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BIBLE-BELT CATHOLICISM: A HISTORY OF
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN
OKLAHOMA, 1905-1945

By

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PREFACE

Since Catholics in the United States during the twentieth century have been largely concentrated in large metropolitan areas of the Northeast and Middle West, the focus of the historians of American Catholicism has centered on these urban areas, such as New York, Boston, St. Louis, Chicago, and Cincinnati. Within these population centers, Catholics predominate over the other religious denominations. The subject of such studies is thus the major religious group of the local area. A history of Oklahoma Catholicism departs from this approach by studying the same religious group in an environment in which it is an extremely small numerical minority. With an overwhelming conservative Protestant majority in a heavily rural state, Oklahoma is a "Bible-Belt" state. Consequently, the basic thrust of this study is an examination of the set of problems which the Bible-Belt environment posed to the Catholic Church, and the ways in which the religious organization responded to these difficulties in an attempt to achieve the maturity and degree of development needed to care for the spiritual needs of the Oklahoma Catholics.

In preparing this historical study of Oklahoma's Catholic Church, I am indebted to a great number of people without whom this work would have been impossible. Foremost

is Professor Theodore L. Agnew of the Department of History at Oklahoma State University. Not only did he suggest the topic, but he also gave generously of his time in encouragement, directing the research, offering suggestions and advice, and carefully editing the manuscript.

While not officially "authorized" by the Catholic Church, a study of this nature could not have been accomplished without the wholehearted cooperation of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City and Archbishop John R. Quinn. Father Charles H. Schettler, Chancellor of the Archdiocese, unhesitatingly altered his schedule to arrange for my research at the Chancery office, to provide invaluable research leads and ideas, and to answer my seemingly unending chain of questions. I hope that this study is worthy of the faith that Archbishop Quinn and Father Schettler place in my historical ability. My appreciation also extends to the entire staff of the Chancery office for doing everything possible to facilitate my research.

The cooperation of Catholic organizations did not stop at the Chancery. Sister Theodore Von Elm, librarian at St. Francis de Sales Center for Christian Renewal, extended to me every courtesy in the use of materials at the center. The Oklahoma State Council of the Knights of Columbus, through the kindness of Mr. Bernard E. Fonza and Mr. Ernest L. Chastain, made available all of the records of the State Council since its formation in 1905. I am also indebted to Father Joseph Murphy, O.S.B., who allowed me to use the

relevant materials located at St. Gregory's Abbey in Shawnee, Oklahoma.

The staff of the Oklahoma Historical Society, especially in the Newspaper Division, went out of their way in providing me with the material concerning the state's Roman Catholic Church. I am also thankful to those who gave so generously of their time in granting personal interviews: Dr. Sterling Brown, Mr. T. Austin Gavin, Msgr. Raymond F. Harkin, Dr. T. H. McDowell, Msgr. C. A. McGinty, Father James McNamee, Mrs. John Frank Martin, and Msgr. John Rooney. Finally, I am grateful to Dr. Ivan Chapman, Dr. H. James Henderson, Dr. Michael M. Smith, and Dr. John A. Sylvester for reading the manuscript and offering their suggestions and criticisms.

While these people deserve the credit for any success of this work, I alone am responsible for its shortcomings and failures.

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ABBREVIATIONS FOR MANUSCRIPT DEPOSITORIES

- AAOKC . . . Archives of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma
- MJFM . . . Papers and scrapbooks in the possession of
Mrs. John Frank Martin, Oklahoma City
- OHS . . . Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City
- SFCCR . . . St. Francis de Sales Center for Christian
Renewal, Oklahoma City

CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW OF BIBLE-BELT CATHOLICISM

As the hot summer sun bore down upon the villa near Rome in June, 1905, two men quietly talked inside. Their subject of conversation was over 5,500 miles away as they discussed the conditions in Indian and Oklahoma Territories of the United States. While similar in physical appearance, the two men had experienced vastly different backgrounds. Pope Saint Pius X had been born to poverty in Italy and had risen to the papacy through ecclesiastical positions limited to his native country. Almost symbolically, the simple white cassock of Pius X contrasted with the episcopal purple of his visitor.

The pontiff's guest was Bishop Theophile Meerschaert, Vicar Apostolic of Indian Territory whose jurisdiction covered both Indian and Oklahoma Territories. Born to an upper middle-class family in the Belgian province of East Flanders in 1847, the prelate left his homeland in 1872 for Mississippi. After serving the sparse Roman Catholic population of Mississippi for nineteen years as a priest, Meerschaert received word in 1891 that Rome had selected him as the new bishop for the Vicarate Apostolic for Indian and Oklahoma Territories. There Meerschaert had continued for

fourteen years his missionary efforts on behalf of Catholicism.¹

Meerschaert's ad limina visit to Rome had brought him to this audience with Pius X on June 27, 1905. His Belgian face, hardened by Reconstruction in Mississippi and weathered by the winds of Oklahoma, smiled as Pius X indicated that the Vicarate would be erected into the Diocese of Oklahoma.² Soon after Meerschaert returned to his residence in Guthrie, the capital of Oklahoma Territory, the Apostolic Delegate forwarded to Meerschaert the pontifical briefs, dated August 17, 1905, officially establishing the Diocese of Oklahoma. Furthermore, Rome designated that the episcopal see would be Oklahoma City.³ To have the vicarate raised to a diocese with the see city in Oklahoma City had been a goal of Meerschaert for the previous seven years; his labors had finally achieved the desired results.

In 1899, Meerschaert's attempt to have the vicarate erected into a diocese had failed in the Vatican's Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. At that time, a major decision in Rome had been the election of the see city for the new

¹The only scholarly biography of Oklahoma's pioneer bishop is Sister Mary Alicia Mideke, R. S. M., "Bishop Meerschaert: First Bishop of Oklahoma, 1847-1924" (unpub. M. A. thesis, Catholic University of America, 1950).

²Private Diary of Bishop Theophile Meerschaert, June 27, 1905, AAOKC; Theophile Meerschaert to Gustave Depreitere, Rome, June 28, 1905, Gustave Depreitere papers, AAOKC.

³Mideke, "Bishop Meerschaert," p. 39.

diocese. As the people of the state of Oklahoma would have to decide the location of the state capital, the church officials needed to determine which city near the center of both territories would develop into the major urban area. Specifically, should the center of the future diocese remain in Guthrie, the capital of Oklahoma Territory, or should the center be moved to Oklahoma City, the most promising area of the territories? In addition to the uncertainty of the see city, the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, D. C., was also of the opinion that "the determination has been reached in Rome to erect no more dioceses [sic] without greater certainty as to the future success than has usually been offered."⁴

Bishop Meerschaert, however, did not cease his efforts to have Oklahoma and Indian Territories approved by the Vatican to become a diocese. In the summer of 1903, Meerschaert sent to Rome Father Urban de Hasque, a Belgian priest who had arrived in Oklahoma Territory three years earlier to work under Meerschaert. While the ostensible purpose of de Hasque's journey was to complete his written comprehensive examinations for the Doctor of Divinity degree, another goal of his trip was to attempt to persuade Roman officials to erect a diocese with the see at Oklahoma City. During the first two weeks in July, 1903, de Hasque discussed

⁴Sebastian Martinelli to Theophile Meerschaert, Washington, D. C., October 4, 1899, "Vicariate Apostolic of the Indian Territory" file, General Correspondence to 1930, AAOKC.

the proposed change with three cardinals, including Gerolamo Cardinal Gotti of the Congregation of Propaganda. Gotti said that he favored the idea and requested that de Hasque write a report of his arguments for the Congregation of Propaganda. Within a week after de Hasque presented his written statements, his efforts came to an abrupt halt. Pope Leo XIII died on July 20, 1903,⁵ and his death naturally postponed any decision on such an issue as the Vicarate of Indian Territory.

In the spring of the following year, the Apostolic Delegate offered to "advance" the erection of the diocese on his forthcoming trip to Rome. Meerschaert responded with the reasons for a favorable decision. Besides giving the regular information, the numbers of Catholics, priests, churches, and collections, Meerschaert argued for the selection of Oklahoma City as the see city. Claiming that "all points to the fact that she [Oklahoma City] will become the leading city," the bishop stressed the area's central location and best developed transportation facilities which reached to all parts of the diocese. He discounted the question of the capital of the new state, maintaining that it would make no difference since many state capitals are not the largest and most important cities.⁶

⁵Ordo of Urban de Hasque for 1905, July 6-20, 1905, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

⁶A. D. Falconio to Theophile Meerschaert, Washington, D. C., May 30, 1904; Theophile Meerschaert to A. D. Falconio, Guthrie, June 21, 1904, "Vicarate Apostolic of the Indian Territory" file, General Correspondence to 1930, AAOKC.

When the Roman officials approved the location of the see city at Oklahoma City, a public relations problem confronted Meerschaert. In 1905, Guthrie and Oklahoma City were intense rivals for pre-eminence in Oklahoma Territory and consequently the future state of Oklahoma. While the Oklahoma Citizens were pleased over the selection of their city as the new seat of the Roman Catholic Church, the citizens of Guthrie were distressed over the change. In response to this attitude, Meerschaert attempted to explain the move. Keeping silent about his long activity in favor of the change, Meerschaert avoided the issue by stating that it was "not to my choosing." Instead he placed the responsibility upon Rome, where indeed the ultimate choice had rested. With the expected humility of a servant of the Lord, Meerschaert concluded, "I must go where the church thinks that I can do the most good and much as I have been pleased with the city of Guthrie I can only go where the church will send me."⁷

Despite the ruffled feelings in Guthrie, the audience with Pope Pius X in 1905 was a joyous occasion for the Belgian cleric since it culminated his efforts to have Oklahoma and Indian Territories erected into a diocese. Furthermore, the establishment of the Diocese of Oklahoma was official approval of his record of administration years since 1891. Since he had directed the vicarate for fourteen

⁷Oklahoma State Capital (Guthrie), October 21, 1905.

as well as the effort to secure Rome's approval for the erection of the diocese, Bishop Meerschaert is chiefly responsible for the establishment of the Diocese of Oklahoma. As the first bishop for the new diocese, he also bore the chief responsibility for achieving the initial success of the diocese. As such, Bishop Theophile Meerschaert's heritage is the institutional foundation of the Roman Catholic Church in Oklahoma.

Immediately after the establishment of the Diocese of Oklahoma, Bishop Meerschaert estimated the total population of the twin territories at 1,500,000. Of this number, only two per cent or 26,500 were Catholics, and these were scattered across the 70,000 square miles encompassed by the diocese.⁸ During the next forty years, the Catholic population continued to grow with that of the state. By 1945, the Catholic Church estimated its total population within Oklahoma at 67,884 living among 2,336,434 Sooners.⁹ While a numerical growth took place among Catholics, the percentage of Catholics in the state rose to only three per cent, a very small increase. Consequently, the Oklahoma Catholic Church was a small minority during the first forty years as a diocese.

⁸Meerschaert's handwritten notes relative to a questionnaire entitled "Series of Questions to be Answered by Applicants for Aid from the Commission for the Catholic Missions Among Colored People and Indians, 1905-1960," "Commission for the Catholic Missions Among Colored People and Indians" file, General Correspondence to 1930, AAOKC.

⁹Official Catholic Directory, 1945 (New York, 1945), p. 498.

This relatively small number of Catholics was not uniformly distributed across the entire state. For example, the United States census in 1916 reported that five counties in the northeastern part of the state had a total of thirty-three Catholics out of a population of more than 77,000. While the population of these same countries had grown to almost 95,000 in 1930, the Census Bureau in 1936 did not record a single Catholic among them.¹⁰ A similar situation existed in the southeastern part of the state which borders Texas. In the nine Oklahoma counties near the Red River, only 820 Catholics were living in 1916 out of a total population exceeding 164,000. By 1936, the number of Catholics had fallen to 380 out of total population of around 197,000.¹¹ Consequently, large areas of the state lacked even a significant Catholic minority.

On the other hand, the Census Bureau reported in 1916 that the Catholics exceeded five per cent in Coal, Oklahoma, Kingfisher, Noble, Okmulgee, Osage, Pittsburg, and Tulsa counties. In addition, Canadian and Lincoln counties were

¹⁰These five counties are Adair, Cherokee, Delaware, Mayes, and Sequoyah. U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies, 1916, Part I: Summary and General Tables (Washington, 1919), p. 301; U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies, 1936, Part I: Summary and Detailed Tables (Washington, 1941), pp. 805-806.

¹¹Ibid. These nine counties are Atoka, Bryan, Choctaw, Johnston, LeFlore, Love, McCurtain, Marshall, and Pushmatahah.

just shy of being included in that list.¹² While an excess of five per cent may not seem to be a heavy concentration of Catholics in comparison with a predominantly Catholic area like Boston, Massachusetts, such a ratio is indeed heavy for a state less than three per cent Catholic. Furthermore, the history of Catholic settlement in these ten counties indicates much about the economic and ethnic background of the Catholics across Oklahoma.

Okmulgee, Pittsburg, and Coal counties were typical of the narrow band of a relatively large Catholic population separating the highly non-Catholic areas of the northeastern and southern parts of the Sooner State. This belt, running north and south in the eastern section of Oklahoma, encompassed the coal fields. When mining began during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the prospect for employment in the mines and related businesses attracted many unskilled and semi-skilled workers.¹³ Among these were large numbers of immigrants who were also Catholics. In the southern part of this zone, near McAlester and Coalgate, Italians, and thus Catholics, tended to predominate among the ethnic groups. In fact, Pittsburg county in 1916 was the only county in Oklahoma to have a Catholic population in

¹²U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies, 1916, Part I. Summary and Detailed Tables (Washington, 1919), p. 301.

¹³Theophile Caudron, The Enquirer's Guide of St. Michael's Catholic Church, Henryetta, Oklahoma, 1916 (n. p., 1916), pp. 1-2; "3 Rings in Fifty Years," supplement to The Southwest Courier, October 8, 1955, p. 29.

excess of ten per cent. With almost 5,500 Catholics, Pittsburg county also claimed over 2,400 residents of totally Italian origins.¹⁴ As the band moved north, the origins of the Catholics diversified to include many ethnic groups from eastern and southern Europe. The Catholic parish in Okmulgee county claimed to have sixteen different nationalities speaking thirteen different languages.¹⁵ In Hartshorne, the parish would contact the Catholics of the area in order to secure their support. In establishing the committee, the parish in 1922 selected a fund raising committee and appointed different individuals to contact the Polish, Lithuanian, Slavic, Italian, and English speaking Catholic of the area.¹⁶ In addition to the European immigrants, some areas of the region also attracted black migrants from the South. While the vast majority were Protestant, some blacks from Louisiana settled near the city of Okmulgee bringing with them the Catholic tradition associated with the French heritage of the Pelican State. Consequently, Okmulgee became one of the few centers of black Catholicism in Oklahoma.¹⁷

Since the Catholics of this area were primarily involved in unskilled and semi-skilled employment related to the

¹⁴Southwest Courier, January 22, 1943; U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies, 1916, Part I: Summary and Detailed Tables, p. 301; U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Volume III: Population, Part II, p. 476.

¹⁵Southwest Courier, April 24, 1937.

¹⁶Catholic Home, January 27, 1922.

¹⁷Southwest Courier, June 5, 1943.

mines, the economic base of the Catholic church rested upon a membership of the lower economic classes. While natural gas began in the late 1920's to outdistance the coal mines in production, the Great Depression of the 1930's brought the mining industry almost to a halt. Consequently, what had been a weak financial base during the first twenty-five years of this century proved to be almost non-existent during the next fifteen years. Furthermore, the decline in the mining industry prompted many, including Catholics, to migrate to different parts of Oklahoma and other states.

In the near northwestern part of Oklahoma, the concentrations of Catholics were in Canadian, Kingfisher, and Noble counties. These counties, however, were typical of the Catholic population throughout northern and western Oklahoma. The basic economy of the area rests upon agriculture, mostly wheat. During the opening of the Oklahoma lands during the 1890's, farmers established themselves throughout western and northern Oklahoma. Among these settlers were a significant number of Catholics, mainly of German, Bohemian, and Irish origins. While the city of Okarche is better than ninety per cent German Catholic,¹⁸ most of the parishes of western Oklahoma are various mixtures of these three ethnic groups. While a majority of the Catholics in the Okeene area are descendants of Germans, the Irish, Bohemians and even some Russians comprise significant

¹⁸Southwest Courier, July 30, 1938.

minorities.¹⁹ Also with a majority of Germans was the parish of Newkirk. In addition to the sixty per cent German, the pastor estimated that the parish had twenty-five per cent Irish and fifteen per cent Polish, Bohemian, and Indian.²⁰ In 1892, Hennessey established a Catholic Church with twenty-two Irish families, fourteen German, fifteen Bohemian, and nine black.²¹ Both El Reno and Yukon areas in Canadian county had a large majority of Bohemian and Irish settlers, but also a strong German element.²² The churches in Goltry and in Prague were almost entirely Bohemian during their early years, but later migrants rapidly made the congregations more cosmopolitan.²³ Consequently, there were only rare instances in which a given parish did not contain a mixture of European origins.

While Catholics of a given nationality may have comprised a majority of a particular parish, only a very few instances did the Catholics ever reach twelve per cent of the total population. The obvious exception to this generalization that the Catholics were scattered among a Protes-

¹⁹Southwest Courier, September 23, 1939.

²⁰A. Pieretes to Urban de Hasque, Newkirk, September, 1925, "Newkirk" file, de Hasque historical files, AAOKC.

²¹Statement of Martin E. Reid, Hennessey, May 25, 1925, "Hennessey" file, de Hasque historical files, AAOKC.

²²John B. Dudek, "Yukon, Oklahoma--Parish of St. John Nepomuk," manuscript, July 15, 1925, "Yukon" file, de Hasque historical files, AAOKC.

²³Mark Maszkiewicz to Paul V. Brown, Goltry, April, 1955, "Goltry" file, de Hasque historical files, AAOKC; "3 Rings in Fifty Years," p. 61.

tant majority in Okarche, which was organized almost entirely by German Catholics. In sum, the Catholics in northern and western Oklahoma, while mainly of German, Bohemian, or Irish ancestry, were in a minority compared to the Protestant denominations.

Economically, the western and northern parts of Oklahoma, while sparsely settled, have been more prosperous than the eastern and southern sections of the state. While the economic base of the Catholic Church in these areas contained prosperous individual farmers, there are only a few of these wealthy agriculturalists among the scattered population. During the 1930's, the long drought of the Depression years struck its full force against this area of Oklahoma and consequently severely strained the financial stability of the Dust Bowl diocese.

Osage county ties the ethnic base of the Catholic Church to Oklahoma as the "Land of the Red Man." The county received its name from the large Osage Indian reservation within its boundaries. While the Osage lived during the early part of the nineteenth century in eastern Kansas, the Society of Jesus sent missionaries to work among them. During their stay, the Jesuits had successfully converted almost the entire tribe by the time the Osage were removed to Oklahoma during the late nineteenth century. To the detriment of Catholic fervor among the Osage, the Jesuits did not accompany them to their new homes in Indian territory. Without the services of clergy, most of the tribe had become

only nominal Catholics by the 1920's. Despite this laxity among the Osages, the first two totally Indian altar societies began in Oklahoma, both located in Osage county and included only members of the Osage tribe. While the altar society at Fairfax adopted an English name, the Pawhuska altar society was called Klash-Kah-She Club, which is translated as "Little Flower."²⁴ Also indicative of Catholic activity within the Osage tribe, in 1924 two members of the tribe, Mrs. W. B. McGill and Miss Annetta Prudom Lohman, were the first American Indians ever presented to the Pope in full Indian costume.²⁵

Despite this Catholicity of the Osages, the remaining Indians in Oklahoma were generally non-Catholic. In 1905, Meerschaert estimated that the number of Catholic Indians in Indian and Oklahoma Territories at 3,200 out of a total Indian population of 96,000.²⁶ Outside of the Osage tribe, the only others with a significant Catholic minority were the Pottowatomie and Choctaws.²⁷ The chief of the Choctaws during the early twentieth century, Victor M. Locke, was a

²⁴Daily Journal-Capital (Pawhuska), June 27, 1937.

²⁵Lyle H. Boren and Dale Boren, Who Is Who in Oklahoma (Guthrie, Oklahoma, 1935), p. 307.

²⁶Meerschaert's handwritten notes relative to a questionnaire entitled "Series of Questions to be Answered by Applicants for Aid from the Commission for the Catholic Missions Among Colored People and Indians, 1905-1906," "Commission for the Catholic Missions Among Colored People and Indians" files, General Correspondence to 1930, AAOKC.

²⁷Fred S. Bard Collection, "Catholic Church" file, Library, OHS.

Catholic convert of the first priest born and raised in Indian territory.²⁸

The remaining concentrations of Catholics were in Tulsa and Oklahoma counties, encompassing the state's major urban areas of Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Yet the background for the Catholic population in each city is different, with the Tulsa experience being unique to Tulsa and the account of Oklahoma City Catholics being typical of many smaller cities of the state.

Before 1905, Tulsa was little more than a trading village on the Arkansas River. In the year in which the Diocese of Oklahoma was erected, another event occurred which would far more dramatically shape the history of the future state of Oklahoma. To the south of Tulsa, a wildcat well struck oil and opened the Glen Pool Field to production. Within the next ten years, the population and prosperity of Tulsa spiraled upward with the rapid development of the petroleum industry. As a result, Tulsa laid claim to the title of "Oil Capital of the World."

The original exploration for petroleum in eastern Oklahoma was an extension of the oil industry in Kansas which began just before the turn of the century. Centered in Independence, Kansas, the producers began developing an oil and gas pool in the southeastern part of the Sunflower State. As a result, oil men from Pennsylvania, West

²⁸Southwest Courier, March 13, 1943.

Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana went west to Kansas. When they learned of the Glen Pool strike, they migrated south to Oklahoma and the vicinity of Tulsa. Soon these Easterners were exploring and developing many oil fields in the north-eastern and northern parts of the state. While these discoveries were collectively known as the "Midcontinent Oil Field," the hub of activity for the petroleum industry was Tulsa. To this center came even more people who had previously been involved in the oil business in the north-eastern part of the country.²⁹

Since these oil men were from a section of the country with relatively large Catholic populations, it is not surprising that many of the people who migrated to Tulsa in search for the "black gold" were Catholic. Never dominating the oil industry, the Catholics were a strong minority among the oil titans. To generalize about these early Catholic oilmen of Tulsa, most were born in America, were of Irish ancestry, and had been involved in the petroleum industry of western Pennsylvania.

One of the earliest major oil companies established in Oklahoma, the Sinclair Oil and Refining Company, was incorporated in 1916. While Harry F. Sinclair was not a Catholic, Catholics were heavily involved in the establishment of Sinclair Oil. The predecessor organization was the Sinclair and White Oil Company which was concerned mainly

²⁹William L. Connelly, The Oil Business As I Saw It (Norman, Okla., 1954), pp. 18, 28-30.

with producing properties. The name of the business was derived from the major stock holders, namely Sinclair and his brother, Earl, and Patrick J. White and his brother, Thomas. The latter men were Catholics who helped to lay the foundations for Sinclair's future success. A disagreement between the Sinclairs and the Whites in 1915 prompted Sinclair to purchase their shares of the company and move in 1916 to establish a fully integrated petroleum corporation. In this effort, one of Sinclair's chief lieutenants was William L. Connelly, a Catholic from the Pennsylvania oil fields. Connelly worked for fifty years for the Sinclair organization and served as both president and chairman of the board before his retirement in 1950. Three Stanford brothers, all Catholics, became associated with the Sinclair interests in Independence, Kansas, and two rose to become vice-presidents and the third to be general counsel. Likewise, James Flanagan first became involved with the Sinclair efforts in Kansas and continued to work for the company until he became president.³⁰ While many Catholics helped Sinclair build his oil empire, another Irish Catholic oilman, Edward L. Doheny, was involved in the Teapot Dome scandal which resulted in the public humiliation of Sinclair.

In addition to Sinclair officials, the organizer and chief director of Cities Service Company was another man of Irish ancestry. While E. W. Marland of Marland Oil Company in Ponca City and Frank Phillips of Phillips Petroleum

³⁰Ibid., passim.

Company in Bartlesville were not Catholics, both supported the Catholic Church financially. When Marland sold his company and Continental Oil Company was established, Daniel Moran, a Catholic, was the chief architect of the new organization and the first president of Conoco. Moran's brother, Martin, became president of the Texas Pipeline Company when John M. McGoldrick, another Catholic, retired in 1933. When William Kelly Warren, a Catholic, organized the Warren Petroleum Company in 1922, its first vice-president, Charles E. Brown, and Warren's chief lieutenant, Joe LaFortune, were both Catholics. Harry McGraw was the head of the Gypsy Oil Company which was the production basis for the Gulf Oil Corporation. Consequently, almost every major petroleum company in Oklahoma had strong Catholic ties.

In addition to the large corporations, Catholics were also involved as independent producers. The two highly prominent oil producers were William J. Sherry and Charles L. McMahon. Another prominent independent oilman was Eugene Peter Constantin, a French immigrant to Louisiana in 1880, who came to Tulsa in 1909. Before his death in 1927, he organized the Export Oil Company, Phoenix Refining Company, Indianahoma Refining Company, and the Constantin Refining Company. Associated with this Frenchman was an American of Irish ancestry, Pat Malloy, who reorganized the Constantin holdings into Malloy and Company in 1927. Sherry, McMahon, Constantin, and Malloy were all Catholic and typify other

successful Catholic independent oilmen.³¹ Consequently, many Catholics in Tulsa achieved wealth and prominence by direct involvement in the actual production and refining of petroleum. Given the large number of people of all religious faiths, the Catholics of northeastern Oklahoma never dominated, yet were, at least, a strong element within the region's basic industry.

Although some prominent Catholics in Tulsa were not involved with the actual production of petroleum products, most were at least associated with businesses related to the oil industry. An example of a business which was ancillary to the oil industry was the Exchange National Bank. In 1911, Harry Sinclair and Patrick White established the bank from the remnants of the defunct Farmers' National Bank. With a goal of becoming the oilman's bank, Exchange National Bank catered to the financial needs of the petroleum industry. By 1930, the Exchange National Bank listed over \$110,000,000 in assets and was the largest bank in Tulsa. During its first seventeen years, the bank had three presidents, all Catholics. When in 1928 "The Oil Bank of America" selected its first Protestant president, six Catholics were serving on the bank's board of directors.³² When the Depression of the 1930's struck, its full force

³¹The two basic sources for the involvements of these prominent people are news stories and obituaries in the Southwest Courier and The American Catholic Who's Who (16 vols.: Grosse Pointe, Mich., 1934-1965).

³²Southwest Courier, March 21, 1931.

hit the nation's financial and oil industries. Consequently, a bank resting upon the petroleum industry suffered a double blow. Reeling under this blast, the Exchange National Bank closed its doors in 1933. Upon its faltering foundation, the National Bank of Tulsa was organized in April, 1933.³³ Within a year Edward I. Hanlon, one of the former Catholic directors of the Exchange National Bank, was selected as the chairman of the board of the National Bank of Tulsa.

Another enterprise which was auxiliary to the oil industry was the publication of The Oil and Gas Journal, the national magazine of the oil industry. Founded in 1910 by Pat Boyle, owner and publisher of the Oil City, Pennsylvania, Derrick, the new Tulsa-based publication came under the guidance of Frank T. Lauinger and Robert W. Egan, also from Oil City. In 1931 Lauinger's position as publisher went to his son, Philip Lauinger. When Egan died in 1925, a brother, John W. Egan, came to Tulsa to become the new general manager. Since all of these men were Catholic, The Oil and Gas Journal provided another avenue which some Catholics travelled to gain social prestige. Likewise, several Catholic attorneys achieved wealth and prestige by specializing in legal matters relating to the oil and gas industry. Probably Tulsa's foremost legal expert during the 1920's on petroleum litigation was Thomas Daniel Lyons, a University

³³Southwest Courier, April 29, 1933.

³⁴The American Catholic Who's Who, 1964-1965, vol. 16, p. 248; The Southwest Courier, December 22, 1925; The Southwest Courier, January 26, 1926.

of Notre Dame graduate.³⁵ While not directly involved in production, these Catholic journalists and lawyers gained prominence through association with the oil industry.

Most well-known and wealthy Catholics in Tulsa, therefore, rose to their positions through direct and indirect connection with the petroleum industry. As early as 1910, the pastor of the only Catholic church in Tulsa could correctly state, "There are people in this parish as rich as any in the city and there are more members in this parish than any congregation in this city."³⁶ Since Tulsa oilmen, regardless of religion, had generally come from the same area of the northeast and were involved in the same business, they comprised a tight group of leadership for the city. Strongly involved in this elite were a large number of Catholics of Irish ancestry who came to Tulsa area from Pennsylvania. If the story of Tulsa is indeed the story of oil, then the story of Tulsa Catholicism is the story of Tulsa Catholic oilmen.

Unlike their Tulsa counterparts, the prominent Catholics of Oklahoma City lacked a common denominator. As the largest city in the state and the state capital after 1910, Oklahoma City attracted men with various occupations as well

³⁵The American Catholic Who's Who, 1964-1965, vol. 16, pp. 265-266. Two other prominent Catholic attorneys who based their practice in part on oil and gas problems were Charles Coakley and Philip Kates.

³⁶John G. Heiring, "Voting on the Style of the Church", sermon delivered in Tulsa, Oklahoma, November 13, 1910. Heiring papers, AAOKC.

as those interested in government service. Among those people coming to Oklahoma City were a small number of Catholics.

The most common road to prominence for the Catholics of Oklahoma City was the legal or medical profession. Among the well-known members of the Oklahoma Bar Association in Oklahoma City were such Catholic laymen as William Frank Wilson, Mont Frederick Highley, John Frank Martin, Leo Considine and John William Barry. In the medical field, the two Catholics who achieved the highest respect were Joseph Thomas Martin and Leo Joseph Starry. Yet Catholics also attained wealth and social status in various business activities, such as Martin J. Reinhart in real estate, Thomas E. Braniff in insurance and later in aviation, and Charles H. Makins and A. E. Perry, both in the sand and gravel business.³⁷ The most influential Catholic within the business circles of Oklahoma City, however, was J. F. Owens. Before his death in 1942, he had become president of Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company. From that position, he had been elected president for three years of the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce, president for one year of the Oklahoma Chamber of Commerce, and first vice-president of the United States Chamber of Commerce.³⁸

³⁷The two basic sources for the involvements of these prominent people are news stories in Southwest Courier and The American Catholic Who's Who, vols. 1-16.

³⁸Southwest Courier, May 11, 1940, February 28, 1942.

With the state capital in Oklahoma City, three Catholic laymen had a statewide reputation due to their political involvements. Dennis T. Flynn, a Republican, was a territorial delegate from Oklahoma Territory. As Oklahoma quickly grew to become part of the solidly Democratic South after statehood, Flynn never held public office after 1907 but remained one of the leaders of the state's Republican Party.³⁹ The state court system called two Democratic Catholics immediately after statehood. Matthew J. Kane was elected to the state Supreme Court in 1907 and won reelection until his death in early 1924. During his sixteen years on the state's highest court, his fellow justices selected him chief justice on three separate occasions.⁴⁰ Similar to Kane, Thomas H. Doyle became a judge of the Court of Criminal Appeals immediately after statehood and was reelected three times. In the Herbert Hoover landslide over Al Smith in 1928, Doyle lost his position by a margin of less than one per cent of the total vote. In 1934, he was again elected to that position and served until his death in 1939.⁴¹ Other Catholics achieved some degree of influence through holding elective offices in the state legislature or appointive positions throughout state government, but these three men were the only Catholics to acquire a statewide

³⁹Southwest Courier, June 17, 1939.

⁴⁰Catholic Home, January 5, 1924.

⁴¹Oklahoma State Election Board, Directory of Oklahoma, 1973 (n. p., 1973), pp. 314, 326, 339, 351, 364.

political reputation.

This Oklahoma City pattern of achieving prominence through the professions, business, and politics duplicated itself in other cities and towns in Oklahoma. In the legal profession, Charles E. Dierker in Shawnee and John Emmett Layden of McAlester attained a high respect throughout the state. The best known Catholic physician outside of the major population centers was Francis M. Duffy of Enid.⁴² In Marlow, Tom Wade acquired wealth and stature through the banking business and parleyed them into politics. After being involved in local government, Wade was elected Democratic National Committeeman in 1916.⁴³ While many other Catholics outside of Oklahoma City achieved prominence through the professions, business, and politics, Dierker, Layden, Duffy, and Wade were the best known on a statewide basis. As such, they can typify the Catholics who were successful in climbing the ladder of success.

This social and economic pattern of Oklahoma Catholicism remained relatively stable during the first forty years of the twentieth century. The only major population addition to this settlement pattern during that time was Mexicans, who arrived principally during the 1920's, either as refugees from revolution, seekers after economic opportunities of Tulsa and Oklahoma City, or miners settling in

⁴²American Catholic Who's Who, 1956-1957, Vol. 12, pp. 106, 251; 1964-1965, Vol. 16, p. 120.

