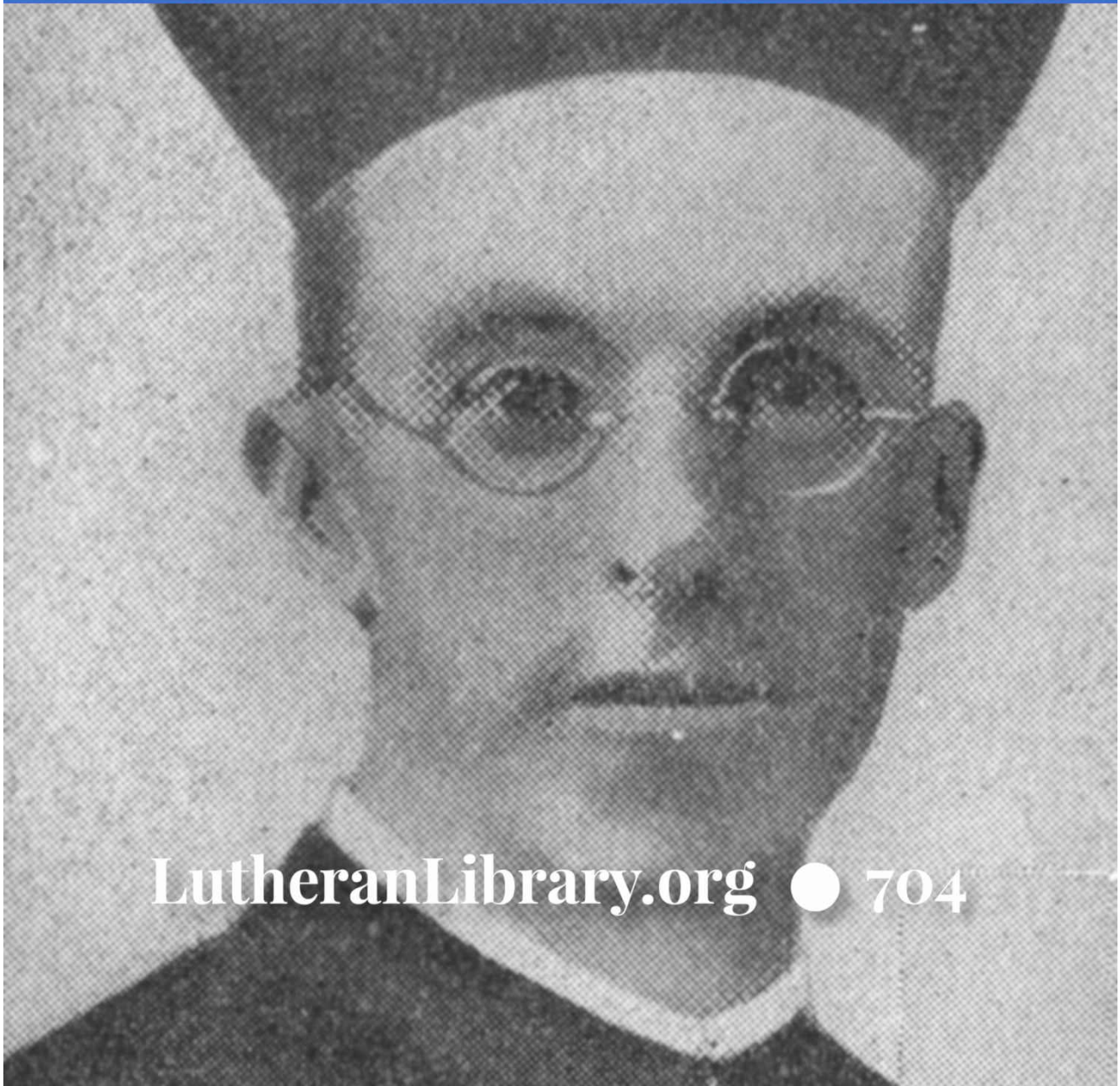


Leo Lehmann

The Soul of a Priest

My Conversion to the Pauline Succession



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The Soul of a Priest: My Conversion to the Pauline Succession

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The Soul of a Priest: My Conversion to the Pauline Succession

By Leo Herbert Lehmann

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“For a priest, there is nothing so dangerous before God, nothing so shameful before men,
as not to speak out his convictions freely.” — St. Ambrose.

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

"LEO HERBERT LEHMANN, by education and experience, is preeminently qualified as an expert on the Catholic Church, its history and trends and political relations.

"Born in Dublin, Ireland, he was educated in Mungret College, Limerick, and All Hallows College, Dublin. In 1918, he entered the University de Propaganda Fide, in Rome, Italy, and was ordained a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in St. John Lateran in 1921. In theology he was awarded the degrees of S.T.L. and D.D. He served as a Roman Catholic priest in Europe and in South Africa, and for several years acted as negotiator in legal matters at the Vatican. Later he came to the United States, where he served as a priest in Florida, continued his education at New York University and graduated with the degree of M.A. He is now editor of *The Converted Catholic Magazine*, and Secretary of Christ's Mission, 229 West 48th Street, New York, N. Y. He is the author of many magazine articles, books and pamphlets on the aims and activities of the Roman Catholic Church." (1943. From *Vatican Policy in the Second World War*)

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Please have patience with us when you come across typos. Over time we are revising the books to make them better and better. If you would like to send the errors you come across to us, we'll make sure they are corrected.

Introduction

THIS BOOK makes an appeal to the hearts of all who believe in the message and ministry of Jesus, and who rejoice when that message is proclaimed by a sanctified priesthood, the “royal priesthood” of believers, of which St. Peter wrote, “to show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his own marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). The author thought he had learned that message, and that he had been set apart to that priesthood. When the Spirit of God made it clear that he had been misled, he turned about, changed his plan, his way of life, his associations. Then his relations to Jesus Christ became sweet and personal. His heart-searching invitation and command, “Come unto Me... take My yoke,” were accepted as of God. The papal yoke under which he had staggered, were and burdensome like that of the Pharisees which Christ repudiated, fell from him, and he found rest to his soul. Then he entered into fellowship with those whom he had been compelled heretofore to term “publicans and sinners.” To his surprise he found that they were of the “royal priesthood.” They, too, had accepted the invitation, had come into the fellowship of Christ, had taken His yoke, and hence were “brethren beloved.”

Now he regrets that ever in thought or word evangelical Christians had been deemed by him as “infidels,” “heretics,” “pagan worshippers,” for they have given him the sweet boon of Christian fellowship. In contrast, his former companions have reviled and persecuted him, and said all manner of evil against him falsely, as Jesus said they would. His new associates say of him, as was testified of St. Paul: “He who persecuted us in time past now preacheth the faith of which he once made havoc” (Gal. 1:23). If the conversion of Paul to the faith of Christ was of God, as all who know of it affirm, who shall say that the author of this book is not also a convert to the true faith. He deserves the fellowship and prayers of all who love the Saviour of mankind.

The author’s courage and devotion in laying bare his life has an apostolic flavor. As in the case of St. Paul, there came to him the searching in-

quiry, “Why persecutest thou Me?” To this there was but one response: “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” Thus without full comprehension of whither he was being led, he found himself in the Pauline succession. The scales of darkness and ignorance fell from his eyes so that he now sees all things new. And compared with the yoke of Phariseeism, how new it all is! Before the light came he had struggled to conform to the minutiae of man-made regulations; now he finds the law of Christ written in his heart. He had been punctilious in offering innumerable sacrifices on earthly altars. Now he knows that by one sacrifice on a heavenly altar the blessed Son of God has brought such sacrifices to an end, “For by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:14). All altar symbolism has been fulfilled. Sins are remitted, not by man but by God, who alone has power to forgive. “Where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin” (ver. 18), and any pretense of such offering is worse than vain. It is a denial of the full efficacy of the atoning sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.

Now, like the great apostle, he finds no room for his former priesthood. Jesus did not appoint priests to minister His gospel. St. Paul names (Eph. 4:5) the agents in the Church for the “perfecting of the saints” — the living, not the dead. They are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers — never priests. Those who claim to offer a sacrifice in the mass, come near to being impostors, and those who believe in them are in darkness and under a delusion — themselves blind being led by blind guides. Thus Jesus spoke in His day. The author is now in the apostolic succession, not man-made but Christ-chosen; in the royal priesthood of believers and true worshippers.

And how unchristian the prohibition of meats, the imposition of fasts, when Jesus had expressly freed His disciples from this superstition (Matt. 15:10-18). Had not St. Paul expressly warned that in the latter times some, “giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons,” should “forbid to marry, and command to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thankfulness of them who believe and know the truth” (1 Tim. 4:1-4)? “Forbidding to marry” a “doctrine of demons!” How many are caught in the delusion that this prohibition helps to sanctity! It was not from God, for Jesus chose married men to be His apostles (Matt. 8:14), and St. Paul affirmed that he had as much right to have a wife as a traveling companion as had St. Peter (1 Cor. 9:5). Again the author found himself in the Pauline succession.

Then fell the last bulwark, the papacy. A careful reading of the New Testament made it clear that Peter never claimed to be head of the apostles or of the church; that this distinction was never accorded him; and that, if he were in Rome when Paul was there a prisoner, he was lacking in Christian courtesy, for he never called to offer aid. Then he read a thoughtful book entitled, “Was the Apostle Peter Ever in Rome?” published nearly forty years ago, in which the legend of Peter’s being Bishop there for twenty-five years was riddled by abundant testimony; and he recalled the confession of Professor Marucchi, the noted Roman archaeologist, made before him and his fellow-students, that in all his researches, not one shred of evidence of Peter’s being in the Eternal City had been unearthed. The papacy fell, a shattered ruin, impossible of credence by anyone who has learned the full meaning of the gospel of Christ, and who accepts His undisputed headship of His Church. The papal church is not of Christ.

How splendid to know the blessings of the “new covenant,” to find the Christianity of the apostles in strong antithesis to papalism, to serve a divine Master, and not writhe under the autocracy of an usurping overlord. The yoke of bondage gives place to the freedom with which Christ makes His disciples free. Repressions of mind and heart and life are removed, and the golden rule becomes the law of service. Thus, as St. Paul, he became “persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate him from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38,39).

Now he has found further that in the Pauline succession are hundreds of thousands of former sworn vassals of the papacy, who, following the great evangelical leaders of the Reformation period — whom he had been taught to execrate, to vilify, and to damn to the lowest hell — had joined with those who maintained the apostolic fervor, and were helping to make this world a better place in live in. They can now yield “allegiance to the flag, and to the republic for which it stands,” without mental reservations because of enforced acknowledgment of a foreign Vatican City government, with its inevitable taint of dual allegiance.

And coming further into the full light, he discovered that every step along the trail toward political, social, and religious freedom had been blazed by those whose worship he had been compelled to term “pagan.” It is true that for propaganda purposes they are sometimes spoken of as “sepa-

rated brethren.” But that is not official, as all will see who read the oath on page 142 which perverts to Romanism are compelled to take. “Heretics and schismatics” are harsh terms to apply to George Washington, to all who have served in the office of President of the United States, and to the millions of Protestants whose virtues honor our country’s roll. But that is how they and we are designated by this alien autocracy. It matters not that these patriotic citizens are supporting churches and charities almost innumerable, and are also contributing a yearly average of more than seventy-five millions of dollars toward benevolent objects — fully \$25,000,000 to carry the message of the gospel to other lands. As a result thousands of heathen communities have been put on the way to a better faith and a better way of living. And this spirit of altruism, shown without primary regard to race or creed, pervades and marks Protestant countries, because the people have studied the life and teachings of Jesus as written down by apostles and evangelists of New Testament times. Among evangelical Christians in the United States there are hundreds of thousands of classes studying the sacred Scriptures, which, according to St. Paul, are able “to make wise unto salvation” (2 Tim. 3:15). And yet, in all the years the author was studying for the priesthood, he never attended even one Bible class, nor are there a dozen in the entire Roman Catholic Church.

Inspired by new experiences and new knowledge the author has revealed his soul. He tells how he found that, to be honest, he must renounce the papacy and demit its man-made priesthood. He cheerfully accepts an outwardly lower position in the royal priesthood of believers that he may be in the Pauline succession. Many teachings of the Council of Trent, with its more than one hundred anathemas, are to him heretical because they do not square with the teachings of Christ as set forth in the Gospels, and as understood and proclaimed by His apostles; that is, with evangelical Christianity. In his new relationships he hopes to help build and strengthen the kingdom of God, thus serving the divine Master in sincerity and truth.

This book should have wide circulation. Protestants should read and commend it as a warning against the specious appeals and unwarranted claims of the papal church. Roman Catholics should read it, for the time is approaching when millions of them will turn from false teachers, and, by accepting true Christian doctrines, bring forth a new Reformation. They have been deceived into thinking that most conversions are to Romanism, when the contrary is the fact. There are in this country hundreds of congre-

gations of evangelical Christians, almost all of whose members were formerly Roman Catholics. The wonderful success of Rev. Charles Chiniquy, of whom the author makes brief mention, will be repeated. He was the means under God of converting many thousands of his fellow-French-Canadians to the faith of Christ. Several churches which he founded in Montreal and vicinity are still actively proclaiming the full gospel of the grace of God, and his books have gone through many editions. While this volume is more modest, all friends of the author will pray that it may help many thousands into the royal priesthood of Christ, and scores of deluded priests out of bondage to a false and subversive system, and into a larger and more fruitful ministry.

“W. A.”

1. Conversions And Perversions

THE PERSONAL ASPECT of religious conversions, apart from controversy, has ever been a subject of very deep human interest.

With the first beginnings of Christianity, conversion meant a straight “turn-over” from pagan and Jewish beliefs and practices to those set forth by Jesus Christ. This called for a complete “change of mind,” for that is the exact meaning of the Greek Gospel word *metanoia*. It involved an entirely new outlook upon the social and cultural, as well as the religious order of things which had theretofore existed. For the teachings of Jesus were intended to establish a different relationship between God and man and also between man and man.

Since that time, however, much confusion has arisen within Christendom itself as to the correct interpretation and practice of the teachings of Jesus Christ. Fanciful superstitions, lust for power, and human greed, have greatly hampered Christian development. Christianity, like all religions, has never been without need for reform, and it has had its prophets who corrected its priests — which prophets were likewise often slaughtered by the priests for their pains. Perversions, conversions and reversions have taken place all throughout the history of Christian church development.

Of special interest and importance have been the conversions of some of those priests themselves from the practice and policies of the Roman church to a better and more enlightened interpretation of the teachings and ideals of Christ.

The position, however, in which such a change places a priest is not an enviable one. By his own brother-priests and their faithful followers he is watchfully shunned and looked upon with dread and dismay. By not a few loyal Protestants of the established churches he is regarded as a *persona non grata*, having offended against recognized religious conventions. To evangelical Protestants he becomes just an interesting “convert from Ro-

manism,” and may soon be forgotten. And so, wearied, brokenhearted and discouraged, he must often walk a loveless, friendless path alone.

The lot of ministers and laymen of note who renounce their allegiance to Protestantism, on the other hand, is never as difficult. Their Protestant brethren merely “regret” their desertion to the Roman church. By papal propagandists they are lauded and welcomed — held up, indeed, as shining examples of spiritual heroism, and often loaded with honors. They are looked upon as “converts” of the only kind which the Roman church admits; they are praised for having “come back” from error to truth.

Since there are so few to praise or even defend the priest who leaves the Roman church, he must defend himself, at least state his own case truthfully before the world and his brethren, and leave it to them to fill the measure of praise or blame.

A Protestant, whether he be clergyman or layman, can, with comparative ease at anytime in his life, change his religious affiliation. Not so a Roman Catholic. A Protestant, in changing his religious views, has not to undergo an internal struggle with himself like a Roman Catholic. For Protestantism, happily, is not founded like Roman Catholicism upon any rigid creedal system, nor upon fixed human laws, nor upon a specialized code of metaphysics. It depends, primarily, upon the individual consecration of a life by personal prayer and worship.

Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, is something more than a church for prayer and worship. It is also a cleverly organized system of law, ritualistic emotionalism, and rigid doctrine. It is made to grip the entire life of its children — to root itself into their very bodies and souls. To break with it, therefore, in after life requires the doing of violence to oneself. Something of oneself must be rooted out with it.

The avowed aim of the Roman church, as taught officially in its schools and universities, is to establish its own world-polity of universal dominion over all churches and states. It begins with the individual from childhood’s tenderest years. History tells us how near it succeeded in its design in the past in Europe. There was a time when all Europe could have been styled “the United States of the Papacy.” Protestants, moreover, who become Roman Catholics, find in Catholic practice something satisfying either to their emotional feelings or to their imagination. Cardinal Newman, for instance, was not influenced in mind by his change to Roman Catholicism. But he obtained a physical comfort from its ritual and color, and a sense of security

from its corporate greatness. Mr. G. K. Chesterton, on the other hand, found in Roman Catholicism an opportunity to exercise his strange mind. It offered him a most fertile playground for his jumbled paradoxes. The very inconsistencies of the bewildering illogic of Roman philosophy and theology provided meat for his peculiar mental make-up. The fanciful topsy-turvyism of Roman Catholic history and teaching supplied him with abundant opportunity for mental gymnastic exercises. His paradoxes were, of course, a convenient substitute for defects of truth. The word “paradox” really means “sidestepping the truth.” Some priests in America, who were born Roman Catholics, have taken to imitate Chesterton in their defense of the strange things connected with Roman Catholic practice and teaching. They find it very effective, in order to make apologetic for their church before the American public, to copy the paradoxical and aggravating Chesterton. The Rev. Dr. Fulton J. Sheen, prolific of late in writings and preachings in defense of Romanism, has been styled and advertised as “the Chesterton of America!”

Protestant ministers who become Roman Catholic priests find ample scope and are given opportunity to obtain public notoriety. Often they make themselves sensationalists in order to obtain this notoriety. The Rev. Ronald Knox in England, after his change from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism, made himself the chief scaremonger about communism. He once set all the fire alarms clanging in London, and had all the police reserves rushed to emergency quarters, by broadcasting a sensational description of London in the control of the communists, as if it had already taken place.

Before him was Monsignor Hugh Benson, a son of the Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury. He tried to outdo Walter Scott in writing novels, not about the past history of England and Scotland, but about the future, when all England from king to peasant would be seen welcoming the pope and his seventy cardinals coming to England by airship!

No such scope is afforded the priest who turns away from the Roman Catholic priesthood. Special effort is made, in fact, to keep him from all contact with the public. He has to suffer the fate of “the prophet in his own country.” No matter what his qualifications may be, he will not be heard with any grace. He must go about as a marked man, not unlike an ex — convict. He is advised, by whatever friends he may still have left, to hide his identity in order to earn his daily bread.

The varied experience of my still young life should not be without benefit to my fellowmen, especially to my former co-religionists. I have tested the worth of religion on three continents of the globe, principally religion as forced upon the millions of Romans Catholics by the laws of the papal church. I have known intimacy with people of high distinction and power and with those of none — the princes and diplomats of the Vatican court, and the peasants of the fields.

Dressed in crimson robes, I have ridden with cardinals in their luxurious limousines past the Swiss Guards at salute through the Damascus gate of the Vatican leading to the pontiff's private apartments. I have watched while a pope died, saw him buried and his successor elected and crowned. I stood beside the late Pope Pius XI while Pope Benedict XV made him a cardinal by placing the quaint pancake hat on his head, myself holding up the long crimson train of another newly-made cardinal. I have studied the piety and the blasphemies of the people in many capitals of Europe. I have ministered as a priest, not only in magnificent cathedrals of Europe, but also in Dutch farm-houses on the wide African veldt and in tumble-down shacks of churches in the backwoods of Florida. I made my bed at night behind the mass altar of one such shack till a Florida hurricane came and swept the framework from its foundations, hurtling it several feet through the air.

I have shared the confidences of bishops and archbishops in America, and know how helpless they are made by the inexorable power of Roman Catholic church authority as exercised by the Jesuit Order. In expressing his true feelings against the machinations of the Jesuits in America and elsewhere, the late bishop of Buffalo once said bitterly to me: "I don't mind an enemy who will meet you face to face; but it is damnable when somebody comes behind you to stick a knife in your back!"

I have heard with breaking heart the story of crushed hopes and the failure of boyhood ideals from priests whom I knew as bright and fervent students in seminary days.

My conversion came about, not because of any lack of sentimentality or color in the religion of my boyhood, as in the case of Newman; nor from any desire to become a mental gymnast like Chesterton; nor in order to attract attention as a religious sensationalist like so many of Rome's converts. I have been truly actuated by a deep pity and sympathy for the mass of ordinary men deprived of the true light of Christianity by a priesthood, whose personnel are powerless to help even themselves.

