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Article Summary: Against the background of boom and bust in frontier Nebraska, the Episcopal Church was no more stable. The Diocese of Nebraska was established in 1868 under the leadership of Bishop Robert H Clarkson. Much of the initial work to establish the denomination in Nebraska failed and a new start had to be made in the 1880s. One of its undertakings was an "Associate Mission" in Omaha between 1888 and 1902. This article describes the history of this mission and evaluates its effectiveness. The purpose of this associate mission was to secure young unmarried priests who would pledge themselves to missionary work for a given time under the guidance and direction of the bishop.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Willa Cather, Joseph Bartley, Eva Lee Matthews [later Sister Eva Mary CT], Paul Matthews, Gurdon W Wattles, Robert H Clarkson, George Worthington, Samuel Smith Harris, H L Gamble, Charles S Witherspoon, John A Williams, Irving Johnson, Paul Matthews, Arthur M Jenks, Edward J Knight, James Goodwin, James S Johnston, Leigh R Brewer, Charles Gore, Francis Paget, Thomas Strong, Elsie Procter, Channing M Williams, John Albert Williams, Francis W Eason, Francis M Bacon, Charles Herbert Young, Giles Herbert Sharpley, Samuel Gardner Welles, William J Blue, Peter Hoyt, James Wise, Irving P Johnson, Stanley Matthews, Grace Keese, Beatrice Henderson, Lewis T Wattson, W S Howard, Charles Herbert Young, James Wise, Otto W Gromoll, Addison Edward Knickerbocker, Anson Graves

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Photographs / Images: Members of Association Mission, Omaha: Charles H Young, Paul Matthews, Irving P Johnson, H Percy Silver, George Worthington, Stephen A W Pray, James Wise, Samuel G Welles, Peter Hoyt; Paul and Eva Matthews, 1886; students of the Parochial School of the Associate Mission, Omaha, 1893; Bishops Irving P Johnson and Paul Matthews

**THE ASSOCIATE MISSION:
AN EXPERIMENTAL MINISTRY
OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN OMAHA,
1891-1902**

By James C. Ransom

The 1890 US Census stated that the "unsettled area [of the West] has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line." In 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner took this to mean that "a great historical movement, . . . the colonization of the great unoccupied West," had come to an end.¹

Although there were areas of northwest Nebraska almost unoccupied, particularly in the Sandhills, the settlement period was almost over by 1890. The state's population increased only 12.7 percent between 1890 and 1910 and most of that occurred after 1900.² There was, however, a great redistribution of population. It was during the 1890s that the farm-to-city trend began—and it has continued in Nebraska to the present. During this period virtually all the state's population increase occurred in its cities: the number of places with more than 2,500 inhabitants increased from 16 to 27; the population classified as rural decreased from 59.2 to 53.5 percent.³

There was also a great movement of people in and out of the state which statistics do not reflect. That bane of the homesteader—the mortgage—drove people from their claims, while drouth and depression accounted for abandonment of many other claims. It was during the 1890s that the grand schemes of the prairie speculators collapsed. Willa Cather describes this period of change from frontier instability to relative permanence:

These years of trial, as everyone now realizes, had salutary effect upon the new state. They winnowed out the settlers with a purpose from the drifting malcontents who are ever seeking a land where man does not live by the sweat of his brow. The slack farmer moved on. Superfluous banks failed, and money-lenders who drove hard bargains with

desperate men came to grief. The strongest stock survived, and within ten years those who had weathered the storm came into their reward.⁴

While the 1890s brought permanent settlement to Nebraska, it also brought a depression that caught cities in a paralyzing grip. There were spectacular business and financial failures that caused a general lack of confidence in local banks, and the defalcation of State Treasurer Joseph Bartley caused similar distrust in state government. In 1896 creditors of Nebraska banks had over 5 million dollars tied up in 101 failed institutions.⁵ Factory buildings stood empty, store windows showed dismal "for rent" signs, and new subdivisions grew up with weeds instead of people. Eva Matthews, sister of Paul Matthews and unofficial member of the Episcopal Church Associate Mission in Omaha, wrote home during the winter of 1891-1892:

Omaha has been on a great boom for the last five years, homes have been built by hundreds, giving employment to carpenters and masons, plumbers and others—but this year there is a great collapse. The boom has run its course, the houses stand tenantless, no new ones are building, and there is no work, so even the sober and industrious are closely pinched.⁶

Nevertheless, Omahans were not about to be discouraged by economic depression. During the summer of 1892, while Populists fulminated, businessmen set out to lick the depression by forming a Chamber of Commerce and the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben⁷ under the leadership of Gurdon W. Wattle—"demonstrating to all the world that it [depression] did not exist."⁸ Out of this effort grew the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition of 1898. President William McKinley opened it on June 1 by pushing a button which sent an electric current from Washington to Omaha that put exhibited machinery in motion. Later the President, along with 98,000 Midwesterners, came to view the wonders, which included Little Egypt (a female dancer) and a monumental plaster warrior in a chariot drawn by four lions and inscribed simply "Omaha." The exposition was a great financial success and helped convince Omahans at least that the depression was over and that brighter days lay ahead.