⁴³Southwest Courier, November 12, 1938.

eastern Oklahoma. Jobs in the gravel business of the Dolese Brothers brought some Mexicans to Comanche county. Relatively large numbers of Mexicans made their homes in the western part of the state, especially in Woods, Caddo, and Grady counties, working on the Sante Fe railroad. The remaining Mexican immigrants were scattered across the state, most working on farms. Bishop Francis Clement Kelley, Meerschaert's successor, summarized their economic status, "The Mexicans in Oklahoma are mostly employed like other residents but in poorer positions."⁴⁴

Such was the Catholic population of the state of Oklahoma during the first four decades of the twentieth century. Yet the areas of Catholic concentration had only on very rare occasions a Catholic population in excess of ten per cent. Consequently, the story of the Italian miners, the German farmers, the Irish oilmen, the Mexican laborers, or the American Catholic businessmen is the history of a minority. With the diocese covering 70,000 square miles, vast distances are another characteristic of the Catholic Church in Oklahoma. In geographical terms, Oklahoma has always contained parishes which were larger than some dioceses in the northeastern sections of the United States. Thus the Catholic Church faced the double challenge of a minority scattered across thousands of miles.

⁴⁴Francis Kelley to Amleto Cicognani, Oklahoma City, October 28, 1936, "Cicognani" file, General Correspondence of 1941, AAOKC.

To serve this minority of various ethnic background and social status, the Catholic Church had a continual difficulty in obtaining an adequate number of priests. During the early days under Bishop Meerschaert, Oklahoma relied upon Europe to provide its religious vocations. For example, the church in Oklahoma had in 1907 eighty-eight priests, of whom sixty-one were from continental Europe. With a Belgian as bishop, Belgium naturally provided more than any other European country.⁴⁵ Under Bishop Kelley, who succeeded Meerschaert in 1924, the reliance upon Europe diminished. In addition to the restrictive immigration laws of the 1920's which hampered clergy coming from abroad,⁴⁶ anti-Catholic agitation in the state made it "inadvisable" to continue the use of immigrant clergy.⁴⁷ In place of Europe, Oklahoma began to rely upon priests from the northeastern parts of the United States. Only after the Second World War was Oklahoma able to supply its own candidates for the priesthood.

Furthermore, the scattered rural nature of the Oklahoma diocese placed greater demands upon the clergy than was true

⁴⁵Bard Collection, "Catholic Church" file, OHS.

⁴⁶Francis Kelley to P. Fumasani-Biondi, Oklahoma City, June 5, 1928, "Apostolic Delegate" file, General Correspondence to 1934, AAOKC.

⁴⁷Francis Kelley, "Report to the Apostolic Delegation in the United States of America on the Question of Large and Small Seminaries Based on the Religious Situation in the Southwest," manuscript, [1926], "Apostolic Delegate" file, General Correspondence to 1934, AAOKC.

of the more densely settled and prosperous northeastern dioceses. Both the European priests of the Meerschaert era and the vast majority of the clergy from other parts of the United States met the challenges of rural Oklahoma with amazing dedication and devotion. The perennial need of additional priests, however, compelled the diocese to accept some who had been rejected by other, less demanding parts of the United States. As a result, "the diocese was looked upon as a sort of refugium" for delinquent clergy.⁴⁸ In fact, the church in Oklahoma had to support two to four priests each year who had been relieved of their pastoral duties for disciplinary reasons.⁴⁹ Ironically, an area which needed a superior clergy had to settle at times for individuals who were unacceptable to other areas.

The wide areas of Oklahoma also affected the growth of parishes in the state. Every parish of the diocese, save some of the later parishes founded in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, began holding services without a church building. Instead, a priest would arrive in a given community according to an established schedule and celebrate morning Mass wherever he could find the necessary space. While the choice was most often the home of one of the parishioners which could accommodate the small number of Catholics,

⁴⁸Francis Kelley to Edward Graham, Oklahoma City, March 24, 1942, "G Miscellaneous" file, General Correspondence of 1942, AAOKC.

⁴⁹John Dudek, Circular Letter to the Clergy, Oklahoma City, January 15, 1936, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

other locations were as disparate as public school buildings, city halls, police stations, stores, tents, American Legion halls, hotels, and every now and then even a Masonic Lodge.⁵⁰ Since some of the Catholics in attendance would have travelled a good distance to get to the service, breakfast was generally served to the congregation following Mass.⁵¹

Generally, the next step in the development of the parish was the construction of a frame church which a priest would still visit according to a regular schedule. Only with the assignment of a resident pastor did the community gain a fully developed parish. As a result of improved transportation which allowed individual Catholics to travel longer distances to church, the number of stations without a church building and missions without priests declined through the twentieth century. Yet, Masses in homes and in small missions were definitely a twentieth century phenomenon to the Catholic Church in Oklahoma. For example, in 1925, the diocese had seventy-six parishes with a resident pastor, eighty-seven missions without a permanent priest,

⁵⁰See the de Hasque historical files, AAOKC. These are collections of newspaper clippings, miscellaneous publications, letters, and statements which pertain to histories of the individual parishes of Oklahoma. Originally compiled by the first historian of the Catholic Church in Oklahoma, Father Urban de Hasque, the alphabetically arranged files have been updated whenever appropriate material has reached the Chancery Office.

⁵¹Anita Lindsay, From Pioneers to Progress (Lindsay, Okla., 1969), p. 14.

and twenty-nine stations without a church.⁵² Even after World War II, priests continued to serve these stations without churches by holding services in private homes or in public buildings.⁵³ In the contemporary renewal of the Catholic Church, Masses in private homes among a small group of Catholics is considered to be an example of liturgical renewal. Yet for more than eighty years, similar celebrations were an ecclesiastical necessity for the Catholic Church in Oklahoma.

Thus a religious minority composed of a cross-section of various ethnic backgrounds affected the clergy and the development of parishes. The broad extent of Oklahoma was also indicative of the rural nature of the Sooner State. As Catholics constituted a minority in this rural state, Protestantism comprised the religious majority. Within the broad spectrum of Protestantism, the more conservative denominations, such as Baptist, Methodist, and the Church of Christ, predominated. Because of its rural fundamentalist Protestant orientation, Oklahoma could be clearly classified as a Bible-Belt state. With such a background, it is not surprising that Oklahoma was the first state to enter the Union with a constitutional prohibition against alcohol and the first state to ban the teaching of evolution in its

⁵²"Report of the Right Rev. Renier Sevens, Vicar of Missions of the Diocese of Oklahoma for the Fiscal Year 1925," The Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926.

⁵³Helen Baldwin, "The History of St. Ann's," manuscript, 1968, "Fairview" file, de Hasque historical files, AAOKC.

school system. This Bible-Belt background posed challenges to Oklahoma Catholicism and affected the Catholic Church as it attempted to respond to its environment. Consequently, the history of Catholicism in Oklahoma during the first forty years as a diocese is the story of the Catholic Church interacting with a Bible-Belt environment in an attempt to gain maturity.

CHAPTER II

LAYING THE FOUNDATION, 1905-1917

In the years between the erection of the diocese in 1905 and the United States entry into World War I in 1917, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma developed a fundamentally sound foundation for the newly created Diocese of Oklahoma. During these twelve years, the diocese established fifty-five additional churches and built ten new parochial schools.¹ Moving into new areas, the Catholics formed additional Catholic organizations for charity, for laymen, for diocesan administration, and for higher education. Catholics made these advances in spite of hardships created by a poor and widely scattered Catholic population and in the face of a budding anti-Catholic movement.

The major political development during these years came in 1907, when both Indian and Oklahoma Territories entered the Union as one state, Oklahoma. Blending Populism and Progressivism, the Oklahoma constitution gained the reputation as the most radical organic law in United States history. Despite this reputation, the document was not

¹Urban de Hasque, "Historical Resume of Catholic Rural Centers in Oklahoma" (mimeographed, paper read at National Catholic Rural Life Conference, Stillwater, Oklahoma, 1944).

extreme enough to satisfy completely Pete Hanraty, vice-president of the Constitutional Convention and the most prominent Catholic in drafting the document. As president of District Number Twenty-One of the United Mine Workers and of the Twin Territorial Federation of Labor, Hanraty led the labor forces during the writing of Oklahoma's constitution. Furthermore, the labor movement joined the Indian Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union in establishing the Joint Legislative Board of the Federation of Labor and the Farmers' Union. Led by Hanraty, this board drafted twenty-six farmer-laborite "demands" for the Constitutional Convention. While all twenty-six proposals advocated by the coalition were too radical to have been adopted in their entirety, the proposals provided the working basis for the Populist-Progressive aspects of the Oklahoma Constitution.²

Coincidental with the voters' ratification of the constitution was a referendum on statewide Prohibition. Although the Oklahoma voters approved of both the new Constitution and the Prohibition proposal, most Catholics apparently opposed the measure regarding alcohol. In their demands, the farmer-laborites had omitted the hot political issue of banning alcohol in the new state.³ Furthermore,

²James R. Wright, Jr., "The Assiduous Wedge: Woman Suffrage and the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, LI (Winter, 1973-1974), pp. 421,

³Albert H. Ellis, A History of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Oklahoma (Muskogee, Oklahoma, 1923), pp. 45-48.

the German-American Association, including within its ranks many Catholics, actively campaigned against the referendum.⁴ While the ethnic backgrounds of the Catholic laborers in eastern Oklahoma and the Catholic farmers in western Oklahoma would explain their opposition, other Catholics, such as Thomas Doyle, also actively opposed the prohibition measure.⁵ Doyle's opposition, which continued after the adoption of Prohibition, earned for the Judge of the Criminal Court of Appeals the consistent enmity of the Women's Christian Temperance Union every time he sought subsequent election.⁶

While these political questions occupied the attention of Oklahoma, Bishop Theophile Meerschaert faced the difficult task of organizing the newly created diocese. After returning in 1905 from Rome to his home in Guthrie, Meerschaert relied upon the priests he had recruited in northern Europe. Thus, perhaps naturally, he appointed Belgians to the key positions in the diocesan hierarchy, for example Father Gustave Depreitere to the position of Vicar General.⁷ This dominance of Belgians in the executive

⁴Jimmie Lewis Franklin, Born Sober: Prohibition in Oklahoma, 1907-1959 (Norman, Oklahoma, 1971), pp. 15, 19-20.

⁵Interview with Mrs. J. Frank Martin, Oklahoma City, February 6, 1974.

⁶George D. Conger, Bulletin letter of Women's Christian Temperance Union, July 7, 1910; W. J. Losinger, Form letter of Women's Christian Temperance Union, [1936], Thomas H. Doyle papers, MJFM.

⁷Official Catholic Directory, 1907 (Milwaukee, 1907), p. 507.

positions of the diocese, known as the "Belgian clique," would continue throughout Meerschaert's administration of Oklahoma Catholicism.

Another primary step to the establishment of a diocese in fact as well as in name was the location of an episcopal residence in Oklahoma City. In November, 1905, Meerschaert began the process by sending a circular letter to the Catholics in his jurisdiction. Stating that he would not move to Oklahoma City until a suitable place was secured, the bishop began a subscription drive to raise the necessary funds. In this letter, Meerschaert instructed each priest to contact all of his parishoners in the hopes of a generous fund-raising effort.⁸ Indicative of the poor financial base of the diocese, Bishop Meerschaert was not able to move to his new residence in the northwest section of Oklahoma City until May, 1907.⁹

After moving to Oklahoma City, Meerschaert established the first charitable institution of the diocese. On March 1, 1909, the bishop purchased, for \$3,000, five blocks along the interurban railroad between Oklahoma City and El Reno.¹⁰ On that site within the next three years, the diocese oversaw the construction of two frame buildings and a

⁸Theophile Meerschaert, circular letter, Guthrie, November 16, 1905, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

⁹Theophile Meerschaert, circular letters, Oklahoma City, May 22, 1907, Gustave Deprieterre papers, AAOKC.

¹⁰ Private diary of Theophile Meerschaert, March 1, 1909, AAOKC.

permanent brick building, as well as the purchase of additional acreage. On October 6, 1912, Bishop Meerschaert solemnly dedicated the land and buildings as St. Joseph's Orphanage, in honor of the patron saint of the Diocese.¹¹ Although the orphanage was a pet project of Meerschaert, it was at best only a shoestring operation. In 1917, for example, the orphanage, while caring for 120 orphans, had received only \$1,211.74 from the state's Catholics in the annual diocesan collection for the institution. With similar financial support through the earlier years, the orphanage operation had amassed a debt of \$16,000 by 1917.¹² Thus the first and only diocesan charity proved to be a financial liability for the diocese.

This diocesan charitable institution joined other Catholic charities, mainly hospitals, which religious orders conducted. On August 1, 1889, the Sisters of St. Francis had opened the doors of St. Anthony's hospital in Oklahoma City. During the next twenty years, the hospital added three extensions to the original building and established a school of nursing. In McAlester in the southeastern part of Oklahoma, the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word purchased in 1914 a colonial residence and converted the building into St. Mary's Hospital.¹³ By the

¹¹"3 Rings in Fifty Years," supplement to Southwest Courier, October 8, 1955, p. 96.

¹²Orphan's Record, May, 1917, p. 143.

¹³"3 Rings in Fifty Years," pp. 84, 88.

time of United States entry into World War I, these two hospitals, owned by religious orders, had joined the diocesan orphanage in providing the basis for future charitable activity by the Oklahoma Catholics.

Laymen's organizations also developed during these early years of the diocese. On November 22, 1903, the first local council of the Knights of Columbus received recognition from the national organization. The order quickly spread across the state until 1907, when eleven local councils organized the State Council of the Knights of Columbus. The Catholic Daughters of America organized their first local unit in Enid in 1905. Two years later, the Catholic women of Oklahoma City instituted a local court which would become the basic unit for the future development of the Catholic Daughters in Oklahoma. Since this organization of lay women spread very slowly into the other areas of the state, it was not until the 1920's that a state council was established.¹⁴

These lay organizations, especially the Knights of Columbus, were involved during the years before the World War I in public events which brought together Catholics from across the state. On October 12, 1909, the Knights of Columbus sponsored a "discovery day" celebration commemorating the anniversary of Christopher Columbus' landing on San Salvador. Similar to a Fourth of July festivity, this out-

¹⁴"3 Rings in Fifty Years," p. 91.

ing, held in Shawnee, consisted of a picnic, speeches, and a parade through the streets. As Judge Thomas Doyle of the Court of Appeals commented, "Today we celebrate the first open demonstration that Catholics made as a body in our State."¹⁵ Two years later, a large celebration occurred in Oklahoma City in honor of the fortieth anniversary of Bishop Meerschaert's ordination as a priest. The festivities included a banquet for the more than fifty clergy present and a public reception at the Lee-Huckins Hotel.¹⁶ In 1914, an Oklahoma City celebration of Meerschaert's silver anniversary in Oklahoma attracted several prominent politicians, including Governor Robert L. Williams, Oklahoma City's mayor, six state supreme court justices, and both the Republican and Democratic National Committeemen.¹⁷ An even larger number of politicians attended the Knights of Columbus Charity New Year's Eve ball welcoming 1916 to the calendar.¹⁸ While similar occasions would dot the history of the Catholic Church during the next three decades, the frequency of such gatherings began during the first dozen years as a diocese.

By 1916, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma had established 51 private and parochial schools educating nearly 5,500

¹⁵Indian Advocate, November 1909, pp. 393-396.

¹⁶The private diary of Theophile Meerschaert, December 27, 1911, AAOKC.

¹⁷Southern Messenger, September, 1914, p. 1.

¹⁸Orphan's Record, January, 1916, p. 27.

children on both the elementary and secondary levels. With these students, more children were enrolled in Catholic schools than in all of the other religious and private schools in Oklahoma. While the Catholic Church was understandably proud of its developing educational system, the number of students in Catholic schools amounted to only 1.3% of the total number of children enrolled in all of the public and private common schools in Oklahoma--whose people clearly stressed public over private education.¹⁹ Despite this small proportion of students in Catholic schools, the Chancellor for the Diocese of Oklahoma, Urban de Hasque, in 1916 obtained for the Catholic primary school system official recognition from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, R. H. Wilson. The state official promised to sign every eighth grade diploma issued by the parochial schools and to see that graduates of high schools received full credit if they wanted to enter Oklahoma's higher education system.²⁰ Yet, despite a diocesan regulation requiring Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools when available, the Church offices had perennial problems in convincing the laity of the advantages of Catholic education.

¹⁹R. H. Wilson, "Sixth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction" ([Oklahoma City], 1916), pp. 75, 217-218.

²⁰Urban de Hasque to Hector Schaubroeck, [Oklahoma City], August 30, 1916, sent as a circular letter, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

Along with lower schools, Catholic higher education also developed during the years preceding World War I. While several of the Catholic high schools operated by religious orders offered college courses, the two centers of Catholic higher education were Shawnee and Guthrie. In 1910 with the aid of Shawnee businessmen the Benedictine monks at Sacred Heart Abbey in Pottowatomie county decided to establish a college in Shawnee. Dedicated on November 23, 1915, as the Catholic University of Oklahoma, the Shawnee Benedictine school became the first Catholic institution devoted to higher education.²¹ In 1916 Benedictine nuns in Guthrie received a charter to operate a four-year liberal arts institution known as St. Joseph's Academy until the name was changed to the Oklahoma Catholic College for Women. The Oklahoma legislature in 1919 authorized the Guthrie school to confer college degrees.²² While Catholic University of Oklahoma later became St. Gregory's high school and junior college, and the Catholic College for Women became Benedictine Heights College in Tulsa, these two institutions established the foundation, however weak, of higher education for the Catholic Church in the Sooner State.

In fighting to insure that the children of Oklahoma Catholics would attend the religious schools, the Catholic clergy stressed that education must include religious and

²¹Indian Advocate, March and April, 1910, p. 524; Orphan's Record, November, 1915, 351.

²²"3 Rings in Fifty Years," p. 78.

moral training,²³ which Catholic schools would provide while public schools could not. To maintain the credibility of this argument, the Catholic Church claimed that the constitutional right of freedom of religion demanded, as Father John Heiring explained, that God should be banished from the public schools.²⁴ When a bill requiring Bible reading in public schools languished in the Oklahoma legislature in 1915, the official Catholic publication in Oklahoma praised the lawmakers for not wasting their time in discussing such obviously unconstitutional legislation. Continuing, the article condemned the widespread practice of reading selections from the Scriptures under the guise of literature in public schools.²⁵ Concerning higher education, rumors circulated among Catholic clergymen that Protestant ministers were delivering lectures in the state's normal schools which granted academic credit for attendance. The church officials wanted detailed information concerning these lectures so that a protest could be filed with the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.²⁶ When such verified information was received from Ada, Durant, and Edmond, Chancellor de Hasque confronted Superintendent Wilson with

²³For example, see Indian Advocate, December, 1907, p. 392; Orphan's Record, September, 1918, pp. 83-84; Theophile Meerschaert, Pastoral Letter of 1920, AAOKC.

²⁴John Heiring, "Preparatory to School Opening," sermon delivered in Tulsa, August, 1913, Heiring papers, AAOKC.

²⁵Orphan's Record, May, 1914, pp. 146-148.

²⁶Orphan's Record, August, 1914, p. 253.

the proof. As a consequence, the State School Board unani-
mously ordered the practice to stop.²⁷

This effort to keep the public educational system strictly neutral not only benefited the Catholic schools, but it also reflected the minority status of Catholics in Oklahoma. Obviously if any religion was brought into the public school system, it would be of a Protestant variety with any scriptural selections coming from "King James' mistranslation of the Bible."²⁸ To inculcate such "heresy" into Oklahoma's youth would be a denial of "that one sanctuary of truth, that everlasting treasure-house, in which alone are found harmonious unity, unchanging doctrine, perfect consistency, everything that can satisfy the craving of the human mind--the Catholic Church."²⁹

The most impressive institutional development of the early years was the construction of Holy Family Church in the burgeoning oil town of Tulsa. Under the direction of John Heiring, plans for the new church were drawn, and construction began on credit in 1912. In January, 1913, the cornerstone was laid for the church which with its steeple would grow into the tallest structure in Oklahoma and which the Tulsa Democrat would call the "finest building of wor-

²⁷Urban de Hasque to S. L. Weirsma, [Oklahoma City], August 30, 1916, sent as a circular letter, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

²⁸Orphan's Record, May, 1915, p. 147.

²⁹Orphan's Record, April, 1916, p. 116 [Emphasis added].

ship in the Southwest."³⁰ After the dedication of the church on April 1, 1914, the parish confronted a large debt. During the summer and fall, Father Heiring planned for a massive fund drive, which was perfected the following April.³¹ The care of preparation paid off; in just six days in May, 1915, more than \$100,000 was raised to help defray the church debt.³²

Such a successful money-raising effort in Tulsa was not indicative of the financial status of the diocese as a whole. Bishop Meerschaert struggled against perennial financial troubles as he tried to administer the broad diocese. About once every four years he would travel to Europe in search of priests willing to emigrate to the United States and in search of money from his family and friends.³³ Furthermore, the bishop applied for donations from various official missionary agencies, such as the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and the Commission for the Catholic Missions Among Colored People and Indians. In 1906, Meerschaert officially welcomed to the diocese the newly formed Catholic Church Extension Society, which would send small sums

³⁰Tulsa Democrat, September 30, 1920.

³¹Private diary of John Heiring, December 25, 1915, Heiring papers, AAOKC.

³²Orphan's Record, October, 1916, p. 313.

³³Sister Mary Alicia Mideke, R. S. M., "Bishop Meerschaert: First Bishop of Oklahoma, 1847-1924" (Unpub. M. A. thesis, Catholic University of America, 1950), p. 44; Theophile Meerschaert, circular letter, Oklahoma City, November 18, 1920, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

of money and would make loans to poor parishes at low interest rates.³⁴ In addition to these loans and income supplements to individual priests, the Extension Society had sent to Oklahoma by 1924 more than \$35,000.³⁵ Despite this outside aid, the diocesan debt by 1920 exceeded \$50,000.³⁶

Financial worries were not the only problems confronting Bishop Meerschaert. As bishop, it was his responsibility to travel across the state, visit the various parishes and missions, administer the sacrament of Confirmation, and shepherd his widely scattered flock. Wearing a black top hat, he travelled the length and breadth of Oklahoma by railroad and by horse and buggy. Despite his ecclesiastical position, his life on the prairie was a simple one. As he toured the state, he would eat homemade soup in the dugouts of his people and sleep in their pioneer homes or under his wagon on the open plains.³⁷ Generally, he made two extended trips a year into the far corners of his jurisdiction, one in the spring during April, May, and June and the other in the fall during September and October.³⁸

³⁴Indian Advocate, May, 1906, p. 119.

³⁵Catholic Home, November 1, 1924, p. 23.

³⁶Theophile Meerschaert, circular letter, November 18, 1920, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

³⁷"3 Rings in Fifty Years," p. 2.

³⁸Private diary of Theophile Meerschaert, appendix. The last pages of his diary provides a list, albeit incomplete, of the places by date which Meerschaert visited during his thirty-two years in administering the Vicarate of Indian Territory and the Diocese of Oklahoma.

Representative of the problems Meerschaert encountered were those of the 1912 spring excursion. On April 22, 1912, the bishop and two priests left Antlers at 8:00 a.m. for Boswell. After travelling in their horse and buggy over the hot, sandy roads for nearly four hours, the clergymen stopped for a crude lunch of coffee, stale bread, and cold meat. During the afternoon the roads deteriorated, and the trio had to make their way through ditches, creeks, and detours. After more than nine hours of grueling travel, they finally arrived at Boswell, looking forward to a hot meal and a good night's sleep in the church sacristy. They, however, discovered that one of the cots in the sacristy had broken and the other one was gone. Their hopes for a good dinner dimmed when they learned that the little cooking stove had been taken to the home of a sick Indian. Compelled by necessity, Meerschaert and one of the priests gathered kindling and wood for a fire outside. Meanwhile the other priest went in search of eggs, only to discover that he did not have enough money to buy them. After eating the warmed-over coffee, bread, and meat remaining from lunch, they located a bed. Around 9:00 p.m. the three retired--the bishop on the bed, one priest on the broken cot, and the other on the floor. Awakening at dawn, Meerschaert said Mass and confirmed fifty Indians. Heating the remnants of the previous day's food for the third and final time, the three clergymen left Boswell at 10:30 a.m. After more than three hours on the rugged roads, the trio arrived in Atoka,

tired, hungry and dirty. Stopping only to eat and wash, they were on the road again by 5:00 p.m. bound for Coal-gate.³⁹

If Meerschaert was a bishop in the pioneer tradition, the priests in his diocese were also pioneer clergymen who covered wide distances under adverse conditions. In the northwestern part of Oklahoma, Father A. F. Monnot took charge in 1907 of the Panhandle parish centered at Hooker. Before he moved to Oklahoma City in 1917, Monnot transferred the center of the 8,500-square-mile parish to Guymon, which had a larger Catholic population, all of seven families. Continually on the move with a second-hand motorcycle, Monnot slept in dugouts, in sodhouses, or on the open prairie--anywhere he was when night fell. His rectory in Guymon consisted of a lean-to next to the church sacristy; his altars at his mission stations were dinner tables, sewing tables, store boxes, and trunks. During his eight years as pastor of the far-flung parish, Monnot's total receipts amounted to only \$137.76.⁴⁰ Yet such financial difficulty was common to the scattered parishes in the rural sections of the diocese and in the towns as well. For example, the pastor at Chickasha in 1904 complained of many tedious calls from creditors.⁴¹

³⁹Private diary of Theophile Meerschaert, April 22-23, 1912, AAOKC.

⁴⁰Southwest Courier, December 31, 1932; Southwest Courier, June 23, 1934.

⁴¹Ordo of Urban de Hasque for 1904, June 27, 1904, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

In the eastern mining district of the state, Theophile Caudron had charge of a parish covering five thousand square miles. Centered in Henryetta, the parish included missions at Ada, Boley, Coalton, Holdenville, and Cotton. More fortunate than Monnot, Caudron was able to reach all of his mission by railroad. To answer sick calls, however, Caudron often resorted to the basic mode of transportation for the Catholic clergy--the horse and buggy. On one such occasion late in the evening he lost his way, gashed the artery in his horse's leg, and wrecked the wagon. Despite these difficulties, Caudron arrived at the bedside of a lapsed Catholic who wanted a priest before his death. Like the pastors in the other Oklahoma parishes, Caudron also suffered from continual financial difficulties.⁴²

As the foundation for the diocese of Oklahoma was established during the period before World War I, the basis for the anti-Catholicism which would blemish the state in the 1920's also took root. A national report of the Knights of Columbus noted that the American Protective Association phase of anti-Catholicism had collapsed immediately after the Spanish-American War. Within ten years, however, agitation against Catholics began to reassert itself, and in the next four years it developed into a national phenomenon.⁴³

⁴²Theophile Caudron, "A Mission Field of Five Thousand Square Miles," Extension Magazine, February, 1916, pp. 7-8.

⁴³Supreme Council, Knights of Columbus, Report of the Commission on Religious Prejudice (Davenport, Iowa, 1916), pp. 24-25.

Paralleling this national trend, Oklahoma experienced its own anti-Catholicism in the years immediately following statehood and witnessed its spread across the state by the advent of World War I.

The charges hurled at the Catholic minority in Oklahoma were all too familiar. The basic contention was that Catholics, because of their loyalty to the Pope, could not possibly be loyal citizens of the United States.⁴⁴ A prime example of this "disloyalty" was the Catholic opposition to the public school system, which with its citizenship training for the nation's youth appeared to many as the cornerstone of American democracy.⁴⁵ Furthermore, others accused the Catholic Church of fathering and fostering political organizations pledged to subvert, either through violence or through the electoral process, the American government.⁴⁶ One of the most scandalous pieces of such literature was a falsified Knights of Columbus oath. Among the pledges which the members of the Knights of Columbus were falsely accused of making was:

I do further promise and declare that I will, when opportunity presents, make and wage relentless war, secretly and openly, against all heretics, Protestants, and Masons, as I am directed to do, to extirpate them from the face of the whole earth; and that I will spare neither age, sex, or condition, and that I will hang, burn, waste, boil

⁴⁴Indian Advocate, February, 1909, pp. 66-73.

⁴⁵Indian Advocate, May, 1909, pp. 192-193.

⁴⁶Orphan's Record, April, 1917, p. 101.

flay, strangle, and burn alive these heretics; rip up the stomachs and wombs in order to annihilate their execrable race. That when the same cannot be done openly, I will secretly use the poisonous cup, the strangulation cord, the steel of the poniard, or the leaden bullet, regardless of the honor, rank, dignity, or authority of the persons, whatever I may be directed to do by any agents of the Pope or superior of the Brotherhood of the Holy Father of the Society of Jesus.⁴⁷

The actions of the anti-Catholics also developed into a pattern which would repeat itself in years to come. Several touring lecturers appeared in the state's towns and cities to denounce the Catholic religion in churches, public halls, and street-corner meetings. In certain smaller centers, local politicians attacked the Catholics religion in churches, public halls, and street-corner meetings. In fact, a Fourth of July celebration at a courthouse in eastern Oklahoma turned into a vehicle to distribute anti-Catholic literature and a platform for verbal assault on Catholics.⁴⁸ Whenever a Catholic sought political office he was forced to campaign in the face of direct attacks on his religious faith.⁴⁹ Finally, anti-Catholic newspapers circulated in Oklahoma, the most prominent being The Menace of Aurora, Missouri.⁵⁰

⁴⁷For a full text of the false Knights of Columbus oath, see the Appendix.

⁴⁸Caudron, "A Mission Field of Five Thousand Square Miles," p. 8.

⁴⁹Charles Coakley to Francis Kelley, Tulsa, undated, "Charles A. Coakley" file, General Correspondence for 1941, AAOKC.

⁵⁰Orphan's Record, April, 1917, p. 101.

In response to such distortions, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma reacted in various ways. While the clergy basically relied on the diocesan magazine to carry explanations and apologetic articles regarding the Catholic church, laymen bore the brunt of the effort. This lay responsibility was probably fortunate, since the non-Catholic population had heard many "monstrous fabrications" regarding priests. When one announcement was made that a priest would be coming to a small town in north central Oklahoma, many people reportedly turned out expecting to see a man with horns and hoofs in a special circus wagon.⁵¹ On the other hand, laymen could approach the non-Catholic population in the Protestant spirit of a strong lay participation in religious matters. Consequently, many laymen, generally attorneys, lectured in meetings sponsored by local Catholic organizations across Oklahoma.⁵² Furthermore, laymen would utilize their local newspapers to print letters and statements offering corrections to the accusations of an anti-Catholic lecturer. Finally, laymen took the lead in offering free distribution of Catholic literature through reading racks in public places.⁵³ A Catholic mail carrier in Canadian County

⁵¹John Heiring, "Introductory address at Collinsville, Oklahoma," sermon delivered at Collinsville, August 20, 1908, John Heiring papers, AAOKC.

⁵²Orphan's Record, May, 1915, p. 154; State Council, Knights of Columbus, Report of the Twelfth Annual Convention of the Knights of Columbus Held at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, May 8, 1917 (Oklahoma City: [1917], p. 16.).

⁵³Orphan's Record, May, 1915, p. 154; Orphan's Record, September, 1917, p. 279.

would match each subscription delivery of The Menace by leaving a free copy of the Catholic publication Our Sunday Visitor.⁵⁴ Despite these efforts, however, Oklahoma Catholics during these early years never mounted a well-organized or consistent campaign to counteract anti-Catholic activities.

One of The Menace's favorite topics was the alleged oppressive conditions in Catholic convents for religious nuns. Many sensational, even weird "revelations" of corruption and debauchery were included. Seeking to transform this crusade into legislation, The Menace continually urged the passage of "Convent Inspection Bills" which would require regular investigation of all convents by county or state officials.⁵⁵ In fact, a legislative committee in 1915 reported favorably on such a bill, only to have it die a quiet death on the house floor.⁵⁶

Offering apparent coorboration to The Menace in its charges about convents were incidents associated with a former nun, Anna M. Lowry. This woman, who had entered and left eight different convents in Europe and the United States, arrived at St. Joseph's Convent in Guthrie in 1904 and asked for admission to the order. In the fashion typical of the pioneer church in Oklahoma, the Benedictine nuns did

⁵⁴Orphan's Record, October, 1916, p. 326.

⁵⁵Orphan's Record, August, 1916, p. 254.

⁵⁶Orphan's Record, April, 1915, p. 113.

not check thoroughly into her background and accepted her.⁵⁷ After three years, on January 3, 1907, Anna Lowry took perpetual vows to the order under the religious name of Sister Justina. Feeling overworked and mistreated, Sister Justina decided in June, 1911, that she had had enough of the religious life, and left her ninth convent.⁵⁸

While the departure of a nun from the religious life is not in itself significant, subsequent events brought the incident of "ex-Sister Justina" to the fore. The first problem arose when she solicited money from Guthrie citizens while still wearing her Benedictine habit. After she had collected about \$100, the pastor of the Catholic church in Guthrie through the newspapers warned the citizens that she had no authority to solicit funds and urged them to cease giving her contributions. Later in the summer she arrived in Aurora, Missouri, and took employment with The Menace.⁵⁹ In her articles for the "Aurora Infernalis,"⁶⁰ she attacked the Catholic Church and convent life with the vitriolic language typical of a repentant sinner.

In the fall of 1912, the former Sister Justina filed suit against the Benedictine sisters of Guthrie in the state

⁵⁷St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 26, 1913.

⁵⁸Anna Lowry, The Martyr in Black: Twenty Years of Convent Life of "Sister Justina, O. S. B." (Aurora, Missouri, 1912), pp. 27-58.