My conversion comes at a time in the world's history when men are beginning to see how much the progress of the race has been hampered by the misuse of religion and God by ecclesiastical systems, greedy of the power which untold wealth and a large unenlightened following afford to those in high places. Men have now the freedom and scope to examine and hear about the inner working of things which before this were too fearfully sacred to be mentioned by the common people. Many use that scope only to mock at and attempt to destroy what has only been misused by human greed. They wish to wipe out everything labeled "religion" because church powers have abused it. They would destroy God, if they could, because self-asserted church rulers have, without warrant, preached a God to the people who is unlike the God in Christ.

In ceasing to minister as an official priest of such a church system, and in spite of the repudiation and social ostracism which I incurred by so doing, I have confidence that I can effectively lend a hand to convince all men of religion's worth.

Religion, as the professional piety of politically powerful church systems, can no longer serve the race in its present and future needs. In order to satisfy the nobler ideals now emerging, religion will have to be identified more and more with an honest life dictated, not by the bewildering illogic of dogmatic definitions, but by the urge of the individual conscience wherein abideth the true kingdom of God.

It is with this aim in mind that I pen the simple story in the following pages of the bitter struggle of experiences which led me to break with the priesthood of the Roman church.

2. My Boyhood In Catholic Ireland

THE STORY of my boyhood years in Ireland, where I was born, has little out of the ordinary with the youth of that country who are reared as members of the Roman Catholic majority. I was born, at the close of the year 1895, in the little seaside suburb then called Kingstown on the south fringe of Dublin Bay. In its delicately spired church I was baptized and registered as a child of the Roman Catholic religion.

I found, however, as I grew up and played about with other boys that there was some noticeable difference between myself and my companions, due to my mixed ancestry. My father was a native of the German Schwartzwald, or Black Forest, and had become a naturalized British subject in London before coming to Dublin where he met and married my mother. She, on her side, was of the Anglo-Irish family of the Rainsfords, and had turned Roman Catholic in her girlhood. These Anglo-Irish have been always known in Irish history as “more Irish than the Irish themselves,” though not always belonging to the Roman Catholic religion. Many of the Anglo-Irish, though Protestants, have been among Ireland’s most patriotic rebels against British dominion.

Of either father or mother I remember but little, as I was the youngest of a family of seven, and both my parents died before I attained to the full use of reason. I was not motivated therefore by any deep maternal influence either in becoming a priest, as so many Irish boys are, nor in breaking with the priesthood — as also are many discontented priests — when the time came for me to do so. The thought of a heartbroken mother urges many a pious Catholic boy to persevere and become a priest against his better judgment, and again influences many more to remain in the priesthood against their better reason; and, saddest of all, the tears and lamentations of mothers drive not a few back again to serve at the mass altar after they have lost all faith in the efficacy of Roman Catholic ministrations.

It cannot be denied that we inherit even religious characteristics from our forebears. I have had proof of this in my life. Unknown to myself, two characteristics have come to the surface in my religious development, in spite of every environmental influence to the contrary. Only after the facts had developed did I realize that the urge in me, first, to search for the true Christ in the Gospel itself in place of the Christ offered to me by Roman church authority, and second, to protest publicly against priestly domination and untruth, must have come to me from my maternal grandfather and my own father, respectively. I never knew my grandfather Rainsford, as he had died long before I was born. Of my own father I have only a shadowy remembrance, I being but five years old when he died. What I know of these two was related by my elder sister. My grandfather Rainsford was a devout Bible-reading Protestant. It was with a kind of reverential awe that my sister recounted to me how he would retire at evening to read aloud from the Bible and play a hymn on the organ. My sister has always attributed my decision to devote my life to religion as a priest to something inherited from this grandfather. Unfortunately she is now unwilling to admit that my break with the Roman priesthood could be in any way the ultimate fulfillment of that likeness of me to him.

Of my father also she has recounted how he resented the arrogance of Irish priests in the churches in Dublin. More than once was he known to have disputed the sermons of the priests and to have left his seat and walked out of church.

My primary education in Ireland was entirely from the nuns and Christian Brothers. My childhood memories of the nuns recall them as gentle, motherly women, tender and sympathetic to us little boys outside of school hours, but rigorous disciplinarians in the classroom. There they severely whipped our little hands and legs with long bamboo rods. As a result of my contact with nuns afterwards as a priest I have come to regard the pious sisters of Catholic convents as "mistaken martyrs." They have to fight a hard battle to crush out natural and maternal instincts; they sacrifice the comforts of a home and all it means to women in the service of a stoical church system which counts the continuance of its power to be of primary and essential importance, rather than the individual welfare of the sons of God.

In the Christian Brothers of the Irish schools, on the other hand, I recall very few redeeming qualities. They were cruel to us boys almost to the point of sadism. Fear alone prevented us from asking reasons for this cru-

elty in the Brothers, and from protesting against it. Even in after life, when Dublin boys grow to be men, that same fear in them of criticizing any man dressed in clerical clothes saves the Christian Brothers from public censure. I know personally, however, that these boys keep resentment in their hearts in after life against this schoolday cruelty which would be deemed to merit prison punishment in America. A knotted thong of twisted catgut was one of the instruments of punishment which I remember was devised by certain Christian Brothers in the schools I attended in Dublin. With this they lashed the stockinged legs and the bare flesh of poor boys too frightened to repeat their lessons correctly. So harsh and cruel was one Brother — Damien was his name — that by threats of punishment he drove a boy in our school to attempt suicide. This poor lad, after brooding over the excessive punishment which he expected to receive, made his way unnoticed to a three-story window overlooking the quadrangle where we others were at play supervised by Brother Damien. He stood out on the ledge of the window, and to our horror, prepared to throw himself down upon the concrete pavement below. The Brother took off his coat and threatened the frenzied boy that he would catch him in his arms if he jumped. This cowed the boy and he retreated to a back window and jumped on to the ground there, which, fortunately, was soft grassy earth. He was taken away immediately in an ambulance and, as far as I can remember, nothing more was ever heard or said of the occurrence! Excuse was made that the boy was not of a sound mind.

This excess of cruelty is carried out more in the orphanages under the charge of the Christian Brothers in Ireland than in their day-schools. Ireland, on account of its many poor, its lack of hygienic methods, its neglected homes, its overburdened and sickly, undernourished mothers with too many children, abounds in orphanages. These are all under the care of nuns, brothers and priests. The children are supplied from morning till night with excess of religious exercises, but with very little nourishing food. Bread with dripping-fat in place of butter and shell-cocoa form their morning and evening meals, and a thin soup, bread and potatoes, at midday. There is no civil jurisdiction to inspect or interfere with the method of feeding and disciplining orphans in Ireland.

I know now the reasons that explain the almost fiendish mentality shown by these Irish Christian Brothers in their methods of school correction. It expresses the pent-up, repressed natural instincts in young men wrongly induced to devote their lives to a work not suited to vigorous young men.

They simply give vent to these repressed instincts by excessive harshness towards some boys and by unnatural fondling and coddling of others, the more girlish ones.

These Brothers are repressed both in body and mind by the strictness of their order, which was founded by a certain Edmund Ignatius Rice about the middle of the last century. At that time no provision was made, either by church or state in Ireland, for any kind of education for the greater number of Irish boys because they were exceptionally poor. Only the sons and daughters of the rich and well-to-do could obtain an education in the high class colleges of the Jesuits and other religious orders of priests, and in the select convents of nuns. Edmund Ignatius Rice was a retired merchant of Waterford City, who devoted the profits of his business to gather together a band of young men to teach the rudiments of learning to poor Irish boys.

But he was obliged to obtain first of all the consent of Roman church authority and to submit to rules and regulations limiting the scope of his work for the education of the poor in Ireland, for two reasons. First, because too much education is held by the priests as a danger to the people's "faith," and second, because it would interfere with the monopoly of education held by the Jesuits and other priestly Orders in their well-paying schools and colleges for the rich. The Christian Brothers were therefore forbidden, as they are to this day even in parts of the United States, to teach Latin and secondary school subjects.

The Christian Brothers' schools (until the establishment of the Irish Free State) were free, and depended solely upon the pennies either brought to school by the boys themselves, or begged by the Brothers from the people. They were free, therefore, from the supervision of the British civil authority, but not of the church. Now their schools are supported by the Irish Government, but supervised still entirely by the church authorities.

The Bible was a closed book to us in the classroom, in church, and in the home. Specially prepared Bible stories and gospel parables, with a strictly papal interpretation, were given us to read and learn by rote. But into the pages of the Bible or of the Gospels themselves we never got a peep. I must confess that the beauty of the Psalms, the eternal verities uttered by the Prophets, the practical value of the writings of Paul — not to mention the truth of Christ as asserted by himself and recorded in the Evangelists — were unknown to me until I freed myself from priestly ministry. True, I had mumbled them over, in parts, during the daily recitation of my Latin bre-

viary-book, and in the mass missal as a priest; but few priests ever take time or care to understand the Latin of the Breviary or Missal, which they are obliged under pain of mortal sin to repeat every day with their lips.

Not that we were expressly forbidden as boys to read the Catholic version of the Bible. We were firmly discouraged, however, even from that. We were taught, of course, that it would be mortal sin and heresy even to handle a Protestant Bible. We had not the courage or the money to buy a Catholic version, usually high-priced, and it would have seemed like selling our souls to the devil to accept a free Bible from a Protestant society. We would have thrown such into the flames on a fire-shovel. We thus developed an aversion to, that was almost hatred of, any sort of a book that even looked like a Bible.

Many Catholics in America, I know, may accuse me of exaggeration in thus mentioning such things; but I would remind them that the sometimes overemphasized encouragement of Catholics in America by priests to read the Bible is by no means given with a free conscience. It is forced upon them by the outcry of their Protestant fellow-Americans, and not looked upon very favorably by church authorities in Rome.

My boyhood aversion to the Bible should not be wondered at. I was taught to hate everything Protestant as a danger to our Catholic faith. But we saw that Protestant children loved the Bible, and we recognized them from Catholic children because they always carried a large Bible in their hands to church and Sunday-school. And so, hating and shunning Protestants, we came to have a holy horror also of the Bible which seemed so much a part of their lives and ideas.

Religiously, the British made a lamentable blunder by their excessive zeal to make Ireland Protestant at the time of the Reformation. With an English translation of the Bible in one hand and a sword in the other they attempted to force the Irish people to abandon their native language and renounce allegiance to Rome. The only result was to initiate that saga of "persecution" which the papacy, to its own advantage, has made use of to this day to boast the Irish as its staunchest adherents. The Irish accepted joyfully the role of "martyrs for the faith," and clung more blindly and tenaciously to the dictates of Rome.

At that time there were but few of the Irish people who could even speak, much less read, the English language. Had they been given the open

Bible in their native tongue, even the Catholic version, the history of Ireland would be very different from what it is.

Politically, however, the attitude then taken by the British was a successful move. It helped them more than anything else to retain dominion over Ireland in the face of bitter struggles and recriminations of numerous rebel organizations. It brought about that eternal triangle of forces which has made Irish political and religious affairs the paradox of the nations. It pitted the Orange North and the Catholic South relentlessly against each other in a perpetual conflict. The Northern Protestants loathe everything papal as of the devil, and the Catholic South hates everything British as Protestant and heretical. It thus left the British Government and the papacy free to conspire together over the heads of both; it allowed the British to control in civil and the papacy in religious affairs. And so, while the Orangemen shout "To hell with the Pope" and harass the "bloody papists," and the Catholics fling stones and broken bottles at the dirty "Proddy dogs," the British Government has always been able to employ the thunder of the pope's excommunications to crush rebel movements and leave the bishops and priests all the freedom they require to keep their people loyal to the Roman Catholic faith.

Inside a Protestant church in Ireland we never dared to enter. The word "church" is taken by the people to mean only a Protestant place of worship; while Catholics go to hear mass in a "chapel," Protestants are said "to go to church." Irish priests in Protestant countries instruct their people from the pulpit not to say "I am going to church," but, "I am going to mass."

We had a superstitious fear of a Protestant church, and we would cross the street and walk on the other side of the road whenever we had to pass one when open for services. Even when its doors were locked we hurried past, not daring to raise our heads or to read the church notices and Scripture texts, which are to be seen on bulletin boards only outside Protestant churches. We would hold on tight to the marbles in our pockets and count them after passing an open Protestant church, fearing that some of them might have been spirited away. I confess I never as much as looked to see what the inside of a Protestant church was like until I became a ministering priest in Cape Town, South Africa.

The Roman Catholic catechism was our principal textbook in the Christian Brothers' schools. It was a formidable booklet, prepared by a synod of the bishops in Maynooth seminary. It was crammed with unintelligible theological terms which we were forced, under threat of corporal punishment,

to learn and recite by rote. Only when I came to study theology in Rome did I begin to understand the meaning of the words of the catechism which were dunned into my ears in the school. Since they were too difficult for us to read, they were dictated to us by the teacher and memorized by repeating them after him. Few Irish Catholics have the faintest notion of what the words of the catechism meant which they learned as children. Thus recited, the technical answers of the catechism often became a ludicrous and meaningless jumble of nonsense. For example, one answer I remember read thus: "Wherever the decrees of the Council of Trent which annuls clandestine marriages have been duly published, a clandestine marriage is no marriage; it is null and void in the sight of God and of His Church." This was repeated by us as — "Wherever the grease of the Council of Trent which annuls and destines marriages," etc. Another which says: "The pope can no more err than the church when he teaches doctrines... to be held by all the faithful," was turned into the following: "The pope can know more air than the church," etc. Marriage was often substituted for the definition of purgatory as "a place or state of punishment, where some souls safer for a time before they go to heaven!"

Of the contentment of the Irish people with their proverbial poverty and wretchedness I will say but little. Who can blame them when such contentment is preached from the pulpit as a virtue which makes them like unto Christ? I did not see then the contradiction between the luxury and comfort in which priests lived, who preached this, and the dire want of the people by whose savings they lived in abundance. Afterwards as a visiting priest in Ireland I have sat at table with priests on days of fast and abstinence and have seen timorous maids lay hot roasts before them. Yet, these same priests heard those poor people in confession acknowledge as mortal sin any mere chance eating of anything even resembling meat on Fridays and other days of abstinence.

Such circumstances in which I passed my early years, I need scarcely say, did not conduce to make my boyhood a happy one. I have no joyous memories of those years. A sense of constant fear overshadowed everything. Ingrained fear is, in fact, the predominant note running through the life of all children born and reared in Catholic Ireland. Few ever get rid of it completely in after life, even in America. That fear concerns everything in this life on earth, and still more terrible is the fear of the terrors in the life beyond the grave. Fear is bound up with every act of religion — with the

priest, confession, attendance at Sunday mass, what to eat on fast days and days of abstinence, hell, heaven, purgatory, death and the rigorous judgment of an angry God.

I have come to think that Irish Catholics would not feel at all satisfied with their religious acts of devotion without this sense of constant fear. Priests know that their people expect to hear harsh and fear-inspiring sermons, and I have heard them offer this as excuse for such preaching. The consequence of this fear is to give Irish Catholics greater satisfaction than others in sinning. For them to sin affords momentary relief from a host of fearful inhibitions.

How I was helped in my decision to become a priest by this sense of fear in religion, I shall detail in the following chapter.

3. Seminary Days

IT IS A PUZZLE to Protestants that so many Catholic boys and girls are induced to become priests and nuns. To simple-minded Catholics, however, it is not a puzzle, but a kind of miracle. They believe that their boys and girls receive a special “vocation,” or call to devote their lives to the service of the Roman church, and that this call comes to them either direct from God, or through the Blessed Virgin Mary or some specially interested saint. Some have a conviction that such boys and girls are specially marked out from birth to be priests and nuns; and that their natures are in some way different from other boys and girls. Their peculiar dress and mode of life help to confirm this idea that priests and nuns are of a different sex from other men and women; that they are hermaphroditic beings belonging to a kind of third sex which fits them for their calling. This has been ironically styled the “ecclesiastical” sex. Protestants and Catholics alike are, in fact, interested in the sex aspect of this question because of the unmarried lives imposed upon priests and nuns by Roman church regulation. In my own boyhood decision, at the age of sixteen, to become a priest, consideration of sex did not enter. I did not come to the knowledge of the physical facts of sex and marriage until my twenty-first year, when I had already completed my philosophical studies in the seminary in Ireland.

It was principally the fear connected with everything in the Roman Catholic religion that helped my decision. I came to believe that the only way to overcome or escape from it was to succeed in obtaining power myself over religion by becoming one of its priests. It was what our new psychologists would call a defense or escape mechanism. To us young boys, priests were a kind of lesser gods; they alone seemed to be free of the fear of the religion they preached. Sin or its consequences seemed not to affect them. We thought that, like the kings of old, they could do no wrong.

This is due to the exaggerated teaching of the Roman church about the officials of its hierarchy from the pope down. The pope holds the place of God on earth; the actions of priests are taught to be as effective as those of

Christ Himself, and that God's power among men is limited to them. It was difficult for us to imagine how sin and its fears could touch them. Consequently to become a priest would seem to be the only way to escape all the fears which it seemed must of necessity accompany religion.

Two of the noblest causes to which a boy could devote his young life and manhood were pictured to us by our religious teachers. One was the cause of Irish Freedom — the complete separation of Ireland from her Protestant oppressors, the British. The other was the propagation of the Roman Catholic church in foreign lands. Either to die fighting for Ireland against Protestant England, or to be a missionary priest, even at the risk of martyrdom, in some pagan or Protestant land, was taught to us to be the height of spiritual heroism. Either was a certain guarantee of eternal salvation hereafter, the surest way of placating the God of fear whom we were taught to serve.

Many of my school-companions of those days did lose their young lives in the bitter and hopeless struggle in the rebellion against England in 1916 and after. It was a shock to those who survived to find that they were excommunicated, and denied the sacraments and absolution from sin, by their bishops and priests for persisting in the attempt.

Others, like myself, chose to become priests in foreign lands, to be scattered all over the world, in India, China, Australia, South Africa and the United States. By making these countries Roman Catholic an effective blow could be struck at Protestant England. Acting upon this resolve, I applied for admission, and was accepted into the missionary college of Mungret near Limerick. The college was in the charge of the Jesuits, its foundation and upkeep being covered by funds gathered mostly from Irish immigrants in the United States. Although Mungret College was expressly founded to train boys for the missionary priesthood, the Jesuits had superimposed upon it a well-paying secular, or lay college of their own, to the private profit of their Order. In fact, against both civil and ecclesiastical law, they employed the trust funds of the missionary school for this private interest. Elsewhere I shall detail the part which I came to play in exposing the public injustice of the Jesuits in this matter before the ecclesiastical courts of the Vatican in Rome, and in which I was supported by archbishops, bishops and a host of priests in the United States.

I was extremely happy then in the choice I made to become a priest. I counted myself specially fortunate above my fellows for my holy vocation,

looking upon it as the greatest of favors God can bestow. And this especially so since I was destined to carry the light of truth and Christian teaching, as I then saw it, to some distant land sunk in the horrors and superstitions of paganism or Protestant heresies. I chose South Africa as my mission-field.

My preparatory years of priestly training in Mungret Seminary are among the most consoling and sentimentally precious of my life. They are second only to the years of joyous liberation since my adventurous break-away from that same priesthood in 1929. My subsequent years of training in Rome were not joyful years, for it was then that doubt and distrust of papal Christianity first assailed me.

Nor did my actual ordination to the priesthood by a Roman cardinal, amid the splendors of the Eternal City, prove to be the inspiring event so long yearned for. And never during my seven years of priestly ministry itself in South Africa and the United States did I regain any of the fervor and spiritual romance of those first years of training in Mungret College.

Before my admission to the seminary I was told that it was advisable to make a general confession of my whole life to a priest. I was extremely fearful of this ordeal. Yet it offered me the chance of ridding myself of many fears connected with my confessions in the past. I hoped that, as a result, I would thereafter be free of all further fears until I was made a priest and thus be among the chosen ones who seemed to be above sin.

I was just turning seventeen and, having been strictly kept from contact with the world, there was little on my conscience that could be called sin. I made believe, however, that I was a very great sinner, and in order to make this confession an important event in my life, I magnified as enormities such peccadilloes as neglect of morning and evening prayers, grace before and after meals, not arriving promptly at mass on Sundays, and every chance and inadvertent tasting of meat on Fridays.

Sins of sex were then unknown to me; yet this matter troubled me most. Sex had been preached to us as something dark, terrible and mysterious, ruining body and soul in some unknown way. Nine-tenths of the souls in hell, it was said, were there because of sins of impurity. No one had ever attempted to explain to us what sex was all about. It always made me perspire at the palms of my hands to confess to the priest the instinctive urgings of my maturing boyhood. I styled them "bad temptations," "bad thoughts and

desires,” adding always to the priest, “to which I don’t know, Father, whether I consented or not.”