Omaha was becoming "quite a city," Paul Matthews wrote in 1891. But despite its fine metropolitan hotels, numerous banks, paved streets, and electric trolley cars,⁹ its wild-west aspects

lingered. Prostitutes were numbered in the hundreds, saloons ornamented downtown corners, and the list of unsolved murders was large.¹⁰ On side streets in rainy weather, the mudholes were so deep that people put signs: "No bottom here." Paul Matthews described the custom of moving frame houses from one section of town to another as the desirability of different subdivisions changed:

So common was this habit of house moving that it caused no particular comment when, in 1893, a house was moved from one end of the city to the other, given a new coat of paint and some alteration in the way of a new verandah; but when the owners returned from a visit to the World's Fair in Chicago, all they found was a vacant lot! It took them a long time to locate their stolen house!¹¹

Against this background of boom and bust, the Episcopal Church in Nebraska appears no more stable. The Diocese of Nebraska was established in 1868 under the leadership of Bishop Robert H. Clarkson. During the early years of his episcopate, the emphasis was in towns along the Missouri River, but with the extension of railroads across the state, emphasis by the diocese changed to areas in which railroads were the primary influence.¹² The consequence of this shift was that within a decade much of the initial work to establish the Episcopal Church had failed and a new beginning had to be made. A former chancellor of the diocese wrote in 1893:

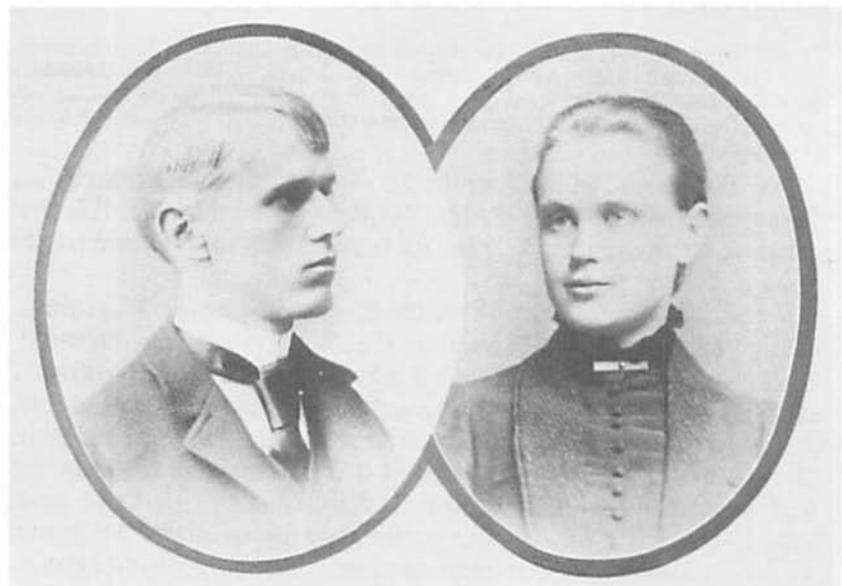
In 1868, when the Diocese was organized, the churches at Brownville, Peru, Bellevue, Fort Calhoun, and Decatur each had a measure of strength. In 1885, when the Bishop died, they had become almost extinct. . . . And thus it happened that the Diocese had two beginnings; two periods of pioneer work; the work of the last aided not at all by the work of the first.¹³

As the population stabilized, Episcopalians operated an "Associate Mission" in Omaha between 1888 and 1902. It is the purpose of this paper to trace its history and to evaluate its effectiveness.

On St. Matthias' Day, 1885, the Reverend George Worthington, STD (doctor of sacred theology), was consecrated Bishop of Nebraska, succeeding not only to Bishop Clarkson's see, but to the task of building a diocese from near extinction. As early as 1879, when he was rector of St. John's Church in Detroit and a leading presbyter in the Diocese of Michigan, he had counseled his bishop, Samuel Smith Harris, that the most effective method of working in the growing towns of Michigan was to establish an "associate mission," securing young unmar-



Members of Associate Mission, Omaha: Charles H. Young (back left), Paul Matthews (facing right), Irving P. Johnson, H. Percy Silver (middle left), George Worthington, Stephen A. W. Pray (with beard), James Wise (front left, dark tie), Samuel G. Welles, Peter Hoyt. . . (Below) Paul and Eva Matthews, 1886. All photos from Mrs. Harlan Cleveland, Mother Eva Mary, C.T.: The Story of a Foundation (1929).



ried priests, who for a given time would pledge themselves to missionary work under the guidance and direction of the bishop. Feeling strongly about this scheme, he urged Bishop Harris to make the experiment. The bishop, however, deemed it inexpedient, and the idea was never tried.¹⁴

Coming into his see, Bishop Worthington resolved that he would carry out the plan he formulated in Michigan and began to search out suitable priests for an associate mission he hoped to establish in Omaha. It was difficult to secure and keep missionary clergy, as Bishop Clarkson had found out years before.¹⁵ It was not until the fall of 1888 that the Reverend H. L. Gamble of Fond du Lac came to Nebraska, and after his ordination joined the Reverend Charles S. Witherspoon to establish the Associate Mission of Omaha. The Reverend John A. Williams, writing in 1907 said this was the first such mission formed in the American Episcopal Church upon the initiative and by sanction of a bishop.¹⁶

One of Bishop Worthington's arguments for the effectiveness of an associate mission was that the work desired in the mission field could be done more cheaply. His financial arrangement with the two missionaries was that while the Associate Mission contained only two members, it would receive \$1,200 a year. When it increased to four members, that amount was to be increased to \$1,500 and a house provided by the bishop.¹⁷ For the first 18 months of the mission, no additional men could be found.