⁵⁹St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 26, 1913.

⁶⁰Orphan's Record, August, 1916, p. 254.

district court for Logan County. In the brief written by her attorney, she claimed that she had an oral agreement when she entered the convent that she would render services as a teacher. Since she estimated that a reasonable salary for her teaching services would have been \$100 per month, her suit called for the payment of \$8,600 in past due wages. Furthermore, she claimed that the oral agreement bound the order to provide her with a home for her natural life in return for her teaching services. The Benedictines, alleged Sister Justina, demanded menial housekeeping chores and care for sick individuals. She performed this arduous labor in unheated buildings, with little nourishment, and under brutal taskmasters. In doing so, the order had prevented her from fulfilling her part of the contract while it had ignored its part of the bargain. Consequently, Anna Lowry alleged, the order was still responsible for providing her with a lifetime estate. Claiming that she was only thirty-eight years old and that her life expectancy was just over twenty-nine and one half years, the suit called for additional damages of \$8,860 based upon a scale of \$300 per year. In sum, Anna Lowry's suit called for the Benedictine order to pay her \$17,460 for violating the oral agreement concluded when she joined the convent.⁶¹ In the article announcing the filing of the suit, a Guthrie newspaper commented, "The case promises to be sensational in the

⁶¹Lowry, The Martyr in Black, pp. 72-74.

extreme."⁶²

During the next year, the Benedictine sisters investigated the background of ex-Sister Justina in the preparation of their defense against the legal action. In the course of their investigation, they discovered that Anna Lowry had been born in 1857 and thus was well over fifty years of age. In a case involving a life annuity, a difference of ten or fifteen years made quite a difference.⁶³ During the trial in September, 1913, the attorney representing the nuns, Mr. C. G. Hornor, seized upon this discrepancy in his cross-examination of Anna Lowry and succeeded in impeaching her testimony. After pointing out further inconsistencies, Hornor moved for an immediate dismissal after the presentation of the plaintiff's case. The judge sustained the defense motion on the grounds that ex-Sister Justina had failed to substantiate her case.⁶⁴

A newspaper in Guthrie concluded that the decision "of the Court bore out the common opinion that there was nothing in the case."⁶⁵ The court ruling, however, neither ended the career of Anna Lowry nor halted the spreading anti-Catholicism. The Menace used the court case as an example of how the long tentacles of the papal conspiracy had gained

⁶²Guthrie Daily Leader, November 1, 1912.

⁶³Mother Placida to J. E. Rochford, Guthrie, November 11, 1912, "Benedictine Sisters (Guthrie) and ex-Sister Justina (Anna Lowry)" file, AAOKC.

⁶⁴St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 26, 1913.

⁶⁵Oklahoma State Register, September 15, 1913.

control of the state's judicial system.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the publicity afforded ex-Sister Justina gave her the notoriety to become one of the state's leading anti-Catholic lecturers. After several forays through Oklahoma, she left for the financially greener pastures in other states to carry on her crusade against the Catholic Church.

With the departure of Anna Lowry, the leading anti-Catholic lecturer in Oklahoma before World War I was Roy Crane, whose background differed greatly from that of the former nun. Moving from St. Joseph, Missouri, Crane settled in Holdenville in 1912 as the socialist organizer for Hughes County. Under his organization, the Socialist Party, running ahead of the Republicans, came within 284 votes of carrying the county in 1914 for governor. After the Socialist fortunes began to wane in 1915, Crane turned to anti-Catholicism with the publication of a ninety-four page booklet entitled Barbarous Catholicism. While all but two pages of the work were copied from earlier anti-Catholic slanders, including the bogus Knights of Columbus oath, Barbarous Catholicism marked Crane's transformation from an anti-Semetic socialist to an anti-Catholic socialist. Taking to the lecture circuit, Crane preached his brand of anti-Catholic socialism through southern and western Oklahoma.

Crane, however, ran into a problem in El Reno when the

⁶⁶The Menace, July 5, 1913.

Knights of Columbus persuaded the county attorney to file two charges against the itinerant lecturer for selling copies of his book. In the first charge, based on disseminating obscene, vile, and lascivious literature, the jury voted five to one for acquittal. The second charge against Crane was for libeling the Knights of Columbus by the distribution of the spurious oath. In January, 1916, the jury returned a guilty verdict but set the punishment at a token one-dollar fine. While the judge criticized the jury for the light sentence, Crane appealed the conviction to the Criminal Court of Appeals, which ultimately affirmed the lower court.⁶⁷ Crane's activities suffered a greater reversal when he was again arrested during World War I. Convicted of interfering with conscription during the war, he was sentenced to the federal penitentiary. Yet he would later take the stump in Oklahoma during the early 1920's to continue his crusade against the papal conspiracy.

During the first twelve years of the Diocese of Oklahoma, the foundations for the future took shape. With new churches, schools, charities, and organizations, the next years of Oklahoma Catholicism seemed to have a base upon which to build. However, the chronic difficulties created by the state's wide expanses, few Catholics, and meager income, would continue to hamper the construction of a sound institution. Coincidental with the erection of this foundation

⁶⁷R. Sevens, "Who is Roy Crane?" (El Reno, Oklahoma, 1916), reprinted in Catholic Home, July 7, 1923.

was the forming of the pattern of anti-Catholic charges and actions which would be repeated during the next ten years. Although the Catholic Church began to react to such activities during these early years, its response would become better organized and more sophisticated with experience.

CHAPTER III

FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM AT HOME AND ABROAD, 1917-1919

When a young Serbian student assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, he struck a spark to the fuse of the European powder-keg that had become more and more lethal during the preceding decades. Being fanned by a month of diplomatic challenges, ultimatums, and responses, the fire travelled the slow-burning fuse until Europe exploded into a general war in August with Germany and Austria-Hungary opposing France, Great Britain, and Russia. Immediately after the first formal declarations of war, Germany had launched the first offensive against France by thrusting her armies through neutral Belgium and Luxembourg.

During that fateful August, Bishop Theophile Meersch-
chaert was travelling through his native Belgium in an attempt to locate money and additional priests for his American diocese. When the German armies crossed the Belgian frontier, Meersch-
chaert was visiting the parish church in Coutrai, Belgium. As forth thousand soldiers raced through the small Belgian community, the German military clogged the roads and transportation facilities and thus stranded the Oklahoma prelate for nine days. During

Meerschaert's stay, he saw German officers abuse the local pastor, viewed soldiers robbing innocent Belgians, heard Germans demean the Catholic Church, and witnessed, in sum, what would become known as "The Rape of Belgium." In addition, he heard first-hand accounts of further destruction which the German forces had inflicted upon his native land, notably the devastation of the University of Louvain.

Realizing the extent of the raging conflict, Meerschaert immediately decided to end his trip and struggled through a warring Europe to find passage for the United States.

Greatly saddened and depressed by the destruction, he returned to Oklahoma City on October 8, 1914, aboard an Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe passenger train. Greeted by a large delegation of clergy and Catholic laity, Meerschaert led the throng to his residence, where a reception was held to welcome him back to safety. While he mentioned in his public address to the crowd "the horrors of Belgium,"¹ the brief news story in The Daily Oklahoman mentioned only that the cleric said that he was glad to be back in the United States.² During the next two years as President Woodrow Wilson tried to steer the ship of state through the war-infested waters, Meerschaert carefully avoided making his personal feelings known about the war. Yet his sympathies

¹The private diary of Bishop Theophile Meerschaert, August 15, 1914, September 8, 1914, and October 8, 1914, AAOKC.

²Daily Oklahoman, October 9, 1914.

obviously did not lie with the German invaders and devastators of his homeland. With Belgium providing more priests to Oklahoma than any other country and with the leadership positions of the diocese in hands of Belgian-born clergy, the priests in Oklahoma generally followed Meerschaert in keeping their anti-German feeling hidden under a blanket of open neutrality.³ Even the diocesan publication, edited by a Belgian priest, did not slant the news to favor one side or the other in the European conflict. In reporting news about the Catholic Church from across the world, the Oklahoma Catholic magazine reported favorably about the relations between the Catholic Church and both belligerent groups.⁴

Nevertheless, public neutrality did not prevent Meerschaert from becoming involved in the politics directly related to the European war. When a relief commission began to organize a national effort to aid war-torn Belgium, Governor Robert L. Williams established the Oklahoma Belgian Relief Fund with himself as president. In addition, Williams requested Meerschaert to become honorary president of the state group since he was a Belgian by birth and was prominent

³Even one priest who had a strong German background did not favor the cause of Germany. Father John Heiring, while born in Iowa, was the son of German immigrants who spoke German in their home. Yet in all the sermons Heiring delivered from August, 1914, to April, 1917, he never expressed sympathy for the German forces, but he occasionally implied support for the beleaguered Belgians.

⁴For examples, see The Orphan's Record, December, 1915, p. 384, January, 1916, p. 19, and March, 1916, p. 88.

in Oklahoma's religious circles. Readily accepting, Meerschaert issued the first public appeal in Oklahoma for donations to alleviate the starvation and distress in the war-razed country.⁵

During the next two years, Meerschaert and his representative on the State Executive Committee, Belgian-born Urban de Hasque, worked to assist their native country by obtaining charitable assistance from across the Sooner State. To benefit the Oklahoma Belgian Relief Fund, several tours were arranged for lectures to serve as a focal point for contributions.⁶ The Catholic Church also joined with other groups in trying to collect clothing for direct shipment in January, 1916, to relieve the winter-suffering Belgium.⁷ Finally, the bishop granted one of his Belgian priests a leave of absence to work in New York City for the National Belgian Relief Committee.⁸ This strong activity to assist the Belgians from German oppression would gradually compromise the neutral stand of the Catholic hierarchy and clergy in Oklahoma.

As the mood of the nation edged toward war with Germany during the winter and spring of 1917, the public position of the Catholic Church in Oklahoma echoed the national trend

⁵Orphan's Record, January, 1915, pp. 14-15.

⁶Orphan's Record, July, 1915, p. 219.

⁷Orphan's Record, December, 1915, p. 367.

⁸Orphan's Record, October, 1916, p. 325.

as the clergy took on a distinctly anti-German stance. When a Belgian priest conducted a retreat at St. Joseph's Academy in Guthrie in December, 1916, he urged the students to pray for his family and friends who were courageously fighting the Germans.⁹ When Bishop Meerschaert went to Camp Doniphan at Fort Sill for a public celebration of Washington's Birthday sponsored by the state council of the Knights of Columbus, the principal speaker detailed the cause of the war as "the fallacious sayings and doings-- misrepresentations and fake statements of the Germans for 50 years past."¹⁰ When war finally engulfed the United States in April, 1917, Oklahoma Catholics had followed the national sentiment leading the nation to arms. While not true for individual Catholic clergymen, the diocesan magazine's editorial comment on the declaration of war could correctly state that the publication had "remained absolutely neutral." Yet the declaration of war by Congress enabled The Orphan's Record to pledge their unfailing support to President Woodrow Wilson. As the editor concluded, "No nation ever entered war with cleaner hands and more just cause than the United States of America has entered upon the present conflict."¹¹

⁹Orphan's Record, January, 1917, p. 23.

¹⁰ The private diary of Bishop Theophile Meerschaert, February 22, 1917, AAOKC.

¹¹ Orphan's Record, May, 1917, pp. 133-134.

The war activities of the Knights of Columbus centered on Camp Doniphan recreation halls at Fort Sill near Lawton. These activities were designed to provide Catholic and non-Catholic soldiers with acceptable entertainment and the Catholic soldiers with facilities for their spiritual needs. Moving to take care of the soldiers during the preparedness effort before the actual entry of the United States into war, the Knights of Columbus went full speed during the summer of 1917 and opened the building in November, 1917.¹² Funds for this activity came from the donations which the Oklahoma Knights helped to collect in support of the national Knights of Columbus program for recreation at all major military bases at home and abroad. While the Oklahoma quota was \$19,000, individuals of all denominations had pledged more than \$65,000 and had already paid \$45,000 by May, 1918.¹³

Since the Knights of Columbus were only one of several groups conducting fund drives to aid recreational and welfare work among American servicemen, they shared in a new effort in November, 1918, called the United War Work drive, which combined the various collections for the social agencies into one large national effort. In Oklahoma, an executive committee was established for the state with the

¹²Orphan's Record, December, 1918, pp. 366-367.

¹³State Council, Knights of Columbus, Report of the Thirteenth Annual Convention of the Knights of Columbus Held at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, May 14, 1918 (Oklahoma City, [1918]), p. 4.

National Catholic War Council represented by Tom Wade, State Deputy of the Knights of Columbus.¹⁴ Other Catholic laymen involved directly in the effort included J. F. Owen, who had overall command of the fund-raising effort in Oklahoma City,¹⁵ and Mrs. Thomas H. Doyle, who coordinated the activities of the women across the Sooner State.¹⁶ At every level of the campaign, joint committees were established to provide representation for all the groups, including Catholics, interested in the effort. Meerschaert urged his co-religionists to "work with those committees in a friendly and whole-hearted manner."¹⁷ This plea for friendly cooperation with the non-Catholics in the fund drive was in answer to Catholics who "instead of being good mixers, . . . have disliked Protestants on general principles, being . . . bitter and prejudiced toward them . . ."¹⁸ While not all problems were solved at this early effort in ecumenical relations, the drive did attain its monetary goal both in Oklahoma and across the nation.

Also active in the war effort on the home front were Catholic women who worked with the Red Cross to make bandages and sew clothes for the troops overseas. Furthermore,

¹⁴Orphan's Record, November, 1918, pp. 155-156.

¹⁵Orphan's Record, December, 1918, p. 185.

¹⁶Orphan's Record, October, 1918, p. 127.

¹⁷Orphan's Record, November, 1918, p. 156.

¹⁸Orphan's Record, December, 1918, p. 185.

some Catholic clergy publicly participated in various Liberty Loan drives, in the sale of War Savings Stamps, and in the everpresent Councils of Defense.¹⁹ Supporting the motivation behind the Councils of Defense, individual parishes stressed the need for patriotism and, whenever possible, proudly displayed their loyalty to their country. In every parish church in the diocese, a service flag, with a star for every member of the parish serving in the armed forces, adorned the sanctuary as a public reminder of the loyalty of the communicants. Americanism, flag ceremonies, and patriotic songs dotted the Catholic school exercises across the state. In this vein, the church hierarchy urged all teachers in the Catholic educational system to get their students to join the Oklahoma School Children's Patriotic League, whose motto was "My country, may she ever be right, but right or wrong, my country."²⁰

These attempts at an ostentatious display of patriotism seemingly were efforts to prove that Catholics were as loyal, if not more so, as their fellow Americans. With the intense antagonism against German-Americans during World War I, the German-Catholics hoped that the continual references to their loyalty would reduce the animosity against their nationality. At Goltry with its large population of

¹⁹Orphan's Record, May, 1918, p. 25, June, 1918, p. 28, and August, 1919, p. 247.

²⁰Urban de Hasque, circular letter to all teachers in Catholic schools of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, March 14, 1918, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

German-Catholics, the parish sponsored an evening of patriotic entertainment which attracted five hundred people for the expressed purpose "to emphasize the loyalty of the Catholic citizens of this community to the American flag and to all it represents."²¹

The Oklahoma Catholics of all nationalities used these displays of patriotism as part of their defense against anti-Catholics who claimed that Catholics were disloyal to their country. As the state deputy of the Knights of Columbus stated immediately after the American declaration of war, "The present European war may also mean much in overcoming this bigotry when it is seen how promptly the Catholic Church takes the part of the true American citizen and stands with the President of the United States in this awful conflict."²² Continually citing the Catholic activities on the home front and the point that forty per cent of the American soldiers were Catholic, church officials never ceased belaboring the involvement in World War I as the example of Catholic patriotism. When the Guthrie Daily Leader published a letter which contained aspersions upon the Catholic Church, the pastor of the Guthrie church responded with a lengthy letter which pointed to the fact that "the loyal sons of the Church and at the same time

²¹Orphan's Record, July, 1917, p. 203.

²²State Council, Knights of Columbus, Report of the Twelfth Annual Convention of the Knights of Columbus Held at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, May 8, 1917 ([Oklahoma City], [1917]), p. 5.

loyal citizens of the United States are fighting and bleeding to death for the rights of humanity and for American freedom."²³

While the nation was fighting a brutal war in Europe to make the world safe for democracy, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma found itself fighting a legal battle in the state's courts to make the Sooner State safe for Catholicism. The problem began nearly two months prior to America's declaration of war, when on February 15, 1917, the Oklahoma House of Representatives approved Senate Bill No. 55, which made it ". . . unlawful for any person in this state to receive directly or indirectly any liquors from a common or other carrier . . . [and] unlawful for any person in this state to possess any liquors received directly or indirectly from a common or other carrier." This legislation, however, specifically exempted pure grain alcohol consigned to scientific institutions, universities and colleges, bonded apothecaries, hospitals, and pharmacies.²⁴ Known as Oklahoma's "Bone-Dry Law," it thus exempted liquor for medicinal purposes while omitting another traditional exception in Prohibition statutes, namely sacramental alcohol. This failure to exclude altar wine from the Bone-Dry Law posed a serious threat to the Catholic Church, which had used wine in its liturgy for centuries. The law was

²³Orphan's Record, December, 1918, p. 178.

²⁴Session Laws of Oklahoma, 1917, Chapter 186, pp. 350-351.

indeed tantamount to outlawing the Catholic Mass within the borders of the state of Oklahoma.

The motivation for this legislation began in 1907, when Oklahoma voters approved the referendum which prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol. As the nation would come to experience during the 1920's, Oklahoma grappled with the complex problems of enforcing Prohibition during the first decade of its statehood. One such difficulty was the legality of purchasing liquor from outside Oklahoma and shipping it into the state. To end this avenue of liquor into Oklahoma and the other dry states, the United States Congress in 1913 approved the Webb-Kenyon Act, which forbade the interstate shipment of alcohol in violation of state law. When the United States Supreme Court upheld the Webb-Kenyon Act on January 8, 1917, the Oklahoma legislature was ready to move. By passing Senate Bill No. 55, the legislators hoped to cure two ills afflicting statewide enforcement of Prohibition. The first was to close the loophole permitting the transportation of intoxicants into the state as well as within the state. Secondly, the new legislation would make the state "bone-dry" by prohibiting the possession of liquor.²⁵

During the legislative consideration of the statute, two arguments dominated the debate. The first was whether

²⁵Jimmie Lewis Franklin, Born Sober: Prohibition in Oklahoma, 1907-1959 (Norman, Oklahoma, 1971), pp. 36, 41, 54, 64.

the medicinal exemption should apply only to institutions or both to institutions and individuals. The legislature decided to adopt the stronger regulation, which allowed for only institutions to be exempt.²⁶ The second and more significant controversy arose over a proposal by Governor Robert L. Williams, a personal wet but a political moderate. The chief executive urged that the law allow an individual to bring into the state one quart of liquor every thirty days. By a vote of 70 to 34, the House of Representatives defeated this modification on February 7, 1917.²⁷ In deciding both controversies, the legislature chose the stricter alternative and showed that its main concern was the rigorous enforcement of Prohibition in order to remedy the social and moral evils associated with alcohol.

While neither of the major disputes involved the use of sacramental wine, the issue of religious use of wine apparently entered into the legislative discussion very briefly. On an amendment by a Protestant senator to exempt sacramental alcohol, a senate committee quickly defeated the change.²⁸ As an Oklahoma newspaper commented when the controversy over sacramental wine came to the forefront in

²⁶Journal of the Senate of the Regular Session, Sixth Legislature of the State of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, [1917]), pp. 361, 363.

²⁷Journal of the House of Representatives of the Regular Session of the Sixth Legislature of the State of Oklahoma (Oklahoma City, [1917]), pp. 738, 745.

²⁸Harlow's Weekly, October 24, 1917; Urban de Hasque to John F. Cunneen, Oklahoma City, December 19, 1917, Urban

the fall of 1917, "If Catholic communion wine is exempt ... all other denominations should be and that would make a pretty big leak" in the Bone-Dry Law.²⁹ If this rationale was in the senators' minds during their brief discussion of sacramental alcohol, then the legislative decision was again grounded in the desire for a strict enforcement statute.

The legislature which thus tried to tighten the liquor laws was not a nest of anti-Catholic bigots wanting to harass the small Catholic minority of Oklahoma. During the same session, for instance, a member of each house offered legislation to fulfill a major hope of The Menace, namely a statewide "Convent Inspection Bill." The chairman of the Senate Committee on the Constitution and Constitutional Amendments wrote a Catholic priest that this obviously anti-Catholic legislation was doomed to defeat. In his letter, Senator Thomas O'Neill, a Protestant, wrote, ". . . [M]y knowledge of the personnel of this Body prompts me to assure you that no such legislation will be tolerated."³⁰ Furthermore, the senator who introduced the Bone-Dry Law, Walter Ferguson, was a newspaper editor in Cherokee,

²⁸(Continued) de Hasque to Paul L. Blakely, Oklahoma City, January 31, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

²⁹Waukomis Hornet as quoted by Harlow's Weekly, October 24, 1917.

³⁰Urban de Hasque to Thomas J. O'Neill, Oklahoma City, February 12, 1917, Thomas J. O'Neill to Urban de Hasque, Oklahoma City, February 19, 1917, "Legislation" file, General Correspondence to 1930, AAOKC.

Oklahoma. When a display of anti-Catholic prejudice marred the election of the Republican National Committeeman in 1920, Ferguson severly condemned the attitude of his fellow Republicans.³¹

Rather than religious bigotry in the legislature, inactivity in the Catholic Church is a more accurate explanation for the failure of the Bone-Dry Law to exempt religious alcohol. As H. T. Laughbaum, the State Superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League of Oklahoma and chief architect for the legislation, explained, "We would gladly have incorporated into the law the permission to import wine into the state for sacramental purposes but at the time you [Episcopalians and Catholics] sent no delegates and ignored us so completely that we let the law go on record as it stood."³² As implied in Laughbaum's statement, the Catholic Church was indifferent to Senate Bill No. 55 and did not make an issue of sacramental wine during the legislative discussion. Likewise, the Chancellor for the Diocese of Oklahoma, Father Urban de Hasque, claimed, "[N]o group or society of Catholics is known by me to have taken any action for or against the passage of the Bone-Dry Law."³³ In fact, the only Catholic member of the legislature, State Representative H. R. Christopher of Henryetta, voted in the House

³¹Orphan's Record, March, 1920, p. 17.

³²Oklahoma City Times, September 17, 1917.

³³Urban de Hasque to Paul L. Blakely, Oklahoma City, January 31, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

against Governor Williams' modification and in favor of the final bill.³⁴

This inactivity of the Catholic Church continued after the legislature sent the approved measure to Governor Williams. As Williams weighed the merits of the legislature, the wets urged his veto and the dries wanted his signature on the bill.³⁵ Yet Oklahoma's Catholic Bishop Theophile Meerschaert, although he had participated in several public events with the governor and was a close acquaintance of the chief executive, apparently did not take advantage of this relationship to defeat the legislation. Indeed, The Catholic Advance of Wichita, Kansas, editorialized that the Oklahoma Catholics were oblivious to the possible consequences of the legislation. "If the Catholic people were on the lookout, the temporary annoyance to which they are put at the present might have been sidetracked."³⁶ Through such inactivity and indifference, the Catholic Church allowed the state to enact a Prohibition measure which outlawed alcohol for religious purposes. Such a strict statute was a bomb waiting to detonate as soon as a state or county official tried to enforce the ban on

³⁴Journal of the House of Representatives, 1917, pp. 745, 902.

³⁵For an example of those urging a veto, see W. J. Hess to Robert L. Williams, Norman, Oklahoma, February 16, 1917, #73875; for an example of those urging approval, see Mrs. N. M. Carter and Mrs. S. E. Richardson to Robert L. Williams, Guthrie, Oklahoma, February 16, 1917, #73885, Robert L. Williams papers, OHS.

³⁶Catholic Advance, October 20, 1917.

religious liquor.

The explosion, coming in late August, 1917, propelled the previously ignored issue of sacramental wine to the front pages of the state's newspapers. Armed with a warrant issued by Judge Custer Burke, the sheriff of Cleveland county went to the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad freight office in Norman. There the officer seized a barrel containing fifty bottles of sacramental wine consigned to Monsignor John Metter, pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Norman. After being returned to Judge Burke's courtroom, the fermented wine disappeared.³⁷ The irascible Metter immediately wrote Governor Williams protesting the confiscation and claiming that the judge and his friends had drunk the liquor. Since the legislature had also enacted a law which called for the removal of any state or county officer who failed to enforce Prohibition, the governor ordered Attorney General S. Prince Freeling to launch an immediate investigation.³⁸

The attorney general, an ardent dry, was presented with a situation involving two untested laws, the Bone-Dry Law and the removal statute. Lest the two issues be confused, Freeling issued an interpretation of the Bone-Dry Law based upon a letter which he had received during the summer from

³⁷J. J. Baker to Theophile Meerschaert, Norman, Oklahoma, September 16, 1917, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC; The Daily Oklahoman, August 30, 1917; The Oklahoma News, September 29, 1917.

³⁸Oklahoma City Times, August 31, 1917.

Father Leo Gariador, prior of the Benedictine Abbey at Sacred Heart, Oklahoma. The monk had sent a private and confidential inquiry to the attorney general asking for friendly advice regarding the legality of the monk's manufacture of wine for use by the monastery. Freeling had informally told one of the Benedictine brothers that it was all right as long as the county officers did not interfere.³⁹ Freeling, however, now reversed himself and issued an official opinion based upon a strict reading of the law, declaring that sacramental wine was indeed prohibited.⁴⁰ Regarding Metter's charges against Judge Burke, the attorney general called for a grand jury investigation which ultimately exonerated the judge.⁴¹

When the newspapers printed the Freeling decision on altar wine, Bishop Meerschaert denounced the ruling as "intolerable and outrageous" and asserted that the Catholic clergy would continue to use wine in defiance of Freeling's official opinion.⁴² Spurred by such criticism, Freeling announced that he would attend a meeting of attorneys representing the various railroads in Oklahoma. The state official hoped that together they might find some legal means to allow for the importation of sacramental wine.

³⁹Leo Gariador to Theophile Meerschaert, Sacred Heart, Oklahoma, September 12, 1917, Leo Gariador to Theophile Meerschaert, September 15, 1917, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁴⁰Oklahoma News, September 7, 1917.

⁴¹Daily Oklahoman, September 21, 1917.

⁴²Daily Oklahoman, September 8, 1917.

But, Freeling cautioned, "We do not make the law; we merely construe it."⁴³ The meeting failed to discover a loophole, and the railroads reluctantly announced that they would follow the letter of the law.⁴⁴

The Norman seizure and the subsequent attorney general's ruling forced the Catholic Church to recognize the state legislature's failure to exempt sacramental wine from Prohibition. In doing so, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Oklahoma offered a different explanation for the legislative motivation behind the Bone-Dry Law. Bishop Meerschaert declared that a "great deal of bigotry" was mixed into the Prohibition movement.⁴⁵ Father Urban de Hasque, Meerschaert's chancellor, accused dry leader H. T. Laughbaum of being sick with religious intolerance and "communicating the virus of his contagious infection to the legislature."⁴⁶ The Orphan's Record, Oklahoma's official Catholic publication, editorialized that those who "love to find fault" with the Catholic Church created the controversy out of bitterness.⁴⁷ This explanation of the law as an example of religious prejudice was understandable in view of

⁴³Daily Oklahoman, September 9, 1917.

⁴⁴Oklahoma City Times, September 10, 1917.

⁴⁵Urban de Hasque to Bernard J. McNamara, Oklahoma City, November 27, 1917, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁴⁶Urban de Hasque to Paul L. Blakely, Oklahoma City, January 31, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁴⁷Orphan's Record, October, 1917, p. 306.

the developing anti-Catholic sentiment clearly present in Oklahoma during the previous decade. Yet the Catholics' view of the legislative intent and the real desire of the House and the Senate to insure strict enforcement of Prohibition determined the issues of the subsequent controversy. With the Catholics believing that religious bigotry had caused the enactment of the law, they grounded their arguments on the principles of religious freedom and toleration. Their opponents, on the other hand, saw the many social and moral ills which could be cured only through the rigorous ban of intoxicating liquor.

During the fall of 1917, the Catholics of Oklahoma received verbal support from other denominations. In early September, Dean Frederick Bates of Oklahoma City's Episcopal cathedral stated that the use of fermented wine in liturgical services was a matter of conscience for all Catholics and Episcopalians. Furthermore, Bates argued that the prohibition of sacramental wine was a direct violation of the principle of religious freedom.⁴⁸ The annual convention of Oklahoma Episcopalians concurred with Dean Bates when it resolved that the Bone-Dry Law was an infringement upon the constitutional guarantee of religious liberty and called upon the legislature to amend the law during its next session.⁴⁹ In a sermon to his congregation, the Rev. A. C.

⁴⁸Oklahoma City Times, September 10, 1917.

⁴⁹Daily Oklahoman, October 5, 1917.

Dubberstein, pastor of the Zion Lutheran Church in Oklahoma City, argued that the Bone-Dry Law violated the principles of Sacred Scripture, the United States Constitution, and the Oklahoma constitution.⁵⁰ The Rev. Oswald Helsing of the Unitarian Church in Oklahoma City also said that the law was an offense against the liberty of conscience.⁵¹

Other religious leaders, however, rejected the claims of those wanting sacramental wine. The Rev. A. P. Aten, pastor of the South Side Christian Church and president of the Oklahoma City Ministerial Alliance, claimed that the state needed to enforce all of its laws and that "there was no necessity for the introduction of wine for sacramental purposes."⁵² Furthermore, the Ministerial Alliance passed a compromise resolution which amounted to a defeat for the arguments of the Catholic Church. In resolving to support all the current prohibitory laws of the state, the Alliance avoided taking a position on fermented wines in divine worship.⁵³ The congregation of Oklahoma City's First Baptist Church also entered the fray and unanimously passed a resolution condemning any effort to discriminate in favor of any denomination in the transportation of wine into the state for sacramental purposes. The Baptists based their

⁵⁰Daily Oklahoman, November 19, 1917.

⁵¹Oklahoma City Times, September 19, 1917.

⁵²Oklahoma City Times, September 10, 1917.

⁵³Oklahoma City Times, September 17, 1917.

opinion on the idea that the laws against intoxicating liquors needed to be applied impartially to all Oklahomans.⁵⁴ All these statements against altar wine stressed the necessity of enforcing the Prohibition ordinances of Oklahoma. Thus the religious leaders of Oklahoma divided over the issue, with the Catholics and their Protestant allies arguing for religious freedom and with many other Protestants believing that only forceful legislation could bring about effective Prohibition.

By the end of September, 1917, the controversy had resulted only in a strict interpretation of the Oklahoma Bone-Dry Law and in the railroads' refusal to transport sacramental wine. Since the Oklahoma legislature held only biennial meetings, an appeal to that body would have to wait until the next session convened in 1919. Hence the Catholics felt that the only avenue for relief from this "oppressive situation" was the judicial system.⁵⁵ However, the Norman seizure entailed more legal issues than just the use of alcohol in religious rituals. With a court judge accused of drinking the wine, with the law requiring the removal of officials for failing to enforce Prohibition still untested, with the wine itself having disappeared, and with an impulsive pastor the probable plaintiff in any court case, it was wise that the Catholic Church chose not to

⁵⁴Daily Oklahoman, September 10, 1917.

⁵⁵Orphan's Record, November, 1917, p. 329.

base any appeal on the Norman incident.

Meanwhile the circumstances for an uncluttered appeal began to emerge in Guthrie, Oklahoma, with Father John Van Gastel, pastor of St. Mary's Catholic Church. Although the priest had been receiving wine from Kansas City on the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad, the Katy was now refusing to ship any wine. By the middle of September, Father Van Gastel had only enough wine for a few more days. The chaplain at the Benedictine college in Guthrie had promised to supply him with a bottle, but this was only a temporary solution to Van Gastel's problem.⁵⁶

While the situation was desperate for the Catholics in Guthrie, it was ideal for the diocesan officials, who were looking for a test case. Consequently, Father de Hasque, Chancellor of the Diocese of Oklahoma, attempted on October 4th to ship to Van Gastel via the Santa Fe railroad eight quarts of "unadulterated fermented juice of the grape." Following the attorney general's opinion, the railroad agent refused to accept the shipment. One week later, de Hasque went into the state district court for Oklahoma county to file suit against the railroad. In his brief, he petitioned the court to issue a writ of mandamus ordering the railroad to accept and deliver all shipments of altar wine.⁵⁷ The

⁵⁶John Van Gastel to Urban de Hasque, Guthrie, Oklahoma, September 10, 1917, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁵⁷Daily Oklahoman, October 12, 1917.

basis of the argument was that sacramental wine was essential for the Sacrifice of the Mass which was the supreme act of worship for all Catholics. According to the legal brief, interference with the Catholic liturgy violated the United States Constitution's guarantee of freedom of religion; disregarded Article I, section 2 of the Oklahoma constitution, which prevented any person from being molested on account of his mode of religious worship; and transgressed the Louisiana Purchase Treaty of 1803, which protected all inhabitants of Louisiana territory in the enjoyment of their religion. In sum, the ban on sacramental wine infringed upon the religious freedom of many Oklahomans.⁵⁸

The chief attorney representing de Hasque was W. Frank Wilson, a prominent Catholic lawyer in Oklahoma City. Assisting Wilson were Mont F. Highley, a Catholic, and John H. Shirk, a Lutheran. For their defense, the Santa Fe railroad had the services of Samuel Hayes, former Chief Justice of the Oklahoma Supreme Court.⁵⁹ Attorney General Freeling joined with the defense on behalf of the state. Believing that the Bone-Dry Law had proved to be the most effective of all Prohibition measures, Freeling wanted to insure that the Catholic challenge to the law would not result in totally invalidating the statute.⁶⁰ Thus the

⁵⁸Harlow's Weekly, October 17, 1917.