In this general confession, therefore, I was determined to settle all my doubts about these secret and unknown sex-temptations and “bad thoughts.” So, with a kind of heroic shame, I bluntly accused myself to the priest that I had sinned much and grievously against the sixth commandment — the sixth commandment being the Roman Catholic one about sex. The priest was not a little taken back at the naive recital of such things by one about to devote himself to a life of enforced celibacy.

Afterwards, as a priest myself in the confessional, I discovered that it is not uncommon for Roman Catholic children thus to accuse themselves of adulterous doings without having any knowledge at all of their true meaning. The dread half-knowledge of sex only as an abomination with dire consequences, harped upon continually by the nuns and priests, forces the innocent minds of children to become soiled by expectant fears of being guilty of such things. They feel as if they already merited the damnation threatened for the guilt of sexual sins. To me the eagerness to accuse myself of what I was not guilty, and of which I had no knowledge as yet, took away the fear of the future and made me happy in my unnecessary self-accusation.

Mungret College was situated in the country, which to me, who had lived all my life till then in the city of Dublin, afforded boundless delight. For the first time I saw things grow out of the earth. The college windows overlooked the famed lordly River Shannon where it broadens and bends westward towards the rough Atlantic. Across the river rose the hills of County Clare, seldom without a covering of dreary mist. During the long winter months the landscape was depressing, due to the almost continual rainfall which made everything indoors damp and unpleasant. The limestone rock of the walls exuded beads of moisture. But the flowering fields and blossoming hedgerows in the lengthened spring, and the colorful beauty of dying autumn foliage, were a wonder to me and enhanced the spiritual fervor of my youthful longings.

Close to the college stood the ruins of the ancient monastery of Mungret, said to have been built by Nessian, a disciple of the national apostle St. Patrick, and abandoned in the twelfth century. The simple people of the village regarded the new college of Mungret as the fulfillment of an old prophecy that from the decaying ruins of the old monastery would rise a

center of learning and religion which would spread all over the world and bring Protestant and pagan nations to Christ. We were proud that in us, as we thought, the prophecy was being actually fulfilled.

We doubted not for an instant that the Christian ideals which then exalted us could only be safely and truthfully embodied in, and developed through, the papal system of religion. With the sincerest enthusiasm and with eyes shining with the zeal that burned in our souls, we sang lustily the Mungret Anthem — the battle-song of our Alma Mater:

God bless Mungret, pray we loudly,
May Heaven's choicest blessings on her fall;
And may she ever stand
As a Queen in this old land,
Teaching, preaching truth and charity to all.

It has been given to me to witness many a sad anti-climax to the spiritual enthusiasm of seminary days in those Irish lads as I met them as young priests afterwards in places as far apart as South Africa and the United States. It takes but a few short years of the mechanized ministry of Roman church law and practice to cool that zealous enthusiasm of Christian ideals to the gray ashes of utter indifference and the carelessness of deep despair. The lamentable effects were the same in those once-idealistic Irish lads wherever I met them afterwards as young priests. They had been scattered far apart and had never met or corresponded with each other. Yet the process of the same system had worked identically in them all.

I have seen them lie prone on the floors of their rectories in a state of semi-stupor from the effects of alcohol, and have heard them exclaim against the fruitlessness of it all. Some were fighting valiantly against the natural promptings of their sex nature, which are intensified in young priests by an inactive and empty life with no lack of bodily comforts and luxuries in the matter of eating, drinking and sleeping. Those who fought hardest against the natural urge of sex suffered most. Not to yield in the least, even for the mere physical relief of it, might seem cruelly unnecessary to many people.

Pere Hyacinthe, the French priest and famed preacher of Notre Dame in Paris, who broke with the Roman church because of its arrogant assertions of papal infallibility, likens the wounds which the papacy has inflicted upon the Christian church to the five wounds in the body of Christ. "Behold," he

says, “ye bishops! the Bride of Jesus Christ pierced, like Him, by five wounds!” The first in the right hand of Christ, the hand that carries the light, is the darkening of the Word of God, the keeping of the light of the Gospel from the people. The wound in the other hand is the abuse of hierarchical power.

He calls the wound in the very heart of Christ’s church the enforced celibacy of the clergy, “suffered most by those (the priests) who dare least to speak of it.”

My companions in Mungret were mostly sons of poor peasant farmers; not more than six of us were from the cities. Few of them could speak correct, idiomatic English. One of the most difficult tasks of our Jesuit teachers was to cut off the thick edge of the burr, or brogue, and twist around the strange provincialisms in the speech of the country lads, so that they would express themselves less barbarously in plain English. It was especially important that they should learn to express themselves intelligibly in English, since many of them were destined to be priests and preachers in the modern countries of the English-speaking world. But Irish brogue dies hard, as may be noticed from the crude English speech of Irish Roman Catholic priests who abound in the United States.

In the division of the college we ecclesiastical students were called Apostolics, and were kept apart from the “lay-boys,” except that we all met in common for classes. We Apostolics were also again divided into senior and junior groups. The older boys were strictly forbidden to speak, play, or eat with the younger boys anytime or anywhere. The two groups ascended and descended by different stairways, had separate halls for study, separate fields for play, and marched along the roads for recreational walks in two separate columns.

It was never explained to us why this separation was insisted upon. It was left to each one to impress himself with a vague disquiet of sexual danger among boys of different ages. Needless to say, this only enhanced unhealthy friendships between the older and the younger boys. From time to time some were expelled because of such forbidden friendships, and an air of whispered scandal among the wise and knowing ones accompanied their going.

We were bound by the rigid rules which are made to govern Jesuit novices. Chief among these was the rule *ne tangere* — “Touch me not!” Those boys regarded as most trustworthy were delegated by the faculty of

the college as “prefects” to watch over their companions and to enforce the rules. They had the unpleasant task of reporting every infringement of the rules to the rector who imposed therefor a salutary penance.

In general the life was not irksome to us. The day was fully occupied with many routine pious exercises, meditation, mass, visits to chapel, examination of conscience, as well as intensive study and active play. Night was welcome for healthy, youthful sleep.

Our studies were, of course, strictly along Roman Catholic lines. Our course in philosophy, psychology, and natural science rejected all opinions and trends of thought which were not in full agreement with Roman Catholic doctrine.

It was during my final year of philosophy in Mungret that I was counseled to read the Bible. A Roman Catholic version of church history was taught us, which conveniently omitted everything of the record of the papacy but the glory and magnificence of its churchly power. Not a trace of a doubt was allowed to enter our minds about the sanctity, the justice and the divine mission of the popes of Rome.

But nothing was taught us then about the Bible. It was, of course, a Douay version which was given us, annotated with papal interpretations. Repeated warnings were given us not to depart from these, nor to allow our minds to wander any further from the closed, dogmatic opinions concerning anything we might see within its covers.

The one thing in our minds which overshadowed everything else was the expectation of the longed for day of ordination when we would be made priests and sent forth to preach to pagan and Protestant that the only way of salvation was that which was laid down for all men and nations by the popes of Rome.

4. Rome

IN MY BOOK: *Ex-Priest and the Riddle of Religion*, I have sketched an impersonal picture of student life in a Roman seminary. It was to this missionary seminary, *di Propaganda Fide* in Rome, that ten other Irish boys and myself began our journey during the last week of October, 1918. It was just three weeks before the Armistice was signed in France which ended the first World War. It was then dangerous even to cross the Irish Channel to England; for only ten days previously one of the packet steamers of the line on which we traveled had been torpedoed by a German submarine. We were obliged to stand ready all the time with a lifebelt strapped around us. British destroyers circled our boat on the lookout for enemy submarines, as most of the passengers were soldiers.

All England was then one great armed camp. Mmunition factories flamed and roared through the bleak October night as our train made its way, with many halts, across the north-west country from Holyhead to London. Soldiers in tin hats, all packed for the war front, and girls in W.A.A.C. uniforms, filled the railway stations. Trains for civilian travelers were shunted and side-tracked to allow for the passage of troop trains and munition freights on their way to France.

It was a bewildering change of scene for us Irish students for the priesthood. For most of our group it was the drawing aside of the curtain of life for the first time; some had never seen a big city before. From the quiet, incense-laden atmosphere of an ecclesiastical seminary we were caught in, and carried along by the turbulent traffic stream of the greatest war in history.

London was war-feverish, short of food, in the deadly grip of the influenza epidemic, and blanketed with its usual November fog. I was the keeper of the common purse for the group, and many drew heavily upon it in London to indulge in the full round of amusements offered by the big city in war time. A few even ventured to taste the full gamut of sense pleasures. They considered it their last chance to enjoy a free fling before the

ponderous gates of the Roman seminary should close them out of life during the years yet remaining before they became celibate priests.

After two weeks of uncertain waiting in London we were permitted to proceed through war-wracked France to Italy. Visas had been withheld from us until secret papal influence prevailed upon the British War Office to permit us to pass. Bishop Amigo, the Roman Catholic bishop of Southwark in London — a Spanish prelate whose power over the British Government, for some mysterious reason, seemed unlimited — used his favor in our behalf.

Petty tragic-comic scenes were enacted on the platform of Waterloo station before our boat-train pulled out. Some London Irish-Catholic girls, with whom a few of our lads had become sentimentally acquainted during their two weeks' stay in the city, came to kiss them goodbye forever. It was a parting which, doubtless, provided a thrill of a different kind for the girls. They had probably wept before, on the same platform, as they kissed goodbye to soldier lovers, off to face danger and death at the front. But here was something different — fine, handsome pious young fellows of their Catholic faith, off to enter upon the cold celibate life of priests. It was the thrill of their lives to have known even the fleeting affection of soldiers of holy Mother Church before they buckled on the forbidding armor of celibacy.

At Modane, the Italian frontier town in the French Alps, we obtained our first glimpse of the fair skies of Italy. The crisp, clear air and the colorful scenery, ringed around with towering, snow-capped glaciers, provided a sudden and inspiring contrast to the fogginess of London and the dull wetness of Paris.

Italian *facchini*, or porters, jabbering and gesticulating among bewildered passengers and gold-braided customs officials, brought out the native Irish wit of our boys. It had been told us that the Italian language, which we would be obliged to speak in Rome, would not be difficult to us on account of our knowledge of Latin and French learned in school. Our first earful of it here, however, did not encourage us. "Come here, Paddy," one smart fellow cried out jocularly from his position at the train window; "come and listen to the language which is easy to understand if you know a little Latin and French!" "Seems easy enough," Paddy replied, "if you could only get the knack of working your hands!"

We arrived in Rome at 11 A.M., November 11th, after a night sitting up in the train from Genoa. We soon learned that the Armistice had put an end

to the war on all the fronts at that same hour. Rome was already gaily be-decked with flags for the peace forced upon Austria some weeks before.

Some suggested that we remain at a hotel in Rome for another week before entering the college, and spend recklessly what was left of our funds. We knew that we would not be allowed to keep money in the college of Propaganda Fide, and that after its doors had closed behind us, even one night's absence for any reason whatsoever would make return forever impossible. But the shadow of the grotesque walls and barred windows of the ancient Barberini palace which housed the students of Propaganda Fide had already cast a gloom over us. All the gaiety was gone even from the most jocular. Paddy O'D — , the wittiest of the group, was the most depressed of all. He dolefully remarked how dreadfully afraid he was of the ordeal of having to go to confession on his arrival. His conscience troubled him for whatever indulgence he had allowed himself during the freedom of the trip. Moreover, we feared the trouble it would cause us at the college should we be discovered wandering around Rome when we should have been safe behind the protecting walls of the seminary.

We voted, therefore, to proceed directly and take up residence in the college. Guided by a *facchino* from the railway station, who trundled our baggage before us through the flagged streets of Rome, we reached our future Alma Mater. As we had not been able to afford the luxury of the *wagon-lits*, we had had little sleep on the train the night before, and we were very much in need of a bath and rest. But it was useless to clamor for a bath, as there were no bathrooms in the entire building. We went to sleep in the boarded cubicles, or cells, which during sleeping-hours are securely locked from the outside. A network of chicken wire stretched across the top of these cubicles in place of a ceiling prevented exit from above.

The oily food sickened us at first, but afterwards we came to relish it. The peculiar pungent smell of highly-spiced Italian cooking filled the place; the remembrance of it has always remained with me. I can never pass an Italian pizzeria in "Little Italy" in any American city without the memory of my first entrance to Propaganda college flashing across my mind.

It was during my seminary years in Rome that doubt and distrust of the papal practice of Christianity first assailed me. The beginnings of my conversion date from my personal contact in Rome with the magnificence of papal pomp and splendor.

Mine was not at first a Bible conversion; nor was it by any means instantaneous, as has been the experience of many through the word of God in the Gospels. It required the bitter realization of many years of mental anguish, and of a useless priestly ministry, to bring my mind into true focus with the teachings of Christ. The promptings of my heart were there, it is true — a bewildered yearning for Christian practice which should “make all things new.” But my mind had been kept to the line of clever reasoning marked out by my papal instructors of philosophy and theology. Like Paul in the Areopagus at Athens, I learned to use the subtle philosophic speculations of the dogmatic theologians against their own developed system in order to discover the truths of Christ.

The continuance of papal supremacy, I knew, depended upon their pseudo — scientific dogmas. But since I had not been grounded upon the truth of Christ direct from His teachings in the Gospel, I could not then see the fallacy in the grandiose and unwarranted claim of the popes to universal, divine overlordship of all men and all nations. It was only by a slow process of turning the false reasoning in favor of the papacy’s pretensions against this claim, that I finally succeeded in proving how opposed these pretensions were to the gentle simplicity of the teaching of the Founder of Christianity.

Christian Scripture formed a part of our theological course in the University of Propaganda Fide, but only in the last years of our studies, and it was taught solely in Latin. It was preceded by the all-important course of lectures in apologetics, the fabricated proofs that Roman Catholic doctrine and practice alone are right, and that all the teachings of other Christian churches are wrong and heretical. The Scripture course itself was merely an apologetic for papal interpretations of certain texts of Scripture to suit the past historical development and aims of papal power.

Nothing was taught or indicated to us about the spiritual, individual message of Christ in the Gospel itself. Hence, what was sought in teaching the Bible was a glib use of tag-ends of texts in defense of papal power. The letter of texts, apart from their context, supplies the pretext for Roman Catholic use of the Scripture. The spirit of the word is overlooked.

The facts of papal church history came as a shock to us all. For this, only one year was allotted, and it was taught also in Latin from Latin and Italian text books. This period was, of course, altogether inadequate in order to obtain a true and full perspective of the entire development of the Christian

church through nineteen hundred years. As we were living within the shadow of the Vatican, it was more than interesting to learn of the many evil men who had sat in Peter's Chair. We daily passed many landmarks of the subversive doings of greedy, ambitious warrior popes and their vile politics. There was the Castel di Sant' Angelo, or Hadrian's Mole, with its walls scarred from the cannon of one pope in the Vatican fortress bombarding a rival pope defying his anathemas.

A few of the questions which arose in our minds concerning the claims of the papacy, which we were told we must defend, may be briefly stated. American and Irish students discussed them in English among themselves so that the other students would not understand:

[1] If Rome be the only center of the true faith and the sole fount of all spiritual grace and divine favor, how is it that true religion is so lacking in its own citizens? Why so much atheism, indecency, lawlessness, in the vast number of non-churchgoers in the Eternal City and Italy? Why so many pagan rites in the worship of the few who frequent the churches? Common courtesy was denied us from the Roman rabble as we passed along the streets; obscene insults were shouted after us even by the children of Rome.

[2] Why so much clamor for priests from Ireland and elsewhere to exile themselves in China, India and Africa as missionaries of papal propaganda, when Rome itself swarmed with ten thousand priests lolling lazily in the Vatican offices, and scarcely finding sufficient altars in its four hundred churches to say mass?

[3] Catholics in Ireland and in other English speaking countries are taught that it is a heinous sin to swallow anything even resembling meat on Fridays. They would spit out a mouthful of meat if taken on Friday in a moment of forgetfulness. In Italy, in Rome itself where the law and its punishments are enacted, the people have no such scruples. Even in our seminary, chopped meat was served us on Fridays in the thick soup, called *minestrone*. For the first time we learned that in Catholic Spain anyone may eat a beefsteak on any Friday provided he pay an *obolus*, about five cents, to the treasury of the church.

[4] Why so much anxiety in Rome about the Protestant nations of England, Australia, South Africa, and the United States? Protestants, as I found out to my surprise when I went amongst them, were orderly, law-abiding, church-going folk. They knew and preached Christ crucified, and shaped their lives according to His teaching as found in the Gospels. Italians, how-

ever, in Rome and elsewhere, knew little of the Christ as pictured in the Gospel narratives; nine-tenths of the people in Italy despise their own priests and never go to church except to attend some paganish festival of one of their hundreds of Madonnas or of Saint Anthony. The most lawless of immigrants to the United States have been Italians. As represented by some of these, Italy has earned the name of a lawless and godless country.

Pope Benedict XV gesticulated wildly and piously before us missionary students in fervent appeals to go forth and preach the gospel to the heathen and to Protestant heretics. He pictured to us the sad plight of the *poveri negri* “the poor negroes,” the lost Hindus, and the misguided Protestants. Pope Benedict XV was a tiny man, with a hawk-like face, and was noted for his oratorical powers. When he spoke he had an annoying, nervous habit of licking his lips. Paddy O’D — our Irish wit, used to horrify us by a perfect mimicry of the pope’s gestures, including the pronounced licking of his lips. *Voi siete apostoli...* “You are Apostles!” the pope cried out to us; “You will go forth to carry the light of the Gospel to the heathen and the heretic; to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death!” Into our credulous minds the thought would enter of the seventy thousand priests in Italy, and of the tens of thousands of godless Roman citizens living under the very shadow of the Vatican. A Roman parish priest once told me that in his parish alone there were two thousand babies who were not even baptized!

[6] Again we asked among ourselves why the boasted three hundred millions of Catholics throughout the world should be represented in Rome by a body of cardinals nearly two-thirds of whom are Italians. Italy’s forty millions of people were Catholics only in name, and not at all religiously-minded. But the twenty millions of Catholics in the United States, for instance, were not only faithful mass-goers, but contributed munificently to the coffers of the Vatican. Yet, only three Americans were allowed to be cardinals — mediocre men, but loyal servitors of Rome, who would never venture to express any disagreement with its dictates.

We got to know of the intrigues among the ecclesiastics in Rome in order to gain the favor of those in power at the Vatican; of their greed for papal honors and advancement to high positions; how each professor in the universities spied upon the others, hoping that by casting doubt upon the orthodoxy of some of their teachings, he would be rewarded with the favor of those above him. We saw priests from all parts of Italy crowd in upon Rome to fawn upon those already in the high offices of the church. We found that

there were bitter factions among high church dignitaries. Some were building up a bloc against those then in favor with the pope, waiting for his death to have their partisan elected and obtain positions through him. All factions feared or sought the influence of Jesuit power.

We heard how, when Pope Benedict XV lay dying, he struggled with those who were trying to keep him in the bed; in his delirium he violently accused them of trying to hasten his death in order to elect another pope who would favor his enemies.

Comparing what we saw around us in Rome with the fragmentary facts of history which we learned at the university, we began to form a true picture of the bloody and shameful story of the popes of Rome in years past. We began to understand something about the secret poisonings of popes and cardinals from the precautions that are still taken to prevent the poisoning of cardinals who would be undesirable as future popes. I have served at the masses of cardinals in Rome where one of the altar boys was obliged to taste the wine for consecration before it was allowed to be poured into the jewel-encrusted chalice, as a proof that it was not poisoned.

We learned that the pope is forced always to eat alone, and to sleep under armed guard; that every bottle of wine — no matter how exquisite — once uncorked at his lonely table, can never return to it; that his food is prepared and tested in a secret kitchen by a trusted monk, and then sealed and sent up to his dining-room in a private elevator.

One of my professors in the university — Monsignor Pietro Ciriaci — was under-secretary to Cardinal Gasparri, then the Pope's Secretary of State. He wished to learn to read and speak English, and chose me as his instructor because of my clear Dublin accent. None of the officials in the Secretariat of State, he told me, could read English. The papacy, having its nuncios in most English-speaking countries, received cablegrams and reports of the English-speaking world through them, either in Italian or French. At that time, however, Ireland, under the leadership of Mr. Eamon DeValera, had lately proclaimed itself a Republic, and was being cruelly harassed by Mr. Lloyd George's infamous "black-and-tans." Mr. DeValera appealed to Rome — to Holy Mother church — in behalf of the Irish people against Mr. Lloyd George's terrorist policy. His cablegrams were worded in English and there was no one who could translate them in the offices of the Cardinal-Secretary of State but my professor and pupil, Monsignor Ciriaci. This he was enabled to do with the little knowledge of English I had taught him.