Although the first Associate Mission was short-lived, it seems to have done considerable work. At the Annual Council of 1889, eight months after the associates had formed the mission, it was reported that three churches were being built and three additional sites had been purchased. All of this was valued at \$13,000.¹⁸ Within two years St. Andrew, St. Augustine, and Good Shepherd churches were built in Omaha, and St. Martin's was constructed in South Omaha.¹⁹ The demise of the first Associate Mission was not because of the difficulty of the work. As John Williams condescendingly suggests, matrimony was the gleam in Satan's eye that brought the mission to an end. He writes, "One of the priests married, and as the other could not 'associate' all by himself, he left the diocese."²⁰ When the mission closed, all the churches it established went into a state of

suspended animation except the Church of the Good Shepherd, which organized itself as a parish and elected its first rector in 1890. Despite this initial failure Bishop Worthington was unwilling to abandon the mission and set out to find men to continue the work.

During 1889-1890 five seniors at the General Theological Seminary in New York City met to discuss issues of common interest, including missions. They were not much different from many seminarians today. One of them recalled:

Every man whom God calls to serve in his sacred ministry, as he looks forward to the day of his ordination, feels the thrill of inspiration and enthusiasm for his work. He has often pictured to himself his ideal of the way in which God's work in the Church should be carried on, and perchance has criticized the labors of his predecessors in the field, for theological students are proverbially critical. We need not strain our memory too hard to carry ourselves back to seminary days, to find ourselves again in a group of devoted young men earnestly discussing the question as [to] how we could fulfill the sacred duty to which God has called us. In fear and trembling we saw the Church was not entirely faithful to her trust.²¹

The group finally settled on a plan to form an associate mission in the domestic mission field. "Considering the worldliness of some portions of the Church, and the laxity of Faith, it was hoped that the existence of such an organization might be, under God, an instrument for the elevation of the Priesthood."²² They gained their ideas largely from *The Revival of the Priestly Life in France*, in which was described the advantages of the "oratory system" then popular among Roman Catholics in France.²³ Included in the group were Irving Johnson, Paul Matthews, Arthur M. Jenks, Edward J. Knight, and James Goodwin.²⁴

While still in seminary, the group applied to several missionary bishops with no result. Bishop James S. Johnston of the Diocese of West Texas replied that he didn't want any Anglo-Catholics working in his field, and Leigh R. Brewer, bishop of Montana, turned them down for much the same reason. Arthur Jenk's bishop then refused to release him for the missionary field, and James Goodwin withdrew from the plan. Edward Knight moved on to a "sacrificial ministry" at Christ Church, Trenton, New Jersey, where he started an associate mission.²⁵ Now only two of the original five remained committed to the plan, and they were discouraged by the reception they received from the missionary bishops.

In some way Bishop Worthington heard about Paul Mat-

thews and Irving Johnson and came to New York to meet with them. They agreed to come to Nebraska.²⁶ Irving Johnson planned to go to Nebraska soon after graduation, but Paul received Bishop Worthington's permission to study at Oxford during the 1890-1891 term.

Paul was accompanied by his sister Eva, a Presbyterian. She was impressed by Oxford's great Anglican divines, especially Charles Gore, whose lectures were entitled "Incarnation of the Son of God."²⁷ She wrote:

I am beginning to be afraid now—to think of my coming to use that word!—of Paul's converting me. The truth is he presents his arguments in such a biblical light, and our reading together in the Acts seems to support his proposition so obviously, that I am slowly becoming convinced that he is right and I am wrong.²⁸

Meanwhile Paul came under the influence of another of the Lux Mundi theologians, Francis Paget, professor of theology and dean of Christ Church, as well as of his tutor, Thomas Strong, later bishop of Oxford.²⁹

They returned to the United States in 1891 to the family home in Glendale, Ohio. Eva was confirmed and Paul ordained to the diaconate in Christ Church, their home parish in Glendale, by Boyd Vincent, bishop of Southern Ohio. Matthews served his diaconate in Glendale. He fell in love with Elsie Procter, a sister of his brother's wife, but he had promised three years of celibate ministry in Nebraska, and by September he and Eva set out for Omaha to join Irving Johnson, leaving Elsie behind.³⁰

After his graduation from General Seminary, Irving Johnson was ordained deacon by Bishop Channing M. Williams of Connecticut and came immediately to Nebraska. While Paul was in England, Irving resided with Francis W. Eason, a divinity student of the diocese, and the Reverend John Albert Williams, also a deacon, at "Deaconthrope," as some romantic clerical wit dubbed it. They said the daily offices at St. Andrew's Church, to which, John Williams recalls, "the season being unusually rainy, we had to wade through mud ankle-deep." The mornings were spent in study while the afternoons were devoted to calling. John Williams writes again, "It was a happy summer spent by the two deacons and the theolog." ³¹

By October Paul and Eva Matthews moved into a roomy house at 608 North 18th Street, and Irving soon joined them.³² They received \$100 a month for living expenses and \$25 a month for each member as an allowance for personal need, but they

limited themselves to \$15 a month to provide some savings. This meant that four men could be supported for the price of one. Paul wrote of his sister's salary:

My sister received nothing, and she was worth more to the associate mission and to Nebraska, as a missionary, than any of us. She had a small competence and she used it freely in maintaining the household, and so long as we lived together we lacked no comforts.³³

On St. Luke's Day, October 18, 1891, at St. Matthias' Church, with Bishop Worthington preaching, Paul Matthews and Irving Johnson along with John Williams were ordained priests. The Associate Mission was now ready to take up its work.³⁴

The approaching winter of 1891 was a time of adjustment for the new associates. Eva wrote home shortly after their arrival, "I am really very homesick just now and just managing to hold on with such crumbs of home talk as stray to me. The world has caught me in its drift at last and I must go outward with the set of the current."³⁵ However, there does not appear to have been much time for melancholy. Shortly after their ordination the missions of St. Andrew, St. Augustine, and St. Paul in Omaha, St. Martin in South Omaha, and St. Mary in Fort Calhoun came under their care. Much of the work of the missions centered in the clergy house, where guild meetings, confirmation classes, and vestry meetings were held around the dining room table.