⁵⁹Orphan's Record, June, 1918, p. 24.

⁶⁰Harlow's Weekly, October 17, 1917.

battle of religious freedom opposing the strict enforcement of Prohibition moved from the front pages of the newspapers to the court rooms. Regarding the outcome of the conflict the Catholic Church felt confident, since it had "abiding faith in the integrity of our . . . courts, and when the time comes the right interpretation will be attached to the law."⁶¹

Such optimism, however, proved unfounded. On Christmas Eve, 1917, state District Court Judge George W. Clark rendered his decision. Basing his judgement upon the principle that the "law means what it says and says what it means," Clark reasoned that the Bone-Dry Law made the transportation of all intoxicating liquors illegal, except for grain alcohol consigned to specific institutions. Holding that the use of the wine was extraneous to the legal question, the judge ruled against the plaintiff and affirmed the illegality of transporting fermented wine into the state even for sacramental purposes.⁶² On the day of the decision, the attorneys for de Hasque announced that they would appeal the decision to the state Supreme Court.⁶³

The adverse decision of the lower court brought added national publicity to the plight of the Catholic Church in Oklahoma. As the Rev. Peter Guilday, the noted Catholic historian, wrote from Washington, D. C., "[T]he situation of

⁶¹Orphan's Record, October, 1917, p. 306.

⁶²Harlow's Weekly, December 26, 1917.

⁶³Oklahoma City Times, December 24, 1917.

the Church in Oklahoma has been brought before the entire United States."⁶⁴ The country's Catholic newspapers became interested in the case and, according to The Morning Star of New Orleans, were united in condemning the district court decision.⁶⁵ The national Jesuit weekly, America, used the case as another weapon in its arsenal to fight Prohibition. Citing the district court decision as its example, America editorialized that the Prohibition movement was endangering the Mass.⁶⁶

Such publicity caused de Hasque to receive numerous letters of inquiry regarding Oklahoma's Bone-Dry Law and Judge Clark's decision.⁶⁷ Many of these letters wanted information so that the writers could judge the possible impact of Prohibition on their own localities. For example, Ohio was scheduling a vote of the people in the fall of 1918 on the subject of Prohibition, and Albert J. Van Den Bosch was concerned over the future of sacramental wine in that state.⁶⁸ The legislature of heavily Catholic Massachusetts was considering the National Prohibition Amendment in the spring of 1918, and the Catholic Church in the Bay State

⁶⁴Peter Guilday to Urban de Hasque, Washington, D. C., January 22, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁶⁵Morning Star, January 19, 1918.

⁶⁶America, January 5, 1918, p. 323.

⁶⁷Urban de Hasque to Paul L. Blakely, January 31, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁶⁸Albert J. Van Den Bosch to Urban de Hasque, Hamilton, Ohio, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

was concerned over the Oklahoma development.⁶⁹

While many letters coming to Oklahoma City wished the church officials well in their court test of the law, others suggested nonjudicial solutions to the ban on altar wine. A Catholic layman in Vinita, Oklahoma, proposed that a statewide movement should petition President Woodrow Wilson to use his authority to obtain wine for Oklahoma Catholics.⁷⁰ A more radical proposal came from an Iowa correspondent. Since it was "indeed high time for us Catholics to assert ourselves most resolutely . . .," the Iowan recommended that the Catholic servicemen in the army and navy should refuse to fight in World War I as long as the government continued to violate the principle of religious freedom.⁷¹ The Oklahoma Catholic Church, slightly revising this letter, printed the threat in the diocesan newspaper as "An Open Letter" from "Iowanus Rusticus."⁷² A writer from Maryland suggested that the arrest of one or two priests "might be just the thing to arouse our Catholic people to the danger."⁷³

⁶⁹Telegram J. J. Splaine to Urban de Hasque, Roxbury, Massachusetts, March 22, 1918, Francis McManus to Theophile Meerschaert, Concord, Massachusetts, March 17, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁷⁰J. F. Davlin to Urban de Hasque, Vinita, Oklahoma, January 11, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁷¹Joseph A. Mench to Urban de Hasque, Warren County, Iowa, February 16, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁷²Orphan's Record, April, 1918, pp. 9-10.

⁷³Bernard J. McNamara to Urban de Hasque, March 19, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

Such national publicity also attracted the attention of John F. Cunneen. This Irish Catholic lecturer for the national Prohibition effort realized that the Catholics, while an insignificant part of Oklahoma's population, were "strong in other states where it is necessary to get Catholic votes before prohibition can win." If the national Prohibition forces did not repudiate "the Burchards of the Prohibition movement" in Oklahoma, Cunneen claimed that the Oklahoma dry fanatics "will do more to defeat prohibition in the United States than all of the liquor traffic forces."⁷⁴ To persuade the Prohibition forces to exempt sacramental wine, Cunneen printed a leaflet entitled, "The Oklahoma Sacramental Wine Case is Not Settled!" In it, he argued that the churches that use wine have a majority of the church members in twenty-one different states with 255 electoral votes. Cunneen concluded, "As it takes only 13 [states] to defeat the National Prohibition Amendment, and 266 electoral votes to elect a President, it can be easily seen that it would be suicidal policy for prohibitionists to favor a law that prohibits the use of wine for sacramental purposes."⁷⁵ Copies of this and other pamphlets by Cunneen filled the mailboxes of the leaders of the Oklahoma Anti-Saloon League, the Women's Christian Temperance Union,

⁷⁴John F. Cunneen to Urban de Hasque, Chicago, February 8, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁷⁵John F. Cunneen, "The Oklahoma Sacramental Wine Case Is Not Settled!" (Chicago, [1918]), in "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

the Prohibition Party and state officials as part of Cunneen's crusade to reverse the position of the Oklahoma prohibitionists.⁷⁶

Cunneen was not alone in this effort, as other national drys attempted to force a change in Oklahoma's ban of sacramental liquor. In 1914, the Catholic Prohibition League of America had pledged itself to securing Prohibition on both the state and national levels and to prevent altar wine from ever being included under any ban of alcoholic beverages.⁷⁷ Following its pledge, the League informed its national membership of the "outrageous" and "fanatical" Bone-Dry Law of the Sooner state.⁷⁸ Furthermore, the leadership of the Anti-Saloon League of Massachusetts publicly repudiated the Oklahoma statute and pledged to use every bit of its influence to bring about a change in the state's liquor law.⁷⁹

The national movement had cause to worry about the turn of events in Oklahoma. On April 16, 1918, New York held local option elections in thirty-nine cities. Although the dry forces had expected to carry at least thirty of these elections, only twenty cities voted in favor of Prohibition.

⁷⁶John F. Cunneen to Urban de*Hasque, Chicago, February 28, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁷⁷Catholic Prohibition League of America, Proceedings of the First Conference of Catholics Favoring Prohibition (Scranton, Pennsylvania, 1914), p. 7.

⁷⁸Catholic Temperance Advocate, January, 1918, p. 37.

⁷⁹Catholic Journal, May 4, 1918.

While some drys attributed the electoral defeats to the failure of newly enfranchised women to vote in large numbers, others analyzed the returns as a direct result of the Oklahoma situation. The New York liquor forces had capitalized upon the Oklahoma legislation and made it appear that their dry opponents favored the Sooner state's Bone-Dry Law. Consequently, one of the major issues in the New York elections was the prohibition of sacramental wine in Oklahoma.⁸⁰ For many drys, here was concrete electoral evidence that the Oklahoma controversy was endangering the national prohibition effort.

With such pressure being applied to the Oklahoma drys, H. T. Laughbaum of the Anti-Saloon League retreated from the position he had taken in 1917. Rather than intentionally omitting sacramental wine, he now claimed that he had only "overlooked" the exemption of altar wine when drafting the measure. Furthermore, he publicly pledged that he would secure an amendment exempting sacramental wine during the next legislative session if the state Supreme Court ruled against Urban de Hasque.⁸¹ Thus the pressure from dry groups beyond Oklahoma's borders had secured a pledge that Catholics would ultimately be legally able to obtain wine

⁸⁰Ernest Hurst Cherrington, editor, The Anti-Saloon League Yearbook, 1918 (Westerville, Ohio, [1918]), p. 258; Catholic Journal, May 4, 1918; John F. Cunneen to Urban de Hasque, Chicago, April 22, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁸¹H. T. Laughbaum to W. H. Anderson, Oklahoma City, April 11, 1918, as printed in Catholics and Prohibition, August, 1918, pp. 5-6.

for sacramental purposes.

The Catholics, however, did not need to wait until the next legislature because Oklahoma's Supreme Court rendered its decision on May 21, 1918. Although Chief Justice M. J. Kane, himself a Roman Catholic, abstained, the remaining supreme court justices were unanimous in their verdict. While the opinion, written by Justice Thomas H. Owens, admitted that the literal interpretation of the Bone-Dry Law would prohibit altar wine, it argued that the state legislature had always manifested a strong belief in the freedom of religion and a profound reverence for divine services. Consequently, the legal brief concluded that sacramental wine was exempt from the Bone-Dry Law because religious liquor was "not within its spirit, nor within the intention of its makers."⁸² Thus in the conflict between the freedom of religion and the strict enforcement of Prohibition, the Supreme Court decision supported the principle of religious freedom. However, the justices also upheld the constitutionality of the ban on the transportation of intoxicating liquors. Thus Attorney General S. Prince Freeling succeeded in his desire to keep the law intact even if the court system allowed for Catholics to obtain alcohol for religious services.

The Catholic reaction to the decision was understandably one of elation. The Orphan's Record praised the judg-

⁸²Urban de Hasque vs. Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Co., 68 Okla 182 (1918).

ment as reflecting "much honor and credit upon the Supreme Court of Oklahoma and shall be heralded throughout the United States by the true friends of religious liberty."⁸³ In Wichita, Kansas, The Catholic Advance claimed victory over the enemies of the Catholic Church and warned them "not [to] hatch any more 'crow' for they shall be made to eat it."⁸⁴ The Morning Star of New Orleans congratulated Meerschaert and de Hasque on their victory and praised the triumph of religious liberty.⁸⁵ Furthermore, de Hasque received many personal letters of congratulations from prominent Catholics who believed that the decision would protect the church in its religious exercises even as the Prohibition movement crystalized into national law.⁸⁶

The dry forces also hailed the judicial ruling, but for different reasons. H. T. Laughbaum claimed, "The Oklahoma case is settled for all time, and anti-prohibitionists will no longer be able to make capital out of this case under the pretense of saving the Mass."⁸⁷ The Anti-Saloon League of America claimed that the Supreme Court's decision was the exhaustive answer to "the opponents of prohibition [who]

⁸³Orphan's Record, June, 1918, p. 25.

⁸⁴Catholic Advance, June 8, 1918.

⁸⁵Morning Star, June 15, 1918.

⁸⁶For example, see John Glennon to Urban de Hasque, St. Louis, Missouri, May 24, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

⁸⁷Catholics and Prohibition, August, 1918, p. 6.

have seized upon the decision of the lower court and used it widely to prejudice Catholic voters and certain other Church voters against such legislation and constitutional amendments." In fact, the organization printed the "very remarkable" decision in full and urged its members to take particular note of the ruling.⁸⁸ By judicially excluding the use of altar wine from the dry laws, the court decision was thus a major weapon for prohibitionists to use in conquering one of the last defenses against the National Prohibition Amendment. Indeed, the Massachusetts legislature ratified the amendment only after being assured that the prohibition of wine "for beverage only" did not include sacramental wine.⁸⁹

With all sides feeling victorious over the resolution of this legal battle, a greater sense of euphoria swept them and other Americans on November 11, 1918, when word was received that Germany had signed the Armistice. On that day, Bishop Meerschaert wrote a letter to the Catholics of Oklahoma which began, "Thank God! the war is ended and the fighting is over!" With foresight, he asked his people to continue their prayers for peace "until the time when the

⁸⁸Cherrington, ed., The Anti-Saloon League Yearbook, 1918, pp. 278-285, 455.

⁸⁹Telegram, J. J. Splaine to Urban de Hasque, Roxbury, Massachusetts, February 22, 1918, J. J. Splaine to Urban de Hasque, Roxbury, Massachusetts, March 20, 1918, "Sacramental Wine Case" file, AAOKC.

Council of Nations will have signed the final peace."⁹⁰ In this line, some clergy warned that the League of Nations could not succeed in achieving a permanent peace without the divine aid of the Prince of Peace. In talking about the "movement for 'universal peace,'" Father John Heiring commented that the League of Nations was almost doomed to defeat since it was a human creation and not a divine plan.⁹¹ Regarding the complicated secular issues surrounding the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations, the Knights of Columbus unanimously passed a resolution in the spring of 1919 urging that the people of Ireland should be granted the right of self-determination which "had been adopted by the enlightened conscience of the world as the only just and practicable solution for the many perplexing questions arising because of oppressed nationalities."⁹² While this statement would imply opposition to the treaty, which did not contain a provision for an Irish state, "The Orphan's Record dryly commented during the United States Senate consideration of the treaty, "The armistice was signed a year ago, and the only democratic nation on earth is still making a fool of itself."⁹³ In contrast to the Knights of

⁹⁰Theophile Meerschaert, circular letter, Oklahoma City, November 11, 1918, John Heiring papers, AAOKC.

⁹¹John Heiring, "VII Sunday After Pentecost," sermon delivered in Tulsa, n.d., John Heiring papers, AAOKC.

⁹²State Council, Knights of Columbus, Report of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the Knights of Columbus Held at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, May 13, 1919 (n.p., [1919]), p. 13.

⁹³Orphan's Record, November, 1919, p. 342.

Columbus resolution, the editorial comment implied a criticism of the opponents of the treaty, who were successfully thwarting ratification in the Senate. Since these were the only two substantive comments directed toward the Versailles Treaty, the few stated positions of Catholic organizations in Oklahoma offered contradictory opinions on the subject of the final peace settlement.

During the years of World War I, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma, despite its pro-Belgian sympathies, followed the national policy of neutrality until war seemed imminent. Once the United States threw its weight onto the European balance of power, the Sooner Catholic Church enthusiastically rallied to the cause of the nation at home and abroad. During the formation of the American position on the League of Nations, the church generally withheld comment and remained above the fight. Since all three of these responses to the world situation show that the Oklahoma Catholics publicly supported the national policy once it had been derived, these positions became part of the evidence to refute the anti-Catholic accusations that Catholics were not loyal American citizens. The court decision regarding sacramental wine gave the Catholics in the Sooner State a strong court opinion upholding the freedom to practice one's religion free from governmental interference. Consequently, the case could serve as a judicial precedent in case of any similar effort which would outlaw the Catholic religion in Oklahoma. As a result of the Catholic activities on the

home front, on the battle front, and in the court room during the First World War, Oklahoma Catholics had prepared to meet even the stronger challenge which anti-Catholicism would pose during the first years of the 1920's.

CHAPTER IV

BATTLING ANTI-CATHOLICISM AT HIGH TIDE, 1920-1924

Typical of a winter Sunday, Catholic families across Oklahoma City arose early on a clear but crisp January 4, 1920, to attend Mass. After the church services, they returned to their homes for a leisurely day of rest. As the wife busily rushed through the kitchen preparing breakfast, the husband glanced through the enlarged Sunday edition of the city's major newspaper. On the front page, the Oklahoman had published an article under the headline "Round-up of Radicals Halted Menacing Plot," which summarized the mass arrests earlier in the week of aliens and alleged radicals by Woodrow Wilson's attorney general. Flowing in part from the reservoir of superpatriotism built up during World War I, the so-called "Red Scare" inaugurated the intolerance associated with the 1920's. Beside the article concerning the raids on the supposed subversives, the Oklahoma City newspaper carried an article analyzing emergent anti-Catholicism in the political campaign for Republican National Committeeman.¹ This news story about religious prejudice

¹Daily Oklahoman, January 4, 1920.

foreshadowed how the "Age of Normalcy" would affect the Catholic Church in Oklahoma. Of the many different social characteristics of the 1920's, the one which would most directly affect the Sooner Catholics was blatant and rampant anti-Catholicism.

During January, according to one political observer, "the contest of James J. McGraw and Colonel Jake L. Hamon for republican national committeeman has passed all other campaigns in Oklahoma in so far as space given by newspapers is concerned."² The early favorite was McGraw, the incumbent committeeman, a millionaire oilman from Ponca City, and a prominent Catholic who had been state leader of the Knights of Columbus and was currently on the organization's national board. His challenger, Hamon, was likewise a wealthy oilman, but from Ardmore in the heavily Democratic southern part of Oklahoma. Each man threw his personal fortune into the campaign to build a statewide organization down to the precincts and to finance wide-spread newspaper advertisements. Such extensive activity was highly unusual for an office that would be ultimately selected by the Oklahoma delegation to the Republican National Convention after a prolonged series of precinct caucuses, county meetings, and district and state conventions.

²Harlow's Weekly, January 21, 1920. For a narrative account with analysis of this political contest, see Harlow's Weekly, January 7, 1920, pp. 1-2; January 14, 1920, pp. 1-2; January 21, 1920, pp. 2-4; January 28, 1920, pp. 1-4, and February 4, 1920, pp. 1-5.

In the political fight, McGraw had the power of the incumbency, the consequent support of the Republican National Committee, the backing of almost every Republican newspaper in the state, and the aid of the current county chairmen who were organizing the convention process. Against this impressive array of forces, Hamon had his millions and McGraw's religion. Using rank and file Masons, the Hamon organization spread vicious propaganda against McGraw's Catholicism and his membership in the Knights of Columbus, including the spurious Knights of Columbus oath. While this attack earned Hamon the enmity of the state's powerful Democratic dailies, it also won the support of the participants in the precinct meetings, county assemblies, and district conventions.

In explaining Hamon's series of political victories, a commentator analyzed, "In many counties carried by him, there was really no Hamon sentiment, but the McGraw standard went down to defeat because of the intense opposition to his being a member of the Knights of Columbus."³ Realizing that defeat was inevitable, McGraw dramatically withdrew from the race. In his statement explaining his action, he bitterly commented, "The religious question has been raised and fomented by my opponent and his supporters to a point where it overshadows all other issues. My devotion

³Harlow's Weekly, February 4, 1920, p. 2.

to the religious training which I received at my mother's knee will not permit me to drag the creed to which she is a devotee into an unequal, unfair and unwarranted contest."⁴ With McGraw no longer a candidate, Hamon easily continued his string of victories to capture the party's national committee office. Thus the decade of the 1920's opened in Oklahoma with a convincing demonstration of the political potency of anti-Catholicism.

During the next year and a half, the anti-Catholic tide in Oklahoma, which had begun to flow before World War I and had received added force in the McGraw-Hamon contest, gushed through the Sooner State in 1922. With dismay, the editor of Oklahoma's Catholic Home, Joseph J. Quinn, read in 1922 a national Catholic publication which thankfully declared that bigotry was on the decline. Strongly disagreeing, Quinn responded that "deep-rooted prejudice has a hold on the Southwest in general and Oklahoma in particular." To prove his point for the Sooner State, he cited the fact that Oklahoma had an active Ku Klux Klan, several popular anti-Catholic lecturers, three anti-Catholic newspapers with statewide circulations, and employment discrimination based upon religion.⁵

⁴Harlow's Weekly, February 4, 1920, p. 2.

⁵Catholic Home, May 27, 1922.

The Knights of the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan arrived secretly in Oklahoma in the spring of 1921 as the King Kleagle organized local chapters in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Muskogee, Lawton, and Enid. Rapidly spreading over the state in the summer, the masked organization surfaced in the fall with reports from all sections of Oklahoma of silent parades of white-robed figures, of konklaves or meetings of Kluxers, and of violent activities designed to maintain the Klan principle of "one-hundred-per-cent Americanism." By the spring of 1922, with the Invisible Empire attracting followers in all parts of the United States, Oklahoma claimed about 70,000 Klansmen.⁶ While the chief motivation behind the Klan in Oklahoma was the defense of traditional Protestant morality and ethics in a rapidly changing world, their literature and speakers incorporated into the organization an ideology espousing anti-Catholicism, hatred of Jews, white supremacy, opposition to foreign immigration, and anti-radicalism.⁷ With Catholics as one of the "un-American" targets of "one-hundred-per-cent Americanism," the Catholic Church was very sensitive to the Kluxing of Oklahoma.

The Ku Klux Klan was by far the most prominent of the many different organizations and activities which blossomed forth in Oklahoma. One group, calling itself the Evangeli-

⁶Charles C. Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest (Lexington, Ky., 1965), pp. 43-44, 47-49, 53.

⁷Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest, p. 19.

cal Protestant Society, wanted to imitate the organizational techniques of the Anti-Saloon League in support of a constitutional amendment reading, "The teaching or profession of the Roman Catholic faith within the United States and all territories subject to the jurisdiction thereof is prohibited."⁸ While such a provision would take care of the constitutional freedom of religion, the organization never developed nor attracted a large following anywhere in the state or the nation. Another group was the White American Protestant Study Club, whose national secretary spoke in Oklahoma City in 1923. Stating that the group was not against either the black or the Jew, the study club spokesman threatened, "The Catholics are winning over the niggers No, the Southern Catholic doesn't love the nigger. But he wants to enlist his services in case that our sons will have to go out and take up--well, you know what I mean. In case we don't win by the ballot, well--you know."⁹ Other groups, such as the Society of American Patriots¹⁰ and the American Children's Foundation,¹¹ also made their existence known, but similar to the Evangelical Protestant Society and the White American Protestant Study Club never made a strong impact on Oklahoma. As such, the Klan as the prominent

⁸Catholic Home, May 6, 1922.

⁹Catholic Home, February 3, 1923.

¹⁰Orphan's Record, May, 1918, pp. 12-13.

¹¹Catholic Home, April 8, 1922.

body became the broad generic term which Catholics applied to all anti-Catholic organizations.

The state's cities, towns, and hamlets hosted several itinerant lecturers who espoused their particular versions of the papal conspiracy undermining American democracy. Roy Crane, who had been converted from his socialist principle regarding the capitalistic oppression of the people, spoke to rural throngs on how the Catholic Church was enslaving the American people.¹² A professor of chemistry at the University of Oklahoma and the Grand Dragon of the Oklahoma Klan, Edwin DeBarr expanded his commencement address to the graduates of Okmulgee High School into an attack upon the anti-American Catholic school system.¹³ In the southeastern part of the state, Dr. John L. Brandt carried his personal crusade against the Roman Catholic Church's alleged political program to subvert the American republic.¹⁴

Continuing the tradition of Anna "ex-Sister Justina" Lowry, two women took the stump to expose the debauchery of convent life as they spoke of their own experiences in the sisterhood. Detrimental to their credibility was the fact that neither one had ever been a member of a Roman Catholic convent. Not to be deterred by minor discrepancies of fact, Mrs. Clifford Steepe managed to stay one jump ahead of the

¹²Catholic Home, June 30, 1923.

¹³St. Anthony's Parish Bulletin, June, 1922, p. 2, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

¹⁴Catholic Home, May 20, 1922.

truth in her explicit discussion of convent immorality and her extreme denunciation of the Catholic octopus sucking blood from America. Despite such vehemence, the mayor of Tulsa gave her a key to the city and permission to use the municipally owned convention hall.¹⁵ The best known of all the lecturers was Sister Mary Ethel, whose real name was Helen Conroy. Erroneously claiming to have been a nun, she travelled extensively in all parts of Oklahoma throughout 1922 and 1923 to speak to anyone willing to pay fifty cents to hear her sensationalized version of religious life.¹⁶

Drilling in the same field as the wildcat editors of The Menace, three newspapers sought the black gold of religious bigotry. In Oklahoma City, the Oklahoma Fiery Cross, whose name later changed to the Oklahoma Klan Kourier, was the most successful in terms of longevity.¹⁷ While the Fiery Cross had obvious Klan sanction, two other newspapers, the Oklahoma Herald in Muskogee¹⁸ and the American Searchlight in Shawnee,¹⁹ pumped the sludge of Klan-associated religious intolerance and at times claimed to be the official organ of Oklahoma's Invisible Empire. In addition to

¹⁵Catholic Home, May 27, 1922.

¹⁶Catholic Home, July 1, 1922; July 15, 1922, February 10, 1923; May 19, 1923; June 2, 1923, Interview with Mrs. John F. Martin, Oklahoma City, February 6, 1974.

¹⁷Southwest Courier, December 13, 1924.

¹⁸Daily Oklahoman, August 1, 1922.

¹⁹Catholic Home, April 8, 1922.

these statewide efforts, some local newspapers also drilled their wells in the promising anti-Catholic field. For example, The Morris News printed the spurious Knights of Columbus oath and the Ku Klux Klan oath side by side under the heading "WHICH ONE DO YOU PREFER?"²⁰ Also, the Ada News displayed a definite anti-Catholic bias under the editorial hand of Marvin Brown, who had been for many years the editor of The Menace.²¹

Catholics also suffered from discrimination in employment in the public school system. While rumors had circulated for years that public education and Catholics did not mix, the first concrete evidence came in May, 1922, concerning the Duncan public school system. When the superintendent informed two Catholic teachers their contracts would not be renewed for the next school year, the only reason given was their religion.²² Another incident occurred regarding the Wilburton High School, which hired a recent graduate to teach English. After she arrived and the school board discovered that the teacher was Catholic, they immediately discharged her.²³ Such discrimination even hit the state's wealthiest city when the Tulsa school system in May, 1923, dismissed four Catholic teachers. In the words of one

²⁰St. Anthony's Parish Bulletin, September, 1922, p. 1, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

²¹Harlow's Weekly, February 4, 1920, p. 3.

²²Catholic Home, May 13, 1922.

²³Catholic Home, September 16, 1922.

school principal, "There are no professional objections, but Protestant teachers are preferred."²⁴ Although some Catholics attained their employment by listing their religion as "Christian" or, in the case of one individual, as "non-sectarian,"²⁵ most Catholics justifiably felt that the public educational system did not want their coreligionists as teachers.

To counter this rampant movement against their religion, Catholics in Oklahoma continued the techniques developed before World War I. Individual laymen printed letters of financed advertisements in secular newspapers in a community to respond to anti-Catholic propoganda.²⁶ Furthermore, laymen still continued to lecture around the state in attempting to explain the correct Catholic position on freedom of religion, the purpose of the parochial schools, and other misunderstood issues.²⁷ In continuing the effort to distribute Catholic literature, the Diocese of Oklahoma tried to consolidate the move into a statewide operation and tried to raise funds to send to non-Catholics religious periodicals, especially Our Sunday Visitor.²⁸

²⁴Catholic Home, May 5, 1923.

²⁵Interview with Msgr. John Rooney, Oklahoma City, February 4, 1974; Interview with T. Austin Gavin, February 9, 1974.

²⁶Catholic Home, July 28, 1923; July 15, 1922.

²⁷Catholic Home, April 8, 1922.

²⁸Theophile Meerschaert, circular letter, Oklahoma City, January 12, 1920; Gustave Depreitere, circular letters, Oklahoma City, undated, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

While these general responses were partially effective, sometimes the reactions were almost total failure. Relying upon the earlier precedent involving Roy Crane in El Reno, the Okmulgee Knights of Columbus chapter filed criminal libel charges against the editor of the Morris News, C. W. Jefferies, for the publication of the bogus Knights of Columbus oath.²⁹ Despite the offer of a \$500 reward for evidence leading to conviction of everyone who distributed the newspaper,³⁰ the Knights faced a stacked deck in court-- both the judge and prosecutor had been elected with the open support of the Okmulgee Kluxers.³¹ The only rebuttal which achieved any success was the Knights of Columbus advertisement in the Daily Okmulgee Democrat which explained the false nature of the alleged oath.³² After the Literary Digest printed an article "A Defense of Ku Klux Klan," the editor of the Catholic Home began a campaign to convince Oklahoma Catholics to stop subscribing to the national publication.³³ While the effort was partially successful in Oklahoma,³⁴ total success would have had only minimal

²⁹St. Anthony's Parish Bulletin, September, 1922, pp. 1-2, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

³⁰Catholic Home, October 14, 1922.

³¹St. Anthony's Parish Bulletin, January, 1923, p. 1, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

³²Catholic Home, October 14, 1922.

³³Catholic Home, March 24, 1924.

³⁴Catholic Home, March 31, 1924.

effect upon the nationally popular magazine. In an editorial condemning job discrimination against Catholics in the public school system, the Catholic Home urged Catholics to write their Congressmen.³⁵ While such a letter writing campaign was unrealistic, the effort ironically contradicted a longstanding Catholic Home editorial policy against any federal involvement in the state public school systems and especially against the creation of a cabinet-level Department of Education.³⁶

The Diocese of Oklahoma also tried to organize in the spring of 1921 a state branch of the National Council of Catholic Men. In bringing together all Catholic men's groups throughout the state, the NCCM would attempt to coordinate their responses to the evergrowing anti-Catholic bigotry. Each parish was instructed to organize a parish council which would elect representatives to one of ten geographical districts in the state. Each of these districts would in turn select delegates for the state council.³⁷ In this way, church officials reasoned, "Eternal and organized vigilance is the price of liberty. With this organization we can obtain full cooperation between the

³⁵Catholic Home, June 10, 1922.

³⁶Catholic Home, February 3, 1922; April 22, 1922; F. B. Drew to Theophile Meerschaert, McAlester, February 21, 1921, "Legislation" file, General Correspondence to 1930, AAOKC.

³⁷Theophile Meerschaert, Circular letter, Oklahoma City, March 3, 1921, reprinted in Holy Family Parish Memo, March 20, 1921, John Heiring papers, AAOKC.

Church and all its members, and secure what is so often denied us, recognition of our people as an integral part of our nation and state in every relation."³⁸ The result did not live up to the expectations, since the groups remained only a paper organization until the summer of 1922, when the anti-Catholic movement presented its greatest challenge to the church in Oklahoma.

During 1921 and 1922, Klan organization and violence confronted the staunch opposition of Governor J. B. A. Robertson and his administration. When 150 white-robed men in December of 1921 descended upon a suspected bootlegger's home in southern Oklahoma and precipitated a gun fight which left two men dead, Robertson sent the attorney general to gather evidence for the prosecution. As a result of the investigation, a grand jury indicted eleven men, all admitted Klansmen.³⁹ Also the state's chief executive issued Military Order No. 11 to the Oklahoma national guard which required that all Oklahoma militia men renounce allegiance to any secret organization "which may come under the ban of the law and require the services of guard to suppress."⁴⁰ Since this was a euphemistic description of the Invisible Empire, Governor Robertson later claimed that he had begun the movement against the Oklahoma Klan by driving

³⁸Theophile Meerschaert, circular letter, Oklahoma City, April 21, 1921, Urban de Hasque, AAOKC.

³⁹Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest, pp. 50-51.

⁴⁰Catholic Home, April 29, 1922.

the hooded order from the state militia.⁴¹ Since the term "Klan" was rapidly becoming synonymous to anti-Catholicism for Oklahoma Catholics, they strongly supported Robertson's actions against the secret empire.⁴² Unfortunately for Sooner Catholics, the year of 1922 was a gubernatorial election year and the incumbent was not eligible to succeed himself in office.

With the Democratic primary election coming August 1, the Klan during the spring and summer reduced their public activities and moved into the political field to oppose Oklahoma City's mayor, Jack Walton, in his quest for the governor's chair. Walton had in February received the endorsement of the newly formed Farmer-Labor Reconstruction League, which tried to unite farmers, laborers, and socialists around a platform emphasizing liberal economic and social reform. The Oklahoma City mayor had also achieved a reputation as a Klan fighter when he issued an order to the policemen of the capital city that Klan membership would not be tolerated among the members of the force. Opposing Walton were Thomas H. Owen, former justice of the state supreme court and author of the judicial decision upholding the Catholics right to sacramental wine, and avowed Klansman R. H. Wilson, state superintendent of public instruction and the man responsible for the partial accreditation of the

⁴¹Southwest Courier, July 24, 1926.

⁴²Catholic Home, April 29, 1922; May 6, 1922.

parochial schools in Oklahoma. These two men vied for the essentially conservative "progressive" voter who favored prohibition, fiscal responsibility, and honest government. In the spring, the leadership of the Klan in Oklahoma decided to give active support to Superintendent Wilson in the campaign for governor.⁴³

As individual Catholics in the spring pondered the forthcoming election, religious considerations attracted them to Walton and the Reconstruction League candidates. In addition to Walton's reputation as opposing the Klan, his wife was an active member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish in Oklahoma City. Furthermore, the farmer-laborite organization had endorsed for re-election the only two Catholics holding statewide offices, Matthew J. Kane as supreme court justice and Thomas H. Doyle as judge of the Criminal court of appeals.⁴⁴ Yet with the campaign becoming an ideological battle between economic reformers and political conservatives, a person's political opinions probably had more influence than an individual's religious associations. As such, the possibility of a monolithic Catholic vote seemed remote in the early summer.