This monsignore, a Roman by birth, was then a most promising ecclesiastical diplomat. He was later raised to the dignity of titular archbishop and was made papal nuncio to Czechoslovakia. In 1925, when Czechoslovakia angered the pope because of its great centenary celebrations in memory of the martyred priest-reformer, John Huss of Bohemia, diplomatic relations were broken off between the Vatican and the Czechoslovak Government whose President, Masaryk, had sponsored the celebrations. Monsignor Ciriaci was delegated to negotiate for the resumption of relations. He may be made a cardinal, but I doubt if he will ever be elected pope although he is still comparatively young and in robust health. For one thing, he is not in favor with the Jesuits. I met him in Rome in 1928, and he worked in my behalf in the Mungret case against them and their ally, Marchetti-Salveggiani, now Cardinal Vicar of Rome.

He was more outspoken than a Roman church diplomat should be respecting the position of the papacy in the modern world. He discussed the question with me, both during our language lessons and when I met him several years later in Rome. He was keen to know of the trend of things in modern countries, and chafed at the stupidity of the church's overbearing and contemptible attitude towards the United States. He of course defended "Rome," i.e., the papacy itself, in everything, distinguishing between the institution and the greedy ecclesiastical officials who dictate unwise policies from behind the backs of cardinals and the pope himself. He was particularly antagonistic to the Jesuits. He had in mind the present Cardinal Vicar of Rome, Marchietti-Salveggiani, who by Jesuit influence attained his present position making him a likely candidate at papal elections.

Yet, when I questioned him frankly about the papacy's interference in the civil and political affairs of governments he hedged as only a Roman church diplomat can. "How can you combine the truth and the guilelessness of the gentle Christ with the untruth of priestly political intrigue?" I asked him boldly. He had admitted that a politician must of necessity be an opportunist and is not expected to tell the truth, at least not all of it.

"You know from the theologia," he replied in the halting English he was learning to speak, "that one is not always obligated to tell the truth. In the first place, you know, one is allowed *celare veritatem*, to hide the truth. Pero, when one deals with unscrupulous men in defense of the church, one must use their own methods and weapons against them. You Anglo-Saxons," he added, "try to be too honest — too puritan; you too much speak out

the mind, and you will in the end be vanquished by the Latin race. I like you, Signor Lehmann, for your spoken-out mind as an individual, but in the affair of the church and the nations you must not express the whole mind.”

“*Gli americani, per esempio,*” here he broke into his native Italian for greater fluency, “the Americans, for example, are fine people to meet and to know individually; but as a nation they permit too much liberty of expression to everybody in public affairs. This in the end will bring ruin to the United States.”

The ambition of every true Roman is to see Rome restored to her former position as mistress of the world. Signor Mussolini and his followers have concluded that this will come about through fascist autocracy. To his fascist cohorts at Civitavecchia during their famous march on Rome in 1922, Mussolini solemnly affirmed: “I swear to lead our country once more in the paths of our ancient greatness.” “Everything,” he declared in his newspaper, *Politica*, “calls Italy to the resumption of her imperial mission: the tradition of Rome, of Venice, and of Genoa.” Like the Emperor Constantine of old, he knows he will need the help of the papacy to gain his end. He wrote further:

“The Eternal City, *caput mundi* [the head of the world], has two courts and two diplomacies... It is the seat of Christianity. It has taught and will continue to teach law and art to the whole world.”

But he will not concede that the papal church can ever be superior to, and independent of his civil power. This, however, the popes demand.

Ecclesiastical Rome, on the other hand, continues to be obsessed with the conviction that Rome is destined to become once more the “mistress of the world” through papal church imperialism. The “two diplomacies” in Rome, of which Mussolini speaks — fascist and papal — are at variance with each other; they are but friendly enemies, each striving to dominate the other. Both separately proclaim their God-given mission to lead Rome along the path of her imperial destiny.

Even in democratic America the official teaching in Roman Catholic universities claims for the papacy a juridical status which calls for “the recognition of the Roman Church’s right to function through purely canonical [i.e., ecclesiastical] moral persons, established and existing independently of the civil authority.”

Neither of these “two diplomacies” in Rome — neither of these two imperialist aims to make Rome again mistress of the world — is in accord with the aim of true Christianity. Both have been tried in the past, and both have miserably failed. The facts of history bear witness that both the magnificent cruelty of Rome of the imperial Caesars, and the grandiose misconception of Rome of the imperial popes, have failed utterly to “make things new” in Christ.

The world is now on its way to arrive at unity, truth, and order by methods which are the very opposite of those of the two ancient imperialisms. That way is by free individual cooperation, not by the brute force of imperial armies, nor by the forced dogmatism of an imperial church corporation.

I am now convinced that our democratic way is the more Christian, that it is the beginning of true Christian progress.

But, against the old conceptions of Caesarism, personified in civil affairs by the forced dictatorship of Signor Mussolini, and in religious affairs by the autocracy of the papacy, the modern world will have to contend for a while yet. The common instincts of humanity, however, craving a true brotherhood of all men, will finally vanquish the inhuman dictatorships of Mussolini and Hitler, and the unchristian overlordship of the religious autocracy of the papacy.

5. Priest — By The Rite Of Rome

AT LENGTH the day eagerly awaited with pious yearning by every student of the Roman church — the day of his ordination to its ancient priesthood — drew near for me. By special favor of the church authorities in Rome my ordination day was advanced by six months. This favor was granted because I had served in the seminary as “prefect,” or guardian over the senior boys of the college.

This prefectship was a distasteful duty to English-speaking boys. A prefect was required to report to the rector every petty infringement of rules by his companions; also all his personal suspicions concerning their moral conduct and their attitude, obedient or otherwise, to the commands of the rector. It was his duty, every night, to push the big bolt in place outside the door of each boy’s cell when he retired. When, at 5:30, the bell tolled the hour of rising in the morning, he had to go his rounds again to unlock each door, pronouncing in a solemn voice a pious salutation. This locking-in of his companions was done again each afternoon for the siesta during the summer months.

The rector of the college of Propaganda Fide was a Roman by birth, and was later made the pope’s nuncio in Colombia, South America. Till his appointment to this post he had never been outside the borders of Italy, except for a week’s pilgrimage to the shrine of the Madonna at Lourdes. Yet, he was entrusted with the guidance and training of young men of different ages from thirty different countries of the globe, and afterwards was sent to negotiate with a foreign Government as representative of the Vatican.

He knew enough of most European languages to enable him to read the letters of the students to their parents and friends, and those of parents and friends to the students. All letters to and from the students must pass the rector’s scrutiny before being mailed out or handed to them. He was balked in this only by his inability to decipher the hieroglyphics of the Arabian,

Chinese and Japanese boys. An Australian student, not to be outdone by the Arabs and Japs, cheated the rector out of his curiosity by having arranged a secret code with his brother in Australia. His code of strokes and numbers was as unintelligible to the rector as the pothooks and hangers of the Arabs.

As a prefect, I could not bring myself to report to the rector all that went on among the boys in my charge. Many of them were suffering great mental strain because of the unnatural restrictions placed upon them by the hard discipline of the college. They came to confide in me, especially concerning their conscientious struggles to repress the natural promptings of sex. There was little I could do or say to help ease their fevered minds. I was no psychoanalyst. But I made bold to defend and shield them from the rector's misjudgments and petty favoritisms. I questioned his undue preferences for some boys of little worth and his harshness towards others more worthy of merit.

This often occasioned his displeasure towards me. He would say: "Signor Lehmann! *tu sei troppo insistente.*" ... "You are too insistent about asking for 'reasons why' from your superiors. Blind obedience should be the mark of a good priest of the church!" I resigned my prefectship before the expiration of my final term because of my inability to have justice done to my companions.

Nevertheless, the rector's regard for my probity and frank honesty remained, and he had me advanced for ordination at Christmas, 1921, six months before my scheduled time. Six of us were thus favored, and we were secluded in the Passionist monastery of San Giovanni e Paolo for a ten days' retreat previous to the great day.

The Passionists are an order of very doleful monks who carry the mistaken asceticism of the Roman church to its extremes. They concentrate solely upon repressing the urgings of sex, as if that were the only sin of the world. They scourge their flesh with little whips; wear rough, irritating shirts next to the skin and prickly girdles around the waist. They take little care of the body, which, as a consequence, is left dirty and unkempt.

The Roman church has yet to realize and admit that her ascetic torture by bodily chastisement and repression produces the very opposite effect from what is intended. It only serves to enhance the frustrated promptings of sex to a point of exquisiteness unknown to men and women of the world.

The almost sole topic, therefore, which was preached to us during our stay with the Passionists was sex and its dangers to young priests. Invari-

ably, I found out afterwards, priests who profess to discipline themselves most rigidly against sex are the ones who talk and preach about it most. I have known stern Redemptorist priests who went as far as to preach publicly that no man and woman could ever remain alone together without being drawn into sex sin. "I would not trust my own sister alone in a room even with a Saint!" one used to declare dramatically in his sermons. This man, I know, spoke thus because of his own sex weakness, developed through excessive self-repression. He admitted privately to me that he was incapable of sitting anywhere in the same room with a girl, even when others were present, without becoming sexually affected.

I had little sense of any spiritual exaltation on my ordination day. There was the usual splendor of ritual, gorgeous vestments, jeweled chalices, exquisite music, and abundance of incense and flowers. The ordaining prelate was the Vicar of Rome, Cardinal Basilio Pompilj. The ordination ceremony took place in St. John Lateran — the "Mother Church of the World" — the Pope's own church and parish. It is situated now in a slum quarter of Rome. In this parish of the pope there are comparatively few practicing Catholics. Thousands of couples live together without either church or civil sanction; thousands of its children are not even baptized. Pope Pius IX is entombed in this church, but his body was carried thither for burial secretly, in the dead of night, for fear of the Roman rabble.

The ordination of a priest is a long drawn-out ceremony; you are bewildered by the countless actions performed upon you; by the many prayers and endless chantings. Your fingers are consecrated to say mass and then wrapped in rich linen cloths; your head is anointed and likewise wrapped in linen bandages. You are given the golden chalice to touch; you are given the power to hear confessions and to forgive sin; to anoint the dying, and to bury the dead. For the first time you taste the wine from the mass chalice, which, according to Catholic belief, you have just helped to transubstantiate into Christ's blood by the formula of consecration. All the power which Roman church authority alone claims to possess direct from God is transmitted to you — to be used, however, only under blind obedience to papal commands.

After the ceremony, many of the laity came to kiss the palms of our freshly-anointed hands and to have them laid on their heads in blessing. Then came the important event of celebrating the first mass. This I had reserved for Christmas morning. I was able to celebrate three masses in suc-

cession — two in the Church of St. John Lateran, and the third in our own college chapel, which was the solemn high mass of the day. I was honored in having as my first assistant my professor, pupil and friend, Monsignor Pietro Ciriaci, of whom I spoke at length in the preceding chapter. As a gift, he procured me a picture of the pope with a special blessing written thereon for me by Pope Benedict XV in his own handwriting.

There was no mother with tears of holy joy in her eyes to watch me ascend the altar to say mass for the first time; the rest of my family, too, were far away. To see a son, dressed in cloth of gold and fine lace, as a priest at the altar, is regarded by pious Catholic mothers as the acme of God's special favors to woman.

Paddy O'D—, my witty Irish companion and classmate, stood beside me that Christmas morning as I divested myself of my priestly robes. He was in one of his serious, almost lyrical, moods. "I suppose you feel like an angel now," he whispered to me; "I am sure I would, if I had just said three masses on the first day." "To tell you the truth, Paddy," I replied, "there is not so much to it after all, and I am far from feeling angelic; but I do feel rather hungry." I knew that young priests were often overcome by pious feelings during their first mass; that some would weep; that others would bow down and deliberately kiss the consecrated Wafer on the altar. Paddy, turned mystic for the moment, was surprised that I did not at least hear the whirr of angels' wings!

Any joy which I experienced on that day was offset by a sad incident which I witnessed late that night. One of my companions became affected in his mind through over-repression and pious "scruples." In my book, *Ex-Priest*, I have described the dire effects of Roman seminary discipline upon the minds of once healthy, sport-loving, English-speaking lads. The stress of mechanical routine, innumerable petty restrictions, countless repetitions of prayers and formulas, often unbalances the mind and brings on a species of religious madness called "scrupulosity." The mind loses power to register the routine acts of imposed piety and to count the number of repetitious prayers. The Roman theologians, who list the number and gravity of sins attached to these things, have no method of psychoanalysis to cure the disease of the mind which they cause.

In Florida afterwards as a priest I used to visit an institution for feeble-minded children outside Gainesville. The doctor in charge brought me a Catholic girl about fourteen years old whose species of insanity consisted in

feverishly repeating and counting "Hail Mary's." Her mind was deranged by the idea that she was obliged to say this prayer a hundred times each day, and in order to make sure of having them said on time, she was over a thousand ahead. Some priest, doubtless, had imposed the saying of these "Hail Mary's" as a penance in confession.

That Christmas night, after the students over whom I had charge had retired, I went my rounds as usual to lock each one in his cell. Coming to the door of one of my Irish companions, I saw that his light was still on and heard from within a low moaning and sobbing. I knocked and entered, and found the poor lad prone over his desk with his Breviary open before him. "Eddie," I cried, "what's wrong with you?" "I can't say my Breviary," he moaned. "I started it yesterday evening and I have it nearly all to say yet; I have only half-an-hour left to finish it."

The daily reading of the Breviary is imposed under pain of mortal sin, and each word must be pronounced with the lips. It is not necessary, however, to understand the meaning of the Latin words. If read rapidly right through it takes about three hours, but it must be finished before the stroke of midnight each day. To miss even half a page of it is to incur the guilt of mortal sin. Eddie had begun to read the Breviary for Christmas day the evening before, as is allowed, so as to be sure of having it finished before midnight Christmas night. It was then a half-hour to midnight and he was still at the first page! He had repeated that page so often that he could not convince himself that he was reading it at all.

I knew that Eddie had been suffering greatly of late from nervous scruples. He had told me what a torture going to confession was to him; he could never convince himself that his sins were pardoned as he did not think he felt sufficiently sorry for them. For this reason he would go to confession five or six times each day, repeating the same things to the priest and perspiring at the palms of his hands while doing so. Many of the boys suffered in the same way.

I could not persuade Eddie to close his Breviary and go to bed. The terror of the mortal sin which he would incur at midnight by leaving his Breviary unfinished made him altogether unreasonable. Fearing that he might lose his sanity completely, I hurried through the dark halls of the college, awakened the rector, and had him come to command Eddie to go to bed. I prevailed upon him to take from the room every book even resembling a Breviary lest Eddie should resume his useless babble from it during the

night. It took all the force of the rector's authority to induce him to relinquish his books. The rector imposed a penance upon him to say three "Hail Marys" as a substitute for the Breviary and ordered him under obedience to go to bed. It was a long time after that before Eddie could bring himself to read anything out of his Breviary without fear and trembling.

During my last six months in the seminary after my ordination I had experience of a little pastoral work in a country place a short distance outside of Rome. One of the priests of the college faculty, pastor of a small church there, had me take his place to say mass, hear confessions and preach whenever he was unable to be present. There it happened that I heard confessions first, and preached my first sermon in Italian. The congregation was mostly of women-folk dressed in bright colored shawls and with scarfs over their heads.

There was little I could preach to suit them, since their crude notions about religion and Christ were confined to attendance at mass on Sundays, and devotion to the Madonna and to their patron saints. There was no Gospel to read to them. So I endeavored to translate the Latin of the Gospel of the Sunday from the mass missal into my best Italian. I ended up with a *ferverino* — appealing to them to come to mass every Sunday and to confession and communion often.

I got my first shock about priests one Sunday morning after mass in this little church. While talking to the boys who had served mass, one of the little fellows pointed to one of his companions dressed like the others as altar boys and said: "Padre, that fellow's father is a priest!" Thinking I had not heard aright, I asked the boy himself what the other meant. "It's true, Padre, my father is a priest; but he is a *mascalzone* (a scoundrel). He left my mother and ran away to America. I have to live with my grandmother." I also earned my first money as a priest during those six months — the proceeds of the offerings I received for saying mass each day. It enabled me to take an extensive trip through Central Europe after I left Rome in June.

The rector still trusted me and confided much in me; but I could see that he had his doubts as to my willingness to submit myself in blind obedience to the commands of unquestioned authority. On the morning of my departure from Rome he kissed me on both cheeks, as is the custom, bidding me Godspeed with many *auguri* for a successful ministry in the service of Roman church propaganda.

6. South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA is a country about which Americans know but little. Many identify it with the jungles of Central Africa inhabited by savage tribes and wild beasts. I had chosen to be sent to South Africa as a missionary priest, and arrived in Cape Town in January, 1922.

The Union of South Africa forms a sub-continent uniting the extensive provinces of The Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State. Since the first World War there has been added to the Union the former German Protectorate of South-west Africa. Each of these provinces has its capital city, scattered indeed across a vast open veldt-land, but each having all the modern improvements of twentieth century civilization. Together these provinces have an area equal to more than one-third of the United States. Their total population, however, is almost negligible when compared to that of this great republic. There are not more than one million white people in the entire Union of South Africa.

Cape Town is the oldest, the “mother” city of South Africa. It is situated on the very toe of the vast African continent, and is the gateway through which the first colonizers entered the land. Squatting picturesquely with its back against quaint Table Mountain, it spreads itself north and south over the peninsula; it dips its feet into the Atlantic Ocean a short distance from the extreme point of the Cape where the colder waters of the Atlantic mingle with the more temperate currents from the Indian Ocean.

Contrary winds blow across this tip of the great continent of Africa. In simple justice, however, the Portuguese king, John II, changed its name from Cape of Storms to that of Cape of Good Hope. The climate is ideal and the temperature pleasantly normal most of the year; abundant rains fall only during the winter months of July and August when the north-west trade wind blows. In the summer, about Christmas time, the opposite south-east trade wind sweeps in from the Indian Ocean but leaves the sky a piercing blue. This “south-easter” plays a curious trick with Table Mountain. It lays a dazzling white cloud, called the “tablecloth,” over its flat top, the

fringe of which hangs down the sides. This south-caster is also styled the "Cape Doctor," since it blows gustily down through the city sweeping everything noxious out of the colored district into the blue waters of the Atlantic.

Up at the top of Plein Street, almost touching the lower slopes of Table Mountain, stands the quaint little Roman Catholic cathedral of St. Mary's. It is built in castellated, medieval form with incongruously plastered walls painted a light pink. It dates from the times of the South African wars when it was erected to accommodate the Irish Catholic soldiery of the British armies. It has heard the tramp of these armies marching through Cape Town to war against the Zulus, and later to bring the Boers into subjection to British rule. It has resounded to the creaking of the wagons of these sturdy Dutch Boers passing through to trek across the mountain kloofs far into the hinterland of unlimited veldt. Now it re-echoes the screeching of street cars as they round the sharp corner of Plein Street on their way up the curve to the foot of Table Mountain.

Adjoining the cathedral is the whitewashed residence of the bishop and his priests who minister to the Catholics scattered over the western district of the Cape. The bishop's jurisdiction extends over an area greater than that of the whole of New York State. Yet he can scarcely count ten thousand communicants.

It was here in Cape Town that I began my official work in the ministry of the Roman church. It was not at all inspiring, nor did it call for any great heroic missionary endeavor. Outside the city there were barely enough Catholics to occupy the time of the thirty priests whom the bishop had at his disposal.

I remember well my first sermon in the cathedral. I based it upon a text of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, 9:26. Knowing how necessary it was for me to finish with a flourish in defense of papal law and sacramental practice, I found it difficult to find the connecting link whereby St. Paul could be brought into line with the Catholic practices of the mass, confession, rosary devotions, etc. I remembered the story of the old Irish priest who could always find some indication of confession in every incident in the Gospel. One Sunday morning the prominent character in the Gospel for the day was Saint Joseph. The congregation was sure that they were going to be spared the usual instruction about confession on that day at least. Nothing daunted, however, the old priest went on quietly to explain that

Saint Joseph was a carpenter; but a carpenter makes confession-boxes, and therefore this Gospel passage clearly indicated the need of a sermon on confession. My text from St. Paul was his reference to the racing games in Corinth wherein “but one receiveth the prize. So run that you may obtain” (1 Cor 9:26). I made this a defense of the practice of mass and confession by the following chain of argument: The prize is heaven; mortal sin alone can make you lose the prize; but mortal sin can only be forgiven by priestly absolution; therefore, you must go often to confession.