Early spiritual life was centered around St. Barnabas' Church and its newly ordained rector, John Williams. Eva Matthews, a ready collector of community humor and observer of its life style, recorded her impressions in many letters to her sister. She wrote of St. Barnabas' Church: "Paul and Mr. Johnson have concocted a new name for St. Barnabas—Sanctus Barn—a most appropriate title. But in spite of the deadly cold, the water freezing in the sacred vessels, Paul has never caught cold there and has hardly missed a morning service."³⁶ Father Williams became Eva's spiritual director. He has left behind a reputation of pastoral zeal³⁷ typifying the kind of Christianity she thought effective. For Matthews and Johnson St. Barnabas parish had another appeal. Paul recalls:

We selected this house (North 18th Street) because it was near St. Barnabas Church, which we held in much the same regard as faithful Roman Catholics revere St. Peter's

and the Vatican. Fr. John Williams was a keen partisan; while we did not actually get into hot water. we found the stream pleasantly warm much of the time.³⁸

The life of the community centered in a loosely organized scheme of work, prayer, and study. After "mass, matins, and mush,"³⁹ as it was known, the morning was usually given to study and devotion, the afternoon to calling and parish duties, and the evening to social gatherings and meetings that mark every parish's life. Evening prayer and occasionally the litany were said before the evening meal.⁴⁰ Study consisted mostly of reading the Bible in the original tongues, Hebrew and Greek, and some side reading in church history and theology. Visiting often took on humanitarian aspects in a city experiencing the growth that came with urbanization. Eva writes of a visit she made:

A little woman gave birth to twins about two weeks ago. She really didn't have enough to eat, and while very ill, before the babies were born, she had to do her washing as well as her other work, living in a wretched little cottage without foundations, and of course, cold floors. I called on her last Monday with a nice basket of fresh eggs and oranges, jellied chicken, and a bottle of port wine which Paul carried for me.⁴¹

In March, 1892, Eva records another visit which she made with Paul to a sick child in a hovel in the country:

We had to go to the extreme limits of the city and then walk for nearly a mile over the prairie. It was a wretched cottage, looking forlorn and lonely on the vast stretch of the landscape reaching to the faraway horizon, and the attempt at a fence about it served only to render its exposure the more pitiful by giving it self consciousness. . . .After some persuasion he [the father] gave his consent to having the child baptized, though with the reluctance of suspicion, and we entered the low-browed, sullen-looking cottage, where the black demon of uncleanness reigned. The child, a plump little girl, not yet two, lay in a great feather bed, too sick to notice or care about strangers. . . .The service was exceedingly simple, a soup plate serving for a font, but as we concluded with prayers for the sick child, the dull cloud upon the woman's face broke into a rain of tears, and as we left, the father asked us to come again with a cordiality very different from his scanty greetings.⁴²

Johnson and Matthews had formed a deep and lasting friendship while they were in seminary, and it seems to have been cemented by their life together in the Associate Mission. It was still the custom in the 1890s to preach twice on Sundays, once in the morning and again in the evening at a more evangelical service of hymns and prayers. It was the custom of the two clergymen to exchange pulpits in the evening to avoid writing two sermons a week. This story survives as a demonstration of the wit and intimacy that marked the lives of the associate ministers, as well as the kind of preaching they liked:

Late one Saturday evening Irving, coming in fagged out, threw himself into a chair by the fire. "You ready for tomorrow, Paul?" he asked casually.

"Yes, I'm ready."

"What are you going to preach about?"

"The Law, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' "

"You couldn't make anything out of that," challenged Johnson.

"Oh, yes, I can." And growing eloquent, Paul expounded his three points. First. Guilty of all because the Law is One, and one least law broken, all is broken. Second. The Law is of God, and God is One. Third. Man is One, and breaking the Law breaks the unity of his nature.

"You might make something of that," Irving ruminated and went to bed. And so did Paul, all unsuspecting. The next evening as he tucked his sermon away in his overcoat pocket, Irving Johnson stopped him. "You'd better not preach that sermon this evening, Paul," he said, with his genial laugh. "I preached it at St. Andrew's this morning!"⁴³

In the summer of 1892 the mission was augmented by three seminarians home on vacation from the Seabury Divinity School: Francis W. Eason, Francis M. Bacon, and Charles Herbert Young.⁴⁴ Later in 1892 St. John's Church, "having deemed it expedient to dissolve its parochial organization,"⁴⁵ was placed in charge of the mission. Paul Matthews recounts that "St. John's rather resented having to come under the Associate Mission."⁴⁶ Their feelings were somewhat eased when Matthews was elected head of the mission and vicar of St. John's and moved its official headquarters there. In October the Reverend Giles Herbert Sharpley joined the mission, and early in 1893 Samuel Gardner Welles increased the clergy to four.⁴⁷

In the fall of 1892 William J. Blue also came to live with the mission. He was assigned by the bishop to read for holy orders under the direction of the mission. Eva observed that he was quicker of hand than he was of head.⁴⁸ Soon after Blue arrived, another postulant, Peter Hoyt, lay worker, joined Blue in his study. This early attempt to establish the mission as a place for educating clergy was not successful; neither man was ordained. However, with the arrival of James Wise, the mission gained a student of more capability and determination. He was a Scot, who came to Omaha as a worker for the Union Pacific and later joined one of the parishes of the mission before joining its staff as a student and lay worker. Matthews described Jim Wise as a "delightful companion, a hard worker, conscientious and effective. . . [with] a heart of gold and an alert mind."⁴⁹ He was ordained in 1902.