The diverse personal opinions of individual Catholics were soon galvanized into a unified block when a group of anti-Catholics challenged the continued existence of the

⁴³Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest, pp. 130-131.

⁴⁴Daily Oklahoman, August 3, 1922.

parochial school system in Oklahoma. In July the newly organized Oklahoma Americanization Society launched a drive for signatures on an initiative petition calling for a referendum to change the state's constitution to require all children up to the eighth grade to attend public schools for at least five months each year. With the petition's obvious but unstated consequence of outlawing all private and parochial schools in the state, the petition had added another ingredient to the volatile politics of the Sooners State. To counter this move, the Catholic Home declared that Oklahoma Catholics must fight for their "rights as American citizens, we must STOP, if not the propaganda, then at least the destruction of the Catholic school."⁴⁵ In this fight, Catholics were urged to organize, form joint committees with other denominations, sponsor advertisements, distribute propaganda, register and vote, and encourage their friends to register and vote.⁴⁶

To involve Catholic laymen in the effort to prevent the flood of religious bigotry from washing away the Catholic school system, the diocese set out to vitalize the one-year old National Council of Catholic Men in the state. During July and August, this organization, under the direction of prominent Catholic laymen from all parts of Oklahoma, hastily established local councils in the various parishes in

⁴⁵Catholic Home, July 8, 1922.

⁴⁶Catholic Home, July 15, 1922.

the state. Once formed, these local groups would use members of the parish as the core of an organization to distribute propaganda and to wage a political campaign in their local communities against the petition. To direct the over-all operation, the national organization sent their chief organizer, Edward J. Roach, into Oklahoma, which he described as the most bigoted state in the Union.⁴⁷ Under the banner of the NCCM, the Catholic Church took up arms and marched into the political arena to wage a united fight against the Oklahoma Americanization Society, which had the verbal support of the Invisible Empire.

In support of the petition, the Oklahoma Americanization Society claimed that only the public school could inculcate true one-hundred per cent American values into the children during their formative years. "Only in such schools can American Democracy and American ideals be taught."⁴⁸ Denying these American principles by teaching loyalty to Rome and an "untruthful" history of the United States, the Americanization Society alleged that private schools were using foreign languages to spread Bolshevism among the enrolled students.⁴⁹ To answer these charges, the NCCM rested their opposition upon the American principle

⁴⁷Catholic Home, July 15, 1922; July 22, 1922.

⁴⁸Oklahoma Americanization Society pamphlet as quoted in National Council of Catholic Men, Diocese of Oklahoma, "Save the Parochial Schools!" (n.p., [1922]), Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

⁴⁹Catholic Home, August 3, 1922.

which "guarantees liberty of education to every child in the state of Oklahoma." Approval of the petition would consequently be an "un-American infringement upon the liberty of education." Furthermore, the Catholics cited the American loyalty of their co-religionists during World War I, with Catholics comprising thirty per cent of the Army, forty per cent of the Navy, and fifty per cent of the Marines. As such, the NCCM claimed, "Their [the parochial schools'] histories are one hundred per cent American and what is more the children grow up into one hundred per cent American citizens."⁵⁰ Seizing a very practical argument against the move to close the private schools, the Catholics also pointed to the additional financial burden to the taxpayers if they would have to care for an additional 12,000 students.⁵¹ Applying this to a local situation, the pastor in Okmulgee estimated that the Catholic school had saved the local freeholders a total of \$30,560 in 1922 and had prevented further congestion of overcrowded public school classrooms.⁵²

As these arguments and counterarguments became part of the political winds of Oklahoma, the petition proposal joined the raging tempest of the Democratic primary election

⁵⁰National Council of Catholic Men, Diocese of Oklahoma, "Save the Parochial Schools!" Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

⁵¹Catholic Home, July 22, 1922.

⁵²St. Anthony's Parish Bulletin, July, 1922, pp. 1-2, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

for governor. R. H. Wilson, the Klansman, endorsed the proposal, and Jack Walton, the farmer-labor candidate, denounced the petition. With this development, the Catholic clergy entered the political storm in July. In a prominent front-page announcement, the Catholic newspaper urged all Catholics, especially women, to register and vote in the forthcoming Democratic primary.⁵³ Added to this, Msgr. Gustave Depreitere, administrator of the diocese during Meerschaert's absence on another trip to Europe, instructed all priests to see that all legal voters, regardless of sex, registered before the primary election. Furthermore, the chancery office called all priests to Oklahoma City for a secret strategy meeting in the basement of St. Joseph's Cathedral.

The Catholic Church, throwing itself into Sooner politics, believed that "the ballot is our only defense."⁵⁴ As a result of this clergy meeting, Depreitere sent to the priests throughout Oklahoma by registered mail a package of unmarked sample ballots for the state Democratic primary, a list of the Klan-endorsed candidates, and instructions on how to proceed. Across the state on Friday afternoon and evening before Tuesday's election, pastors waited by their telephones for a call from Gustave Depreitere, who would tell them of the "Catholic" list of candidates. On Saturday,

⁵³Catholic Home, July 15, 1922.

⁵⁴Gustave Depreitere, circular letter, Oklahoma City, July 14, 1922, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

each pastor was to contact one trustworthy member in his mission, hand that member some of the sample ballots, and verbally tell the member of the "Catholic" slate. Beginning on Sunday, the pastors, the messengers from the missions, and a few other reliable parishioners began quietly to spread the word to the other members of the parish on how the Catholics should vote to save their private schools. At no time, however, did the pastors make a public announcement concerning the election or distribute marked ballots. Church officials correctly feared that if the secrecy of their work was violated, the Kluxers and other anti-Catholics would have concrete evidence to sustain their contention that the Catholic Church was a political organization trying to subvert the democratic process.⁵⁵

Against this unpublicized movement, the Invisible Empire was actively soliciting votes for R. H. Wilson and their slate of candidates not only for the state offices but also for local positions. Although publicly denying the existence of any Klan endorsement, Klansmen circulated model tickets in many Protestant churches in the state. On election day, the sheriff in Tulsa arrested two election workers for distributing lists of Klan ballots for both the Democratic and Republican primaries.⁵⁶ Despite this activity by Catholics and Klansmen in the primary campaign,

⁵⁵Gustave Depreitere, circular letter, Oklahoma City, July 25, 1922, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

⁵⁶Daily Oklahoman, August 1, 1922.

neither Walton, Wilson nor the third candidate, Owen, stressed the Klan in their campaigns. The three-way battle chiefly revolved around Wilson's and Owen's attacks upon Walton's program for liberal social and economic reform.

With its innate conservatism, the Daily Oklahoman vehemently opposed Jack Walton and his program. Basing its judgement upon two straw polls, the Oklahoman concluded in a front-page editorial that "the fight has simmered down to a duel between Judge Owen and R. H. Wilson."⁵⁷ On election eve, the state's most popular newspaper began its story on the election with the lead sentence asking "Is the drift to Owen or Wilson?"⁵⁸ Such conservative optimism proved unfounded as 119,248 Oklahomans choose Jack Walton, only 84,320 opted for Wilson and 63,915 voted for Owen. With no provision for a run-off primary, Jack Walton, the candidate of farmers, laborers, socialists, and Catholics, won the Democratic nomination. For lieutenant governor, the farmer-labor candidate, W. M. Darnell, received 45,227 votes, and the Klan candidate, J. W. Tharp, garnered 31,006 votes. Yet this was not enough to defeat M. E. Trapp, who captured 47,717 votes.⁵⁹ Thus the leaders of the Democratic ticket in the election in November were Jack Walton and M. E.

⁵⁷Daily Oklahoman, July 30, 1922.

⁵⁸Daily Oklahoman, July 31, 1922.

⁵⁹Oklahoma State Election Board, Directory of Oklahoma, 1973 (n.p.; 1973), p. 335. For a complete list of Klan and Reconstruction League candidates, see Daily Oklahoman, August 3, 1922.

Trapp--both of whom had Catholic wives.

In their analysis of the election, the Daily Oklahoman front-page editorial carried the headline "Catholic Vote Defeats Ku Klux Klan." Claiming that the Catholics of the state for the first time had been "herded" into one political camp, the editorial writer claimed that more than 41,000 Catholics voted in almost a solid mass for Walton as the most likely person capable of defeating the Klan candidate. To marshal this uniform force, the newspaper claimed that "every priest of every Catholic Church announced from the altar that Catholicism must defeat the Ku Klux Klan and vote absolutely as instructed by the bishop of the diocese." While acknowledging "the many hybrid interests which have been conglomerated into one mass behind Mayor Walton," the editorial emphasized that Walton's ability to attract the entire Catholic vote and to employ members of the Knights of Columbus as campaign workers made the difference in the campaign. Despite blaming the Catholics for turning the state over to the socialists and radical union organizers, the editorial commented that it "has nothing whatever against what it considered to be a threat to its religious rights by the program of Ku Klux Klan."⁶⁰

Wincing from the public implication that the Catholic church had entered into the political arena to dominate the political situation, the hierarchy believed that the Daily

⁶⁰Daily Oklahoman, August 3, 1922.

Oklahoman editorial could serve to fan further the flames of religious bigotry. Responding on behalf of the church, Father J. F. McGuire, chancellor of the diocese, employed one of the standard responses to anti-Catholic bigotry and wrote a letter for publication. Printed on the front page, the priest's statement admitted that Walton had received the larger share of the votes of Catholics, but denied that the bishop had instructed the citizens on how to vote. Denying the potency of the Catholic vote, McGuire claimed that the Catholics "have not formed a political alliance with any person or organization We did oppose the Ku Klux Klan and its candidates as well as we could We would have never taken part in this campaign, as an organization, had we not been compelled to defend ourselves."⁶¹ While thus admitting that the church had participated in the election by voting for Walton to defeat Wilson, McGuire denied the true extent of the church's involvement in the gubernatorial primary. The Oklahoman answered the letter and repeated its position that it did not blame the Catholic church in defending itself against the Klan. Ironically, the paper went on, the hooded order's goal of ousting Catholics from politics only forced the Catholics to enter politics, and "the candidates selected and endorsed by the Catholics were for the most part successful Instead of the Klan eliminating the Catho-

⁶¹Daily Oklahoman, August 4, 1922.

lics, they placed them in the saddle and no one but the Klan is to blame."⁶² As a result, both the Daily Oklahoman and Father McGuire agreed that the Catholic Church had entered the primary only in defense of itself. But in doing so, the Catholic church, when attacked, obviously could prove to be a formidable political force despite its small size.

While the Catholics were displaying significant influence in the governor's race, the impact was lessened for the other offices. The Klan candidates won the Democratic nomination for secretary of state, state auditor, attorney general, state superintendent of public instruction, commissioner of insurance, president of the state board of agriculture, corporation commissioner, and clerk of the supreme court. On the local level, the Klan was even more successful, as it nominated most of its endorsees in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Okmulgee, Muskogee, Osage, Washington, Comanche, and Rogers counties.⁶³ Consequently, the Klan emerged from the election with a strong base of local political support, while the Catholics had achieved the reputation of being a sleeping political giant which was left best unaroused.

In spite of this intense activity in 1922, Catholics continued to maintain that the Catholic Church was not a political body and would never advocate a Catholic invasion

⁶²Daily Oklahoman, August 5, 1922.

⁶³Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest, p. 133.

of politics. Within a year after the election of 1922, a layman financed an advertisement in the Durant Daily Democrat in response to an earlier Klan statement. In the response, the layman wrote that there was not "even the slightest evidence that the Catholic church is taking part in politics anywhere, or ever preaches partisan politics."⁶⁴ In an editorial in 1926, the diocesan newspaper claimed that there was no such thing as a "Catholic vote" and the Catholics never voted in a block.⁶⁵

The political influence ascribed to the Catholic Church aided its effort to stop the circulation of the Oklahoma Americanization Society petition. Furthermore, many Protestants joined with the Catholics to save the private schools, for the Methodists, Baptists, and Lutherans also operated religious primary schools.⁶⁶ While not extensively involved in the private educational realm, these Protestant groups believed in the concept of private religious education.⁶⁷ The national Religious Liberty Association, organized by the Seventh Day Adventists, sent money and

⁶⁴Catholic Home, July 28, 1923.

⁶⁵Southwest Courier, July 31, 1926.

⁶⁶Catholic Home, July 15, 1922.

⁶⁷Kenneth K. Bailey, Southern White Protestantism in the Twentieth Century (New York, 1964), chapter 2; David Cox, "Murmurs from Mainstreet: Oklahoma Baptists and the Fundamentalist Crusade, 1920-1928" (unpublished paper read at Regional Conference of Phi Alpha Theta, Oklahoma City, April 6, 1974).

workers into Oklahoma to defeat the petition proposal.⁶⁸ Thus the opposition among both Catholics and Protestants broke the petition drive, and the Americanization group reluctantly announced in September that it had failed to obtain the requisite 70,000 signatures.⁶⁹ With a second political victory in as many months, the Catholic Church relaxed from the political wars, and the National Council of Catholic Men in the state retreated to its earlier position of being a paper organization.

In the November general election, Jack Walton rode the crest of Democratic votes into the governor's office. On the day of his inauguration, the new governor hosted the largest barbecue in the history of the state of Oklahoma. Realizing that the farmer-laborite movement had only a minority in the legislature, the new governor tried to expand his coalition of farmers, laborers, socialists, and Catholics to include the Klan. In late January, 1923, the newly installed governor applied for and received secret membership in the Invisible Empire. Despite his Klan membership, he was unable to push his Reconstruction League platform through the recalcitrant, conservative legislature. By the time the lawmakers had adjourned sine die, his original farmer-laborite coalition was becoming disenchanted with his leadership, and the various conservative groups still distrusted him. To regain his declining popularity, Governor

⁶⁸Catholic Home, September 9, 1922.

⁶⁹Catholic Home, September 23, 1922.

Walton gambled on trying to rally support around a new issue and declared war on the Klan in the Sooner State. When his declaration of martial law in Okmulgee county failed to uncover any evidence of Klan violence and political domination, he expanded military rule to include Tulsa. After discovering a few incidents of Klan terrorism in Tulsa and attempting military censorship of the Tulsa Tribune, the governor placed the entire state under martial law for the avowed purpose of stamping out the Invisible Empire.

After these arbitrary activities, the state's newspapers spanning all political persuasions began an editorial crusade to remove the governor. As events began to overtake Walton, he ordered the military to dismiss the legislature, which was attempting to convene itself at the state capital in order to begin the impeachment process. When a vote was scheduled on October 2 to amend the constitution to allow the legislature to convene itself without a formal call from the governor, Walton proclaimed an indefinite postponement of the election and ordered the military to shoot anyone who attempted to vote. Despite this threat of an open civil war, election boards in seventy of the state's seventy-seven counties defied the governor and held elections. With the final vote three to one in favor of the proposed amendment, the state legislature convened, impeached, and convicted Walton within two months, and M. E. Trapp assumed

control of the state's executive department.⁷⁰ According to one historian of the Walton reign, the governor's tyrannical use of martial law compelled anti-Klan individuals to side with the Klan in the removal of the governor. One scholar concludes, "Perhaps Walton's greatest sin was that he forced people who did not like the Klan to choose between the hooded order and a despotic governor."⁷¹

When confronted with this choice, the Catholic newspaper in Oklahoma remained loyal to the Klan-fighting governor. In the front page coverage of Walton's inaugural, the news article editorialized, "Walton has given his word that he will strive for justice, equity and a preservation of the rights of citizens as guaranteed by the Constitution. Down in their hearts the people feel that Jack Walton will make good as Governor of the State of Oklahoma."⁷² When Walton sent the national guard into Okmulgee county, the Catholic Home praised his "drastic steps to stop all unlawfulness and dampen mob spirit" and prophesied that Walton's movements "may call forth severe criticism . . . , but in all likelihood, it will prove far-sighted prudence."⁷³ When martial law in Tulsa brought forth confessions of beatings and kidnappings from self-professed Klansmen, the Catholic

⁷⁰Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest, pp. 134-155.

⁷¹Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest, p. 158.

⁷²Catholic Home, January 6, 1923.

⁷³Catholic Home, June 20, 1923.

publication claimed that the convictions proved that Walton was correct in his actions and praised the governor for his forthright opposition to the Klan.⁷⁴ As the desire to remove Walton culminated in success, the Catholic Home remained one of Walton's few supporters among the state's newspapers. To counter the extensive editorial attacks against the chief executive, the Catholic newspaper reprinted editorials from sixteen different publications from across the country which commended Walton's forceful fight against the Klan. While these were generally Catholic newspapers, the emphasis was given to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, which questioned whether the critical newspapers in Oklahoma had fought the lawlessness of the Klan as vigorously as they fought the "lawlessness" of Walton.⁷⁵ After the Senate voted to convict Walton on the impeachment indictments, the editor of the newspaper claimed that the Klan had inspired the action and that "twenty-three of the thirty-six senators who impeached Walton are Klansmen."⁷⁶ Thus the Catholic publication, in the choice between the arbitrary Walton and the anti-Catholic Klan, chose Walton.

Since the legislature was still in session from the impeachment proceedings, the new Governor Trapp urged the

⁷⁴Catholic Home, August 23, 1923; September 1, 1923.

⁷⁵Catholic Home, September 29, 1923.

⁷⁶Catholic Home, December 1, 1923.

lawmakers to pass a strong anti-Klan law which would require the full disclosure of membership lists of any secret organization and would prohibit the wearing of masks in public demonstrations. While the Knights of Columbus endorsed the proposal and pledged to file its officer and membership lists in compliance with any piece of legislation,⁷⁷ the legislature decided to exclude the publication of membership rosters as part of the anti-Klan bill. The legislature further reduced the effectiveness of the anti-mask statute by permitting masks to be used in any historical demonstration.⁷⁸ Feeling that the Klan could take advantage of this loop-hole, the Catholic Home called the statute a "wishy-washy . . . buttery" bill.⁷⁹ Thus the legislature succeeded only in enacting a weak piece of legislation with which to control the Invisible Empire.

Although such innocuous legislation demonstrates a strong Klan influence in the legislature, and although Klan membership showed a brief increase during 1924, the Invisible Empire soon went into a sudden and permanent decline in all parts of Oklahoma. In a religious survey conducted in 1925 in all of the state's Catholic parishes, only nine parishes of seventy-eight reported any serious anti-Catholic

⁷⁷Catholic Home, December 15, 1923.

⁷⁸Session Laws of Oklahoma, 1923-1924, Chapter 2, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁹Catholic Home, December 15, 1923.

agitation in their local communities.⁸⁰ Thus by 1925 the Klan had died as a major political or social force in the Sooner State.

With the history of anti-Catholicism in Oklahoma beginning in the decade before World War I, the decade of the 1920's opened with the political potency of anti-Catholicism being exploited by Jake Hamon in his campaign for Republican National Committeeman. During the next two years, anti-Catholicism plagued Oklahoma until the elections of 1922 compelled the Catholic clergy and laymen to fight politically against their self-proclaimed enemies. After the dust had settled, anti-Catholic agitation had been defeated. Yet anti-Catholic bigotry would develop again during the next decade in reaction to specific situations, such as Alfred E. Smith's campaign for president in 1928. Catholics would refer to these sporadic incidents as "Klan action" since scattered Klan parades and "konklaves" continued into the 1930's. Despite the Catholic rhetoric and the widely scattered anti-Catholic incidents, the end of the Klan's power in 1925 marked the end of general overt anti-Catholic displays in Oklahoma.

In addition to the Klan's demise, another death in the mid-1920's also marked a changing period for the Catholic Church in Oklahoma. In November, 1923, Bishop Theophile Meerschaert suffered an attack of diabetes. While under

⁸⁰Responses, "The Diocese of Oklahoma Religious Survey, 1925," Mission Archives, AAOKC.

care for that ailment, the prelate was stricken by influenza and heart disease. Confining him to bed in January, his doctors saw cause for hope as Meerschaert rallied toward the end of the month and into February. With a new illness in February diagnosed as pneumonia, Meerschaert died at 9:50 a.m. on February 21, 1924, at the age of seventy-six.⁸¹ On the following day, the consultors met and elected Msgr. Gustave Depreitere as the administrator of the diocese until Rome would appoint a successor.⁸² In June, word came that the new bishop for the Oklahoma Catholics would be Francis Clement Kelley, founder and current president of the Catholic Church Extension Society. With the arrival of Kelley in October the Catholic Church in the Sooner State took on a new dynamism to meet its challenges.

Since 1924 marks both the end of wide-spread overt anti-Catholicism and the arrival of a new bishop, the year is a turning point for Sooner Catholicism. In spite of the open hostility toward Catholics during the early years of the 1920's, Meerschaert built upon the pre-World War I institutional foundation until the Catholics, numbering more than 57,000 at the time of his death, had constructed 153 churches and sixty schools of various types.⁸³ In this, he bequeathed to his successor a base upon which the Catholic

⁸¹Catholic Home, February 23, 1924.

⁸²Oklahoma City Times, February 22, 1924.

⁸³Catholic Directory, 1924 (New York, 1924), pp. 550.

Church could continue to build. Furthermore, the direct challenge to Catholicism during the elections of 1922 resulted in a victory for the church. As a result, politicians continued to ponder the possibility that a unified Catholic vote might determine future elections.⁸⁴ The Meerschaert years left to the new bishop as an intangible legacy the reputation of political potency which would benefit the church when it dealt with later state leaders.

⁸⁴Interview with Msgr, Raymond F. Harkin, Oklahoma City, February 4, 1974.

CHAPTER V

ACHIEVING A NEW DYNAMISM, 1924-1929

The summer of 1924--a period of waiting. National politicians watched for the release of the report by the United States Senate committee investigating the Teapot Dome scandal. In Chicago, citizens anxiously demanded immediate justice for Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, self-confessed kidnap-murderers of a fourteen-year-old boy. In the heat of a New York City summer, delegates to the National Democratic Convention struggled through a seemingly unending series of ballots as they searched for a national standard bearer. Tragically, President Calvin Coolidge bided his time as blood poisoning slowly took the life of his son. Across the nation, sports fans watched the baseball season unfold and debated whether the pitching of Walter Johnson could lead the Washington Nationals to victory over the perennially powerful New York Yankees. And Oklahoma Catholics looked forward to the arrival of their new bishop, Francis Clement Kelley.

One of the several American bishops from Prince Edward Island in Canada, Kelley was born on November 24, 1870. After education at St. Dunstan's College and Nicolet Seminary, Kelley was ordained in 1893 for the Diocese of

Detroit and appointed pastor of Lapeer, Michigan. With the aid of Archbishop James Edward Quigley of Chicago, Kelley established in 1905 the Catholic Church Extension Society to help needy missionary parishes throughout the United States. While directing the Extension Society's work of raising and dispensing money for nineteen years, Kelley became one of the nation's more famous clerics, a major foe of the anti-clerical Mexican Revolution, and a key figure at Versailles in negotiating a partial settlement of the Roman question with Premier Vittorio Orlando of Italy. With the background as a noted author, popular lecturer, and international diplomat, and with a wide circle of wealthy friends, Kelley in October, 1924, traded his mission desk at the Extension Society for a mission field in Oklahoma.

Following his consecration as bishop in Chicago on October 2, 1924, and his installation in Oklahoma City on October 15,¹ the new prelate moved aggressively and started a visitation to all parts of his widely scattered jurisdiction. Traveling in his Lincoln limousine, he tried to touch all the Catholic bases in the Sooner State. Besides fulfilling the expected episcopal functions of confirming parishioners, meeting the local clergy, and visiting with the laity, Kelley also talked to as many non-Catholics as possible. To meet these non-Catholics, the bishop employed several different techniques. At times, the local Catholics

¹"3 Rings in Fifty Years," supplement to Southwest Courier, October 8, 1955, p. 3.

would sponsor a private reception for the leading citizens of the community and selected representatives from the various professions and creeds. With his background as a Chautauqua lecturer, Kelley would address various civic clubs or speak before the general public in one of the town's larger halls. Never trying to proselytize, Kelley centered his remarks on countering specific charges against the Catholic Church or on defending the principle of religious toleration. At such meetings, the local organizers attempted to find a Protestant minister to serve as the master of ceremonies or to introduce the Catholic prelate.²

If editorial comments are an indication, Kelley's appearances favorably impressed his non-Catholic audiences. The Enid Events commended his informality,³ and the Henryetta Daily Free-Lance noted the "broad experience and outstanding accomplishments" of the bishop.⁴ In praising Kelley's talk on tolerance, the Muskogee Daily Phoenix printed, "What a beautiful lesson of tolerance; what a lesson for us to take into our hearts. If only this simple story takes root with us the Bishop's visit here will be to us of untold value."⁵ In McAlester, the newspaper supported Kelley's contention that dissemination of the truth about

²St. Anthony's Parish Bulletin, February, 1925, pp. 1-2, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

³Enid Events, November 27, 1924.

⁴Henryetta Daily Free-Lance, February 10, 1925.

⁵Muskogee Daily Phoenix, December 10, 1924.

Catholicism could achieve harmony in the state.⁶ After his speech before the Oklahoma City Lions Club, the Oklahoma News agreed with Kelley that "Oklahoma must not be any longer handicapped in her progress by intolerance and prejudice."⁷

While most visits produced favorable responses, religious bigotry flared up in a visit to Bristow. According to the schedule, Kelley was to dedicate a church and, on the following day, attend a public reception co-hosted by the mayor and the local Presbyterian minister. When the notice triggered anonymous protests and threats of violence, Kelley cancelled the public meeting for the avowed purpose to avoid embarrassing events which could stain Oklahoma's reputation.⁸ Trying to soften the ugly situation, the Bristow Daily Record welcomed the Catholic leader and hoped "that Bishop Kelly [sic] will go away from Bristow with pleasant memories."⁹ As indicated even by the Bristow visit, Kelley's travels influenced many of the leading citizens and opinion makers in the scattered towns of Oklahoma.

In the same spirit of these visits, Francis Kelley sent out on Christmas Day of 1924 his first pastoral letter

⁶McAlester News Capital, June 2, 1925.

⁷Oklahoma News, February 19, 1925.

⁸Southwest Courier, October 31, 1925.

⁹Bristow Daily Record, October 25, 1925.

entitled "On Missions." In the epistle, Kelley called upon Oklahoma Catholics to cooperate "in a missionary campaign all over the diocese" Echoing earlier statements that religious prejudice was based on ignorance, Kelley wrote, "Frequently, . . . much of the intolerance and bigotry from which we have suffered of late can be traced to our own forgetfulness of the great missionary obligation given us by our Master." Hence one purpose of the campaign was to contact as many as possible "of our separated brethern" to counteract what the enemies of Catholicism have claimed. Furthermore, the missionary effort was designed to reach Catholics, hoping that lapsed Catholics would return to active participation and that practicing Catholics would become more knowledgeable in their religion.¹⁰ "The uninstructed Catholic," as Kelley would later comment, "is a mild scandal. He spreads amongst non-Catholics the idea that we are nothing but blind adherents of system of which we know little or nothing."¹¹ To finance this missionary effort, the bishop called for an additional collection in every church on the third Sunday of each month.¹² Under this plan, the annual

¹⁰Francis Kelley, "On Missions: The First Pastoral Letter of the Right Rev. Francis C. Kelley, D. D., Bishop of Oklahoma, Issued on Christmas Day, 1924" (Oklahoma City, 1924), pp. 2-4.

¹¹Francis Kelley, "Bishop Kelley's Report for the Special Committee of the Extension Society," "Conversions" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

¹²Kelley, "On Missions," pp. 6-7.

donations of Oklahoma Catholics to their bishop would increase from \$8,000 to \$20,000.¹³ With the publication of this pastoral letter within three months of Kelley's arrival, the Diocese of Oklahoma launched a massive missionary offensive to reduce bigotry and attract converts. As such, Kelley's first two years in Oklahoma were marked by feverish activity to contact Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

During the first year of the campaign, churches in the state held a total of eighty-eight "missions." Similar to Protestant revivals, an outside priest would conduct a series of religious services centering upon a sermon. Rather than emphasizing piety with a call for increased devotion, the sermons were doctrinal in an effort to explain Catholic dogma.¹⁴ In locating clergy to hold these services, Kelley used his national contacts through the Extension Society. He brought Dominican priests to hold missions in the larger cities and Paulists and priests associated with Philadelphia and Colorado to conduct services in the smaller towns.¹⁵ Besides inviting both Catholics and non-Catholics, some of the tangible goals of these missions were to rectify

¹³Renier Sevens, "Report of the Vicar for Missions of the Diocese of Oklahoma from December 15, 1924, to December 15, 1925," in Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926. Hereafter cited as Sevens, First Mission Report, Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926.

¹⁴Sevens, First Mission Report, Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926.

¹⁵Denver Register, March 7, 1925.

any marriages involving Catholics which had violated Catholic regulations, to bring back lapsed Catholics to the practice of their religion, and to engage non-Catholics in instruction in Catholic dogma with a possible conversion in the future.¹⁶

Supplementing this effort at missions, Kelley brought into Oklahoma the Extension Society's largest "chapel car" named in honor of St. Paul. Basically a railroad passenger car, it had been converted into a small chapel complete with a simple altar, pews, miniature stations of the cross between the windows, a small organ, and a confessional. Under the direction of Jesuit priests, the car would travel into rural sections of the state which had very few Catholics. When the St. Paul Chapel Car would arrive in a local area, the clergy would host an "open house" so that non-Catholics could inspect the unique railroad car. Consequently the priests were able to explain the purpose of various religious articles as they pointed to a physical example. Special services were held for non-Catholics which included sermons trying to answer the traditional objections to the Catholic religion and which used congregational singing of popular Protestant hymns.¹⁷ When the chapel car visited these towns, one of the priests would seek permission to address one or more of the various civic clubs in

¹⁶Various reports of missions given, "Mission Reports-1925" file, Mission Archives, AAOKC.

¹⁷Guthrie Daily Leader, March 7, 1925.

the community. When not otherwise occupied, the Catholic priests would walk around the area, visiting places of business, meeting people, and advertising the chapel car. Although a butcher in Snyder, Oklahoma, pulled a gun on one of the Jesuits when the cleric walked into his meat market,¹⁸ the chapel car apostolate to non-Catholics probably succeeded in reducing some of the anti-Catholic bigotry.

Another aspect of Kelley's missionary program was the effort to provide religious training for Catholic children who could not attend parochial schools. Seizing an idea started by the bishop in Montana in 1921, the diocese sponsored correspondence courses for Catholic children in rural areas that did not have Catholic schools.¹⁹ While such a program lacked personal contact, the church officials considered it the most practical solution under the adverse circumstances. Furthermore, the program had the advantage of reaching the parents since they had to help their children with the courses.²⁰ In more populated areas, laymen organized Catechetical Instruction Leagues in which individual laity would provide doctrinal instruction to small groups of children gathered together in private homes.²¹

¹⁸Austin Fleming to Renier Sevens, Altus, Oklahoma, February 12, 1926, "Chapel Car" file, Mission Archives, AAOKC.

¹⁹Southwest Courier, July 25, 1925.

²⁰Sevens, First Mission Report, Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926.

²¹The C. I. L. Messenger, April, 1925, pp. 5-6.

While most of the pupils in urban areas were from minority groups, such as blacks and Mexicans, the technique was expanded into some of the rural areas to take care of children of all ethnic backgrounds. These Catechetical Instruction Leagues were functioning in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, Sand Springs, Guthrie, Bison, and Enid by 1926. Finally, the diocesan mission office laid plans to begin a series of summertime Religious Vacation Schools so that children without the benefit of formal Catholic schools could have at least two weeks of religious education each year. Yet the schools would not start until the summer of 1931 due to the lack of qualified personnel.²²

The burst of missionary activity included another specific program to reach Mexicans and blacks. Bishop Meerschaeert had started the effort to take care of the refugees fleeing the Mexican Revolution. He permitted Carmelite priests and nuns to establish themselves in Oklahoma and began in 1921 a mission for Mexicans in southern Oklahoma City.²³ In addition, Kelley authorized the establishment of a similar mission in Tulsa and appointed Father Jerome Castellet to be a full-time missionary serving Mexicans in rural areas.²⁴ In an attempt to sponsor a free medical

²²Sevens, First Mission Report, Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926.

²³Private diary of Bishop Theophile Meerschaeert, September 11, 1916, February 2, 1921, AOKC.

²⁴Sevens, First Mission Report, Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926.

clinic for Mexicans in Oklahoma City, the church faced perennial shortages of supplies, equipment and money and was forced to discontinue the operation in less than a year.²⁵ For the blacks, the diocese constructed churches in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Okmulgee and obtained the services of Holy Ghost fathers, who specialized in working among blacks.²⁶

On another front, Bishop Kelley obtained the aid of five Corpus Christi sisters from Minnesota to work in Oklahoma. Beginning in January, 1925, they began a door-to-door visitation of homes in Oklahoma City. In the fall, they moved to Tulsa to continue to knock on doors in an effort to locate lapsed Catholics and Protestants interested in Catholicism. During their first year, they had visited more than 20,000 houses in the two metropolitan areas.²⁷ After the sisters completed their canvass of these two cities, Kelley appointed Father Thomas R. Gorman as a city missionary to follow up the work by talking with the non-practicing Catholics and interested Protestants.²⁸

²⁵John A. Roddy to Carmelite Superior, October 17, 1925; John A. Roddy to Carmelite Superior, November 28, 1925; John A. Roddy to Carmelite Superior, January 1, 1926, "Clinic" file, Mission Archives, AAOKC.