It can be truly said that the duty of a Roman Catholic priest is rather to “preach the sacrament and obedience to papal laws” than to “preach the Gospel.” Preaching was never intended to be of prime importance anyway in the work of a Catholic priest. The scope of his labors is limited to the power by which his hands are endowed by the oil of ordination. How could I, for instance, begin to teach Christ when I had never been given opportunity to learn or experience the true meaning of His life as revealed in the Gospel? All my seminary years were devoted exclusively to drill in Roman church discipline; all my learning was confined to what the papacy had dogmatized concerning its particular forms of belief and practice. No chance was afforded me to doubt that Christ could be anything different from what the doctored metaphysics of the Roman church had made Him appear to be in order to sustain its historical development.

Next came the work of hearing the sins of the people in the confessional. During my seminary training I had been occupied solely with the speculative and dogmatic aspects of Roman Church religion. My sermons were also doctrinal and speculative. On hearing confessions I learned how Roman Catholic people must regard the many varieties of sins which the theologians have listed.

Thus I came to see that the method of moral teaching in the Roman Church is as false as its method of doctrinal discipline. There is no admission that the true norm of morality, of good living, must be looked for within, in the individual conscience, and not outside. The people are forced to find the norm of good living in meticulous obedience to a set of church laws, drawn up by theological experts, not to stir the conscience, but to maintain papal power.

Sins are therefore listed, weighed and measured, according to external requirements and then forced upon the conscience from outside. In catechism classes priests have to teach the children how to sin. Since moral dis-

tinctions are imposed from the theologians' point of view, the child is allowed no opportunity to form his own opinion as to what is right and wrong. Of this same false method in the doctrinal logic of the Roman Church, I have written at length in my book, *Ex-Priest and the Riddle of Religion*.

In Cape Town I found that the priests were confronted with the difficulty of trying to conform the lives of young people to this basis of morality which had been condemned by Christ. All priests today realize how hopeless is the task of imposing the outworn moral usages of medieval Europe upon the youth of modern countries.

Those were the first years of the jazz age. Pious mothers believed that their daughters were both ignorant and innocent of the sins of the flesh. The priests did not attempt to disillusion these mothers. They consoled them by the assurance that as long as their children came to mass every Sunday and went often to confession everything must be right. But we priests knew differently from our knowledge attained in the confessional. We knew that these young people were learning to combine the freedom of the jazz age with the frequent practice of confession and holy communion free of any qualms of conscience. A little knowledge of the new psychology would have helped us in the confessional. Boys and girls soon ceased to mention their sexual experiences at jazz dances and mixed parties.

Rigorous old-time priests probed intimately and indecently into the secret thoughts and feelings experienced by young boys and girls. The young people resented this as an impertinence. Then these older priests, and some overzealous young ones, took to denouncing from the pulpit all dancing, mixed parties, automobile riding, and especially the scanty dresses of the young women. They turned girls away from the communion rail if they came with bare arms and low-necked frocks.

One old priest, a Monsignor, very deaf and extremely nearsighted, wrote indignantly to the Catholic newspaper in Cape Town in protest against celibate priests having to bend over to administer holy communion to young women thus scantily clothed. But it was of no avail. The young people only considered it ludicrous and wondered how dear old Monsignor Kolbe could observe so much when he was almost totally blind!

In South Africa there is a hopeless mixture of races, in addition to the many tribes of negroes, due to the successive colonizations by immigrants from different European countries. There are remnants still of the first Por-

tuguese who migrated to the Cape immediately after its discovery by the explorer Bartholomew Diaz. The Dutch, who succeeded the Portuguese, still remain the most numerous of the whites in spite of their conquest by the British. In Natal many are from India, and in Cape Town there are Malays who are permitted by British law to have a plurality of wives. The Irish are mostly the descendants of soldiers who came with British armies, for the Irish never migrated to South Africa as they did to the United States and Australia.

Between the whites and the blacks are the colored or “bastard” races — the yellow ones — the chance resultant of the unfortunate mixture of low grade whites and negroes. They form the menials, the hewers of wood and drawers of water for their white masters. The native negroes are not permitted to reside in the cities, and if employed there during the day must retire to their tin shacks, or “compounds” at sundown. In Johannesburg they must procure a passport to enter the city, and are forbidden to use the sidewalks. Powerfully-built descendants of proud Zulu warriors go barefooted and in rags of cast-off clothing, having abandoned the assegai of their ancestors for the domestic scrubbing-brush of the white people.

The Catholic church does nothing for the negroes in South Africa. It makes a feeble effort to teach the yellow people the rudiments of reading and writing and Catholic worship, principally to those who bear the Irish Catholic names of their soldier ancestors. Upon the dominant Dutch Reformed church population the Catholic church has made absolutely no impression whatsoever. The Reformed churches outrank those of every other denomination in the country. The Dutch people retain the horror of their Holland ancestors against the Romster Kerk, and the very name of Roman Catholic is still taboo to them as conjuring up visions of antichrist and the Scarlet Woman of Babylon.

The scope of work for priests is therefore very limited in South Africa, Catholics being few and widely scattered. I was sanguine enough to attempt a crusade for the winning of the colored people around Cape Town to the full practice of Roman Catholicism. The work did not prove at all encouraging, nor was I very urgently supported in it even by the bishop. I formed the boys and girls into brigades; organized and taught a band and, as inducement to their parents, had them march on Sunday mornings to mass with a great blare of ill-tuned bugles. I was discouraged from teaching Christianity to them from the Gospel, and I was obliged to confine my effort to making

Roman Catholic ritual and saint-worship attractive to them. Even the Roman Catholic catechism was useless as a medium of instruction.

I was at least given credit for a determined effort at mission work, while my brother priests were content to hear confessions and administer the sacraments to the few faithful Irish who came to mass on Sunday mornings.

After three years and a half my work as a priest in Cape Town was interrupted. I was recalled to Rome in order to continue the negotiations with the Vatican courts in which I had been engaged as a student in Rome on behalf of many bishops and clergy, in connection with the “Mungret College Case” against the Jesuits. While in Rome I had conducted this legal matter to a seemingly successful conclusion. A final decree of ten cardinals, approved by Pope Benedict XV, had been issued against the Jesuits before I departed as a priest for South Africa.

On our side, we had implicit confidence in the justice of Roman canon law procedure, not doubting for a moment that this supreme decree of the Holy See would be immediately and automatically put into effect against the Jesuit Order. But we had reckoned without the power of Jesuit influence in high places in Rome. Years had elapsed and the decree had been left to molder in the pigeon-holes in the offices of the Vatican.

Archbishop Curley of Baltimore, Bishop Barry of Florida, and a host of prominent clergy in the United States then determined to test the justice of the much-boasted Roman canon law to bring even the powerful Order of the Jesuits into submission to a decree of the pope. After a year of negotiations, after which I returned to Africa, these bishops decided that I could best serve their cause if transferred to a diocese in the United States. The bishop in Cape Town, fearful of the power of the Jesuits, agreed, as he was reluctant to sanction my continued activity against this ubiquitous Order.

Owing to the intricacies of this case; the interest and the major scandal which it created within the Roman church on three continents; its far-reaching implications upon Roman church legal procedure — not to mention its bearing upon my own subsequent actions — it deserves the space allotted to it in the following chapter.

7. My Duel With The Jesuits

THE PAST four hundred years of Christian church history has much to say about the puzzling machinations of the priestly Society of Jesus, whose members are commonly called Jesuits, founded by the Spanish soldier-saint, Ignatius of Loyola. There has been as yet no agreement as to whether the Jesuits are the emissaries of heaven or hell. It is not for me to attempt here to add to or take away from either the glory which they have won for themselves in the opinion of some, or the shame imputed to them by others.

No Jesuit has ever been permitted to be a pope.¹ A few mediocre Jesuits have been cardinals, and a few missionary Jesuits in pagan lands have been bishops. Yet upon them collectively, as the militant, violently active order of the Roman papacy, has the burden of the continuance of the Roman Catholic church rested since the time of the Protestant Reformation. Without the Jesuits it is difficult to imagine how the papacy could have sustained its position of power in modern Christendom. The Jesuit Order has been a veritable Atlas bearing the heavy weight of the entire Roman Catholic world on its back.

In order to succeed in its original design of preserving intact the developed system of the papacy, the Jesuit Order has never failed to be guided by the militarist policy of its founder Ignatius. It has made itself “a church within a church,” a military dictatorship similar to that of the army of the Roman Empire by those whose will and choice the Caesars ruled. Popes are chosen and their policies determined by the Jesuits, as the Praetorian Guard of Papal Caesarism. True to their special and personal oath of loyalty to the Chair of St. Peter, the Jesuits have been the jealous defenders of the papacy, not only against every outside antagonist, but they have fiercely resisted every sign of weakness on the part of those within the Roman church itself respecting its claims to universal supremacy. To preserve the papacy the Jesuits have not hesitated to fight, and even poison popes themselves. One courageous pope, not without serious personal risk, succeeded in abolishing the entire Jesuit Order, and his decree held for half a century. During that

time they could find no better protection for their secret existence than that of the infamous Empress Catherine of Russia, until a pope of their choice was elected who restored their Order to its original status. There is no country in Europe from which the Jesuits have not been violently expelled by irate governments urged thereto by popular resentment.

They have suffered greater molestation from countries predominantly Catholic than from those ruled by Protestant majorities. While Protestant America allows them all the liberty and scope for propaganda constitutionally guaranteed to everyone, Catholic Spain has many times decreed the expulsion of all Jesuits from the country and the confiscation of their vast holdings to the state.

Strangest of all is the well-known resentment of Roman Catholic bishops, secular clergy, and priests of other religious orders, to the overlordship which the Jesuits have assumed in the affairs of the Roman church in America and elsewhere, for the watchful eyes of zealous Jesuits are quick to note the smallest deviation from papal teaching and practice in the activities of the church in all its branches. They are especially watchful in the United States where indications are plentiful of a complacent yielding to the liberalizing tendencies of American democracy.

As loyal guardians of the strict policies of the papacy, the Jesuits are quick to seize upon the slightest hesitancy of others in obeying all the dictates issued from the Vatican. Only in their own favor will they permit anything to be disputed which is ordered by Rome. And so it happens that at times the Jesuits, who are specially vowed to regard every wish of a pope as a divine command, are the only ones who may take the liberty to turn an adverse decree of a pope to their own favor. The historic decree, for instance, of Pope Clement XIV, provided that under no circumstances whatsoever were its stipulations to be understood otherwise than to mean that the Jesuit Order was thereby irrevocably and eternally dissolved. Yet in the face of this, they succeeded in having their Order restored and have since continued to carry on.

It is not to be wondered at therefore that the decree of Pope Benedict XV, which I had been instrumental in having issued against the Jesuits in 1921, should have eventually shared the same fate as the decree of Pope Clement XIV in 1773. Time alone was needed to enable Jesuit influence to prevail upon Pius XI to reverse this decree also and to issue another in their favor. No attempt was made in this second decree to prove that the Jesuits

had been misjudged or unjustly convicted of the charges brought against them. The indisputable absolutism of papal power was employed to have it stated in this second decree that it “hereby forgives the injustice and heals every irregularity” in the matter of which the Jesuits had been proved guilty.

Let me add that although such procedure may seem to be a perversion of all recognized legal ethics, it can only be disputed by those who deny the divine absolutist power claimed by the Pontiff of the Roman church. Decisions of legal justice and of common-sense equity, even based upon the stipulations of the Roman Catholic code of canon law, may be reversed or set aside at any time by the mere nod of consent of a pope.

My work as negotiator in the Mungret College case against the Jesuits was that of a secret agent bound by oath not to reveal what was not already publicly known against the Jesuit defenders until the matter should be finally decided. Roman church authorities are careful to allow no official or important matter to proceed until all connected with it have been bound by an oath of secrecy. My oath in this matter had a double purpose: to preserve the reputation of the Jesuits before the universal church, and also to safeguard the identity of cardinals and others in high places who were forced to bring action against them.

Even now, when all activity in this case has been finally and irrevocably disposed of, I have no inclination, or need, to divulge the intimate details of the case that are unknown to the public and heretofore covered by my oath of secrecy. The Jesuits themselves came not to be troubled so much about the actual charges of which they were accused and convicted before the Vatican courts. They were concerned principally with the hurt to their pride by the fact that, justly or unjustly, a decree of papal authority had been obtained against them. To yield to this decree would have been a public confession of wrong-doing. Yet by refusing to obey this decree at once, they considerably injured their position. It was regretfully lamented by influential Jesuits in certain quarters afterwards that they did so, for it afforded opportunity to bishops, clergy, and rival religious orders on three continents to taunt the Jesuits for seven years with the accusation of flagrant disobedience to a solemn decree of the pope.

From a frank, open letter written to me by Archbishop Curley of Baltimore for presentation to fair-minded authorities and individuals in Rome and elsewhere, I quote the following:

"ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
BALTIMORE, MD.
Jan. 27, 1928.

"Rev. Father Lehmann,
St. Patrick's Church,
Gainesville, Florida.

Dear Father Lehmann,

"I have before me yours of January twenty-first.

"When at home last summer, I read the final statement of Father Tompkin, and I am fully aware of the action of the [Jesuit] Provincial in forbidding him to write to any of the past pupils of Mungret *re* the Mungret case. In other words, the Jesuit Superiors have acted in a very stupid way, and I would say in a very unfair way, in the whole matter.

"I am convinced beyond a shadow of doubt that Father Tompkin's answer to the statement of the case for the defense by the Rev. Peter Finlay is clear, convincing, and shows that the defense has not a foot to stand on. His further answer to the affidavit of Father Tom Finlay, S. J., shows very clearly that Father Tom Finlay knew nothing about the situation, or if he knew anything, it was purely a one-sided knowledge.

"I am surprised and I need not say that I am shocked, at the attitude of the [Jesuit] Society towards Pontifical Decrees. If the knowledge of the facts ever comes to the public, it will cause great scandal...

"You can make what use you like of this letter, by sending it, if you will, to the Holy See. It is simply a frank statement of my views on the very important question which I discussed with His Eminence the Cardinal Prefect of the Propagation in 1922.

"In Australia there are two Bishops who are Mungret men. Here in this country there are four Bishops and myself, making seven members of the Hierarchy so far. All of us without exception will be grateful to the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda for a decision in the case that will give the Apostolic School of Mungret its rights...

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) Michael J. Guam,
Archbishop of Baltimore."

It was brave of Archbishop Curley thus to express himself so honestly and openly against the unjust policies of the Jesuits. It is now his own opinion

that his frankness in this very letter seriously impaired his expectations of ever being made a cardinal. Press reports from Rome have ceased to mention the name of Archbishop Curley as a possible future cardinal in the United States. Unless he redeems his rashness by some special proof of friendship towards the Jesuits, the primatial see of the late Cardinal Gibbons will remain ungraced by the dignity of the princely purple as long as its present incumbent lives.

How quickly Archbishop Curley sensed the need of counteracting his former condemnatory attitude towards the Jesuits as soon as they had had their way in Rome, may be judged from the following, written to me at that time. If the making public (by his own permission) of his frank statements above quoted, may have put a check to his rise to a dignity that is only one step below the papal Chair itself, the following statement which he wrote to me later of his submission may help to redeem his fallen fortunes:

"DEAR FATHER LEHMANN:

"I am in receipt of yours of October twenty-fourth.

"If the Decree of 1921 was, as it was, the action of the Holy See, so is this last Decree of 1928. As far as I am concerned the thing is settled. I am not going to have any part whatsoever in the case any more...

"I state further that it would be very unwise on your part to give the matter any further thought. You are a priest. You have your life to live and your own specified work to do. Any further defense that you would attempt to make of the case would be interpreted at once as a direct attack on the Holy See. Do not let your feelings carry you away to a point of doing anything which you would regret for the rest of your life.

"I repeat then, that I wash my hands completely and entirely of the affair and accept the last Decree exactly as it stands.

Yours sincerely,
Michael J. Guam,
Archbishop of Baltimore."

The facts of the Mungret College Case against the Jesuits, as now publicly known, may be briefly outlined.² It had its origin in a protest against the conversion by the Jesuits of the missionary college of Mungret in Ireland —

an institution founded and supported by trust funds gathered mostly in the United States for the training of missionary priests — to the personal advantage of their Order. Seven members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and a great number of priests in America and elsewhere who had been students in Mungret allied themselves in defense of their Alma Mater. As can be seen from the above correspondence, Archbishop Curley of Baltimore was prominent in support of the case, especially after the Holy See in Rome had decreed, solemnly and finally, against the Jesuits.

The injustice of the Jesuits in the matter was first brought to the attention of those interested by an honest Irish Jesuit — Father James Tompkin — who was rector of the missionary college during my own years of training there. He was a pious and very sincerely-minded priest who possessed also a great deal of jesuitical astuteness — which, however, his brother Jesuits did not seem to appreciate until it was too late. In the end he proved himself more jesuitical than the Jesuits themselves, and he succeeded in outwitting them by employing his jesuitical astuteness against the Jesuit powers under cover of his Christ-like simplicity, and his desire to see justice rendered even against His own Order.

His unsuspected astuteness enabled him to plead for three years with the Roman Curia against his Jesuit superiors without their being aware of his part in the proceedings instituted against them. Afterwards, when the decree had been issued against the Jesuits and his activities in the matter became known, he was promptly penalized by these superiors. But through it all he had afforded them no opportunity which they could seize upon as excuse to expel him from the Order.

Before the matter was brought to the attention of Vatican authorities, this Jesuit had complained to, and sought redress from those above him in the Jesuit Order through recognized channels. But it was not permitted him to carry the matter beyond his own Jesuit General in Rome to higher papal authorities. It was at this point that my services were first sought. As at that time I was about to depart for Rome to begin my final course of theology, he cleverly entrusted me with the task of inducing the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda Fide to command him to present a secret, sworn statement of complaint to the Holy See unknown to the Jesuits. In this I succeeded. Cardinal Van Rossum, apart from the fact that he belonged to the rival Order of Redemptorists, considered the matter worthy of an official investigation. Through me, therefore, acting as intermediary between Father Tompkin and

the cardinals in Rome, documents and sworn reports were placed before the Vatican courts, and the Jesuits officially summoned to defend themselves.

During those three years of the fullest investigation the Jesuits were given every opportunity to offer their defense, but, failing to satisfy the judges, a decree was issued in May, 1921, which specifically ordered the Jesuits to make full compensation for their betrayal of a public trust. This decree was signed by ten cardinals and approved by Pope Benedict XV.

But the case did not, as we confidently expected, end there. It thence entered its second and more important phase. The Jesuits decided to ignore the decree. To yield would have been to admit the justice of the indictment and conviction by which their honor was impugned throughout the entire Catholic world. Against such a decree, with the full force of papal authority behind it, Roman church law, in ordinary cases, allows no appeal. Yet the Jesuits took it upon themselves to present what they were pleased to call a *disquisito*, disputing any right on the part of anybody to question their management of the institution of Mungret College. It was a challenge to the Holy See itself for daring to impeach the honor of the Jesuits. Such a pretext of defense, according to Canon law, is less than futile. To repeat the words of Archbishop Curley quoted above: "I am convinced beyond a shadow of doubt... that the defense has not a foot to stand upon."

Many instances might be quoted to exemplify the proverbial perverseness attributed to what is known as the jesuitical mind. There is the case where the Jesuit can totally deny a direct statement previously made by telling you: "I did not say that," meaning the word "that." When I personally presented the above letter of Archbishop Curley, and those of other American clergy, to the assistant General of the Jesuits in Rome, he calmly told me that the Jesuits were never yet known to have disobeyed the pope in his smallest wish! Which indeed is true — on their own assumption that a pope has no other wish but that of the Jesuits themselves!

Here it may be asked why the British civil law in Ireland was not called upon to punish the Jesuits for a breach of public trust. British law is most prompt and severe in its action against the slightest tampering with public trust and orphan funds. But as Roman Catholic ecclesiastics we dared not do so. We had indeed procured legal advice of eminent counsel in the civil as well as the ecclesiastical court. The opinion was indisputable that were the case brought before the British law courts in Ireland, immediate action could have been had against the offenders, if for no other reason but that the

highest authority within the Roman church itself had decreed sentence against the Jesuits. Roman Church canon law, however, provides for the direst penalties against anyone, layman or cleric, who should dare to bring a priest or bishop before the bar of public justice. We would have thus invited the thunder of a major excommunication upon our heads. All who would take any part in such an action — judge and jury, witnesses and lawyers — would be likewise excommunicated, Protestants and Catholics alike. Such is the law of the papal church in every country.