The mission's report to the Diocesan Council of 1893 showed six growing missions under the care of the Associate Mission with property valued at \$25,000, an indebtedness of less than \$4,000, and a new church building for St. Paul's entirely paid for. During the year 59 baptisms and 29 confirmations brought the communicant strength to 188. The Sunday school enrolled 359 children and included 41 teachers and officers. The total receipts for stipend and house rent were \$1,700, of which \$1,116 was received from the diocese and the balance from the missions.

On the feast of St. John the Baptist, 1893, the Reverend Irving P. Johnson was made head of the mission. Two new churches, St. Mark's at Florence and St. Margaret's at Papillion, were added to the mission's work, as was the new county hospital. A 45-pupil parochial school was opened in September, with six teachers, the two principal ones being Eva Matthews and Caroline Welles, sister of Samuel G. Welles, who joined the mission. One of Eva's students wrote:

She was my French teacher, and that hour of French was the brightest in the day to me. She had a wonderful influence over me as over all the young girls of my age. It seemed to be her especial gift to attract them to her and to bring out all their good points.⁵⁰

The house on 18th Street became too crowded with four clergy, two lay students, and the Misses Welles and Matthews. Eva, attracted to the prairie—a "vast stretch of landscape. . . the keen north wind blowing in our faces"⁵¹—suggested a move. In June, 1893, they occupied a house on California Street at the edge of the city. Eva gardened and the priests converted the attic into an oratory. Love of the country⁵² must have blinded them to the impracticability of the house in Nebraska winters. In cold weather they found that the furnace delivered smoke and mephitic gas but no warmth. One cold night they kept the water running from the taps to prevent the pipes from freezing, and a miniature ice gorge formed in the bathtub. Father Matthews recalled, "We put in stoves wherever we could, and wore our warmest clothing, and took no baths."⁵³ Necessity sent them back to the city. Paul and his sister lived in a small house on 28th Street, the rest of the missionaries at the school.

The Panic of 1893 deeply affected the mission. Father Matthews wrote, "I remember the stream of poverty-stricken

farmers going back East, crossing the Missouri River, getting away from the prairie farms where long continued drought and crop failure and mounting mortgages had made it impossible for them to live."⁵⁴ Through the church press and personal contacts in the East, the mission had gained wealthy and influential friends, one of whom sent a check for \$1,000 for the relief of those suffering in western Nebraska.

Paul Matthews' father, Judge Stanley Matthews, a Glendale, Ohio, lawyer-politician, was named to the US Supreme Court while Paul was in seminary. From their father's estate Paul and Eva came into "a small competence" in 1893.⁵⁵ This money had allowed them to take a separate residence in Omaha and permitted Paul to loan \$6,000 to Bishop Worthington to build a clergy house for the mission near St. John's Church. By autumn, 1894, the new brick house was occupied. It contained a chapel, large dining room, several study-conference rooms, and a library.⁵⁶ Despite the depression the communicant strength rose to 251.⁵⁷

With her portion of her father's legacy Eva established a "house for women," which she hoped would be filled with workers to assist the mission clerics. The idea for the house came originally from Johnson, who irreverently called it the "House of Martha" because it was filled with industrious women workers. By September, Eva had surrounded herself with nine "sisters"—three girls and six women—one of whom was Grace Keese, Johnson's fiancée, who had come to live with her until Johnson was free to marry. Another early resident was Beatrice Henderson, only 15 at the time, who later joined Eva as the first two professed sisters of the Community of the Transfiguration. In a letter to her sister, Eva outlined her own conception for the house:

For the first year the life would be experimental, after that time pledges could be taken—life vows do not enter into the scheme—and a rule of life settled upon. At least one permanent resident besides myself is required, then transient residents coming for one, two, or three months would be welcomed and assistants from outside, not resident, would be useful.⁵⁸

She organized the work of the house. The mornings were spent in the parochial school, where the ladies taught and several of the girls continued their studies. The afternoons were spent according to this schedule:

Mondays: Sewing for the poor. We took turns reading aloud. Tuesdays: Guild meetings and mission calling. Wednesday: Thorough cleaning of rooms allotted to each resident.

Thursday: Recreation day. Friday: Study and reading. Saturday: Morning—our rooms cleaned. Afternoon—we taught in the sewing schools of the different missions. There were 65 girls enrolled in the sewing schools. Sunday: Church services, Sunday school, and rest.⁵⁹

The women spent the evening together as a family and often Eva Matthews played Beethoven on the piano. Girls still in school had a study hour and once or twice a week read St. Monique in French with Miss Matthews in her office. At 9 o'clock the household assembled for compline.

