declared that no branch of the Church could neglect any part of the history of the Church without losing valuable contributions to faith and morals. The Church of England had neglected certain parts of the history, which it should restudy and apply.

In America the greatest controversy was aroused by the contentions that the teaching of the Church and its statement of truth was progressive, not static, and that good works played a part along with faith in securing salvation. The practices that seemed most dangerous were the holding of more frequent communions, the sanctioning of confession to a priest, and the formation of monastic orders. These doctrines and practices were abhorrent to orthodox Protestants; they were, however, part of the teaching and usage of the Roman Catholic Church. Their acceptance by the Episcopal Church would move that body away from Protestantism and toward Rome.

The second movement was known as Ritualism. It was not identical with Anglo-Catholicism, some of whose advocates detested many of the practices dear to Ritualists. Nor did all Ritualists accept Anglo-Catholic teaching in doctrine or in usage. Ritualists wished primarily to provide for refined and cultured people incentives to reverence and devotion in the form of worship they followed and in the construction and decoration of the church buildings. They found much that they liked in Roman Catholic procedure and freely used what they liked.

Neither the High Churchmen, who had shaped the policy of the Church, nor the Evangelicals, who had accepted that policy with reservations, liked the Anglo-Catholics or the Ritualists. Both movements were condemned by the House of Bishops, and both movements persisted because more and more of the lower clergy found in them strength and comfort. And eventually the High Church party, which had tended to look upon the Anglo-Catholics and the Ritualists as nuisances rather than menaces, came to accept both as real aids to the Episcopal Church.

With the Evangelicals it was otherwise. Anglo-Catholicism, by direct teaching, and Ritualism, by implication, led men to base their hope of salvation, partly at least, on certain acts either of devotion or of charity. From the Evangelical point of view, one who counted on anything else but faith

to save him merited damnation. High Church bishops who encouraged or even tolerated imitation of Rome in this matter imperiled the souls given to their charge.

This "betrayal" by tolerant bishops was at its worst in the Northwest. A pact in 1835 had given the control of home missions to the High Church party and of foreign missions to the Evangelical. And Bishop Kemper, chosen under this agreement, was High Church. And among High Church bishops, he was most kindly to Anglo-Catholics. In Wisconsin one might find an Episcopal monastery and Episcopal services closely resembling those of Rome.

Clearing the way for Gospel faith in Iowa required quick action. Only General Convention could recognize a diocese and authorize its election of a bishop. General Convention met next in the fall of 1853. If Iowa did not apply then for recognition, nothing could be done until 1856. Time was of the essence, as the "Western Society," as it was generally called, realized. New men paid entirely by the Society were sent to Iowa. For the most part they were well chosen, the leader being the Rev. John Ufford, who came to Muscatine in the spring of 1852.

Besides assuming the entire support of certain missionaries, the Society gave stipends to others. Furthermore, pious laymen and laywomen made opportune gifts to parishes to help complete build-

ings, purchase equipment, or pay off debt. Evangelical support was made to seem very real.

Ufford began immediately to agitate for the organization of a diocese. Before he had been in the state a year, he called a meeting at Muscatine to consider the matter. Six of the seven active clergy in the state, the Revs. William Adderly, John Batchelder, R. D. Brooke, Samuel Goodale, C. C. Townsend, and John Ufford met on May 31, and sent a letter (dated Muscatine, June 29, 1853) to Bishop Kemper asking him to call an organizing convention in the course of the summer. No laymen were asked to this meeting, and the Rev. Alfred Louderback did not attend.

The bishop, though opposed to organizing a diocese, was bound by canon to call the convention, which met on August 17, 1853, in the present Trinity Church at Muscatine. All seven active clergy were present; lay delegates came from Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Iowa City, Keokuk, Muscatine, Washington, and Dubuque. Bishop Kemper, who had hoped to be present, was held at Galena by low water.

Louderback was chosen chairman, perhaps to forestall his leading a fight from the floor. The convention worked rapidly and in two days had organized a diocese, named delegates to General Convention, and adjourned to meet on May 31, 1854, in Davenport, to elect a bishop.

General Convention made no difficulty about

recognizing Iowa, though it denied a similar request from California. So the convention came together at Davenport, where it was forced to meet in the lecture room of the Presbyterian church because of delay in completing Trinity.

Bishop Kemper was present. So, too, were six of the seven clergymen present at Muscatine the previous August, Townsend being held in the South by ill health. The Revs. Denison and Haff, new in the diocese, attended, the latter being too new to vote. Of the lay delegations of 1853, Iowa City failed to appear. Delegates from Bellevue, Fort Madison, and Dubuque were, however, accepted as entitled to vote.

Letters preserved from Bishop Kemper show that he had hoped to avert the choosing of a bishop: the new diocese could still continue under his supervision. But the shrewd and conciliatory advice that he gave the convention suggests that he had given up the fight. A small group, headed by Louderback, fought against such action. Their contention was that the canons required that a new diocese have at least six presbyters with a year's residence in their current parishes before it chose a bishop, and that that condition did not hold in Iowa. The records seem to show that this contention was technically correct. Practically, the plea was valueless, for the conditions would shortly be fulfilled, and the majority of the clergy and the parishes desired a bishop. The convention

voted by five clergy to two and by six parishes to two to proceed to such an election. (One parish refrained from voting.) The convention then elected the Rev. Henry Washington Lee of Rochester, New York, bishop of Iowa, by five votes to one in the clerical order, and by five votes to four in the lay. (One clergyman, presumably Louderback, did not vote.) Louderback and three laymen signed a formal statement of protest, which was spread on the minutes and sent to the bishops and the standing committees. It was ineffective. The convention passed a resolution praising Bishop Kemper and adjourned.

The biographer of Bishop Kemper notes that he took no part in the consecration of Bishop Lee, although he had shared in the consecration of every other bishop chosen by dioceses formed from his original territory. Probably his absence was not accidental.

Removed by a century from the election, an historian can see excellent reasons for wishing that it could have been avoided. Though the earnestness of the Evangelicals and their willingness to make sacrifices for their faith are beyond question, they understood neither the essential strength of the Episcopal Church nor the trend of the times. Within a quarter of a century, the Evangelical party was to disintegrate, and certain of its members were to head the only schism in the history of the Episcopal Church. In so doing, they allied

themselves with that section of Protestantism which was most conservative in its theology and is still most alien to humane Protestant thought today.

Though the Western Society through its active support of work in Iowa enabled Bishop Lee to achieve results that seemed marvelous, it also exercised pressure on him to accomplishment that lent itself to advertisement. Consequently, much of what he did was doomed from the start to failure. Worst of all, by its willingness in the early years to find money for Iowa, the Society seriously weakened the self-reliance of Iowa.

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