We were thus forced to work only through the intricacies of the canon law which the Jesuits so openly flouted. The task was entrusted to me of arousing the sentiment of fair-minded officials in Rome to the justice of our case. I made especial use of that minority faction in Vatican circles which opposes Jesuit domination over papal affairs. Precisely because they are thus opposed to Jesuit influence they must ever remain a powerless minority. Only those who have had experience, know what a tedious task it is to gain audience with any ecclesiastic in Rome who is entitled to wear a strip of purple or scarlet on any part of his dress. You must first wear out all your patience and pride by hours of idle waiting in their red-tapestried antechambers. Telephones are not yet recognized as a convenience for making appointments; nor is their use desired. Papal officialdom gauges well the asset to its pompous dignity to have all who would approach within the circle of its self-asserted influence do so, either by bribing the favor of an immediate hearing, or by cooling one's ardor by hours of anxious waiting. Even to gain first admittance to the line of petitioners in antechambers you must first bribe the *portiere*, or doorman. Doors open only after their hinges have been treated with a generous supply of "palm-oil." Many cardinals, archbishops, monsignors, *minutanti* and other minor Vatican officials, whom I interviewed in the interest of our case, were very sympathetic. They spread out their palms, however, and in a hushed voice said, "*Ma che!* but what can one do against the Jesuits!"

It is with reluctance that I recount the unworthy part played in this case in favor of the Jesuits by the man whose duty it was actually to enforce the papal decree against them. This he announced positively to me he would not do. When I showed him proofs of the resentment which had arisen in America and elsewhere on the part of bishops and clergy against the Jesuits and their servitors in Rome, he merely ridiculed it all by saying: "You Americans! You think you know everything that goes on in Rome. But you

know nothing! You think you can get everything you ask for in Rome. But you only get what your dollars can buy.” When I returned to the United States and repeated this to Archbishop Curley, he replied: “Well! the man is right. There are fool bishops in America who pay for all they get in Rome, and get only what they pay for!”

It was not surprising, therefore, to hear soon after I left Rome in 1928, that the Jesuits had been forgiven all their irregularities in the Mungret case by Pope Pius XI, who rescinded the former decree in our favor by the exercise of his autocratic power. Nor was I surprised to read in the press dispatches from Rome that Marchetti-Salveggiani had been made a cardinal soon after, and appointed as Cardinal Vicar of Rome.

Of what avail was my little voice then piping alone for justice in a public cause? Even Archbishop Curley hastened to submit. “I am not going to have any part whatsoever in the case any more,” he wrote to me. “I wash my hands completely and entirely of the affair and accept the last Decree exactly as it stands.” “You are a priest,” he warned me. “Any further defense that you would attempt to make of the case would be interpreted as a direct attack upon the Holy See.”

But to me, the case itself was “a direct attack upon the Holy See,” which from my youth had been deceitfully pictured to my mind as the mouthpiece of the truth and justice of Almighty God himself. Doubts concerning the origins of the papacy, growing distrust of Catholic practice as truly Christian, intimate knowledge of the wrecked lives of my brother-priests, and a waning hope of any possibility of Christian church betterment under papal supremacy, had already caused me grave disquiet. But this case of Mungret College broke down the last barrier of defense which I was striving to put up against the total abandonment of my church and its priesthood.

The slight breath of hope which I sensed in the freedom of assertion among Catholics in America gave me renewed vigor for a while longer to continue to exercise my priestly duties. I even tried to read into the anti-papal assertions of Mr. Alfred E. Smith, who was then campaigning for the presidency of the United States, a protest of the American Catholic mind against the aims of the papacy in the modern democratic State. The able manner, however, in which men such as Mr. Charles C. Marshall and the Rev. Charles H. Fountain helped to clarify Mr. Smith’s own mind upon his untenable position as loyal papist and loyal American, disillusioned me in one more particular.

Spiritually, doctrinally, juridically and personally, the Roman papacy, as the divinely-appointed guardian of Christianity, was rapidly crumbling to pieces within me. I was faced with the bitter realization that I must completely break with it if I were to retain my faith in Christianity.

1. This changed with the advent of Jorge Bergoglio (Francis) to the papal throne in 2013.↩
2. cf. *While Peter Sleeps*. Chap. 13, by E. Boyd Barrett, *Ives, Washburn*. Dr. Barrett was a Jesuit for twenty years.↩

8. America

MY ACTIVITIES IN ROME against the Jesuits in the Mungret case did not please my bishop in Cape Town. After I returned to South Africa from Rome in 1927 he plainly told me that he was unwilling to prejudice his interests further with the Jesuits by ever again permitting me to carry on negotiations in Rome. Complaints, he said, had been lodged in Rome by the Jesuits against him. It was said that he was neglecting his duty to his diocese by freeing me from parish work in Cape Town to carry on the case. Only with great reluctance had he allowed me to go to Rome in the first instance.

I reminded him that more than half his priests had been supplied him for the work of his missions in South Africa by Mungret College, and that he should rather deem it his duty not to impede the just effort being made to save the institution from extinction by the Jesuits. But his personal fear of the influence which the Jesuits might exercise against him overruled his interest in the justice of this public cause.

A Roman Catholic priest cannot leave the confines of his diocese, for any cause whatsoever, without official credential letters from his bishop testifying to his character and the legality of his absence. These letters are also the guarantee of protection and help to a traveling priest in whatever part of the world he may find himself. These letters call upon everyone owing allegiance to the Papal church to protect, shelter, and keep safe the bearer. After a military, majestic preamble in the plural “we,” common to all Roman church documents, one of these credential letters set forth in Latin, and drawn up in my behalf, may be quoted:

“We testify that you are a priest of good moral character, and that you go forth from our diocese free of every censure and of every canonical impediment and penalty. Wherefore, We demand from all before whom you may present yourself, especially the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Fathers in Christ, the Bishops, officials and ministers of the churches, that they admit you to the celebration of the sacrifice of the Mass and to the exercise of other divine offices, and to favor you and keep you safe in everything...”

To travel without these credentials would have meant my rejection everywhere, especially in Rome. It would have been sufficient to prejudice our cause fatally by subjecting me to the censure of watchful Jesuits.

Archbishop Curley of Baltimore and some other bishops in the United States, knowing of the growing opposition against my freedom to move in the case, had already expressed their willingness to accept my transfer to a diocese in the United States, so that I might be free to go back and forth to Rome as occasion demanded. I accepted their plan, and when transferred to America, relieved the bishop in Cape Town of any further embarrassment through fear of the Jesuits. I received from Bishop Patrick Barry of Florida the following gracious acceptance of me into his diocese:

"EPISCOPAL RESIDENCE, ST. AUGUSTINE, FLA.
3/8/27

Dear Father Lehmann,

"I have yours of the 22nd ult., and wish to say that my offer to adopt you still stands. If, after your work on the Mungret case is completed you find South Africa closed to you, you can get your permission to come here, I shall find room for you in this diocese.

"With every good wish, I am,

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) P. BARRY,
Bishop of St. Augustine."

The bishop of Cape Town readily gave me appropriate credentials, and I set out for America with some renewed hope that I might be able to effect, not only an adjustment of the Mungret case, but also a renewal of my own personal faith in the methods and practices of Roman Catholicism. My journey to the United States, through England and Montreal (where I had two married brothers whom I had not seen for seventeen years), was long but extremely interesting. I set foot on the soil of free America with a firm conviction that I was in a land whose liberty-loving spirit must eventually force even the Roman papacy to yield to less autocratic methods. In Europe and South Africa we had heard of the power, the wealth, and the efficiency of American Catholics. We knew that the Vatican was now financially depen-

dent almost entirely upon their generosity; that by their faithful attendance at mass and the sacraments, and by their support of every pious project, they shamed the loose-living decadent Catholics of Italy, France, Spain and other European countries, who were Catholic by race and tradition. If there was a future for a reformed Catholicism, the United States was surely the place where it could be effected.

I was appointed immediately by the Bishop of Florida as pastor of Gainesville, the university city of Florida. The state was then recovering from the disastrous effects of two major calamities — the bursting of the speculatively inflated real estate boom, and the hurricanes and tidal waves that had recently devastated its attractive winter resorts. The havoc wrought by nature had caused less disaster than the manipulators of real estate values. But Florida, like other states, was still being carried along upon the crest of the wave of general business prosperity throughout the country.

The number of Roman Catholics in Florida is only about 56,000; the priests do not exceed half a hundred. The bishop, under the pope, possesses full, unquestioned control over all church funds and properties, amounting to more than fifteen millions of dollars in value. He is prohibited by Roman authority to incorporate, because Florida, unlike New York, for example, has no special Church incorporation laws favorable to Roman Catholic hierarchical authority. The bishop, therefore, is obliged to have the deeds to all church properties recorded in his name. Were he to incorporate church properties, schools, etc., built by and for the people, he would then be required to submit reports of all financial transactions to the scrutiny of the people in his congregations. Such procedure is not admissible in Roman church canon law.

The continuation of my work in the Mungret case against the Jesuits, and another journey to Rome, did not prevent me from taking keen interest in the heated controversy respecting the papal church which was carried on during the summer of 1928 in the press and from the pulpit during the Hoover-Smith campaign. For the first time, the American public was afforded the opportunity to learn the official facts concerning the juridical status claimed by the Roman church in the United States. This important question was unhappily clouded over by the accusation of bigotry and political expediency leveled against those who wanted to know the truth and who sought to state the facts dispassionately for the calm, judicious consideration of the general public. The very able presentation of the case, from a

purely legal standpoint, by such men as the Hon. Charles C. Marshall¹ and the Rev. Charles Hillman Fountain² should have freed them from the charge of bigotry. Protestant America has still to realize the significance of the facts then brought into the open.

I was called upon, as a Roman Catholic pastor, to explain to some of the more intelligent of my parishioners the bewildering anomaly which these facts seemed to indicate between the practice of Catholicism and the juristic status of the Roman church in the United States. It was not an easy task. Knights of Columbus naturally resented the accusation that loyalty to their church and true patriotism should conflict. Priests sought a way out of the dilemma by obscuring the issue, charging bigoted and political motives against those who brought the facts to light. I was rash enough to state plainly that the facts could not be denied, since they were the official teaching of papal canon law, and were taught in our own Catholic universities in America. I preferred to smooth over the difficulty by pointing out the improbability of the Roman church ever becoming so powerful as to have opportunity to put its claims into practice. The answers of Catholic spokesmen such as the Rev. Dr. John A. Ryan of the Catholic University in Washington, helped me to convince my inquirers that there seemed no desire for the present on the part of Catholic church leaders in the United States to so press these claims as to nullify the Amendment to the United States Constitution that guarantees religious freedom.

But I knew well that my apology was lame indeed. Nor did it satisfy my hearers. They looked upon me as in some way tainted with Protestant sympathies. Catholic men and women were pledged to do their utmost to realize the slogan of their church: "Make America Catholic." This was the aim and end of all their endeavors; all their clubs; their Knights of Columbus; their parochial schools and universities, their church attendance and their subscriptions to all Catholic projects. Once America became predominantly Catholic, what could prevent their engrafting this purpose upon the government of the nation?

The true claims of the Roman Catholic church are embodied in its canon law, and in textbooks on social ethics used in Catholic universities. It is well to remember that the "teaching" of Catholic principles, as expounded in Catholic schools and universities, differs greatly from teaching in secular schools and universities. The latter may be called "informative" teaching, as compared with the "propagandist" teaching of the Catholic schools. No

“take or leave it” is permitted in Catholic teaching. The pupil must not only learn what his church officially teaches, but must do what he is taught to do. The teacher’s task is to insist that, “This is our opinion; we are right; any other opinion is wrong; everybody is in error who differs from us. As it is unethical to act upon wrong principles, any action against our teaching is sinful.”

What, then, is this only right opinion as to the juridical status of the Roman papacy throughout all the world and at all times? Is it so serious a matter that the new Republican Government in Spain in 1931, for instance, was forced to exile all Jesuit priests because of every Jesuit’s special vow to uphold the papacy? Or that Mexico was forced to expel the pope’s representative and other Mexicans because they would not yield their papal loyalty? The claim is:

- That the Roman papacy is the only church system established by the direct command of God.
- That it exists, and is divinely appointed to exist independently of, and superior to, every other institution on earth.
- That it has no need to accept a charter of incorporation from any civil government whatsoever.
- That it is the one and only major *juristic personality* (corporation) having jurisdiction over every other institution in state and church.
- That all other associations in church and state, be they *educational* — schools and universities — or *charitable* — orphanages, hospitals, etc., or *cultural* — gymnasiums, art and musical academies, etc., depend for their existence upon the major juristic personality of the papacy.

It concedes that the civil Government of a country, whether it be ruled by an absolute monarchy, an elected president, or a self-appointed dictator, is also a “perfect society.” But since the civil state rules only in temporal matters in the economic order and is made up of these educational, charitable, and cultural institutions, it must yield to the superiority of the papacy over it, since the papacy claims to have been appointed by God to regulate every educational, charitable and cultural work.³

It is indeed a grandiose claim. Nevertheless, without it the Roman papacy would immediately cease to exist. No smallest yielding in any particular can be permitted. There can be no half-measures, no compromise. “He

who is not one hundred per cent with me, is against me," the popes must always say; one-half of one per cent of difference makes you against the papal church.

A clear understanding of this basic claim should immediately solve all the riddles of Romanism, both in the medieval and the modern world. It answers the question why kings and nations in Europe were forever mixed in bloody wars with the popes; why popes were poisoned and peasants slaughtered; why emperors had to kneel as penitents before them; why peoples were called upon to be traitors to their excommunicated sovereigns; why heretics were hunted as outlaws deprived of all civil and property rights, and finally burned at the stake. It explains why the Roman church claims jurisdiction over all marriage legislation, and over the sexual relations between husbands and wives; why it regulates what people may eat and drink, when they must go to hear mass, how much money they must give to the church — all under pain of eternal damnation. It explains why even a Mussolini and a Hitler must resist a pope; why the Jesuits have been expelled from every country in Europe; why Mexico in 1927 limited its number of priests and violently expelled its papal delegate. It makes clear why the papacy can never come to satisfactory terms with a really democratic Government.

It should not be wondered at, therefore, that thinking men were amazed in 1928, in Europe as well as in the United States, when Mr. Alfred E. Smith, speaking presumably for his fellow-religionists and with the approbation of Roman Catholic leaders in the United States, publicly proclaimed his determined championship, not as a matter of favor, but of right, of the principles of freedom of worship, liberty of conscience, and of the complete separation of church and state. I knew Catholic men and women who rejoiced greatly when he did so. It seemed to me as if their wish had always been father to their thought that it never could have been otherwise with their church leaders in America. Or, perhaps, they foolishly believed that the papacy had yielded its ancient divine claims in favor of American Catholics!

Catholic teachers and leaders cannot and do not so think. The religious controversy over the Smith-for-President campaign in 1928 should prove to all American Catholic priests and people that there is no way out of the dilemma in which the divine claim of their church places them before their fellow-citizens. The papacy cannot yield one iota in the statement of its

grandiose assertions; it bides its time for the realization of them, permitting the present position of the subservience of the Roman Catholic church in the United States to a Protestant people's Government, as the best "substitute" that could have been worked out by the American people.⁴

As long as I remained a pastor of a Roman Catholic parish it could not have been expected of me to explain the full significance of these things to those of my congregation who came to me for information. The facts were stated and proven clearly enough in periodicals and in the press for them to learn for themselves. Unfortunately, the full significance of the question was clouded over at the time, and ever since, by the uncalled-for injection of the cry of religious bigotry and political expediency. It provided a most convenient covering for the retreat of Catholic leaders and priests out of a very awkward situation. Mr. Smith, who was the least responsible for the hubbub he caused, was the victim of it all, and suffered by being thwarted in his worthy ambition of being elected President of the United States.

For me, it was the death-knell of any hopes which I may then have cherished for a reasonable "reform" of Roman Catholicism in the modern world. I had yet to become fully convinced that the defect in the official root-principle of the Roman papacy made it impossible any longer as a suitable channel for the redemptive spirit of Christ to stricken humanity. I had witnessed the failure of the papacy as a defender of public justice in the Mungret case against the Jesuits; I had seen it fail its people in America in their effort to be one with their fellow citizens in holding adamantly to their constitutional rights to liberty of conscience, freedom of worship, and to separation of church and state. But what forced me to face squarely the bitter duty of removing myself from its jurisdiction was the growing realization that the same defect in the papacy's root-principle was responsible directly for the broken lives of my brother priests, and for the lack of any true spiritual uplift in the souls of many of the people committed to their care.

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1. *The Roman Catholic Church in the Modern State*. Dodd, Mead & Co.↩
 2. *Current History*. April, 1928↩
 3. cf. *Ex-Priest and the Riddle of Religion*; pp. 107-110, for official confirmation of this fact.↩

4. cf. *Ex-Priest*; p. 110.↩

9. Priestly Uselessness

IT does not take one long to realize the truth of the statement that “Rome was not built in a day.” Neither does it take long for the most enthusiastic high-souled Christian church-worker to realize that two thousand years of Christian teaching is not long enough to win the world entirely to Christ. Human nature being constituted as it is, it soon ceases to be a matter of wonder to him that the race is taking so long to realize its redemption. Yet there are few earnest Christian teachers who do not chafe at its delay. Progress there must be, even though it be not openly apparent. Many there are, I know, in the high offices of all churches, who confess their despair of any marked hope of advance towards the redemption of the human race as long as it inhabits this planet. Such deem it sufficient to paint pictures of an “other-worldly” redemption for mankind, in the Elysian fields. They have ceased to expect even a spiritual, and much less a social, regeneration of mankind through Christ in this world. My work as a priest of the Roman Catholic church has convinced me that the system of papalism is an open confession of this despair. It has ceased long since to believe in its power to carry hope of human betterment to mankind in this life.

Papalism proclaims that all men have been redeemed by the sacrificial death of Jesus. Yet it has developed a dogmatic system that actually denies that redemption, even in another world, except to those who conform in every particular to its rules and regulations. It is more concerned about the doctrines and dogmas which it has evolved to preserve its external structure than in the saving message of Christ as set forth in the New Testament. Its basic defect is that it has restored a religious and social system which Christ severely condemned. It seeks to redeem mankind by a man-made system from which Christ freed us. It has restored the old fatalism of the Orient, which affirms that man is, and must ever remain, a mere creature of dust to be ruled to the end by external laws. It thus denies the sovereignty of the individual soul, the sonship of each with the Fatherhood of God, and of the full brotherhood of all men through Christ.

Few are afforded opportunities to discover this as poignantly as do priests of the Roman church. To them it is given to observe and experience at firsthand this denial of sonship to both priests and people. My ministry showed me the effects of the system on priests and people continents apart, whose only bond of connection was inherited or imposed Roman Catholicism.

I came to be more concerned about its effects upon the souls and bodies of my brother-priests than upon the ordinary people. The simple piety and wholehearted devotion of the faithful in the Roman church cannot be denied. Their piety, however, cannot be credited to their church system, but rather is there in spite of it. It may not help the progress of the true Christian spirit, but it cannot entirely prevent it.

There is no need for me to recount any salacious details concerning the lives of priests to prove the failure of the Roman system to help its ministering clergy to preserve Christian ideals and spiritual enthusiasm. The world at large has become wise enough to discern for itself that forced and unnecessary restrictions placed upon them are a hindrance and not a help to their personal sanctity. Protestantism, with its helpful emancipation of Christian teachers from papal repression, has millions of witnesses to the efficacy of its methods. Among its clergy and laity have been hosts of saintly men and women whose devotion to the influence of Christ in their lives cannot be denied.

The saddest experiences of my years as a priest are the evidences I found everywhere of the broken hopes and the crashed ideals of priests, young and old. Had I found it only in myself, I would have attributed it to some personal bias, to some animus against overweening authority; had I found it in one place and only under unusual conditions, I might have hesitated to make this sweeping assertion. Evidence of the failure of Roman church practice upon priests was the same in every country that I visited.

Imposed celibacy is the primary cause of the failure of which priests themselves are most fully conscious. Not that the physical implications of celibacy is a matter of great moment; it should never have been made a matter of importance. Had it not been imposed to serve the ends of papal power, but left to free, voluntary choice, priestly celibacy might have been of real service. Instead it has been the cause of scandal and shame to the Christian church. Forced as it is by human and not divine law, it has perverted any good that otherwise might come of it. It has had the effect of be-

littling the sanctity of the marriage relation; for the only object which it can attain is the denial to priests of legal marriage rights, not abstention from sexual indulgence. The pope alone can absolve a priest who avails himself of civil sanction to contract a legal marriage relation; private sexual aberrations can be either concealed, or absolved by recourse to any ordinary confessor.