²⁶Sevens, First Mission Report, Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926; Renier Sevens, "Mission Work in Oklahoma," "American Board of Catholic Missions" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

²⁷Sevens, First Mission Report, "Southwest Courier," February 27, 1926.

²⁸Thomas R. Gorman, undated missionary reports, "City Missionary Reports," Mission Archives, AAOKC.

During the far-flung missionary effort, the Diocese of Oklahoma made history in one area--the use of radio. While Father John J. Walde was discussing the broad missionary activity in 1925, a layman asked, "Why don't you use the radio?" Seizing upon the idea, Walde secured permission of Oklahoma City's most prominent radio station to sell time for a series of lectures on Catholicism and approached the new bishop with some apprehension to obtain his approval. After listening to the plans, Kelley responded, "Go ahead. The more you do of that the better I like it." While some Catholic clergy and laity felt such a series would serve to arouse the dormant anti-Catholicism, Kelley defended the experiment, "We don't know what will happen until he tries." Beginning on October 14, 1925, Walde delivered ten weekly lectures over the radio, marking the first time that Catholic doctrinal addresses were broadcast.²⁹ Speaking quietly, simply, unaffectedly, Walde brought forth a highly favorable response and began what would become a twenty-five year tradition in Oklahoma.³⁰ Such success at broadcasting dogmatic sermons led Bishop Kelley to take to the microphone the following spring,³¹ and undoubtedly laid part of the foundation for the national

²⁹John J. Walde, "A Pioneer in Broadcasting the Gospel," The Southwest Courier--Oklahoma Catholic Annual Edition and Official Diocesan Directory, 1929, June 29, 1929.

³⁰Southwest Courier, November 1, 1930.

³¹Southwest Courier, May 15, 1926.

Catholic programs of later years.

Another program Kelley initiated in 1925 in Oklahoma was the "Lapeer Rural-Church Program" which had been inaugurated in 1923 at Lapeer, Michigan. The basic thrust of the program was that several priests in rural areas would live in a central parish house in order to engage actively in missionary work. From this base of operations, each priest would minister to one of the missions by saying Mass, hearing confessions, teaching catechism classes, visiting every family, holding home Masses, lecturing to non-Catholics, and distributing Catholic literature.³² With three priests in residence at Muskogee, the Lapeer Program attempted to cover Muskogee, Wagoner, McIntosh, Cherokee, Adair, and Sequoyah counties. Additionally, plans were made for expanding the project into northern Oklahoma with a new base at Tonkawa.³³ Yet Oklahoma's Catholics were too scattered for this program designed for rural areas, and Bishop Kelley soon abandoned his pet project.

Fearful for the faith of Catholic students attending the state university at Norman, Kelley brought religious sisters from Texas to run a women's dormitory, named Newman Hall, and secured the services of two Viatorian priests to serve as chaplains for the Catholic students.³⁴ Two years

³²Francis C. Kelley, "Lapeer Rural-Church Program," (Lapeer, Michigan, 1923), passim.

³³Sevens, First Mission Report, Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926.

³⁴Sevens, First Mission Report, Southwest Courier, February 27, 1926.

later, a men's dormitory, called Columbia Hall, was opened, to provide housing for Catholic male students.³⁵ The Ku Klux Klan, in its final gasps for life, witnessed these far-flung developments and commented,

. . . By broadcasting over the radio, . . . by encroaching on the state university and public schools, by running chapel cars in charge of cunning priests out over the state to reach the uninformed and to seek opportunities to address civic clubs, by establishing special missions and churches for negroes and Mexicans, and by bringing in the Jesuits for clean-up work in politics, the Roman Catholic program for the current year has involved more real danger to Protestantism than all the previous efforts of pope and priests in the territory now embraced in Oklahoma since the expedition of Coronado . . . Thus does the shadow of the house on the Tiber stretch across the fields and forests of Oklahoma, in the heart of a Protestant nation.³⁶

While the Klan analysis attached an undeserved insidious motivation to the activity of Kelley's first year, the anti-Catholic organization did capture the broad-range missionary activity which Kelley inaugurated upon his arrival in the Sooner State.

The hectic pace of innovative missionary effort launched in 1925 obviously could not be maintained at its current rate. For example, the Extension Society sent the St. Paul Chapel Car to other missionary areas in the United States. The number of missions declined slightly, and the Catechetical Instruction League retreated from rural areas

³⁵Southwest Courier, December 22, 1928.

³⁶Oklahoma Klan Kourier, September 24, 1925.

to only Oklahoma City and Tulsa. The diocese, however, maintained the other missionary developments of religious correspondence courses, radio broadcasts, and activity directed toward blacks and Mexicans. Hence Oklahoma continued its missionary endeavors during the next few years without expanding them to any considerable degree. As a result, Kelley could confidently write in 1928, "Our missionary plans are working out and we are actually bringing non-Catholics into the Church. In proportion to our Catholic population we ought to come first in the United States this year."³⁷

While inflaming the diocese with a missionary fire, Kelley also persuaded the diocese to gain fiscal stability through a series of fund raising efforts. In 1925 St. John's Hospital, the major medical facility for Tulsa, needed to raise money to enclose the steel skeleton of a major addition. Appealing to both Catholics and non-Catholics, the financial effort had to fight against subtle anti-Catholic bigotry which claimed that Catholic-operated hospitals allowed papist propaganda access to many Protestant homes.³⁸ In the face of such opposition, the drive encountered delays before it fell \$200,000 short of its \$750,000

³⁷Francis Kelley to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, Oklahoma City, January 12, 1928, "Patrick Cardinal Hayes" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC; Oklahoma Klan Courier, September 24, 1925.

³⁸Francis Kelley to P. Furnsoni-Biondi, Oklahoma City, December 19, 1925, "Apostolic Delegate" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

goal.³⁹ Yet the \$550,000 enabled the administration of St. John's Hospital to complete the structure and provide medical services to Tulsa.

One year later, Kelley launched a massive effort among Catholics to raise general funds for statewide Catholic activities and for liquidation of local parish debts. With a goal of \$750,000, a battery of laymen personally contacted every Catholic home in the state during the fall of 1926.⁴⁰ As money and pledges for the next three years rolled in, the total continually rose until at the end of the drive the bishop had collected dollars and promises of dollars amounting to more than \$800,000. While \$150,000 in pledges were never paid, Kelley believed that the drive had relieved the immediate financial problem and provided necessary funds for the future.⁴¹

Believing that every successful diocese must have its own supply of "native" priests, Kelley wanted to cease relying on foreign clergy. To attract local men to the priesthood and to provide the training appropriate to a missionary state, the bishop wanted to establish a diocesan seminary to provide the first years of training. To finance

³⁹Southwest Courier, November 7, 1925, December 5, 1925, December 19, 1925.

⁴⁰Francis Kelley, The Bishop Speaks (Oklahoma City, 1926), passim, William Huffer papers, AAOKC.

⁴¹Francis Kelley to William A. St. Alberto, Oklahoma City, July 12, 1937, "W Miscellaneous" file, General Correspondence, 1936-1937, AAOKC.

the construction, Kelley appropriated some money from the diocesan fund drive.⁴² In addition, Kelley approached wealthy Protestant oilmen, whom he had met earlier, to donate considerable funds. His basic argument in appealing to these non-Catholics was that such an effort would correct the bigoted image of "benighted Oklahoma" and, consequently, aid the future growth of the state.⁴³ While the response was generally disappointing, Frank Phillips, president of the oil company which bears his name, concurred with Kelley's argument and pledged \$50,000 toward the education of Catholic priests.⁴⁴ This gift was only the first of many large contributions which Frank Phillips, a Protestant, would give to Bishop Kelley.

While the financial support of the seminary is indicative of the improving fiscal situation of Oklahoma Catholicism, the construction of the preparatory school typifies the institutional growth of the diocese during Kelley's first four years. Under the watchful eye of John Heiring, president of the future seminary, the school rose near Keifer, just south of Tulsa. On November 29, 1929, Kelley dedicated the nearly completed structure, and by the follow-

⁴²Kelley, The Bishop Speaks, pp. 8-10.

⁴³Francis Kelley to W. S. Skelley, Oklahoma City, May 14, 1930, "Miscellaneous SK-SL" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁴⁴Frank Phillips to Francis Kelley, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, March 9, 1929, "Frank Phillips" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

ing spring the building was ready for occupancy.⁴⁵ Another institutional development was the establishment of the office of Associated Catholic Charities of Oklahoma to coordinate and raise funds for all diocesan charitable activities. While Kelley had plans to expand such activities, the only diocesan charity was St. Joseph's Orphanage. Consequently, the major function of the new office was to improve the financial condition and administration of the children's home.⁴⁶ In this matter, the Community Fund of Oklahoma City officially recognized the Catholic organization and began to donate money to the Catholic institution with funds from the annual city-wide fund drive.⁴⁷

A variety of other organizational activity took place during the first four years of Francis Kelley's administration. For example, the bishop canonically established the Carmelite sisters, who had been admitted to the state without the proper procedure.⁴⁸ While the burst of activity did not involve an attempt to resurrect the Oklahoma branch of the National Council of Catholic Men, the women organized in 1929 a state group of the National Council of Catholic

⁴⁵Private diary of John Heiring, pp. 105-108, John Heiring papers, AAOKC.

⁴⁶James A. Garvey, "Associated Catholic Charities of Oklahoma," The Southwest Courier--Oklahoma Catholic Annual Edition and Official Diocesan Directory, 1928, June 30, 1928.

⁴⁷Catholic Home, November 22, 1924.

⁴⁸Southwest Courier, January 5, 1929.

Women to assist in the establishment of religious vacation schools for children in rural areas.⁴⁹ Involving the regular Catholic schools, the diocese promoted the Catholic Education Association of Oklahoma, which would serve as the professional organization for those employed by the Catholic private and parochial schools in the state.⁵⁰ Likewise in the parochial schools, this period marked the formation of parent-teacher organizations. While most of these were local autonomous organizations for each school, some groups were drifting toward the national Parents-Teachers Association.⁵¹ Consequently, during the late 1920's Kelley brought about a renewal of the organizational growth of Sooner Catholicism as well as the infusion of a missionary spirit and a partial solution to the diocese's financial difficulties. Hence, in June, 1928, Bishop Kelley could write, "One by one the heavy troubles are being removed."⁵²

Simultaneously with this growth, anti-Catholicism

⁴⁹Southwest Courier, September 28, 1929, October 26, 1929.

⁵⁰Catholic Education Association of Oklahoma, Catholic Education Association of Oklahoma Bulletin, April, 1928 (n.p., 1928), passim.

⁵¹Southwest Courier, October 5, 1929, April 26, 1930. In 1932, Bishop Kelley prohibited these affiliations with the national organization because church law forbade the establishment of non-sectarian societies under Catholic auspices. J. B. Dudek, Circular letter, Oklahoma City, August 12, 1932, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

⁵²Francis Kelley to E. F. Carey, Oklahoma City, June 16, 1928, "E. F. Carey" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

declined somewhat slowly along the road to extinction. A prime example that bigotry was declining came in May, 1926, when the Anadarko Knights of Columbus held their first initiation. Not having any facility of their own, the Catholic women served the Knights a banquet in the Modern Woodman Lodge with kitchen equipment and dishes borrowed from the Ladies Aid Society of the Presbyterian church.⁵³ With the elections for governor and the United State senator taking place, every candidate ran on a platform stressing religious tolerance and opposition to all forms of bigotry.⁵⁴ The governor's campaign gave indications that Catholic laymen were not overly concerned about anti-Catholic agitation. In the contest, most prominent Democratic Catholic laymen publicly supported O. A. Cargill,⁵⁵ who four years earlier had been a Kluxer. Their candidate lost the election to a current Klansman who won with some Catholic support.⁵⁶ In local areas, Catholic clergy listed among their friends some of the local Protestant pastors;⁵⁷ on the state level, the bishop of the Episcopal church dined at Kelley's home on several occasions.⁵⁸ Using the term "Klan" to encompass

⁵³Southwest Courier, May 15, 1926.

⁵⁴Southwest Courier, September 25, 1926.

⁵⁵Southwest Courier, July 24, 1926.

⁵⁶Charles C. Alexander, The Ku Klux Klan in the Southwest (Lexington, Kentucky, 1965), pp. 26, 229.

⁵⁷Southwest Courier, April 2, 1927.

⁵⁸Francis Kelley to A. Edward Saunders, Oklahoma City, July 4, 1929, "Miscellaneous SA-SC" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

all anti-Catholic agitation, the state's Catholic newspaper cautioned, "Some people may have believed that the Ku Klux Klan is a thing of the past, we may believe that it still lives even though it be in temporary hiding⁵⁹

This warning was grounded in sporadic incidents symptomatic of anti-Catholicism. Catholic missionary activity, such as the arrival of the chapel car in a rural town, would sometimes stimulate a local overt display of religious hatred.⁶⁰ When Patrick Cardinal Hayes of New York joined Bishop Kelley for a five-day visit to Oklahoma, which included the solemn consecration of Holy Family Church in Tulsa, the public announcement of the forthcoming ceremonies triggered a threat against the lives of both prelates and caused them to be placed under secret armed protection.⁶¹ The ever present anti-Catholic lecturers continued to make their presence felt in Oklahoma, but their frequency and their audiences continued to decline during these years.⁶²

Yet a storm was brewing on the horizon which threatened to drench the state once again with wide-spread religious bigotry. As John Heiring said before a large gathering of priests, "The eyes of the citizenry of the U. S., our beloved country, are upon the Honorable Alfred Smith.

⁵⁹Southwest Courier, June 26, 1926.

⁶⁰See various reports from Austin Fleming and an undated, untitled mimeographed flyer of an anti-Catholic nature, "Chapel Car" file, Mission Archives, AAOKC.

⁶¹Materials in General Correspondence and Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

⁶²Southwest Courier, June 5, 1926, August 28, 1926,

At the present time no topic of more frequent comment or so commonly on the lips, favorable or otherwise, is found through the length and breadth of this our country."⁶³

For Al Smith, the Catholic governor of New York, was seeking the Democratic nomination for President of the United States.

The religious question in the campaign came to the fore early in the spring of 1927, when Charles Marshall and Smith exchanged letters in the Atlantic Monthly on whether a Catholic in the White House could reconcile his loyalty to his country with his devotion to his religion. The Southwest Courier reprinted Smith's reply in full,⁶⁴ and published editorial opinions from across the nation under the headline "Governor Smith's Answer Hailed By Press of Country as 'Complete and Convincing.'" In its own discussion, the Courier's editorial agreed that Smith's response was thorough and well-reasoned, yet the paper warned, "We do not anticipate that the question of bigotry has been closed. So long as there is ignorance and just so long will there be intolerance."⁶⁵ Having experienced the deep-rooted

⁶²(Continued) September 25, 1926.

⁶³John Heiring, "Sacredotal Silver Jubilee--Rev. Hubert Van Rechem," sermon delivered at Bartlesville, Oklahoma, November 16, 1927, John Heiring papers, AAOKC. For a discussion and analysis of the election of 1928 in Oklahoma, see Mary E. Wade, "The Presidential Election of 1928 in Oklahoma" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Tulsa, n.d.) and Elbert Watson, "The 1928 Presidential Campaign in Oklahoma" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1954).

⁶⁴Southwest Courier, April 30, 1927, May 7, 1927.

⁶⁵Southwest Courier, April 30, 1927.

intolerance of the Southwest, the Courier correctly forecast that the issue of Smith's religion would continue to haunt the campaign.

While the governor fought for the Democratic nomination, the Catholic newspaper turned the tables on the Protestants and accused them of meddling in politics. Caliming that the attack on Catholics was meant to conceal the true Protestant goal, the newspaper argued, "It is not Catholics and aliens, but Protestants and natives that are striving for a union of Church and State in America."⁶⁶ The prime example of Protestant political action was the prohibition issue and the Anti-Saloon League, which the Catholic publication claimed was the political arm of the evangelical denominations' movement to swing the country toward their brand of sectarianism.⁶⁷

After the Democrats in Houston made Smith their national standard bearer against Herbert Hoover, the Republican choice, the usually outspoken Courier remained strangely silent. With this seemingly indifferent attitude eliciting criticism from Catholics, the editor declared that the publication "is conducted independently of politics of any nature."⁶⁸ As the campaign developed, however, the newspaper did venture into politics to uphold the principle of

⁶⁶Southwest Courier, December 10, 1927.

⁶⁷Southwest Courier, April 14, 1928.

⁶⁸Southwest Courier, July 7, 1928.

religious freedom, to condemn those bringing the religious question into the campaign, and to criticize those ministers who brought politics into their pulpits. Although religion was only one of the five key issues to the contest in Oklahoma,⁶⁹ the Courier over-simplified the campaign as "Too many Oklahomans are painting 'No Catholics Wanted' on the White House door-step." When many traditional Democrats publicly endorsed the Republican ticket because of Smith's non-dry stance or his association with Tammany Hall, the Catholic publication concluded that such issues were merely smoke screens covering the major issue of religion.⁷⁰ Thus in defending Smith against the attacks on his religion and in interpreting the opposition of the Prohibitionists as a camouflage for bigotry, the Courier took on a distinctly pro-Smith image. Despite this slant, the Catholic paper assiduously avoided any endorsement of the Catholic presidential candidate.

In the election, most Catholics favored the New Yorker in his contest with Hoover. When Smith came to Oklahoma City to counter the religious issue with a major address, Catholics from across the state flocked to hear their candidate.⁷¹ Yet, unlike the gubernatorial primary six

⁶⁹Watson, "The 1928 Presidential Campaign in Oklahoma," p. 110.

⁷⁰Southwest Courier, October 27, 1928.

⁷¹Interview with Msgr. James McGinty, Oklahoma City, February 4, 1974; interview with T. Austin Gavin, Tulsa, February 9, 1974.

years earlier, Catholics strenuously avoided participating in the election as an organized force. Likewise, Bishop Kelley, a registered Republican who was voting for the Democratic Smith, refused to become involved even to the slightest extent in the Oklahoma campaign. When asked for advice by one of Smith's Oklahoma supporters, Kelley wrote, "I do not want to meddle in any way in political matters . . . because of my determination to keep the Church in Oklahoma out of the situation"⁷² In a letter to a personal friend, the bishop truthfully stated, "I am keeping out of the whole mess."⁷³ Even when a friendly Protestant editor asked him for a statement not directly related to the campaign, the prelate replied, "I prefer not to be quoted until after November about anything that even remotely touches politics."⁷⁴ While keeping away from politics, Kelley wrote his friend and colleague, Cardinal Hayes, his analysis of Smith's chances in Oklahoma based on his observations and second-hand reports. Like the newspaper and many Catholics, Kelley viewed the Oklahoma contest as focusing on whether a Catholic could loyally serve his country in the White House.

⁷²Kelley to T. E. McNeary, Oklahoma City, September 10, 1928, "Miscellaneous NA-NE-NI" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁷³Francis Kelley to Joseph F. Lilly, Oklahoma City, October 19, 1928, "Joseph F. Lilly" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁷⁴Francis Kelley to Thomas A. Latta, Oklahoma City, September 10, 1928, "Thomas A. Latta" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

While Kelley's analysis may have found its way into the national Smith organization,⁷⁵ Kelley joined his fellow Oklahoma Catholics in avoiding active participation and in quietly voting for Smith on November 6, 1928.

When the precinct workers counted the votes in Oklahoma, the Democratic banner went down to defeat. With the national ticket losing the state 219,174 to 394,046, every statewide Democratic candidate lost to his Republican opponent.⁷⁶ One of those defeated Democrats was Thomas H. Doyle, the Catholic who had served on the Criminal Court of Appeals since statehood and who had introduced Smith at the Oklahoma City rally. While some believed that Doyle's defeat was due to his religion,⁷⁷ others attributed it to the current appeals court's strict demand for search warrants in prohibition cases which had rendered enforcement of Oklahoma's dry laws exceedingly difficult. As one Catholic saw it, ". . . It was his stand of prohibition enforcement that had more to do with his defeat than his Church membership."⁷⁸ Since all the other statewide Democrats also were defeated

⁷⁵Francis Kelley to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, July 12, 1928, October 19, 1928, "Patrick Cardinal Hayes" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁷⁶Oklahoma State Election Board, Directory of Oklahoma, 1973 (n.p., 1973), p. 351.

⁷⁷J. J. Moroney, Letter to the editor, Southwest Courier, December 8, 1928; interview with T. Austin Gavin, Tulsa, February 9, 1974.

⁷⁸William Meyer, Letter to the editor, Southwest Courier, December 15, 1928.

and since Judge Doyle received the highest number of Democratic votes in the state, the probable cause for the loss was the devastating outcome for Al Smith's presidential ambitions.

In explaining the reasons for the lop-sided presidential vote, the Catholics simplified the complex reasons as they had simplified the issues in the campaign. For them, the key issue was Al Smith's religion. In the words of the Southwest Courier, "That one of the candidates was a Catholic brought religion to the fore and it held the lead position from the very beginning. No sane observer will ever refuse to admit that religion was the predominant issue." Explaining how this issue was introduced into the campaign, the Courier's editor commented, "Being whispered from lip to ear . . . bias and hatred against the Catholic Church came to the surface like a scum during the last six months. It cropped up in universities, it was mouthed by Senators, ran rampant in business offices and drew its slimy length across the land, rousing old fires, ancient prejudices. Through it all the Catholic Church remained silent."⁷⁹

Despite this six-month storm of prejudice, the Catholics saw the silver lining in the clouds. Bishop Kelley had told Governor Smith before the election that his campaign would have missionary value in increasing non-Catholic interest in the Catholic Church and in providing a forum to rebut the

⁷⁹Southwest Courier, November 10, 1928.

charges made by the haters of Catholicism.⁸⁰ After the election, Kelley claimed to have been a good prophet.⁸¹ Besides several laymen and clergy agreeing that the vicious campaign had served a missionary purpose, the Democrat Chief in Hobart, Oklahoma, concurred that the Catholic Church had profited from the contest because the "broadside of slander and misrepresentation [was] so exaggerated that it has set decent-minded people to thinking." Thoroughly secular, the Chief reflected its southwestern Oklahoma origin by continuing, "The Catholics themselves have remained aloof with commendable unanimity, disproving the age-old charge that they sought a union of church and state."⁸²

Although the Al Smith campaign triggered a wide-spread display of religious prejudice throughout the Sooner state, the Catholic Church had wisely rested upon its earlier answers and did not overtly challenge the arguments lest the charges of the political power of the Catholic Church be given new credence. The Catholics had survived what could have easily been a devastating reversal of the earlier missionary successes. After the election, the flames of intolerance once again died out, and the old fires of

⁸⁰Francis Kelley to Alfred E. Smith, Oklahoma City, January 9, 1929, "Miscellaneous SM-SO" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁸¹Francis Kelley to Patrick Cardinal Hayes, Oklahoma City, June 15, 1929, "Patrick Cardinal Hayes" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁸²As quoted in Southwest Courier, November 10, 1928.

prejudice were reduced to glowing embers.

With the major hurdle of Smith's campaign safely passed, the Catholics in the Sooner State during 1929 could relax and admire the accomplishments that they had made during Bishop Kelley's first five years. In a brief time, the Diocese of Oklahoma had launched a broad missionary program, advanced the institutional development, stabilized the financial situation, and survived an incident which could have precipitated another decade of religious bigotry. It looked as if the pioneer days for the Catholic Church in Oklahoma had finally ended, and that the Diocese of Oklahoma would at last achieve maturity and stability. Yet economic disaster was lurking ahead for the Sooner Catholics as well as for the nation. The Great Depression would soon engulf the economic prosperity of the United States and the religious prosperity of Oklahoma Catholicism.

CHAPTER VI

FACING THE DEPRESSION, 1930-1937

During the hot summer of 1930, Bishop Francis Kelley worked in the cool of the night to keep current with his correspondence. Writing in August, 1930, to a friend, Oklahoma's bishop dryly commented, "I don't believe in blaming Mr. Hoover for the lack of rain but his prosperity is certainly not in evidence."¹ Although the nation would in 1932 reject Herbert Hoover's leadership for Franklin Roosevelt's program, prosperity did not return to Oklahoma and the state's Catholic Church during the early 1930's. The economic chaos of the Great Depression destroyed the financial maturity the diocese was establishing in the late 1920's and consequently conditioned the Sooner Catholic activities from 1930 to 1937. In its quest for stability, the Oklahoma Diocese faced the immediate problem of a national economic disaster as well as the perennial problem of small population scattered across a vast area.

With the Catholic Church greatly dependent on oilmen for its financial support, the diocese severely felt the economic catastrophe which brutally disrupted the petroleum

¹Francis Kelley to William O'Brien, Oklahoma City, August 6, 1930, "Rt. Rev. Msgr. William O'Brien" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

industry. During the late 1920's, the Sooner oil industry had discovered a rich pool of oil around Oklahoma City and had begun to overproduce. When the Depression struck, the market price for crude fell to an abysmally low level of twenty-five cents per barrel. Despite Governor "Alfalpa Bill" Murray's military attempt to limit the production of crude, which saw production cut by eighty per cent, the chief effect was an increase in the unemployment rate for oil workers, while prices continued low.² The depressed petroleum corporations tried to increase efficiency by combining small and large concerns in mergers which threw thousands more onto the unemployment rosters.³ With these developments, Bishop Kelley estimated that Oklahoma had 20,000 oil workers seeking jobs.⁴ When presented a list of formerly wealthy Oklahoma Catholics associated with the petroleum industry, the bishop claimed that "Most of the men, in fact all of them, to my certain knowledge have lost two-thirds of their fortunes."⁵ With some parishes having overbuilt in the 1920's on the strength of subscriptions and

²Robert Sturgis, "Progress in Oklahoma and Throughout Nation," 1933 March of Progress Edition of the Southwest Courier, Supplement to Southwest Courier, June 24, 1933, pp. 2, 6.

³Francis Kelley to L. Cardinal Sincero, Oklahoma City, January 7, 1933, "Miscellaneous SK-SI-SL" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁴Francis Kelley to John J. Wynne, Oklahoma City, August 31, 1933, "Miscellaneous WI-WL-WO-WR-WY" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁵Francis Kelley to A. J. Drossaerts, Oklahoma City,

pledges from oil men, the diocese had during the Depression to assume responsibility for considerable parochial debts.

In addition to the oil depression, the situation of the farmer deteriorated. Never having fully recovered from the fall in prices after World War I, agricultural prosperity totally vanished as the drought which began in 1930 reached its height with the intolerably hot summer of 1936. In a personal letter, Kelley summarized the bleak situation, "The Diocese is in a bad fix because of the awful heat that has burned up everything."⁷ The bishop's early expectations that the small rural parishes would not have much trouble proved incorrect, and the debt-ridden, farmer-based churches became Kelley's biggest financial headache.⁸

With both petroleum and agricultural revenue declining, the local parishes encountered tremendous problems. The major difficulty was the debts, amounting to more than \$750,000, which the local parishes had accrued.⁹ Trying to

⁵(Continued) February 22, 1932, "Catholic University" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁶Francis Kelley to John F. Noble, Oklahoma City, January 4, 1930, "American Board of Catholic Missions" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁷Francis Kelley to Joseph M. Griffin, Oklahoma City, August 3, 1936, "Miscellaneous G" file, General Correspondence for 1936-37, AAOKC.

⁸Francis Kelley to "Most Rev. Duffy," Oklahoma City, January 4, 1934, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁹J. B. Dudek to First National Bank, Oklahoma City, January 20, 1936, "First National Bank" file, General Correspondence for 1935, AAOKC.

survive the economic disaster, some parishes barely managed to raise the necessary funds to pay the interest on the mortgages.¹⁰ Help in meeting these mortgage payments came from the diocese, which was able to borrow additional funds on the strength of its \$4 million in church property across the state.¹¹ Compounding the financial problem, the parishes suffered when banks in all areas of Oklahoma failed. For example, the Catholic Church at Perry and several of its lay organizations lost their deposits when the Farmer and Merchant Bank failed to open for business in September, 1932.¹² With the contraction of the money supply, local Catholics could no longer afford tuition payments for parochial schools, and the Catholic educational system lost enrollment.¹³ With a loss of revenue, trouble in meeting financial obligations, and a decline in school enrollment, parish growth understandably stagnated in the early years of the Depression. The only exception to this lack of parochial development was in Henryetta, where the pastor persuaded the unemployed men of the parish to donate three days to the

¹⁰Interview with Msgr. C. A. McGinty, Oklahoma City, February 6, 1974.

¹¹"List of Properties Held or Controlled by the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa," January 1, 1936, "First National Bank" file, General Correspondence for 1935, AAOKC.

¹²St. Rose of Lima Parish Bulletin, October, 1932, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

¹³Official Catholic Directory, 1929 (New York, 1929), p. 508, and Official Catholic Directory, 1933 (New York, 1933), p. 552.

construction of a new church in return for a small compensation.¹⁴

On the state level, the diocesan institutions and organizations mirrored the local difficulties. The first casualty was the proposed seminary near Tulsa. Lacking adequate funds to operate an educational institution, Kelley made the unpopular decision to change the building from a seminary to St. John Vianney Home for delinquent girls.¹⁵ Under the financial destitution of the Depression, the diocese cancelled the annual meetings of the Catholic Education Association of Oklahoma, and the organization soon became defunct.¹⁶ The lay organization of the Knights of Columbus also suffered as it lost its main meeting house and suffered a fifty per cent drop in membership.¹⁷ Earlier proposals to expand the Associated Catholic Charities into other areas, such as a maternity center, fell by the wayside,¹⁸ and Kelley accurately stated in 1936 that the diocese had "no real organization for Catholic charities in

¹⁴"3 Rings in Fifty Years," supplement to Southwest Courier, October 8, 1955, p. 63.

¹⁵Southwest Courier, April 30, 1932.

¹⁶Southwest Courier, February 3, 1932.

¹⁷State Council, Knights of Columbus, Report of the Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention of the Oklahoma State Council, Knights of Columbus Held at Okmulgee, Okla., May 12, 1930 (n.p., [1930]), p. 11; State Council, Knights of Columbus, Report of the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention of the Oklahoma State Council, Knights of Columbus Held at Shawnee, May 14, 1934, unpublished manuscript, state secretary's report, p. 1, KC Archives.

¹⁸Francis Kelley, circular letter, Oklahoma City,

the Diocese, though nominally there is a director and a board. What the director is actually doing is connected almost entirely with the orphanage."¹⁹ Yet the diocesan charities office had continual difficulty raising the necessary funds even for this single operation. At the beginning of May, 1933, the organization had less than \$300 in cash on hand and more than \$3,400 in immediate debts. Furthermore, the Associated Catholic Charities had a mortgage payment on the orphanage of \$4,178 due in August.²⁰ Hence the diocesan institutional developments which could have followed in the wake of prosperity of the 1920's failed to materialize in the economic chaos of the 1930's.

With the malaise of the Depression afflicting parochial and diocesan growth, a symbolic change for the Catholic Church in Oklahoma came in early 1931. During February, a papal bull arrived and authorized the establishment of a co-cathedral in Tulsa at Holy Family Church. In addition, the location of the main cathedral in Oklahoma City was moved from St. Joseph's Church to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church. With two see cities, the diocese continued to embrace the entire state of Oklahoma and had the new name of the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa. The Southwest

¹⁸(Continued) August 13, 1932, "Miscellaneous MA" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

¹⁹Francis Kelley to Gerald Shaughnessy, Oklahoma City, April 18, 1936, "Miscellaneous S" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

²⁰Southwest Courier, April 29, 1933.

Courier in its coverage of the establishment of two see cities in a diocese commented, "It is usually interpreted as a progressive step in diocesan history."²¹ However, Kelley privately commented that the major change was only to recognize the prominence of Tulsa in the state's Catholic affairs.²² With a background of poverty for the new Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Kelley described the change as "putting up what we Yankees would call 'a good bluff.'"²³

Besides affecting the diocese, the Depression also seriously hurt the private life of Bishop Kelley. Responsible for the deficits of the individual parishes, Kelley was besieged by financial problems. The national agencies designed to aid bishops of missionary dioceses like Oklahoma suffered a loss of income as a result of the Depression and found it difficult to aid Sooner Catholicism.²⁴ Turning over all of the donations raised for his personal support to the diocese, Kelley relied almost entirely for his personal income on speaking engagements across the nation and on royalties from his many books.²⁵ Yet the financial problems

²¹Southwest Courier, February 7, 1931.

²²Francis Kelley to George J. Caruana, Oklahoma City, December 17, 1932, "Most Rev. George J. Caruana" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

²³Francis Kelley to P. Fumasoni-Biondi, Oklahoma City, February 19, 1931, "Apostolic Delegate" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

²⁴Francis Kelley, circular letter, Oklahoma City, March 11, 1932, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

²⁵Francis Kelley to August Ziesel, Oklahoma City, September 22, 1933, "Miscellaneous X-Y-Z" file, General

were so severe that they forced the bishop to allow his membership in civic organizations to lapse²⁶ and to cancel his insurance policies.²⁷ Not able to support a bishop's residence, Kelley turned over his home to a new parish in Oklahoma City and moved into the first floor of St. Anthony's Hospital.²⁸ Always finding Oklahoma's hot summers distasteful to his Canadian background, Kelley complained that "the hot weather here is killing me, especially now that I am living on the lower floor of a hospital downtown."²⁹ Despite this state of near bankruptcy, the bishop received from individuals in his flock many appeals for money, help in locating employment, and assistance in dealing with government welfare agencies.³⁰

²⁵(Continued) Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

²⁶Francis Kelley to Chamber of Commerce, State of Oklahoma, Oklahoma City, October 3, 1930, "Miscellaneous CH" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

²⁷Francis Kelley to August Ziesel, Oklahoma City, September 22, 1933, "Miscellaneous X-Y-Z" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

²⁸Diocese of Oklahoma, Report of the Meeting of Representatives of the Clergy Held on February 4th and 5th, 1930 (n.p., n.d.), pp. 1-2.