During her stay in Omaha Eva became interested in the religious life under the instruction and direction of a retreat master, the Reverend Algernon Crapsey.⁶⁰ "The joy of my vocation leapt into being and sang in my heart all day," she wrote.⁶¹ Her brother at first was angry at her decision to seek membership in a religious order, believing it wrong for her to separate herself from her family in such an irrevocable way. Later he asked that she postpone her decision until he was free from his obligation to the mission. She agreed, but was determined to join the novitiate of the Sisters of St. Mary in Chicago as soon as she could.⁶²

While waiting for Paul's tenure with the mission to end, Irving Johnson, who had encouraged her to establish her "house for women" in conjunction with the Associate Mission, discouraged her entrance into the Sisters of St. Mary, but asked her instead to begin her own order in the Midwest. Thereupon she set out to establish what was to become the Community of the Transfiguration.

In June, 1895, Paul left Omaha. He and Eva took an extended trip to Palestine before returning to Ohio, where he became rector of St. Luke's Church in Cincinnati. As Sister Eva Mary, CT (Community of the Transfiguration), the former Eva Lee Matthews and her student, Beatrice Henderson, established their community at Bethany House across the street from St. Luke's.⁶³

The year Paul and Eva Matthews left, the mission in Omaha had reached the apex of its accomplishments. Lewis T. Wattson, on becoming head of the mission, reported to the Diocesan Council a healthy program, but a staff reduced to eight with the resignations of Father Matthews and H. Percy Silver. Although Irving Johnson had promised to continue the program for women after Eva Matthews left, it was closed in 1896. This put a

hardship on the parochial school, although it managed to keep its doors open for another school year. The associates added to their projects a monthly magazine, *The Pulpit of the Cross*.⁶⁴ It was circulated nation wide and remained in publication until about 1900.

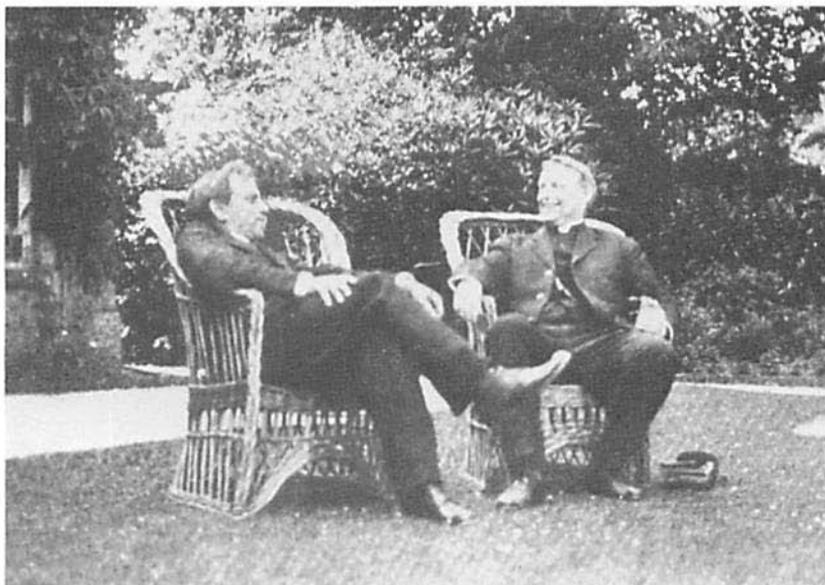
In addition to the magazine, the mission, under the leadership of Irving Johnson, began work in the 3rd Ward of South Omaha, a suburb of about 10,000 persons made up primarily of packing-house workers and their families. At first the congregation met in a room "crowded almost to suffocation." A church was soon built and dedicated to St. Clement. While most of the Associate Mission work was focused in Omaha, the Reverend Lewis Wattson, a gifted mission preacher, began visiting rural sections of the state. Through his efforts a mission congregation was established at Bancroft in northeastern Nebraska. Funds for the erection of a church there were raised through *The Pulpit of the Cross*. Each subscriber was asked to send at least a quarter. The April 25, 1898, issue reported that 320 people had responded and that \$331.46 had been received. The largest gift was \$50 and the smallest was 10c.⁶⁵ The Church of the Atonement at Bancroft was dedicated by the end of the summer of 1898.⁶⁶ This added activity resulted in the Associate Mission's steady growth. In 1895 Father Wattson's parochial report listed 182 baptisms and 89 confirmations. That year over one-fourth of the total growth of the diocese resulted from the work of the mission.⁶⁷

From 1898 until 1902 the work of the Associate Mission seems to have become increasingly limited, and the life of the associates became more closely bound to the interior life of the clergy house than to the needs of the community. The lesser offices were added to the prayer-book services, silence was kept during meals and after compline, and the rule of life was generally made more strict. This new rigor caused most lay members to fall away and hindered the attraction of new clerical members.⁶⁸ Much support for the mission came directly from Bishop Worthington. In 1896 Bishop Williams, elected bishop coadjutor to succeed the ailing Bishop Worthington, said the work of the Associate Mission in Omaha would soon end and that it ought to be relocated farther west.⁶⁹

During this period the principal figures involved with the mission left. In 1896 Samuel Welles and his sister Caroline left; in



Parochial school of the Associate Mission, Omaha, 1893.



Bishops Irving P. Johnson (left) and Paul Matthews after 25 years of friendship.

1898 Father Wattson was replaced by the Reverend W. S. Howard and later by Charles Herbert Young.⁷⁰ Irving Johnson became rector of St. Martin's in South Omaha and continued his work there and at St. Clement's until 1901, when he left the mission after 10 years of service. By this time the mission churches had grown and were anxious to elect their own rectors and become regular city parishes.