But the real evil consequent upon forced clerical celibacy is its enervating effect upon the bodily and mental faculties. It saps all the vigor of manhood from those who must employ the continual force of mind and will against the natural bodily urge. Its victims have to confess that, far from freeing them from the sexual urge, it actually breeds a very ferment of impurity in the mind. It is the boast of the Roman Catholic church that priestly celibacy makes its clergy something more than men — that it makes them supernatural, almost angelic. The simple people readily believe this. In truth it makes them something less than men.

It is almost impossible for the laity to understand to what extent Roman Catholic priests fail to live up to the celibate state imposed upon them. Those who know cannot, or prefer not to make it public. Priests themselves alone possess adequate knowledge of the facts. I am content with this general statement for I would not have anyone believe that I think the question of prime importance. The general public today knows enough about sex, and the part it plays in the lives of all normal men and women, to judge it for themselves. If priests were as celibate as they appear, then the conviction of the simple Irish about them must be more than an induced pious belief, namely, that priests are especially endowed with a kind of angelic continence at their ordination ceremony.

Totally at variance with that induced pious belief of the Irish about their priests, which I had shared from my youth, were my findings among them during my ministry upon three continents. Not one in a hundred was free from a tense bodily and mental struggle with the sex urge. When I came to the United States I thought that the more practical outlook on life with which Americans are credited all the world over, and the more common-sense Christian attitude towards moral usages and the personal liberty of the individual, would have shown their effects upon priests. But neither in their lives nor in their dealings with the lay people, did I find any beneficial effects of American methods and ideas upon them. Among the priests in the United States who became my coworkers were many companions of my

seminary days in Ireland and in Rome. Of the religious enthusiasm, the intense Christian idealism, even the personal sanctity, which had then possessed them, little or nothing remained. The soul-destroying process which I had seen working in my brother-priests in other lands, had also been at work in these others from whom I had been separated by thousands of miles of ocean. I spent many an hour reminiscing with them about what we had been taught and what we had felt in student days, exchanging experiences of our work as priests, recounting the fortunes and failures of some in the priesthood whom we had known as boys. All without exception groaned out their confession of disillusionment. Invariably they expressed their desire to escape from the bondage; to go far away to some place where they could forget they ever had been priests. Not a few mentioned life on a ship at sea; perhaps because the unlimited expanse and freedom of the ocean would least recall the shape or form of a church! The inevitable recourse to the deadening effects of alcoholic liquor had left its sad marks upon the still young boyish bodies of many.

Not that these young men had become bad; they were just sick, sad, tired and disappointed; once imbued with a saintly, self-sacrificing Christian idealism, worthy indeed to serve a better cause than that of Roman church propaganda in modern countries, they had succumbed to a state of indifferent lethargy. They could see no recognized, respectable retreat out of it. They had, therefore, submitted to the loyal soldier's rule: "Theirs not to ask the reason why; theirs but to do and die."

New as I was in a strange country, I thought to save myself from total disillusionment by taking a keen interest in the humble work of ministering to the spiritual needs of the simple people. I tried to forget the injustices I had recently witnessed in the papal curia in Rome itself, and to accept lightly its extravagant demands and its interference with Christian life. But I soon realized that to strive thus was to harbor a fading illusion. To minister officially as a priest of Rome, to don the vestments of its ritual, to speak from its richly ornamented chancels, to confine the dispensation of grace to the working of my consecrated fingers, began to seem out of harmony with the fearless teachings and simple counsels of the gentle and unassuming Christ. One could not be loyal to both.

Two instances will illustrate the sense of failure which I experienced. One was the sad ordeal of assisting a young man condemned to die in the electric chair in the Florida State prison at Raiford, which came within the

confines of my parish in Gainesville. He was from a city in the East, born and baptized a Roman Catholic, and a product of a Roman Catholic parochial school. In his youth he was taught all that Roman Catholic practice deems essential for a Christian, God-fearing life. He was convicted in Tampa as accessory to first-degree murder during the hold-up of a restaurant in which the proprietor was slain.

I did all I could to prepare this young man for the "last mile." I administered to him in full every rite which the Roman church has ordained and by which divine grace and strength are said to be poured into needy souls. Even as he lay limp and dead in the electric chair the moment after the fatal current had done its work, I anointed his forehead with oil as prescribed for the administration of the sacrament of "extreme unction."

Yet I knew I had failed to carry any real consolation to the racked and sin-scarred soul of that poor lad. I visited him in his death-cell during his long week of fearful waiting, and signed him with the form of absolution many times over. On that last morning I was at the prison gates at break of dawn, carrying with me all the cumbrous instruments necessary to celebrate mass. These I arranged on a table near the double bars of his cage. I donned all my shining mass vestments, and proceeded, with all the dignity which the ominous atmosphere of a condemned cell would permit, to offer the "sacrifice" of the mass in full. The poor lad, in a fever of dread expectation, paced up and down behind the bars smoking one cigarette after another. He threw away a cigarette to receive on his tongue the wafer of holy communion which I passed to him through the bars of his cell. It produced no effect.

The injection of morphine administered by the doctor, ten minutes before he was led to the chair, calmed him somewhat. It suddenly dawned upon me that the doctor's single injection of morphine had brought the boy more external relief than all my administrations of the Roman Catholic sacraments, which are believed to soothe both body and soul. We followed him to the chair. A newspaperman, who had reported the case for the press all through the trial and conviction, was there to jot down his last-minute impressions. His breath smelled vilely of whisky, and he confessed to me in a nervous whisper that if he had not filled himself with liquor he could never have brought himself to witness the end.

As the whirr of the rheostat sent the full force of the destructive current through the boy's body, jerking it up violently and holding it tense and stiff-

ened almost in the air, my hand went up and down in repeated signs of the cross accompanied by the Latin words of absolution, as if I, too, could send a current of absolving grace through to his departing soul. His body fell limp and dead when the current had ceased, and I stepped forward with my vial of oil poised in my fingers. I requested the warden to remove the iron cap from the dead boy's head and smeared his forehead, damp with the dew of death, with the oil used in the last rite of the Roman church.

Since none of his relatives were there, I claimed his body and had it buried with full church rites in the Roman Catholic part of the cemetery — though not without protest on the part of some pious Catholics in my congregation who objected to a convicted murderer resting among their departed relatives. I had to remind them that Jesus Christ died between two murderous thieves.

Yet, I confess that, in spite of all this elaborate working of the power of Roman Catholic sacramental rites through my consecrated fingers, I felt that I had failed a Christian soul in its most needful hour. It may have been my fault; it may have been the boy's own. But in justice to us both, first consideration must be given to the lack of true Christian content in the Roman Catholic system of youthful religious training. Besides, if the correct and full administration of external sacramental rites could have effected an expression of Christian sentiment in that boy's soul, then surely enough had been done by me to produce it. But not a sign of it did the boy evince through it all. He had been a faithful mass-going Catholic until shortly before his conviction. It was too sadly evident to me that true Christian sentiment had never been taught to him. Catechism in plenty he must have had in his parochial school; he must have been taught an abundance of routine prayers and devotional saint worship. But all these, together with the external, magical working of a priest's hands, could not produce in a moment of need the helpful Christian attitude which should have been taught him in his youth.

Nevertheless, I had to accept the praise of Catholic people for having apparently succeeded in doing a true priest's work for the poor condemned boy.

There is a second instance which I shall now record when the external application of sacramental rites again failed me, but in which I was also praised for my apparent success. I was lauded for bringing back to the Roman Catholic sacraments on her deathbed a woman who, though born and

reared a Catholic, had left the church and had lived as a Protestant for over forty years. Although other priests had failed to effect her “conversion” during all those years, I succeeded — but against my better judgment! For at that time I was beginning to be very doubtful about my own continued allegiance to Roman church practices. It was just a year before I resigned my position in the priesthood.

I do not doubt that, although this good woman did finally agree before she died to accept the last rites of the church of her childhood, her arguments long before that began to weaken my faith in my priestly practice. I must confess that I won her to accept the last rites of the Catholic church solely because of the social satisfaction it would give her family to have her buried with her Catholic relatives. I admitted to her that, since she was recognized as having led a truly Christian life, she was in no essential need of the Catholic sacraments, but that they would at least do her no harm, and would afford her the rights of Catholic burial. She consented to accept any benefit which these sacraments might afford her, though she was not conscious of the need of them.

I therefore performed for her also all the works of my priestly functions as required by Roman church regulations. I even “married” her again, though she was over sixty and had been married for more than forty years to her Protestant husband who was still living. But they had been married in a Protestant church contrary to Roman church law. And so she died, nominally a Roman Catholic. I could not disavow the credit given me for her “conversion,” since to do so would have been a premature confession of my dissatisfaction with my activities as a Roman Catholic priest.

I had yet to suffer a year of bitter conflict within my soul before I could bring myself to proclaim that dissatisfaction by publicly resigning from the priesthood.

10. “The Valley Of Achor”

“And I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope”
(Hosea 2:15).

FEW soul-struggles are comparable in bitterness to that which must be suffered by a Roman Catholic priest who is faced with the difficult task of renouncing obedience to his church. Not only does it affect his spiritual outlook in this life and for eternity, but also his name and reputation, his social and economic standing. From an economic viewpoint alone, such a change is well-nigh impossible if the priest be past the age of forty. If his parents are still living it is still more difficult. In any case he must suffer the loss of friends and all his life's associates, his honored status, his secure means of subsistence. If he marries he suffers an extra anathema from his church authority. By legal marriage he gains the comforts, and burdens, of a home and family. Sex relief, however, he could have had while remaining respectably within the ranks of the priesthood where a safe cloak for irregularities may be had. For almost a year before I finally made the momentous decision to break completely with my priestly ministry, this bitter struggle continued within my soul. I not only fought it out with myself, but sought the counsel of some of the more trustworthy of my fellow-priests. All, without exception, judged me unwise to the point of foolishness to allow my convictions to carry me so far as to renounce the priesthood. Some were most sympathetic and admitted perfect understanding of it all. Their admiration of me was limited only by their lack of courage to face the duty as squarely as I did, unmindful of the consequences entailed.

They were able to save themselves by specious arguments such as: that the sacrifice of their position as priests and of their only means of subsistence was too great; that by giving up the Roman priesthood they would thus cut themselves off entirely from all contact with their people; that it was better to continue to encourage the simple people in their superstitious practices of piety than to be denied any approach to them whatsoever; that

by renouncing their priesthood they could never succeed in convincing their relatives of the sincerity of their motives; that the hurt to the pride of their pious mothers made such an act impossible; and, finally, that the erroneous position of the Catholic church was no fault of theirs — it had existed before they were born, and would continue after they were dead. Hence they were not called upon to make martyrs of themselves.

Others asserted that their admittedly false position as priests was not at all a matter of conscience, for this had ceased to be their guide. They were amazed that a priest should allow a matter of con — science to lead him to risk losing every personal comfort. They frankly advised me to watch my step, to swallow my doubts, to sink my conscience if necessary, in order to carry on and make the best of it.

Even Archbishop Curley, as quoted above, warned me to beware; to consider first my position and future career as a priest; “Do not let your feelings carry you away to a point of doing anything which you would regret for the rest of your life,” he wrote me. My own bishop in Florida likewise urged me to consider well the consequences I would have to suffer if I broke with the priesthood; he begged me “not to allow myself to slip,” and graciously offered to grant me three months’ absence from my duties in order to recuperate my health and renew my priestly ardor.

I felt the need of a rest away from parish work, for the strain of the mental and spiritual combat was beginning to tell upon my physical health. I therefore took advantage of the bishop’s permission, and spent the time with my brothers in Montreal.

Bishops and priests having failed to help me, I knew that the issue would have to be fought out entirely between my conscience and God. At times I endeavored to convince myself that my doubts were merely “temptations of the devil.” I even prayed against the light, and petitioned God in prayer that I might become callous to the promptings which could only have come from God; that I might succeed in sinking my conscience, as many other priests had done, so as to be able to carry on and make the best of it.

Although I returned improved in health and resumed my work with a kind of perplexed resignation, I knew that there was slowly dawning within me a settled conviction of my duty as a true Christian. I realized the truth of what St. Ambrose had said: “For a priest there is nothing so dangerous before God, nothing so shameful before men, as not to speak out his convictions freely.” I trusted that out of the very bitterness to be suffered there

would come a sweetness amply compensating me for the sacrifices which would be entailed.

Nor was I disappointed in this. I have never had a moment's regret for the decision which I finally took to lose all that made life dear and precious to me as a priest, in order to find the true life promised by Christ to those who should sacrifice all for His sake.

11. My Clearing Vision Of Christ

I HAVE alluded elsewhere to the submission of prominent Protestant clergymen and laymen of our generation to the obedience of the Roman papacy. During the struggle to bring myself to decide finally upon my break with the same obedience, I was not unmindful of the sentiments and convictions which induced such prominent and prayerful men to deliver themselves over completely to Roman Catholicism. The church and priesthood which they sought and accepted had failed me.

I considered well, therefore, the “conversion” to Rome of men such as Cardinal Newman, Monsignor Hugh Benson, Rev. Ronald Knox, Mr. G. K. Chesterton and Mr. John L. Stoddard. Since then I have been interested in the submission to Rome of two publicly-known men in New York, the Rev. Selden P. Delaney, Rector of the Anglo-Catholic church of St. Mary the Virgin, and Mr. John Moody, prominent broker of Wall Street.

For a while, indeed, the determined conversion of these men to Rome made me pause before taking a step which would lead me in the opposite direction. These men admitted that for years they were violently opposed to the Roman church obedience and had stoutly denied its claims and practices. They had examined the various conflicting sects of Protestantism; had sought the seeming virtue in modern religious free-thought organizations; had remained agnostic for years; had even allowed themselves to drift into an indifferent atheism. Now they trumpeted the news that they had arrived, face upward, sure and convinced that peace of mind, spiritual rest, and security of eternal salvation could be had only by unquestioned submission to papal church authority. To quote Mr. John Moody, prominent lay Protestant who lent his voice to Roman church propaganda in America (from his statement to the *New York Herald Tribune*, Sept. 3, 1932):

"It was through the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas that I found the way. Here at last I found a sane reasoner and profound thinker, who has made all the moderns look to me like thirty cents.

"It was through him that for the first time in my life I came clearly to understand Christianity and its meaning. Then I made what was for me the surprising discovery that the Catholic church alone of all Christian bodies had been teaching for 1,900 years, and is still teaching, the only interpretation of the Bible and the life of Christ that makes sense.

"An unlettered layman like myself, if at all studious, flounders through modern philosophy, as I did for a quarter of a century, trying to convince himself that life has no supernatural meaning and that man is merely an accidental animal evolved out of the loom of time. He feels it ridiculous to even question these great thinkers with all their learning and wisdom. Eventually I rose above this complex, but it was a loadstone for many years."

In fairness to the church and its priesthood which I was about to repudiate, as well as to myself, I asked myself: who was I to put myself against the convictions of such men? Perhaps my struggle against the methods, practices and claims of Roman Catholicism was only the result of a disordered fancy or personal distrust and discontent? The testimony of these prominent men, combined with the selfish warnings of bishops and of my fellow priests — not to be a rash fool; not to throw away my means of a secure living and my honored status; to make the best of it; to sink my conscientious doubts — served not to make my soul-struggle any easier.

One thing alone sustained me; and that was the clearing vision of the true Gospel Christ which was slowly forming within me out of the very bitterness of the struggle with it all. Christ surely brooded over my soul during all that time — a veritable "bound of heaven" pursuing me and beckoning me with insistent allure. That vision helped me to discount the selfish warnings of priests older and more experienced than I. It helped me also not to be frightened out of my determination by the arguments and actions of Protestant men who had become enthusiastic defenders of everything papal.

I came to see that men such as Newman, Chesterton, Knox, Stoddard and others, had not truly found the Christ they desired in Roman Catholicism. They found there, it is true, a security, a rest, and a kind of perplexed peace for their minds which had been led almost to the point of distraction by unsatisfied questionings into the jumbled sophistries of many religions. All of them had floundered in a morass of mental and spiritual speculation; they had exercised their minds to the fullest limit endurable. In order to save their minds from total wreck they had been forced to cease all questionings and all useless speculation, and by a kind of voluntary "mental suicide," had submitted to the unquestionable dictates of Roman Catholic dogmatic authority. What they had found in Roman Catholicism was in reality

but an escape from serious mental turbation; an alternative, in fact, to a mental asylum.

Falsely, but safely for their minds, they accepted an insufficiently warranted dogmatic authority as a substitute for the truth of Christ. They found in this oblivion a haven of complete rest from their fruitless searchings.

There is a limit to the searchings of the mind of man after God (who is truth itself) by the logic of words. Beyond that limit, everything visible appears as a hopeless illusion unless the reality of God and Truth can be apprehended as certitude by the mystic, intuitive sense. Cardinal Newman himself has styled this the “illative sense,” and frankly confesses (much to the disgust of Roman Catholic authority) that, “The only ultimate test of truth is the testimony which is borne to truth by the mind itself.” Yet, with what seemed to be a cowardly distrust in his own rock-bottom principle, he outwardly denied it for the sake of the colorful attraction of external ritual and the corporate security of papal Catholicism. He failed to proceed to accept the reality of Christ on the basis of his own true principle of certitude, and ran for protection against it to the external dogmatism, sustained by the useless logic of wordy speculation, of Roman church authority.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton appears to have taken his stand upon that very borderline of the mind where the logic of words makes all things visible appear as aggravating illusion. He fails to be affected by any “illative sense,” but skilfully plays the illusion, which he saw in all visible things, against the aggravating illogic both of Roman Catholicism and insane asylums. He actually admitted that there is more sanity behind the walls of insane asylums than outside them. His irritating game of mental shuttle-clock, which provided him with abundant (and profitable) scope for mental gymnastic exercises, resulted in his well-known penchant for disturbing paradoxes. But since he could so skilfully make it appear to many that black is white, he could also as skilfully have made it appear that white is black. If he could prove, as he took delight in doing, that the papacy is good because some popes were bad, he should as easily have been able to prove that the papacy is bad because some popes were good.

Monsignor Hugh Benson, the famous convert son of the Archbishop of Canterbury, showed tendencies towards the cult of spiritualism after his conversion to Rome. This, doubtless, afforded him a refuge from the Roman Catholic covering of the reality of the spiritual by dogmatic externals. It was considered providential by many Roman priests of my acquaintance

that he died before his dabblings in necromancy had landed him in an insane asylum; which would have greatly impaired the glory which his conversion and ordination to the Roman priesthood had brought to the cause of Roman Catholicism.

The repudiation of Protestantism by the Rev. Ronald Knox in England, and later by the Rev. Selden P. Delaney of New York City, disturbed me but little. They had been already Roman Catholic in spirit, intention, and ritualistic practices, as ministers in the Anglican church. The conversion to papalism of Mr. John Moody, the New York broker, was interesting to me in this, that he found as the greatest virtue in Roman Catholicism what I have come to regard as its greatest defect. He states that he found in St. Thomas Aquinas “a sane reasoner and a profound thinker who has made all the moderns look to him like thirty cents.”

By this he must mean the brilliant engineering by Aquinas of external unrealities whereby the reality of the spiritual is covered, and its expansion checked for all time. Aquinas was the master-mind which secured the developed system of papal power in its desired framework. To do so he was forced to set the spirit of Christ within the rigid mold of ritualistic externals and dogmatic definition. The signs of spiritual things were thus made the very essence of the things signified. Transubstantiation was not the only error which was then dogmatized into Roman Catholic teaching. All the sacraments of the Roman church were turned in like manner into magical coefficients of a crude idea of grace. It was the actual water of baptism which was made to wash the soul free from sin; the waving of a priest's right hand in the air over a penitent's head which absolved him or her from the guilt of sin; the actions and prayers of a duly authorized priest which alone joined two persons in matrimony. All of which has helped to preserve the usurped position of the bishops of Rome intact down to our day, but which has helped in no way to expand the spiritual reality of Christ.

Thus John Moody is but another example of the defeatist attitude of all prominent Protestant converts to Rome, be they lay or clerical. They denied the true reality of Christ within their grasp through spiritual cowardice, and sought the seeming safety of the corporate protection of papal power sustained, as it only can be, by the dogmatic substitution of external unrealities for the reality of the spiritual. Not one of them sought the aid of the Bible as a guide to the true Christ, not even Cardinal Newman.

The following profession of faith in the papal church must be sworn to by all Protestant converts to Rome:

"I, N. N., having before me the holy Gospels, which I touch with my hand, and knowing that no one can be saved without that faith which the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church holds, believes, and teaches, against which I grieve that I have greatly erred, inasmuch as I have held and believed doctrines opposed to her teaching:

I now, with sorrow and contrition for my past errors, profess that I believe the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Roman Church to be the only and true Church established on earth by Jesus Christ, to which I submit myself with my whole soul. I believe all the articles of Faith that she proposes to my belief, and I reject and condemn all that she rejects and condemns, and I am ready to observe all that she commands me.