²⁹Francis Kelley to F. J. Brandenburg, Oklahoma City, June 11, 1934, "Miscellaneous BL-BY" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

³⁰For example, see Francis Kelley to B. A. Murtaugh, Oklahoma City, October 10, 1932, "Miscellaneous ME-MU" file, Mrs. Anna Purcell to Francis Kelley, Elkhart, Kansas, March 17, 1933, "Miscellaneous PU-PY" file, Francis Kelley to Msgr. G. Depreitere, Oklahoma City, January 4th, 1934, "Miscellaneous E" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

With the crippling Depression dealing blow after blow to Sooner Catholicism, the presidential administration of Herbert Hoover stressed the viewpoint that relief for individuals should rest upon private, not governmental agencies. In this spirit, the financially destitute church tried to assume an additional burden from 1930 to 1933 and promote various activities to aid the suffering of the unemployed. In various parts of the state, local Catholic organizations sponsored entertainment to raise money for relief.³¹ In Tulsa, the Knights of Columbus tried to establish the Knights Employment Bureau by distributing cards at all church services in the city during a two week period. After soliciting job vacancies during the first week, the Knights requested job applications during the second.³² Since the applications far outnumbered the employment vacancies, the Knights Employment Bureau accomplished very little. The Associated Catholic Charities tried to expand into opening breadlines, but only served as a clearing house for those who wished to donate old clothes to the jobless.³³ Like most of the voluntary efforts of the Hoover years, the efforts of Sooner Catholics to aid the unemployed brought little effective relief.

Having voted for Hoover's Catholic opponent in 1928,

³¹Southwest Courier, January 17, 1931, March 7, 1931, January 23, 1932.

³²Southwest Courier, December 13, 1930.

³³Southwest Courier, January 24, 1931, November 28, 1931.

the editor of the diocesan newspaper could not resist commenting upon Hoover's defeat in 1932 by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In interpreting the Roosevelt triumph, Joseph Quinn claimed that many millions of voters in their repudiation of Hoover admitted the mistake they had made in 1928.³⁴ After Bishop Kelley sent to Roosevelt a pro forma letter lauding his inaugural address,³⁵ the Southwest Courier on April 1, 1933, launched an editorial campaign praising Roosevelt's New Deal and claimed that the new president was "measuring up to every expectation."³⁶ In their editorials and news stories, the diocesan publication praised the forthrightness of Roosevelt's bank holiday, agricultural proposals, efforts to protect securities, formation of the 'brain trust,' work relief program, and the National Industrial Recovery Act.³⁷ When some newspapers objected that the National Recovery Administration codes by including the fourth estate had violated the freedom of the press, the Courier concluded that "the objections made to the newspaper NRA code are capricious and without the least merit."³⁸ Likewise, the National Council of Catholic Women

³⁴Southwest Courier, November 12, 1932.

³⁵Francis Kelley to Franklin Roosevelt, Oklahoma City, March 10, 1933, "Miscellaneous R" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

³⁶Southwest Courier, April 1, 1933.

³⁷Southwest Courier, April 8, 1933, May 27, 1933, June 2, 1933, June 24, 1933, July 22, 1933, July 29, 1933, August 19, 1933.

³⁸Southwest Courier, November 11, 1933.

passed a resolution praising "the great president of the United States for his courageous stand in behalf of the people in inaugurating the NRA."³⁹ In fact, Bishop Kelley wrote to a friend that he had not expected much from Roosevelt, but now concluded that perhaps "there was a man sent by God and his name was Roosevelt."⁴⁰ The basic rationale behind each statement was the belief that the New Deal by restoring prosperity to the country, was thus aiding Oklahoma, and thus also the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

This Catholic support of Franklin Roosevelt began to wane over foreign affairs, with the first area of disagreement revolving around the President's diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union. In the fall of 1933 when it was rumored that Roosevelt would recognize the Communist government, the Southwest Courier ominously forecasted that Roosevelt would lose the confidence and good will of many Americans for recognizing a government whose aim was to foment atheistic revolution in the United States.⁴¹ Two years later, the Catholic publication concluded that "the major mistake of his administration was the recognition of the Soviet Russia."⁴²

³⁹Southwest Courier, September 30, 1933.

⁴⁰Francis Kelley to Most Rev. Duffy, Oklahoma City, January 4, 1934, "Miscellaneous DU" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁴¹Southwest Courier, September 30, 1933.

⁴²Southwest Courier, September 7, 1935.

The second foreign policy disagreement was over the anticlerical Mexican Revolution, which had begun in 1910 and had continued into the 1930's its program of restricting the former rights and privileges of the Catholic Church in Mexico. An early opponent of the Mexican Revolution and a leading critic of Woodrow Wilson's policy toward Mexico, Francis Kelley had continued to urge that the United States government take action to protect the Catholic Church from persecution. In the late 1920's at a second time of strained United States-Mexican relations, the Catholic press in Oklahoma and throughout the nation, condemning the "leftist revolution," urged the United States to act. As Mexican anticlericalism reached a new height in 1935, another burst of critical editorial opinion came. In Oklahoma, this occurred simultaneously with the publication of Bishop Kelley's lengthy book on the Mexican Revolution, Blood-Drenched Altars. With the Roosevelt administration refusing to protest the Mexican handling of religious liberty or North American interests, the Southwest Courier continued its criticism of the United States policy toward Mexico.⁴³ Consequently, the Oklahoma Catholic position as stated in the official publication of the diocese was one of the praising Roosevelt's domestic programs and criticizing his foreign policy.

With the 1936 elections approaching, the Southwest

⁴³Southwest Courier, November 23, 1935.

Courier refused to enter the fray and remained silent about the contest between Franklin Roosevelt, the Democrat, and Alf Landon, the Republican. Like many other Catholics in Oklahoma, Bishop Kelley had individually decided upon his personal choice in the summer of 1936. While he disliked "the persistent swinging to the left that seems to characterize the present administration," Kelley was more concerned about Roosevelt's policy toward Mexico. Opposing armed intervention, the bishop claimed that he knew "enough about Mexican affairs to be quite sure that the persecuting Mexican government receives encouragement through the friendship exhibited for them by our administration." In the balance between Roosevelt's attempts at solving the unemployment and religious liberty in Mexico, Oklahoma's bishop claimed that he did "not feel justified in weighing a few jobs against religious principles" and elected not to leave his Republican party alignment.⁴⁴ During the fall campaign, Kelley quietly advised Landon on the Mexican situation, and the Republican candidate included some of the cleric's ideas in his addresses on foreign policy.⁴⁵ This non-publicized involvement on behalf of Landon by the Bishop of Oklahoma City-Tulsa came to the attention of Roosevelt

⁴⁴Francis Kelley to Hugh Boyle, Beach Haven, New Jersey, July 25, 1936, "Miscellaneous B" file, General Correspondence for 1936-37, AAOKC.

⁴⁵Patrick McInerney to Francis Kelley, Topeka, Kansas, October 28, 1936, Francis Kelley to Patrick McInerney, Oklahoma City, October 31, 1936, Miscellaneous Mac-Mc" file, General Correspondence for 1936-37, AAOKC.

and served as part of the evidence for concern among some top Democrats about the allegiance of American Catholics to Roosevelt and his party.⁴⁶

While Kelley's covert political activity was a personal matter, it came to affect the Catholic Church in Oklahoma during the week prior to the election. Having agreed to deliver the closing benediction for Landon's nationwide radio program on election eve, the Bishop of Oklahoma City and Tulsa read the newspaper dispatches stating that he was going to deliver a political address.⁴⁷ After Kelley requested that the Republican National Committee correct its press release, the Daily Oklahoman carried an accurate announcement describing the bishop's forthcoming broadcast.⁴⁸ On Monday night, Kelley closed the hour-long political program with a non-partisan prayer for the nation. In the election day issue of the Oklahoma City Times, the editor wrote in his widely read front page column that Kelley's benediction joined with the emotional attacks upon Roosevelt by Father Charles Coughlin, with the well-publicized attacks on communism by Al Smith, and the month-long tour of the United States by Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, the Vatican's

⁴⁶George Q. Flynn, American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency, 1932-1936 (Lexington, Kentucky, 1968), p. 196.

⁴⁷Telegram, Francis Kelley to Mr. Tisdale, Oklahoma City, October 31, 1936, "Miscellaneous R" file, General Correspondence for 1936-37, AAOKC.

⁴⁸Daily Oklahoman, November 1, 1936.

Secretary of State, as part of the overall effort of the Catholic Church to dictate to American Catholics their choice in the national election. According to the column, the Catholic Church was against Roosevelt because of his inactivity during the Spanish Civil War between the anti-clerical Loyalist government and the pro-Catholic Nationalist rebels.⁴⁹ Here was a major metropolitan daily newspaper resurrecting the specter of Catholic political intrigue.

During the week after the election, Coughlin announced his retirement from politics. Since the editor of the Times now speculated that Pacelli was responsible for silencing the radio priest, the week-old Catholic conspiracy was no longer viable. Consequently, the editor admitted that he had made a mistake and retracted his earlier statement. In concluding his column, the secular journalist wrote, "My friend Bishop Kelley is a rampant Republican and he doesn't care who knows it, but you would never find out kindly, suave, tolerant Lateran Lieutenant speaking out offensively against the president of the United States" as had Charles Coughlin.⁵⁰ Yet the damage had been done, and a national secular publication, The Liberal, editorially condemned the column's original remarks as "bigoted, unfair, and infamous."⁵¹

⁴⁹Oklahoma City Times, November 3, 1936. Cardinal Pacelli became Pope Pius XII in 1939.

⁵⁰Oklahoma City Times, November 9, 1936.

⁵¹The Liberal (December, 1936), p. 22.

This was one of a few scattered examples of anti-Catholic prejudice which surfaced from 1930 to 1937. The incident which received the widest publicity came in 1935 when Eugene Maple charged that Ed Bason, chairman of the Oklahoma Industrial Commission, had dismissed him as manager of the State Insurance Fund because he had refused to follow Bason's orders to fire all Catholics in his employ.⁵² With Bishop Kelley on vacation, Monsignor A. F. Monnot, rector of Oklahoma City's Cathedral, called for the impeachment of Governor E. W. Marland since "the administration has let him [Bason] run the capital."⁵³ The governor immediately investigated the ugly charges and quieted the potentially inflammable situation.⁵⁴

During his career, Governor Marland had achieved a reputation for tolerance. As the wealthy owner of Marland Oil Company in Ponca City, he had given more than \$150,000 to Catholic schools, hospitals, and churches before his entrance into politics.⁵⁵ During the governor's contest in 1934, even Catholics who were supporting his opponent admitted that the oilman was without religious prejudice.⁵⁶

⁵²Oklahoma City Times, August 14, 1935.

⁵³Oklahoma City Times, August 16, 1935.

⁵⁴E. W. Marland to Francis Kelley, Oklahoma City, August 16, 1935. "Miscellaneous M" file, General Correspondence for 1935, AAOKC.

⁵⁵Southwest Courier, November 3, 1934.

⁵⁶Southwest Courier, November 3, 1934.

When Marland ran for the United States Senate in 1936, a group of Catholics supported his campaign because of his record of religious tolerance in the governor's mansion.⁵⁷ Despite this background, the rector of the Catholic cathedral in Oklahoma City had publicly called for the removal of Marland because of religious bigotry.

Anti-Catholicism also burst forth in the Oklahoma City municipal elections in 1935 when John Frank Martin, a prominent Catholic and the state head of the Knights of Columbus, ran for mayor of the capital city. As a former legislator, municipal counselor, and current city councilman, Martin decided that the time was ripe for a Catholic to challenge the latent prejudice in Oklahoma City. With the support of organized labor, blacks, prominent Catholics, and some members of the Chamber of Commerce, Martin ran an unexpected first in the primary election. During the run-off campaign, Oklahoma City again witnessed an outbreak of religious bigotry. While most of the attacks on Martin's religion came in a non-publicized, whispering campaign, the political anti-Catholicism surfaced in three fashions. Buying time on a small radio station, a Protestant minister continually ranted over the airwaves that the election of Martin would mean that the Pope would rule Oklahoma City. Also Martin's opponents hung anti-Catholic flyers on automobiles parked outside of some Protestant churches during

⁵⁷Ben Garvey, Jr., circular letter, n.p., n.d., "Miscellaneous G" file, General Correspondence for 1936-37, AAOKC.

services.⁵⁸ On the day before the election, the pastor of a Baptist church sent a letter to the city's Protestant ministers claiming that the basic question was whether they wanted ". . . a good, clean, levelheaded Christian, and a Baptist deacon, or Mr. Martin, who is a Roman Catholic, to be your mayor in Oklahoma City?"⁵⁹

When the returns came in, Martin narrowly won the election by fewer than eighty votes out of nearly 29,000.⁶⁰ While such a small margin can have several explanations, one is that almost every Catholic nun in the city turned out to vote in the election. Martin also carried the black precincts on the east side of the city. Martin had spoken in various Protestant churches throughout the black community while a city councilman, and his wife had taught in the homes of black Catholics through the Catechetical Instruction League's program since the late 1920's. Thus the election, which caused a brief resurgence of anti-Catholicism, was decided by the "black cloud" of nuns and black voters.⁶¹ Yet the four-year term of Martin as mayor enabled citizens to see for themselves that Catholics could serve

⁵⁸Interview with Mrs. John F. Martin, Oklahoma City, February 6, 1974.

⁵⁹As quoted in Albert McRill, And Satan Came Also: An Inside Story of a City's Social and Political History (Oklahoma City, 1955), p. 219.

⁶⁰Daily Oklahoman, April 3, 1935.

⁶¹Interview with Mrs. John F. Martin, Oklahoma City, February 6, 1974.

in a responsible public office without subverting the government to a papal conspiracy.

Other examples of religious bigotry in the early 1930's included at least one meeting in Tulsa which centered upon an anti-Catholic theme.⁶² Individual Catholics continued to encounter covert hostility when applying for teaching positions in the public school system.⁶³ The major public display in Oklahoma was the nationally produced Jehovah's Witness "Watch Tower" radio program featuring Judge Joseph A. Rutherford and his attacks on Catholicism. While Catholics were able to persuade some of the local radio stations to refuse to carry the program, some local broadcasters continued to carry the "Watch Tower" production.⁶⁴ Gone were the earlier formats of the public anti-Catholicism of the 1920's. The Ku Klux Klan had breathed its last breath; anti-Catholic lecturers no longer toured the Sooner State, and anti-Catholic newspapers had gone bankrupt. With only a few exceptions, the Depression years of the early 1930's were generally free of the widespread, overt Catholic bigotry

⁶²"Report of Meeting, Convention Hall, Friday Night, May 24, 1935," "Miscellaneous B" file, General Correspondence for 1935, AAOKC.

⁶³Francis Kelley to Joseph Wonderly, Oklahoma City, September 21, 1933, "Miscellaneous Wi-WL-WO-WR-WY" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, Francis Kelley to Florence Hornback, Oklahoma City, December 29, 1936, "Miscellaneous H" file, General Correspondence for 1936-37, AAOKC.

⁶⁴Mrs. S. M. Stevens to Francis Kelley, Tulsa, March 12, 1935, James O'Keefe, to Mrs. S. M. Stevens, Oklahoma City, March 16, 1935, "Miscellaneous S" file, General Correspondence for 1935, AAOKC.

of the 1920's.

Coincidental with the declining anti-Catholicism, some diocesan clergy achieved prominence through appointed positions in state government and other areas of public service. The process began in 1929, when Governor William J. Holloway appointed Father A. F. Monnot of Oklahoma City to serve on the Advisory Pardon and Parole Board with four prominent Democratic politicians.⁶⁵ When rumors of scandals came from the state's welfare institutions in 1931, Governor "Alfalpa Bill" Murray appointed Monnot to the chairmanship of his Ministerial Investigation Committee for Eleemosynary Institutions in Oklahoma.⁶⁶ In the fifteen institutions under study, all of the state's institutions except for the correctional facilities at McAlester and Granite, Monnot expected to find hidden intrigues, scandals, and maladministration. The committee of seven ministers returned to the governor a highly favorable report regarding the management of the facilities.⁶⁷ Murray's successor continued the tradition of appointing priests to state bodies when Governor Marland placed Father James A. Garvey, director of Associated

⁶⁵Southwest Courier, October 26, 1929.

⁶⁶Southwest Courier, September 19, 1933.

⁶⁷John F. Thomas, Jr., secretary, "Report of the Committee of ministers Appointed By Governor Wm. H. Murray to Investigate and Inspect the Fifteen Charitable and Eleemosynary Institutions of the State of Oklahoma," passim, especially p. 86, manuscript in Francis Kelley papers, SFCCR.

Catholic Charities, to the State Welfare Board.⁶⁸ Another area of public service came with Monnot, who was instrumental in getting the state legislature to approve a statute allowing the establishment of credit unions in Oklahoma.⁶⁹ While the legislation was used to establish credit unions among many different groups, Monnot worked with various parishes to form parish credit unions in different parts of the diocese.⁷⁰

One of the most prominent areas of public service resulted from Bishop Kelley's close friendship with Governor "Alfalfa Bill" Murray. Not having met each other prior to Murray's inauguration in January, 1931, the two became acquainted in the fall of 1931 through Melvin Cornish, whom Murray had appointed to the chairmanship of the Oklahoma Tax Commission.⁷¹ Despite an apparent contrast between the coarse, unrefined manner of the governor and the cultured, dignified personality of the bishop, the two leaders quickly established a close personal relationship which extended throughout the rest of their lives. A man who strongly believed in religious toleration, Murray allegedly remarked in jest that he knew only two intelligent people in

⁶⁸Southwest Courier, November 24, 1934.

⁶⁹Southwest Courier, November 18, 1933.

⁷⁰Southwest Courier, January 13, 1934.

⁷¹Melvin Cornish to Francis Kelley, Oklahoma City, November 23, 1931, "Miscellaneous CR" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

Oklahoma--"myself and Bishop Kelley."⁷² In April of 1933, Murray established with legislative approval the Coordinating Board of the State of Oklahoma to attempt to bring together the administration of state-operated colleges and universities, to co-ordinate public and private higher education in Oklahoma, to improve the quality of education, and to prevent the complete secularization of higher education. To this fourteen-member board concerned with advanced education, Murray appointed Kelley, who was selected as chairman of the group's executive committee. While their extensive research and their final report ran into difficulty with Oklahoma's anti-Murray attorney general in November, 1933, Kelley benefited from the wide-spread publicity regarding his educational views and from expanded contacts with many state officials.⁷³

These contacts, like the associations of other Catholic clergymen made in other areas of public service, aided in reducing the latent anti-Catholicism in many of the state's leaders. As one man wrote the Bishop,

It was Garfield who said the most beautiful and most fragrant flowers grew over party walls, but I am going further and saying that I believe the flowers that grow over denominational walls are still more fragrant. I am absolutely sorry that I am learning this great lesson so late in life. Why could I have not met men like you early in life? Then I would not have made some of the

⁷²Interview with Msgr. Raymond Harkin, Oklahoma City, January 30, 1974.

⁷³See the extensive files, "Education--Oklahoma Plan" files, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

mistakes that I have made.⁷⁴

The general thrust of missionary work which Kelley had begun in the late 1920's continued during the early 1930's. The missionary activity, however, fell under the general term of "Catholic Action." With the Pope and the National Catholic Welfare Conference calling upon every diocese to implement Catholic Action with practical programs, Kelley asked the clergy for their suggestions and proposals before the determination of concrete plans.⁷⁵ After receiving suggestions and weighing alternatives, the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa inaugurated Catholic Action in 1934 with the suggestion from the bishop that "we center our efforts for Catholic Action chiefly on conversions."⁷⁶ While a major emphasis of the early effort in the first years of Kelley's administration was to counteract anti-Catholicism, the thrust in the 1930's was proselytization for converts.

With this emphasis, Catholic Action embraced the continuing missionary program of radio lectures, vacation schools for rural Catholic children, churches for black Catholics in Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Okmulgee, and lay

⁷⁴J. T. Dickerson to Francis Kelley, Oklahoma City, August 1, 1933, "Education--Oklahoma Plan" files, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁷⁵Francis Kelley, circular letter, Oklahoma City, January 26, 1932, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

⁷⁶Francis Kelley, circular letter, Oklahoma City, January 31, 1934, Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

instruction of minority children in the homes of their parents. Also included in Catholic Action were all major Catholic activities in Oklahoma such as hospitals, Associated Catholic Charities, the Knights of Columbus, parish credit unions, the Catholic Daughters of America, St. John Vianney Home for delinquent girls, and various local social clubs.⁷⁷ Despite the emphasis on missionary and conversion work, Catholic Action was in actuality an umbrella term encompassing all the current activities of the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa which did not deal strictly with conducting religious services. The emphasis on conversions consequently did not entail specific programs as much as an attempt to encourage the clergy and laity to become psychologically aware of the need for conversions.

To encourage this consciousness, the diocese sponsored a Catholic Action Congress in Oklahoma on October 10 and 11, 1934, which 1,600 Catholics from across the state attended. Consisting of an evening rally at St. Joseph's church and a series of daytime speeches explaining how the various programs fit into Catholic Action, the congress was designed not to inaugurate new programs but to encourage those involved in existing activities to become conversion-minded.⁷⁸ Another congress was held two years later with

⁷⁷"Catholic Action in the Diocese," 1935 Oklahoma Catholic Annual of the Southwest Courier, supplement to Southwest Courier, June 29, 1935, pp. 1-8.

⁷⁸Southwest Courier, October 13, 1934.

the same general format and with the same goal.

One innovative missionary technique which was included under the Catholic Action label was "street preaching." While Father Stephen Leven was in Europe studying at the Catholic seminary in Louvain, Belgium, he became involved with the Catholic Evidence Guild in London. The Guild would set up temporary lecterns in the streets of London and arrange to have a knowledgeable individual preach Catholicism. Before Leven returned to Oklahoma to begin his ministerial duties, he had participated as a speaker in the English program. Being assigned to an Oklahoma City parish, Leven applied the technique to Oklahoma and began street preaching in the United States. On April 11, 1932, Leven set up a temporary podium on the lawn of the Oklahoma county courthouse, sang a hymn, and began talking about Catholicism. The unique sight of a Catholic priest speaking in the street attracted more than a hundred people, who began to participate in a question-and-answer period. With plans to continue every Monday evening, Father Charles Buswell joined the effort, and the two priests alternated on a weekly basis in delivering the lectures.⁷⁹ In May, Father John Walde, who had a wide reputation due to his radio broadcasts, joined the other clerics, and the trio conducted the weekly street preaching campaign throughout the summer and into the fall.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Southwest Courier, April 16, 1932.

⁸⁰Southwest Courier, April 30, 1932.

The technique of street preaching spread quickly into southwest Oklahoma when two priests spoke in the town square of Mangum on April 16, 1932.⁸¹ With the addition of two seminarians, the four clerics spoke in all cities and towns throughout the southwestern part of the state.⁸² In the fall when earlier sunsets and colder weather finally silenced the street preachers, the participants judged the experiment a success. Furthermore, the bishop also concluded that "it looks as if what has been started will go on and increase."⁸³ In preparation for the street preaching movement of 1933, the bishop transferred Leven to Bristow and appointed Father E. R. Wright to continue the Oklahoma City effort.⁸⁴

The thought of a Catholic priest going into the streets of Protestant Oklahoma caused anxiety in some Catholics, who feared the resurrection of religious bigotry. But the street campaign had the advantage of costing little in a time when the Catholic Church had only severely limited funds.⁸⁵ Also Father Leven argued that street preaching went where non-Catholics would come to hear the Catholic

⁸¹Southwest Courier, April 23, 1932.

⁸²Southwest Courier, July 23, 1932.

⁸³Francis Kelley to Martin Keating, Oklahoma City, May 27, 1932, "Miscellaneous KA-KE" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

⁸⁴Southwest Courier, October 8, 1932.

⁸⁵The Denver Register, August 19, 1934.

priest. Believing that they would drop by a street corner to hear a priest because of curiosity, or because they may have heard the priest on radio, or "because religion is the most interesting subject of conversation and discussion in their lives."⁸⁶ The advantage that non-Catholics would come and listen outweighed the disadvantages of street noise hindering the street preaching. The original fears of arousing hatred proved non-existent, and people originally sceptical of the effort soon gave the project their wholehearted endorsement.⁸⁷ Voicing a similar opinion, the bishop's spokesman commented that "street preaching is . . . knocking out the bigotry amongst our separated brethern."⁸⁸ With these results, the campaign in the streets of Oklahoma began again with warmer weather in the spring of 1933.

With Father Leven in Bristow, a new twist was added to the second year of street preaching, that is a "Catholic Revival" movement. Lasting continually for two weeks, the meetings were held in the open air or in a public building in the evening. Ornamented by congregational singing of hymns, the revival meetings centered around a sermon and a

⁸⁶Stephen Leven, "Outdoor and Schoolhouse Preaching," Southwest Courier, October 20, 1934.

⁸⁷"Catholic Action Congress, Oklahoma City and Tulsa Diocese, in Oklahoma City, October 10th-11th, 1934," pp. 30-32, manuscript, Francis Kelley papers, SFCCR.

⁸⁸T. J. Jordan to John M. Kelly, Oklahoma City, April 8, 1940, "Miscellaneous K" file, General Correspondence for 1940, AAOKC.

⁸⁹Southwest Courier, May 6, 1933.

question-and-answer period.⁹⁰ Following the initial success in Bristow, Leven expanded the revival movement into other areas between Oklahoma City and Tulsa.⁹¹ In later years, Leven carried his Catholic revival movement into all sections of the Sooner State.⁹² Like street preaching, the revival movement could attract non-Catholics to a place where they could see and hear a Catholic priest. While the essential attraction of street preaching was curiosity, the revival movement rested upon the strong Protestant tradition of revivalism and fit the religious background of Oklahoma.

For the street preaching effort for 1935, the Knights of Columbus under John Frank Martin began training more than a hundred members to serve as lay catechists to join the clergy in the campaign.⁹³ On February 2, 1935, Martin went to Bristow to become the first layman in the United States to speak on Catholicism as a street preacher.⁹⁴ The lay movement received additional support from college co-eds who came from Rosary College in Illinois to spend their summer vacation explaining Catholicism to the people of Oklahoma.⁹⁵ This lay involvement using the Knights of

⁹⁰Southwest Courier, July 22, 1933.

⁹¹Southwest Courier, August 5, 1933.

⁹²Southwest Courier, September 8, 1934, May 25, 1935, June 1, 1935, August 10, 1935.

⁹³Southwest Courier, December 1, 1934.

⁹⁴Southwest Courier, February 2, 1935.

⁹⁵Sister Mary Vianney to Francis Kelley, River Forest,

Columbus and college students continued throughout the 1930's.

While moving forward with revivals and lay participation, the street preaching effort took a temporary step backward in August, 1935, when the movement lost Stephen Leven, the guiding force behind the effort, and Charles Buswell, who had been a chief supporter. The two priests went to Europe to pursue studies leading to advanced degrees.⁹⁶ During their absence, the program fell into the hands of Father F. X. Neville, who believed in the effort as strongly as did Leven and Buswell,⁹⁷ but was not as effective.

By 1937, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma had survived the worst of the Depression and was optimistic that Roosevelt's economic policies foreshadowed a return to prosperity. So confident was Bishop Kelley, though beleaguered by financial difficulties, that in deciding his choice for president in 1936, he could place concerns about foreign policies ahead of his worries about the domestic problems. Furthermore, the first seven years of the 1930's had witnessed the last gasps of the anti-Catholic movement. Both as cause and result of this decline, Roman Catholic clergymen received

⁹⁵(Continued) Illinois, July 30, 1935, "Miscellaneous R" file, General Correspondence for 1935, AAOKC.

⁹⁶Southwest Courier, August 24, 1935.

⁹⁷"To the American Board of Catholic Missions [1936 Report]," "Miscellaneous A" file, General Correspondence for 1936-37, AAOKC.

appointments to official governmental agencies on the state level. Furthermore, the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa brought under the label of "Catholic Action" all the ongoing activities, including street preaching, in an effort to increase conversions. With resurging prosperity, declining anti-Catholicism, coordinating diocesan activities through Catholic Action, and increasing conversions, the diocese embracing Oklahoma seemed to be moving toward a stability which it had lacked during the first thirty years of its existence.

CHAPTER VII

ACHIEVING MATURITY AND WAGING WAR, 1937-1945

On a cool spring day in 1939, Bishop Francis Kelley stood on the massive front porch of a twenty-year-old mansion and admired the mocha-colored columns and stone walls. One of Oklahoma City's finest residences, the well-known home of W. T. Hales had reverted to the trustees of his estate after his death. The estate managers wanted to sell the three-story mansion to Kelley and had begun negotiations with the cleric to reach a mutually acceptable price. Relying upon funds from Frank Phillips, the wealthy Protestant oilman, Kelley concluded an agreement in May, 1939, and ended a nine-year stay at his quarters in St. Anthony's Hospital.¹ The acquisition of the huge home to serve as both a bishop's residence and a diocesan chancery office symbolized the continued progress toward maturity of the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Having become evident during the mid-1930's, this stability characterized Sooner Catholicism until December 7, 1941, and America's entry into

¹Francis Kelley to Frank Phillips, Oklahoma City, March 16, 1939, Francis Kelley to Frank Phillips, Oklahoma City, March 22, 1939, "Frank Phillips" file, General Correspondence for 1940, AAOKC; Daily Oklahoman, May 12, 1939.

World War II. While the impact of the war at times threatened the previous advancements, its ending in 1945 showed that the Catholic Church had survived the challenges of mobilization and had entered the postwar period with the necessary strength to build upon forty years of history.

Continuing the Catholic Action program inaugurated during the Depression years, the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa still used the term to embrace many wide-ranging activities. As with earlier meetings, the diocese sponsored a third Catholic Action Congress in Tulsa.² One favorite form of Catholic Action, street preaching, revived in 1938 when its guiding light, Stephen Leven, returned from Europe and became pastor at Tonkawa³ in the northern part of the state. Leven inaugurated the Institute of Street Preaching, conducting this institute for two years in an effort to spread the street campaign nationwide. When only a small number of priests from across the country attended, Leven reluctantly abandoned what he had hoped would become an annual program.⁴ Nevertheless he continued almost single-handedly a more modest campaign, concentrating his activity in northern Oklahoma throughout World War II.⁵

²Southwest Courier, April 12, 1941.

³Southwest Courier, September 24, 1938.

⁴Southwest Courier, May 11, 1940.

⁵Southwest Courier, September 13, 1941; Stephen Leven to Francis Kelley, Tonkawa, September 3, 1942, "Miscellaneous L" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC; Southwest Courier, May 15, 1943, August 26, 1944, July 28, 1945.

Although street preaching waned, the diocese established other movements which came to be included under the all-encompassing term of Catholic Action. In 1939 the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was to be established in each parish. Under its aegis teachers were to instruct children attending public school, parents were to aid in their children's religious education, lay parishioners were to be urged through home visits to help arrange meetings, distribute literature, participate in discussion and study clubs, and otherwise become involved in CCD work. While most pastors tried to implement the program, the scattered nature of Oklahoma's Catholic population meant that only small progress could be achieved.⁶ Under the same label of Catholic Action, Kelley tried in 1941 to resurrect a diocesan branch of the National Council of Catholic Men which had previously been organized in Oklahoma during the early 1920's to combat anti-Catholicism. Bringing together groups of Catholic men, the NCCM was to be a vehicle to coordinate the apostolic endeavors of the laity. The advent of World War II, however, postponed any great organizational progress until 1944.⁷

The year 1939 witnessed the creation of another branch

⁶Letters from various pastors to Francis Kelley, April and May, 1939, "Replies to Circular" file, General Correspondence for 1938-1939, AAOKC.

⁷Southwest Courier, January 18, 1941; Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, Manual of Instructions: Oklahoma City and Tulsa Diocesan Council of Catholic Men (n.p., 1944), passim.

of Catholic Action as the diocese established the Catholic Youth Organization. Aimed primarily at the teenagers of Oklahoma City, the CYO tried to provide a program to serve their spiritual, athletic, social and civic needs, at the same time encouraging apostolic work by the youth.⁸ In the same year, under the direction of Father Donald Kanaly the Sooner Catholic Church held the first diocesan congress of Young Christian Workers in the United States, becoming the first American diocese to establish formally the YCW.⁹ Seizing upon the principles of the Jocist movement in Europe, Kanaly tried to organize youthful Catholic workers in an alternative to both Fascism and Communism by calling for a Christian reconstruction of society based on charity and justice.¹⁰ Involved in building the program not only in Oklahoma but throughout the United States, Kanaly wanted to proceed quietly and slowly.¹¹ Yet the progress of these youth-oriented Catholic Action groups suffered from the impact of World War II. After World War II the two movements combined under a new name, Young Christian Students, and spread statewide.¹² Yet the earlier attempt in these

⁸Southwest Courier, November 4, 1939.