In 1902 these developments caused the head of the mission to submit this report to the Diocesan Council:

Because of the rapid and substantial growth of the two largest of our Omaha missions, we believe that the best interests of the Church in Omaha requires a change in the methods of our work. Both St. Andrew's and St. John's have reached the point where they need the entire services of a resident priest. Each of these missions has made large increases in the stipend pledges for the support of the clergy. We believe, therefore, that they should be made independent. At St. Augustine's the response to our work has not been such as to warrant us to recommend its continuance. . . .

The stations north of Omaha can be easily cared for by combining them into groups. We therefore believe that by its very success and growth the Associate Mission has accomplished its purpose in Omaha. Its work here has been done. We respectfully recommend that the suggestions above mentioned be carried out during the coming autumn, and that the Associate Mission be removed to another strategic point in the diocese, to carry on the work which has been so successfully accomplished here.⁷¹

Within a year the Associate Mission was closed and its members dispersed. It was never moved to a new location. In

the 11 years of its existence, 981 persons were baptized; 700 confirmed; eight churches, two parish halls, and a clergy house built; one parish and four missions permanently established, and several others started; and a parochial school opened. It educated three men for the priesthood: James Wise, Otto W. Gromoll, and Addison Edward Knickerbocker, one of whom was later elevated to the episcopate. Eva Matthews established the Community of the Transfiguration. Father Williams said that once-skeptical Episcopal churchmen should now be convinced of the "utility and effectiveness of this agency."⁷² Bishop Worthington, who founded the mission, echoed Williams' opinion.⁷³

After nearly 70 years, three of the missions it founded still exist as churches,⁷⁴ and no other missionary project has made such an impact on the diocese.

The lonely and difficult life of missionaries on the frontier had for two generations driven even zealous clergymen of several denominations from the plains to less arduous fields in the East. In 1872 the Reverend Anson Graves wrote of the low pay, lack of visible accomplishment, physical hardships, and the overwhelming task which he was sent to Nebraska to face alone: "Alone with God and doing his work, persuading, battling others, yet alone; master and man, alone, alone with God."⁷⁵ Becoming completely discouraged, he decided to leave Nebraska:

I told Bishop Clarkson that I was worked out and preached out and desired a change. He wanted me to go to North Platte, three hundred miles farther west. I shrank from the still lonelier life I should have there and accepted a call to assist the Rev. B. D. Knickerbocker in his large parish and many missions around Minneapolis, Minnesota.⁷⁶

Members of the Associate Mission faced such problems in Omaha 20 years later. They made little money, living on \$15 a month. They faced discouragement, disappointment, and even tragedy. In September, 1897, a hanging Rochester lamp broke open and spilled burning oil on the children's confirmation class and burned the interior of St. Margaret's Church at Papillion.⁷⁷ The task must have seemed enormous, for none of the associates had practical experience as clergymen. But 50 years later Bishop Matthews nostalgically recalled, "Happy days indeed! The ties of friendship knotted there have endured and never will be forgotten."⁷⁸

NOTES

1. James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln, 1955), 258.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*, 259.
4. Willa Cather, "Nebraska," in John T. Flanagan, ed., *America is West* (Minneapolis, 1945), 623.
5. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 264.
6. Mrs. Harlan Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.: The Story of a Foundation* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1929), 45.
7. The Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben get their name from spelling Nebraska backwards. They are the most significant commercial and civic organization in Omaha, if not in all of Nebraska.
8. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 265.
9. The Right Reverend Paul Matthews, DD, "Reminiscences of the Associate Mission in Omaha," *The Living Church*, CX, May 27, 1945, 12.
10. Sibyl Harton, *Windfall of Light: A Study of the Vocation of Mother Eva Mary, C.T.* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1968), 58-59.
11. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945, 12.
12. William J. Barnds, "The Episcopal Church in Nebraska Since 1875," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, XXXIII, September, 1964, 186.
13. William T. Whitmarsh, *Quarter-Centennial History of the Diocese of Nebraska* (printed privately by order of the Annual Council of the Diocese of Nebraska, 1893), 35.
14. The Reverend John Albert Williams, "An Historical Sketch of the Associate Mission of Omaha," *The Living Church*, XXXV, October 20, 1906, 1,027.
15. In 1885 the average length of tenure in Nebraska parishes for a clergyman was 13 months. For a vivid account of the hardships of the rural missionary clergy, see Anson Rogers Graves, *The Farmer Boy Who Became a Bishop* (Akron, Ohio, 1911), 101ff. Here he records his year's tenure at Plattsmouth, Nebraska.
16. Williams, *The Living Church*, October 20, 1906, 1027. I know of no other evidence that acknowledges or nullifies this statement.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *The Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1889.
19. Williams, *The Living Church*, October 20, 1906, 1,027.
20. *Ibid.*
21. "The Work of the Associate Mission: The Mission at Omaha," *The Pulpit of the Cross*, II, March 25, 1896, 227.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*
24. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945, 12.
25. Some 25 years later, when Paul Matthews was elected Bishop of New Jersey, the building in Trenton built by Edward Knight to house his Trenton Associate Mission was the diocesan house of what had become Christ Church Cathedral. Edward Knight became the bishop of Western Colorado in 1907.
26. *The Pulpit of the Cross*, II, March 25, 1896, 227. Bishop Worthington met with Paul Matthews and Irving Johnson at the Church of the Transfiguration in New York City, a parish long active in the catholic movement and supportive of western missions. The church later became known as "The Little Church Around the Corner."
27. Harton, *Windfall of Light*, 50. Charles Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God* (New York, 1902). Charles Gore gave his famous Bampton lectures "The Incarnation of the Son of God" to overflow crowds at the University Church of St. Mary at Oxford in 1891. The lectures were an exposition of the Chalcedonian doctrine of the person of Christ. Gore's application of catholic theology directly to social problems in England

established him as the leader of the progressive party in the Church of England. As Bishop of Worcester, Gore began to establish mission parishes in England's industrial Midlands, especially Birmingham, using a model similar to the associate mission experiment being tried in Omaha and other American cities.

28. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 38.

29. Harton, *Windfall of Light*, 51. In 1889, the year before Paul Matthews and his sister Eva arrived at Oxford, Charles Gore and Francis Paget (with other contributors) published *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation* (New York, 1890). Its purpose was "to put the Catholic faith into its right relation to modern intellectual and moral problems." This collection of essays caused "grave distress" among the older school of high churchmen at Oxford, and established a party of progressive, socially active, and missionary-minded catholic churchmen of which Paul Matthews was proud to count himself as a member. This group of Oxford scholars became known as the Lux Mundi theologians. See James Anderson Carpenter, *Charles Gore and Christian Socialism* (London, 1964).

30. *Ibid.*, 56.

31. Williams, *The Living Church*, October 20, 1906, 1,027.

32. Harton, *Windfall of Light*, 58.

33. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945, 12.

34. *The Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1897, 16.

35. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 44.

36. *Ibid.*, 46.

37. Harton, *Windfall of Light*, 58.

38. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945, 14.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 43; Harton, *Windfall of Light*, 38.

41. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 46.

42. *Ibid.*, 35.

43. *Ibid.*, 48.

44. *The Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1898, reports that Charles Young was later ordained at St. John's Church, Omaha, with Paul Matthews preaching; Francis Eason was also ordained at St. Philip's Church with Bishop Worthington preaching. Young later joined the associate mission.

45. Williams, *The Living Church*, October 20, 1906, 1,027.

46. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945, 14.

47. I can find no record of what happened to Giles H. Sharpley; Charles Young left the mission in 1896 to take a church in Council Bluffs, Iowa. He later went to Peoria, Illinois, and then to Cincinnati as Father Matthews's assistant at St. Luke's Church. He became rector in 1904 after a short tenure in Oklahoma. When Paul Matthews was elected bishop of New Jersey he invited Father Young to take charge of work in the institutions of the diocese. He held the post for 25 years. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945.

48. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 45.

49. Matthews, *The Living Church*, October 27, 1945, 12-13. He was elected bishop coadjutor of Kansas at the age of 43 and died at the age of 64 on July 8, 1939.

50. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 82. See also Williams, *The Living Church*, October 20, 1906, 1,027.

51. Harton, *Windfall of Light*, 60.

52. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 63.

53. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945, 14.

54. *Ibid.*

55. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 63.

56. Williams, *The Living Church*, October 20, 1906, 1,028.

57. *Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1895.

58. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 84.

59. *Ibid.*, 66.

60. Harton, *Windfall of Light*, 61. Eva's vocation to the religious life seems to have come as the result of a mission given at Trinity Cathedral in Omaha by Father Algernon Crapsey. She poured her heart out to him, and he assured her of her call. Eva considered this experience the turning point in her life.

61. *Ibid.*, 63.

62. *Ibid.*, 68-69.

63. Cleveland, *Mother Eva Mary, C.T.*, 127-128.

64. *The Pulpit of the Cross*, III, May 26, 1896, 249.

65. *Ibid.*, IV, April 25, 1898, 409.

66. *Ibid.*, V, June 29, 1898, 455.

67. *Ibid.*, May 26, 1896, 250. *Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1896.

68. *Ibid.*, IV, September 29, 1897, 310; Matthews, *The Living Church*, October 20, 1906, 1,028: "I am inclined to think that this contributed largely to the giving up of the work, as the members, one by one, went away."

69. Williams, *The Living Church*, October 20, 1906, 1,028. Bishop Worthington remained diocesan until 1908, but after 1899 he lived at the old Manhattan Hotel on 42nd Street in New York City. He was obliged to leave Omaha because he was afflicted with *angina pectoris* which demanded that he live at a low altitude. He was referred to by New Yorkers during those years as "the Bishop of Manhattan." He married shortly before leaving Nebraska. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945, 14.

70. Under the name Paul James Francis, Wattson founded the Society of the Atonement, a Franciscan community. He and the community left the Episcopal Church to establish themselves as a Roman Catholic religious order based in Greymour, New York. In recent years the "Greymour Friars" have devoted themselves to Christian unity, originating and promoting the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, a popular devotion in many denominations today. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945, 13.

71. Williams, *The Living Church*, October 20, 1906, 1,028.

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Council Journal of the Diocese of Nebraska*, 1897, 42.

74. St. Andrew's, St. John's, and St. Martin's in South Omaha. St. Andrew's has become one of the most influential parishes of the diocese.

75. Graves, *Farmer Boy*, 101.

76. *Ibid.*, 102.

77. *The Pulpit of the Cross*, IV, September 29, 1897, 312.

78. Matthews, *The Living Church*, May 27, 1945, 15.