I believe in Purgatory... in the Primacy, not only of honor but of jurisdiction, of the Roman Pontiff, successor of St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, Vicar of Jesus Christ.

I believe in the veneration of the Saints and their images.

And, I believe in everything else that has been defined and declared by the sacred Canons and by the General Councils, and particularly... by the General Council of the Vatican, especially concerning the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff, and his infallible teaching authority.

With a sincere heart, therefore, and with unfeigned faith, I detest and abjure every error, heresy, and sect opposed to the said Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Roman Church. So help me God, and these His holy Gospels, which I touch with my hand."

Over against these fearful conditions, arrogantly laid down by the Papacy as essential for salvation, I place the sweet, simple invitation of Jesus Christ in Matt. 11:28-30:

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart. For my yoke is sweet, and my burden is light."

On my path away from Rome I passed some of these men racing towards it; others already within its gates were loudly trumpeting the false glories of Roman Catholicism. They were facing that upon which I had turned my back; the religious system which had disillusioned me, not only as a member but as an official of it, was becoming or had fully become their illusion. Happily I remained convinced that what was a cowardly retreat for them

was advance for me. Nor did I stumble on my way because of the knowledge that whereas they would be proclaimed as spiritual heroes by powerful Roman church propagandists, I would have to suffer the effects of their bitter persecution and repudiation.

Unlike Cardinal Newman, Chesterton and those others, my conversion was not to escape the alternative of an insane asylum, but to attain spiritual sanity. On the mental borderline outside the logic of the wordy speculations of Roman church dogmatisms, as well as of all religious free-thought organizations, I knew I would find the reality of Christ. I saw, without argument, why Christ had condemned in no uncertain terms all church systems like the Roman papacy by holding up to ridicule the Jewish church of his own time.

I could see but a difference in name between the church of the Roman papacy and that which Christ so mercilessly belabored — the church of pontifical high-priests; of pompous dignitaries with broad phylacteries; of myopic scribes and whitewashed Pharisees; the church which “binds heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lays them upon men’s shoulders;” which legislates much about fastings and external washings; which makes sinful the meats that go into the belly on certain days, but heeds little the foul things that come out of the heart every day. If it might not be given to me to imitate Christ in His extreme condemnation of such a church, I felt that I would be one with Him by my silent protest in relinquishing my official position as a member of its ministering priesthood.

12. The Call Of Conscience

“I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet, I do not forget Thy statutes.” — Psalm 119:83.

ALONG the difficult path from the church of my childhood and its ancient priesthood I had to travel alone, bereft of all human guidance and sympathy. Christ was my only companion and guide. Resolutely I grasped His outstretched hand and followed whither He led.

I knew that others had trodden that path before me, and that for many of them it was a bloody road to torture and violent death. The record of a host of brave, persecuted and martyred priests of Rome has come down to us in the pages of history — a record of glorious achievement for the truth of Jesus Christ, of shame for the Roman papacy. But, owing to the restrictive nature of my priestly learning, I knew but imperfectly then of the Christlike motives which had actuated them. I may mention John Huss, John Wycliffe, and Savonarola of the pre-reformation period, and Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Thomas Cranmer and others who, during that time of stress, repudiated the Roman priesthood. I have now come to realize why their names will always remain inscribed in shining letters upon the scroll of history, and why all generations to come must acclaim them as saviors of the true Christian order.

All Protestant and free Christian church organizations, and all social, educational and cultural associations in our modern democratic world, are living witnesses to the protest of these men against the self-asserted world-polity of the Roman papacy. Since that repressive polity is as strong and as vigorously proclaimed in America as it ever was in medieval Europe, Protestant leaders, and all who treasure the precious heritage of civil and religious freedom which we now enjoy, would do well to extend a helping hand to the many discontented priests of our day who strive, against bitter odds, to fight their way out of the erroneous papal system. Only since my

own break with Rome have I come to know how many there are who have done so.

It should be of interest to mention the attitude which the papacy now takes towards priests who renounce its teaching and policies. Since the civil law of democratic countries cannot be employed against them, no physical harm can be openly done them. The ancient thunderbolt of excommunication, which formerly deprived such men of all civil as well as religious rights, has lost its terrifying power. It strikes harmlessly against the protecting bulwark by which democratic Governments now shield the personal rights of their citizens. Therefore the papacy takes a non-committal attitude towards recalcitrant priests, knowing that few would heed the futile commands of a major excommunication which expressly calls upon everyone to apply its dire penalties against them. Moreover, Rome hesitates to proceed to formal excommunication of a priest in the hope that in time he may be induced to submit and return to the exercise of his priesthood — which has sometimes happened.

But Roman officialdom, being powerless to command the civil law to employ its penalties against former priests, makes every effort to force them into oblivion. Whereas notable converts from Protestantism are generously welcomed and publicly proclaimed as agents of papal propaganda, priests who leave the Roman church are prevented from coming into public notice. Many are obliged to lose their identity among the petty clerks of city offices. Those who become ministers of other churches are counseled not to exercise any effort to defeat the purposes and working of Roman Catholicism.

It is said that in New York City alone there are over five hundred priests who have renounced the Roman church. During the space of one year I have met a score of them. But little is publicly known even of those who have endeavored to emulate the priest reformers of old in counteracting the erroneous teachings of their former church. The Rev. James A. O'Connor, who was a priest for seven years, after leaving the church founded and maintained a mission in New York to help such priests and to prepare them to teach Gospel Christianity to Roman Catholics. He succeeded in helping more than one hundred and fifty priests into the freedom of evangelical faith. A goodly number became ministers of other churches, and others were helped to find positions in business, and to preserve their faith in Jesus Christ. His foundation, still known as "Christ's Mission," continues to hold

Gospel services, and testimonies from former Roman Catholics are heard at each Sunday afternoon meeting.

Father Charles Chiniquy (1809-1899), a French Canadian priest, who on leaving the church in 1857, took with him his entire congregation of a thousand souls, carried on vigorous and successful campaigns for the evangelization of Catholic people in Canada and the United States. During his forty years of active missionary endeavor he brought tens of thousands of Roman Catholics into the light of Gospel Christianity. The story of his life is full of thrilling adventure. He met with much violent opposition from Roman church authority in Montreal and Quebec, and in far away Australia, and his personal character was most unjustly maligned. After his death the Catholic newspaper *La Croix* published this slander respecting his marriage:

“Chiniquy, the apostate, could no more marry than any priest or member of a religious community who is bound by solemn vows. Consequently, *Euphemie Allard* was nothing but a concubine for Chiniquy.”

His daughter, the wife of Professor J. L. Morin, of McGill University in Montreal, sued the editor of *La Croix* on the grounds that this was libelous and defamatory to the memory of her parents. She won the action and was awarded damages in the amount of three thousand dollars.

For nearly twenty-five years Charles Chiniquy had served the Roman church as a priest with great honor, and had won for himself the title of “Apostle of Temperance.” For his success in this cause he was publicly thanked by the Government of the Province of Quebec, and commended by his bishop, and by the pope. When he died, a venerable old man of ninety, thousands of Roman Catholics were among those who lined the streets to pay respect to his remains. The English-speaking Catholic organ in Canada, *The True Witness*, was constrained to do him honor in death by the following:¹

“That the late Father Chiniquy had been the author of great good in his time, it would be untrue and unjust to deny; that he crowded into the space of forty years more than any other man in this country — or perhaps in any other one — is equally undeniable.”

The Roman church consistently teaches its people that whereas only good Protestants and good Protestant ministers become Catholics, only evil-living Catholics and Catholic priests, including Martin Luther, become Protestants and Protestant ministers. Such an outrageous libel should not be permitted to persist.

When relinquishing my place in the Roman Catholic priesthood, I did not intend to set myself up as a reformer, or to attempt to lead my own people out of the wilderness of Romish errors into the promised land of Christian truth. What concerned me chiefly then was my own personal search for Christ and for the peace of soul and mind which I had failed to obtain as a priest of Rome. Offers were immediately made to me from other Christian bodies to throw in my lot with them, and to prepare to minister as a clergyman of their churches. I realized however that I could not be a guide to others until I was sure of my own feet along the path away from the false position of the church which I had so long defended. I was as yet but a child falteringly turning my steps into a new way of life.

As a priest I had stood upon an eminence above the people, and looked down upon them from that height of conscious dignity which Roman church authority has erected in favor of those who serve its altars. Young men thus kept apart from the ordinary mode of life of the people, of necessity fall short of full sympathy with the people and of intimate understanding of the needs of common folk. During the years of their blossoming boyhood they are immured in closely-guarded seminaries. Every indication of the adolescent urgings, which in all other young men find healthful expression in the practical affairs of life, and in romantic responses to sweet and wholesome affection, are crushed out at their inception. The promptings of such urges to affectionate companionship are even taught to be regarded as sinful. A cold, stoical, and indifferent attitude towards the life that other men and women lead, is cultivated in them as of the highest virtue and as essential for the exalted position which they are to occupy as priests.

As a safeguard for the celibate life imposed upon them they are counseled to harden themselves against the tenderness of domestic happiness enjoyed by ordinary men with loving wife and growing children. Although they are commissioned as guides and counselors, especially in the confessional, in everything that concerns the relations between the sexes, priests personally must abhor the tender glances of women as an instrument of the devil's guile to lead them into sin.

Thus, after I had stepped down from that superior position of dignity attached to the priestly office, it appeared to me that, for a while at least, it would be advantageous to seek a place among the ordinary avocations of other men, to forget my former ostentatious dignity and to live as a simple layman among the people.

Like other men I have known the simple joys of a humble home. I have shared the hopes, the expectations, and the disappointments of small salaried clerks in a city business office. I have shared their dismay during the years when the economic structure, after reaching a peak of prosperity hitherto unknown, came tumbling down to ruinous levels of industrial depression and financial deflation. I have learned at first-hand of the needs of men and women, of their spiritual yearnings, of their ceaseless struggles to obtain recognition of the principles of Christian justice from those who rule in church and state. I have learned in the school of intimate experience what was not, and never could have been taught me in the seminaries of the Roman Catholic church — the essentials of life which its priests never seem to grasp because of the exclusive lives required of them.

No better opportunity could have been given to fit me for whatever work for God and Christ I may yet be called upon to accomplish. I have come to understand with increasing clearness the need and the yearning by all men for Christ, and the manner in which the Christian Church can best help them.

Opposition from Roman Catholic officialdom was not lacking against every attempt I made to place the benefit of my experiences at the service of my fellow-men. As was to be expected, the publication of my book, "*Ex-Priest and the Riddle of Religion*," did not go unchallenged. Priests who had never known me wrote the publishing company saying that I never was, and never could have been, a priest. Others who knew me and had worked with me as a priest wrote condemning the book without having read it. In this connection I quote the following letter from a friend who undertook to dispose of my book in a town where I was formerly Roman Catholic pastor. I may mention that I made no direct effort to induce my close friends to renounce the practice of Roman Catholicism, but left them to discover its errors for themselves. The letter is as follows:

"As long as I live I shall count Sept. 13th, 1932, as a Red Letter day in my life. Yesterday was Sunday and yesterday was also Sept. 18th. We went to church as usual and I went to confession. Needless to say Father R — refused to give me absolution, but proceeded in a way which must be a formula, by asking me if my intentions were to be truly Catholic. I told him my intentions were as good that day as they had been in all the days past when I had gone to confession in that church. I realized right then that I was in for the worst.

"He said: 'Are you sure you have the interest of Catholicism at heart?' I said, 'Father R — , get to the point, I know what you want to say.' He said, 'I understand you have been circulating literature against the Catholic Church.' I said, 'If you mean the book I am selling which Father Lehmann wrote, it is not against Catholicism but against the organization of it.' He said, 'That is Catholicism.' I said, 'I am sorry to hear that I have lived this long in ignorance. But this book deals in nothing but truth, and I cannot find it in my conscience to say that I have sinned in circulating the truth.' His answer was, 'It is not for you to decide whether or not you have sinned! I said, 'Why, Father, that is absurd. All this time you have left it to me to confess my sins and have not taken it upon yourself to say when I have done wrong or not, but you now begin to do so at this late date.' Then I said, 'You have looked for an excuse for a long time to excommunicate me and this is your chance. I must say it does not come as a surprise.' And I walked out of the confession box.

"It so happened that I was the only one who went to confession that day, and it was but a minute or two before Father R— came out of the confession box strolling towards the altar. I rose up in my seat and said in a moderate voice, 'Father!' He did not answer but kept on walking. I then called out louder, 'Father R—!' and I took a step towards him. He turned around and said, 'Please, let's not have a scene here, that is not the Catholic way.' I said, 'No, that is not the Catholic way; the Catholic way is to hide behind falsehoods and shirk the truth. I want you to stand here before your congregation and tell them that you have excommunicated me and the reason for so doing.' He turned and walked away.

"I then turned to the congregation which was composed wholly of women (here some names are mentioned). I said to them: 'My good people, I want you to know that he (and I pointed towards the sacristy where Father R— had hidden himself) has excommunicated me for selling a book. This book tells a few of the unknown truths about Catholicism and for that reason you are forbidden to read it. I have been turned out of the church because I have done a thing that to my mind is not a sin. I simply want to tell you now that if you are seeking truth and charity in the true meaning of the words, you will not find them in the Catholic Church.' I then walked out but stopped at the door in front of all the men who were gathered there around their cars and told them the same thing. My only regret is that their religion forbids them to read this book and learn for themselves a number of things which they will never find out otherwise."

If the Joan-of-Arc attitude of this brave girl were followed in other Roman Catholic churches in America, the papacy would soon be forced to abandon its medieval methods in the modern world. It is significant to note that this young Catholic girl was educated, not in a parochial school, but in a public high school.

As priest-in-charge of that district, I had gathered funds, and helped with my own hands to design and build that pretty little church in the pinewoods of Florida from which this friend was ejected; the former building had been carried away by a cyclone. On Christmas night, 1929, shortly after I had relinquished my duties as a priest, I happened to be visiting in those parts and planned to worship in that little church. But a prominent Catholic family, in collusion with the bishop, had the deputy sheriff stationed at the door with a gun to keep me out!

And thus did living as a Roman Catholic finally reveal to me the startling fact that, not only was I out of place as a priest, but that all priests are out of place in Christianity. Nowhere in the New Testament is there found any warrant whatsoever for the continuance of a sacrificial priesthood. There is as little provision in the New Testament for popes and priests as there is for kings, princes, and peers in the Constitution of the United States.

The apostle Peter, far from making himself priest or pope, was content to call himself one of many elders, a *presbuteros*, and he exhorted them not “to be lords² over God’s heritage” but “as examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Paul enumerates many kinds of ministers of the Gospel, and calls himself one of them: Ephesians 3:7: “some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.” To none but Christ does he give the title of priest, *ierous*.

This is clearly stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, especially chapter seven. Christ alone is priest:

“Who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For there is verily a disannulling of the previous commandment, because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof” (Heb. 7:16-18).

Christ is the one and only high priest, *archierous* or *pontifex*: “Who pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar” (Heb. 7:13).

Thus the Levitical priesthood “under which the people received the law” of the Old Covenant, has vanished:

“For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by which we draw nigh to God” (Ibid. 19).

This is the very kernel of Christ’s redemptive teaching, the bringing of all men into direct relationship with God under a New Covenant, establishing us as sons and heirs, and abolishing the pre-Christian slave relationship of man to God and man to man. The Levitical priesthood, offering intermediary sacrifices daily for the people, was in itself the proof that mankind was as yet unredeemed.

Under the New Covenant that priesthood has no place, and also the law of sacrificial offerings was abolished forever: “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the law” (Ibid. 12). Now there is but one great high-priest, *archierous*, Christ — the last, the first, and the only eternal *ierous*:

“And they were truly many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this [Christ], because He continueth forever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Who needed not daily, as those other priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s; for this He did once, when He offered up Himself” (Heb. 7:23-27).

The Douay Version of the Bible here warns Catholics in a footnote that they must accept this in the sense that:

“This hinders not that he [Christ] may offer himself daily in the sacred mysteries [in the Roman Catholic Mass] in an unbloody manner.”

And again that:

“Our Lord Jesus is a priest forever and hath no successor; but liveth and concurreth for ever with his ministers, the priests of the New Testament, in all their functions.”

Such a false interpretation at once nullifies all that is said in this epistle concerning the abolition of the Levitical priesthood and the finished sacrifice of Christ, “Who needeth not daily, as those other priests, to offer sacrifice.”

The entire sacrificial priesthood of the church of Rome, the succession of its popes from St. Peter, its curia of cardinals, and its “divinely” appointed Lord bishops, are absolutely unscriptural, unchristian, and owe their existence solely to an unwarranted process that can be studied historically.

Their fruits have been harmful to the Christian church, as history clearly testifies. The institution of the priesthood, by which men have been clothed with pagan priestly powers, is responsible for the perversions which have marked the history of papalism to this day.

What was given me to witness of the stultifying process of such a priesthood upon the souls and bodies of my fellow-priests throughout the world, the wreckage it made of their once splendid ideals, their false and forced loyalty to the machinery of papal law, their inability to check the ignorance and superstitions among their people — all may be attributed to this unchristian continuance of a priesthood which vanished completely with Christ and was not known to His apostles. But papal dominance depends upon its continuance, for without an hierarchial priesthood the papacy would immediately cease to be.

As a student in Rome I had as my teacher of Archaeology a certain Professor Marucchi, a layman of advanced age who was a coworker with the great archaeologist Di Rossi. He related to us that for fifty years his greatest ambition had been to unearth in Rome some inscription which would verify the papal claim that the apostle Peter was actually in Rome. Pope Leo XIII had solemnly promised, should he succeed in bringing to light such an inscription, that, layman and married though he was, he would reward him by making him a cardinal. He was forced to admit to us that he had given up hope of success in his search. What has been dug up from the soil of early Christian Rome verifies all that the New Testament tells us of the formation of the Christian Church, but both remain silent witnesses against the claim of the bishops of Rome to be the successors of the apostle Peter, whom they claim to have been the first bishop and pope of Rome.

It is ever becoming more evident to me how far the church of Rome has departed from the Christ as revealed by the evangelists and by the apostle Paul to the Church of their day. With him I ask of the church of Rome:

“But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years... Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Gal. 4:9; 2:16).

More telling still against the papal church are the words and woes pronounced by Christ Himself as recorded in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew.

How one such as I, having abandoned the ministry of the Roman church, can help to counteract the errors which the papacy has so insidiously propagated throughout the Christian world, is not easy to determine. Alone my voice will be little heeded. But I see the immediate need of a united front of all Protestant bodies as the only effective means of undermining the falsely Christian structure which papal Rome has erected out of the sticks and stones of paganism, and also of saving what the Reformation has accomplished towards a more spiritually enlightened world. In this work I am prepared to help. Protestantism has yet to put the finishing touch to the Reformation's historic masterpiece of the emancipation of the spiritual man, by a unity which will safeguard the liberty of the individual.

The boasted unity of Catholicism is forced and unchristian, and is obtained at the cost of the liberty of sonship with the Fatherhood of God in order to serve the ends of unwarranted hierarchical power.

Protestantism, without sacrificing the freedom of the individual soul, can present a solid front in a unity that breathes unswerving loyalty to the person of Jesus Christ, and direct obedience to His authoritative commands. All that we treasure most in twentieth century Christendom is the outcome of the Protestant Reformation. It has given us the Constitution of our American Republic; it has laid the foundations for the security of democracy throughout the world; it has helped to vanquish the oppressors of nations; it has made thought free, and the individual secure in his natural and Christian rights. It can effect what Catholicism has hopelessly failed to show, namely, that Christianity is the final religion, and that Jesus Christ is the absolute Master and personal Saviour of all men.

The claim of Roman imperial churchianity, still vigorously asserted amongst us today, has deluged the nations in blood, and has bred a hatred among Christians that turns millions of God-fearing men away from Christ. I look to a united Protestantism to make a fact the valedictory prayer of Jesus to His Heavenly Father for our race:

“And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.”

1. Father Chiniquy, against great opposition, published his story in a book entitled: *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, that went through sixteen editions. So virulent was the opposition against him that the establishment bringing out his book was burned to his severe financial loss. That and his later book: *Forty Years in the Church of Christ*, written during the closing years of his life and issued shortly after his death, constitute a most effectual apologetic for evangelical Christianity. Another book: *The Priest, the Woman and the Confessional*, went through many editions. It supplies much that the writer leaves unsaid respecting the Roman Catholic institution of auricular confession.↵
2. *Dominantes* — in the Greek, *katakuriontes*, such as the papal curia makes itself.↵

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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- The Formula of Concord

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