⁹Southwest Courier, May 27, 1939.

¹⁰Southwest Courier, August 26, 1939.

¹¹Francis Kelley to Francis Talbot, Oklahoma City, July 24, 1939, "Miscellaneous A" file, AAOKC.

¹²"3 Rings in Fifty Years," supplement to Southwest Courier, October 8, 1955, p. 94.

two areas, as in the case of the efforts to organize the CCD and NCCM, showed that the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa was stable and growing.

During the late 1930's, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma obtained limited public aid for its educational system when the attorney general ruled that the state should provide free text books to parochial school children unable to purchase them.¹³ The diocese also tried to expand this public support of private education into the area of free public transportation. Many local school districts were permitting public school buses to transport children to private schools when the practice did not significantly change the designated routes. Declaring this practice illegal in the fall of 1938, the Oklahoma attorney general ruled that state school buses could not be used to carry children to schools which did not receive state funding.¹⁴ The next session of the Oklahoma legislature tried to reverse the attorney general and passed a statute requiring school boards to provide transportation for pupils attending private and parochial schools when those schools were near designated school bus routes.¹⁵ Within one month of the

¹³J. W. O'Keefe, circular letter, Oklahoma City, January 9, 1937, Francis Kelley to A. L. Crable, Oklahoma City, January 25, 1937, "Government Aid to Catholic Schools" file, J. W. O'Keefe, "Important Notice," n.p., n.d., "Miscellaneous C" file, General Correspondence for 1936-1937, AAOKC.

¹⁴St. Rose of Lima Parish Bulletin (September, 1938), Urban de Hasque papers, AAOKC.

¹⁵Session Laws of Oklahoma, 1939, Chapter 34, p. 185.

legislative action, the attorney general declared that the statute violated Oklahoma's constitutional ban on any public funds from being used to support a sectarian institution.¹⁶

Having failed to get the legislature to reverse the attorney general, the Catholics took the next step and tested the validity of the opinion in the judicial system. Members of the predominantly Polish parish in Harrah sued the local school board asking that a writ of mandamus order the board members to provide transportation for children attending the Catholic school. In September, 1939, the district court ruled against the plaintiffs and upheld the attorney general's ruling.¹⁷ The attorneys for the Catholic laymen appealed to the State Supreme Court, only to have the judges reject their claim.¹⁸ The plaintiffs pressed their appeal to the United States Supreme Court. On October 12, 1942, the final decision came when the nation's highest tribunal refused to review the state court's ruling and, in effect, sustained the original attorney general's decision!¹⁹

Comparing this law suit with the sacramental wine case twenty years earlier again demonstrates the maturity of the

¹⁶J. Harry Johnson to Raymond T. Plumbee, Oklahoma City, May 23, 1939, "School Bus Bill" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

¹⁷W. F. Wilson to Francis Kelley, Oklahoma City, September 27, 1939, "School Bus Bill" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

¹⁸Southwest Courier, December 6, 1941.

¹⁹Daily Oklahoman, October 13, 1942.

Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa. In the suit regarding the prohibition of altar wine, the Sooner Catholic Church, by relying on the principle of religious freedom, had argued for a strict application of the constitutional precept separating church and state. The position of the diocese had changed during the ensuing twenty years, and the Catholics now advocated a weakening of that legal principle. In sum, the Catholic minority was willing to surrender some of the protection provided by a strict adherence to the separation of church and state in return for a small amount of governmental aid to their schools. Obviously, this change from strict separation of church and state to a position favoring a less adamant interpretation demonstrated that the Catholic Church felt secure without a strong constitutional protection.

One explanation for this feeling of security was the growth of local interdenominational activities with Protestant and Jewish denominations in the late 1930's. While such ecumenical relations were found in all parts of Oklahoma, one early effort came in Norman, where a Protestant minister organized a series of Sunday afternoon coffees for the University of Oklahoma students. At these informal meetings, Protestant ministers, Catholic priests, and Jewish rabbis explained their religious beliefs before the same audiences consisting of all faiths.²⁰ Even in the rural-

²⁰Interview with Sterling Brown, Oklahoma City, December 21, 1973.

oriented Protestant community of Purcell, the Methodist church sponsored special weekly services at which clergymen from different religions would speak.²¹ In Enid, a unique interdenominational Sunday vespers service took place to pray for the Jewish victims of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany. Held in a Presbyterian church, the service featured a sermon by a Jewish rabbi; when he agreed to deliver the main sermon, the Catholic pastor in Enid agreed to introduce him. Informed that a Catholic clergyman had participated in an interdenominational Vespers service, a national leader in interfaith relations said that it was impossible.²² Regarding these interfaith activities in general, the diocese took the official position of encouraging joint meetings while prohibiting Catholics from participating in joint religious services.²³

Simultaneous with these local, almost spontaneous activities, the National Conference of Christians and Jews began moving into Oklahoma in 1936 and 1937 on a sporadic basis.²⁴ Having been organized in 1928, the NCCJ emphasized brotherhood and acceptance of differing religious ideas, and

²¹Louis Hugo to James O'Keefe, Purcell, April 12, 1938, "Miscellaneous H" file, General Correspondence for 1938-1939, AAOKC.

²²Interview with T. H. McDowell, Oklahoma City, December 21, 1973.

²³Southwest Courier, July 23, 1938; James O'Keefe to Louis Hugo, Oklahoma City, April 13, 1938, "Miscellaneous H" file, General Correspondence for 1938-1939, AAOKC.

²⁴Southwest Courier, December 12, 1936, April 10, 1937.

avoided attempts at reconciling theological differences.²⁵ Having taken nearly a decade to spread across the nation from its East Coast base, the conference had encountered indifference, if not hostility, from many American Catholic bishops.²⁶ Yet the Catholic bishop in Oklahoma, perhaps because he had experienced hostility toward his religion, was very receptive to the national movement. In fact, Bishop Kelley joined with the Catholic bishops of Texas in issuing a public statement in support of the national conference.²⁷ This endorsement was not only the first time, but the only occasion when a group of Catholic bishops gave their official approbation to the work of the NCCJ.²⁸ Despite this willingness of the Catholic Church to work with the conference, the local chapters of the NCCJ did not spread across Oklahoma until 1945 and the end of World War II.²⁹

While Catholics in Oklahoma supported the work of

²⁵Lerond Curry, Protestant-Catholic Relations in America: World War I through Vatican II (Lexington, Ky., 1972), chap. 1; Interview with Sterling Brown, Oklahoma City, December 21, 1973.

²⁶Francis Kelley to Edward Mooney, Oklahoma City, October 31, 1936, "Miscellaneous M" file, Francis Kelley to John McNicholas, Oklahoma City, February 15, 1937, "Miscellaneous Mac-Mc" file, General Correspondence for 1936-1937, AAOKC.

²⁷Southwest Courier, June 24, 1944.

²⁸Interview with Sterling Brown, Oklahoma City, December 21, 1973.

²⁹Interview with T. H. McDowell, Oklahoma City, December 21, 1973.

reducing interdenominational hatred, such magnanimity did not extend to Jehovah's Witnesses. When two members of that denomination began street preaching in heavily Catholic Okarche, Catholic citizens filed a complaint against them for disturbing the peace.³⁰ Furthermore, only a lack of funds prevented Catholic laymen from distributing a pamphlet, entitled "The Freak Religion," which attacked the denomination for several things, including a lack of patriotism.³¹ While the cause for this opposition to the Jehovah's Witnesses was their anti-Catholicism, it contradicted the traditional Oklahoma Catholic adherence to religious freedom and opposition to religious bigotry.

With the exception of the presence of scattered radio programs which contained bigoted comments,³² anti-Catholicism had practically disappeared from Oklahoma, remaining virtually non-existent from 1937 to 1945. One incident, however, had some significance because of its uniqueness rather than because of its impact. On August 15, 1940, an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation knocked on the door of the rectory of St. Joseph's Church in Oklahoma City and informed the assistant pastor that he had a search warrant to investigate reports that arms were hidden in the

³⁰Southwest Courier, December 2, 1939.

³¹Francis Kelley to Charles Carty, Oklahoma City, June 15, 1939, "Miscellaneous C" files, General Correspondence for 1938-1939, AAOKC.

³²Southwest Courier, July 1, 1939; C. A. Breitung to Paul A. Walker, Tulsa, July 16, 1940, "C. A. Breitung" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

church's basement. Disbelieving, the priest telephoned the local F.B.I. office to verify the agents' authority. After receiving an affirmative reply, the cleric permitted the agent to search the church's basement, to open every box, and ransack every corner. Needless to say, no arms were found. The incident came as a shock to Bishop Kelley, who was incredulous over the fact that an agency of the federal government would have acted upon such a ridiculous rumor.³³

When word of the search spread quietly among some Catholics in Oklahoma City and to other parts of the country, the editor of the Southwest Courier wanted an F.B.I. apology and an assurance that the incident would never be repeated. If the pledge was not forthcoming, he wanted to print the story, "playing it up as a stupid perpetration by men who are unable to recognize fanaticism and a studied offense by a Government agency against the 60,000 Catholics of Oklahoma."³⁴ A calmer head, Kelley quietly protested to J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the F.B.I., and questioned the policy of the agency investigating every report made to one of its offices.³⁵ Immediately responding, Hoover sent

³³Francis Kelley to J. Edgar Hoover, Oklahoma City, August 21, 1940, Francis Kelley to Amleto Cicognani, Oklahoma City, September 4, 1940, "F.B.I." file, General Correspondence for 1940, AAOKC.

³⁴Joseph J. Quinn to Francis Kelley, Oklahoma City, August 21, 1940, "F.B.I." file, General Correspondence for 1940, AAOKC.

³⁵Francis Kelley to J. Edgar Hoover, Oklahoma City, August 21, 1940, "F.B.I." file, General Correspondence for 1940, AAOKC.

a personal representative to investigate the incident.³⁶ Within two weeks of the search, the federal bureau had apologized and had assured Kelley that no such incident would take place anywhere else in the United States.³⁷

The major event between 1937 and 1945 for the United States and consequently for the Catholics in Oklahoma was the Second World War. During the years leading up to the conflict, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma through its diocesan newspaper wanted the United States to avoid entanglements with Europe which could involve the country in a war.³⁸ When war broke out in Europe in September, 1939, the Southwest Courier urged the United States to remain totally neutral and encouraged its readers to demand that strict neutrality become America's policy.³⁹ In the fall of 1941, when the United States was drifting toward war in Europe, the newspaper's editor criticized Franklin Roosevelt for trying to lead the nation into the European conflict against the will of the people.⁴⁰

³⁶Telegram, J. Edgar Hoover to Francis Kelley, Washington, D. C., August 28, 1940, "F.B.I." file, General Correspondence for 1940, AAOKC.

³⁷Francis Kelley to Hoover, Oklahoma City, September 2, 1940, Francis Kelley to Amleto Cicognani, Oklahoma City, September 4, 1940, "F.B.I." file, General Correspondence for 1940, AAOKC.

³⁸Southwest Courier, January 29, 1938.

³⁹Southwest Courier, September 16, 1939, September 21, 1939.

⁴⁰Southwest Courier, August 2, 1941.

This isolationist position contained a firm opposition to Communism. In its comments on the Spanish Civil War, the diocesan newspaper supported General Francisco Franco and his Nationalists against the "communistic" and "atheistic" Loyalists.⁴¹ To prevent the Loyalists from obtaining American arms and thus reversing the fortunes of war, the National Council of Catholic Men organized grass-roots support for maintaining the embargo of all arms in Spain.⁴² When Nazi Germany invaded Communist Russia in 1941, the newspaper was in a quandary since it hated communism and believed that a German victory would mean an end to freedom throughout Europe. In labeling the battle "an academic choice," the Catholic publication concluded that it was just another reason for the United States to remain aloof from the European war.⁴³

This isolationist position ended on December 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. In a prominent place on the front page of the issue following the "Day of Infamy," Francis Kelley declared, "There is no question as to the justice of this war of defense. It was settled when we were attacked."⁴⁴ Both Kelley and the newspaper concluded

⁴¹Southwest Courier, August 1, 1936, July 30, 1938, January 21, 1939.

⁴²Louis Kenedy to J. B. Dudek, Washington, D. C., March 2, 1939, Francis Kelley to Louis Kenedy, Oklahoma City, March 7, 1939, "NCCM" file, General Correspondence for 1940, AAOKC.

⁴³Southwest Courier, August 2, 1941.

⁴⁴Southwest Courier, December 13, 1941.

that the Catholics of Oklahoma would respond to the sacrifices demanded in the conflict by fulfilling their duties as Americans.⁴⁵

To aid the war effort on the home front, the Catholic Church operated social centers for members of the armed forces which harkened back to the camps which the Knights of Columbus sponsored during World War I. As the nation began to increase the size of its military during the two years preceding Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt requested that six welfare agencies join together to organize the United Service Organization. Representing the Catholic Church was the National Catholic Community Service. When Oklahoma formed in May, 1941, a state branch of the USO with John Layden, a Catholic, as temporary chairman, Sooner Catholics joined the move with a state affiliate of the NCCS.⁴⁶ While World War I saw Oklahoma Catholics sponsor only one major effort at Fort Sill near Lawton, the new conflict saw two more major centers of the NCCS activity in Oklahoma--at Oklahoma City and Muskogee.⁴⁷ In areas not having a center under the NCCS, many Catholics worked in activities conducted by other USO-affiliated agencies. For example, Tulsa Catholics held a party every sixth Sunday at the YMCA for servicemen, provided daily refreshments and

⁴⁵Southwest Courier, January 24, 1942.

⁴⁶Southwest Courier, May 3, 1941, May 17, 1941.

⁴⁷Southwest Courier, January 31, 1942, June 6, 1942
September 30, 1944.

entertainment at Tulsa's induction center, and gave parties every two weeks at the Spartan School of Aeronautics.⁴⁸ Consequently Catholic efforts during World War II under the United Service Organization were more wide-spread than the Knights of Columbus effort in World War I. Furthermore, the activity in the 1940's concentrated on the social and morale needs of the soldiers while the earlier move had had a strong emphasis on their spiritual needs.

As they did in World War I, the Catholics participated in several money-raising drives during the conflict with the Axis powers. Before the United States entered the war, the USO sponsored a fund drive to support their social centers. In this first campaign, Bishop Kelley issued an official letter urging Catholic support of the USO, and W. K. Warren, a Catholic oilman, headed the Tulsa drive.⁴⁹ Catholic's enthusiastically supported the series of War Loan campaigns for selling War Bonds and War Saving Stamps.⁵⁰ When Mr. and Mrs. T. E. Braniff gave \$25,000 to Bishop Kelley for his fiftieth anniversary of ordination, the cleric bought war bonds with the donation.⁵¹ Catholic schools in all parts of the state conducted local bond and

⁴⁸Enclosure, D. C. Fletcher to Francis Kelley, Tulsa, January 6, 1943, "D. C. Fletcher" file, General Correspondence for 1943, AAOKC.

⁴⁹Southwest Courier, June 7, 1941.

⁵⁰Southwest Courier, May 8, 1943, December 2, 1943.

⁵¹Southwest Courier, October 2, 1943.

stamp drives, generally with a goal of raising enough funds to purchase a jeep, plane, or another piece of military hardware. By far the most successful student effort was at Monte Cassino school in Tulsa. In their first campaign, called "Name-a-Plane Contest" with a quota of \$400,000 in war bonds, the students sold more than \$1 million in bonds and were able to "name" four airplanes as well as purchase fifteen jeeps.⁵² Leading the nation in per capita student sales, the students at Monte Cassino sold more war bonds than any other school in the nation with the single exception of Notre Dame University.⁵³ By 1945, the students had sold more than \$2 million in bonds and had purchased twelve planes and thirty-seven jeeps.⁵⁴

One type of drive that was unique to World War II was the solicitation of scrap strategic materials. Members of the diocesan council of the National Council of Catholic Women saved steel, tin, iron, rubber, waste fats, nylon, and furs, to be donated during the appropriate drive.⁵⁵ In a scrap metal collection in Bartlesville during 1942, the local Catholic parish collected nearly two tons of iron, steel, and tin.⁵⁶ When the nation moved to collect scrap

⁵²Southwest Courier, October 11, 1943.

⁵³Southwest Courier, December 23, 1944.

⁵⁴Southwest Courier, February 17, 1945.

⁵⁵Southwest Courier, January 4, 1943.

⁵⁶St. John Parish Messenger, October, 1942, Gustave DePreitere Papers, AAOKC.

rubber in the summer of 1942, Bishop Kelley used his influence in Oklahoma to be "of real assistance in augmenting a real stockpile."⁵⁷ In all of these drives, children enrolled in Catholic schools did the foot work of going door-to-door to collect the needed items.

Catholic women also joined the Red Cross effort to make or prepare bandages and surgical dressings required by the soldiers who had shed blood for their country.⁵⁸ Across the state, women would designate a certain number of hours each week to be spent at a Red Cross station.⁵⁹ It was estimated that from March 1, to December 31, 1942, 1,265 Tulsa Catholics had donated more than 58,000 hours to the Red Cross.⁶⁰ In Elk City, Catholic nuns teaching in the parochial school secured special permission to make surgical dressings in their convent since regulations forbade the bandages to be removed from the controlled conditions of the Red Cross station.⁶¹

With far more activity to aid the servicemen, to raise funds, to help the Red Cross, and to collect needed mater-

⁵⁷W. G. Skelly to Francis Kelley, Tulsa, July 2, 1942, "Miscellaneous S" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

⁵⁸St. John Parish Messenger, January, 1944, Gustave Dereitere papers, AAOKC.

⁵⁹Southwest Courier, March 20, 1943.

⁶⁰Enclosure, D. C. Fletcher to Francis Kelley, Tulsa, January 6, 1943, "D. C. Fletcher" file, General Correspondence for 1943, AAOKC.

⁶¹Southwest Courier, September 25, 1943.

ials, in World War II than in World War I, the Oklahoma Catholics significantly increased their home-front participation over that of twenty years earlier. Yet the diocesan newspaper reported their involvement during the respective conflicts with highly significant differences. In World War I, the Oklahoma Catholic Church used its war efforts at home and abroad as proof of loyalty to the United States. During the latter war, however, the publication covered the activities as straight news, Catholics merely doing their duty in a time of national danger. Hence the World War I theme of superpatriotism was absent in the coverage of the second conflict. One obvious explanation for this difference was the fact that anti-Catholicism, all too present during the years immediately preceding World War I, had died by the advent of World War II. Consequently, in the 1940's the Catholic Church did not experience the need to prove its loyalty.

Yet the Catholic Church in Oklahoma was aware that the end of World War I had ushered in the state's greatest surge of religious intolerance and feared that history would repeat itself with the end of World War II. The editor of the Southwest Courier noted that Jehovah's Witnesses continued to be active and warned that the sect could be the spearhead for another wave of religious bigotry.⁶² The publication editorially urged that Catholics pressure

⁶²Southwest Courier, September 22, 1945.

several Oklahoma radio stations to carry national Catholic programs, such as The Catholic Hour, to nip incipient intolerance before it could develop.⁶³ The Knights of Columbus in 1945 in the state convention warned against another burst of anti-Catholic propaganda after the fighting ended and urged that steps be taken to prepare for it.⁶⁴ Fortunately, these fears went unfulfilled as the American people became more concerned over inflation and the Cold War menace of Communism than over an imaginary papal conspiracy.

In several respects, however, World War II affected the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa far more emphatically than had World War I. One major difference was the draining of priests into the armed forces chaplaincy. By 1945, the diocese had surrendered eight of its clergy to serve full-time with the military. An even greater drain resulted from the auxiliary chaplains who continued to serve their local parishes while ministering to groups of servicemen stationed across Oklahoma. By 1945, twenty-five clergymen had accepted this additional military duty, which was generally some distance away from their home parish. In fact, Oklahoma ranked fifth among more than the one hundred dioceses in the United States in the number of priests engaged in auxiliary chaplain work.⁶⁵ Thus the diocesan priests who stayed on

⁶³Southwest Courier, February 26, 1944.

⁶⁴State Council, Knights of Columbus, Report of Fortieth Annual State Convention of the Oklahoma State Council of the Knights of Columbus Held at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, May 7, 1945 (n.p., [1945]), p. 21.

⁶⁵"List of Commissioned Chaplains, Auxiliary and

the home front had to assume the parochial duties of those leaving and the additional military responsibilities connected with the auxiliary chaplaincies. No wonder one of Bishop Kelley's greatest concerns during World War II was locating adequate numbers of clergy to minister to his flock.⁶⁶

The Catholic Church had to handle not only the Catholic servicemen stationed in Oklahoma, but also an influx of defense workers. Seeking the safety provided by the distance from either coast, Washington established a number of war industries in Oklahoma. Some industries developed in areas where only a handful of Catholics, if any, had lived. But lucrative employment attracted Catholics and non-Catholics alike.⁶⁷ For example, the government located a DuPont powder plant in Choteau with the nearest Catholic Church forty miles away.⁶⁸ The large cities did not escape the influx of defense workers, who included a large number

⁶⁵(Continued) Applicants As of December 21, 1944, "Military Ordinate" file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

⁶⁶Francis Kelley to William Arnold, Oklahoma City, March 15, 1943, "Miscellaneous A" file, Francis Kelley to George Barnard, Oklahoma City, March 6, 1943, "Miscellaneous B" file, General Correspondence for 1943, Francis Kelley to Michael Ready, Oklahoma City, December 31, 1941, "NCCS" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

⁶⁷Francis Kelley to A. G. Cicognani, Oklahoma City, February 25, 1942, "A. G. Cicognani" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

⁶⁸Francis Kelley to Michael Ready, Oklahoma City, December 31, 1941, "NCCS" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

of Catholics. When a Douglas plant opened in Oklahoma City, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Cathedral parish recorded an additional 138 parishioners who had come from California for employment.⁶⁹ Consequently, the parochial responsibilities for the Catholic clergy were increasing as their numbers and available time for this duty were decreasing. To solve this problem, Bishop Kelley asked for permission to hold evening Masses so that the priests in Oklahoma would be able to provide religious services for more people and to reduce the Eucharistic fast for all Catholics. Yet he was not able to secure approval for all of his requests from the proper authorities.⁷⁰

With fewer priests and more duties, the clergy of Oklahoma had to travel greater distances, in the face of almost impossible obstacles of rationing. While the limitations on gasoline and new cars posed relatively minor difficulties, the greatest problem was to secure new tires. The official policy in Washington placed a great amount of discretion in the hands of the local rationing boards, whose members were supposedly familiar with local situations.⁷¹ But many boards operated under the principle of

⁶⁹Francis Kelley to Estelle Doheny, March 9, 1944, "Doheny" file, General Coorespondence for 1945, AAOKC.

⁷⁰Francis Kelley to A. G. Cicognani, Oklahoma City, February 25, 1942, Francis Kelley to A. G. Cicognani, Oklahoma City, September 22, 1942, "A. G. Cicognani" file, General Correspondence for 1942, Francis Kelley to A. G. Cicognani, Oklahoma City, February 18, 1944, "A. G. Cicognani" file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

⁷¹R. A. Hayes to Francis Kelley, Oklahoma City,

"don't give anything to preachers" and refused to approve clerical requests for tires during the first year of the war.⁷² In both Oklahoma City and Tulsa, priests had to cover up to one-fourth of the urban areas as they tried to administer the church's sacraments to the sick and dying. The country clergy confronted an even more depressing situation, with the many missions scattered throughout rural Oklahoma. In fact, Kelley forecast, "If priests cannot get tires, we will ultimately have to close up about one half of the mission churches in the Diocese."⁷³ Finally, the clergy serving as auxiliary chaplains found no special allowances despite their need to travel to military bases for the soldiers' spiritual welfare. For example, Raymond Harkin, having to travel 150 miles each week to care for the military men at Weatherford and F. M. McGoldrick, who had three flat tires in one week as he tried to minister to the servicemen stationed around Oklahoma City, could not obtain tires during 1942.⁷⁴ Washington, however, worked out the difficulty in early 1943 and insured that clergymen

⁷¹(Continued) September 16, 1942, "Rationing" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

⁷²Francis Kelley to F. J. Roach, Oklahoma City, September 21, 1942, "Rationing" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

⁷³Francis Kelley to C. F. Aurand, Oklahoma City, May 15, 1942, "Rationing" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

⁷⁴Francis Kelley to Rex Hayes, Oklahoma City, September 14, 1942, "Rationing" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

would be able to receive tires for ministerial functions.⁷⁵

Another wartime activity engaged in by the Catholic Church in Oklahoma was aiding the prisoner of war camps located within the Sooner State. During 1943, the federal government began establishing internment camps for enemy soldiers captured abroad. During "the duration," in a common phrase of the day, Washington operated nine different base camps and several dependent work camps attached to a base camp. While the number of POW's in the state fluctuated, the internees reached a total of 24,000 in 1945.⁷⁶ After the military transferred the Italian soldiers to Texas in the spring of 1943, the Oklahoma camps never housed more than a few of the Italian prisoners, and these for only a short time.⁷⁷ With no Japanese prisoners in Oklahoma, the vast majority of the state's POW's were Germans captured during the North African and Sicilian campaigns.⁷⁸ Of these, between thirty-five and forty per cent registered their religious preference as Catholic.⁷⁹ Consequently,

⁷⁵Southwest Courier, January 16, 1943.

⁷⁶Stephen Leven to Eugene McGuinness, Tonkawa, March 1, 1945, "Leven-POW Camps" file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

⁷⁷Stephen Leven, "Italian POWs in Oklahoma," August 1, 1944, "Leven-POW Camps" file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

⁷⁸Southwest Courier, July 8, 1944.

⁷⁹Stephen Leven to Eugene McGuinness, Tonkawa, March 1, 1945, "Leven-POW Camps" file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa had to provide for the spiritual care of an additional 9,000 Catholics who were interned at prisoner of war camps.

To handle the spiritual welfare of the prisoners, most camps were able by 1945 to have at least one Catholic priest who was himself a POW. Yet this did not relieve the pressure on the Oklahoma priests to serve as unofficial auxiliary chaplains to the prisoners. Fortunately, Oklahoma had many priests who, either by European birth or education, were able to overcome easily the language barrier. By 1945 the diocese, under the direct supervision of Stephen Leven, had made arrangements for the administration of Catholic sacraments to the prisoners in all of the camps. In addition to looking after their spiritual welfare, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma aided prisoners by obtaining for each stockade radios which were presented in the name of Pope Pius XII.⁸⁰ Further to meet the non-spiritual needs of the prisoners, the diocese tried to provide the camps with athletic equipment, books in German and in English, magazines, musical instruments including reed organs for religious services, cigarettes, Christmas packages, phonograph players and recordings.⁸¹

⁸⁰Southwest Courier, July 8, 1944.

⁸¹Francis Kelley to Amleto Cicognani," Oklahoma City, July 7, 1943, "A. G. Cocognani" file, General Correspondence for 1943, AAOKC, Southwest Courier, July 31, 1943, Francis Kelley to John O'Hara, Oklahoma City, July 31, 1943, "Military Ordinate" file, General Correspondence for 1943,

Although the diocesan authorities publicized their activities to help the POW's,⁸² they did not receive any criticism for aiding enemy soldiers. In fact, the American commanders of the camps welcomed the Catholic clergy and provided the priests with ready access to the prisoners.⁸³ In trying to fulfill the spiritual needs of prisoners, religious activity would help maintain order within the camp. Another explanation for this lack of criticism was that only a few of the prisoners in Oklahoma were recalcitrant Nazi ideologues. The chief exceptions to this general rule were the Stringtown encampment, which housed fewer than 500 former German submariners for nine months; the Alva camp, which contained 1,400 prisoners who had created disturbances in other camps; and the Tonkawa center, which in August, 1944, began accepting non-commissioned officers who had refused to work in other camps.⁸⁴ Consequently, the prisoners in Oklahoma had the image of being simple, albeit

⁸¹(Continued) AAOKC, Southwest Courier, August 28, 1943, Stephen Leven to Francis Kelley, Tonkawa, September 13, 1943, Stephen Leven, "POW Camp, McAlester, Oklahoma," February 8, 1944, Stephen Leven, "POW Camp, Tonkawa, Oklahoma," March 1, 1945, "Leven-POW Camps" file, General Correspondence for 1945, AAOKC.

⁸²For examples, see Southwest Courier, July 10, 1943, July 31, 1943, August 28, 1943, September 11, 1943, September 18, 1943, October 16, 1943, July 8, 1944.

⁸³Southwest Courier, October 16, 1943.

⁸⁴Stephen Leven, "POW Camp, Stringtown, Oklahoma," February 8, 1944, Stephen Leven, "POW Camp, Alva, Oklahoma," February 8, 1944, Stephen Leven, "POW Camp, Tonkawa, Oklahoma," August 1, 1944, "Leven-POW Camps" file, AAOKC.

misguided, soldiers who were no longer able to aid their country and had become symbols of the ultimate American victory.

Some problems developed with the camps concerning the diocesan-directed activities. While the vast majority of the prisoners were delighted with the activity in their behalf, some of the Protestant prisoners resented the continual Catholic operations.⁸⁵ On two occasions, certain prisoners accused the American priests of engaging in politics and convinced the camp's administration by boycotting the services that it was no longer beneficial to allow these particular clergymen into the camps.⁸⁶ At the Alva camp, a serious problem occurred for three months in 1944, when two POW priests refused to hold public services in protest against the camp administration's restriction upon the ranking POW chaplain, a Protestant, from leaving the officers' compound. The transfer of the chaplain and the ranking German officer to another POW camp finally ended the protest.⁸⁷ These internal camp problems never became public and the Catholic ministry to the spiritual needs of the

⁸⁵Stephen Leven, "Report of Visitation of War Prisoner Camps, Madill No. I," July 18, 1943, "Leven-POW Camps" file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

⁸⁶Stephen Leven, "POW Camp, Madill No. I, Tishomingo, Oklahoma," February 8, 1944, Stephen Leven, "POW Work Camp, Bixby, Oklahoma," August 1, 1944, "Leven-POW Camps, file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

⁸⁷Stephen Leven, "POW Camp, Alva, Oklahoma," August 1, 1944, "Leven--POW Camps" file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

enemy soldiers continued to retain its good image.

Another possible explanation for the acceptance of the Catholic Church's work among the prisoners was the Vatican Information Service. Utilizing its international organization and its diplomatic relations with Germany, Italy, and the United States, the Vatican allowed the German prisoners to send short messages to their families in Germany through its diplomatic channels. Reversing the process, American prisoners held in German and Italian camps could also exchange short letters with their families in the United States through the same channels. The letters from the Oklahomans interned abroad passed through the hands of Raymond Harkin, Bishop Kelley's secretary, and the Catholic pastor of the parish in which the family, whether Catholic or non-Catholic, resided. Furthermore, Harkin was besieged by inquiries from across the state about sons and husbands who had been reported as missing in action. With the Vatican's good offices in the belligerent countries, the Catholic Church was sometimes able to locate a missing soldier and establish communications with his family more quickly than either the Red Cross or the official governmental bureaucracy. Only extremely favorable comments regarding the Vatican Information Service ever reached the diocesan officials.⁸⁸

⁸⁸Southwest Courier, June 19, 1943; Interview with Raymond F. Harkin, Oklahoma City, January 30, 1974.

World War II thus presented some serious problems for the Catholic Church in Oklahoma. Having for years faced the difficulty of trying to minister to a flock scattered over a wide area, the clergy saw their problems increase. In all parts of the Sooner State, the priests had to provide religious services for new groups of Catholics, including soldiers stationed in Oklahoma, employees of new defense industries, and German prisoners of war. Yet they had to serve these additional people with decreasing numbers, since some individual clergy were being called to full-time military chaplaincies abroad. In trying to fulfill their responsibilities, the priests had to overcome the difficulties of securing rationed tires. As the Catholic Church struggled with these difficulties, the clergy knew full well that these problems were only temporary and would end with the advent of peace. On the brighter side, the economic prosperity accompanying World War II finally ended the financial straits which the Depression years had brought to Sooner Catholicism. As Bishop Kelley commented, "There's so much war employment that it doesn't seem as if we have any poor left The parishes do not seem to have suffered any. Their repayment of loans is embarrassing to the banks and insurance companies."⁸⁹ The war thus brought temporary problems which were more than offset by long-range

⁸⁹Francis Kelley to George Barnard, Oklahoma City, March 6, 1943, "Miscellaneous B" file, General Correspondence for 1943, AAOKC.

financial solvency.

During much of World War II, the Oklahoma diocese bore another burden which was not directly related to wartime action. On Sunday evening, October 18, 1942, Bishop Kelley suffered a severe attack of angina pectoris.⁹⁰ Reeling under the blow, the cleric was unable to make a public appearance until April of the following year.⁹¹ Despite two extended vacations outside of Oklahoma, the physical condition of the Catholic leader continued to deteriorate.⁹² Although he was always mentally alert, Kelley found that his heart condition brought a series of complications including uremia and paralysis.⁹³ Consequently, with its bishop confined to bed in his room, the diocese faced the tragedies and triumphs of World War II with an invalid for its leader.

With Kelley suffering critical heart disease at the age of seventy-two, it was apparent that the bishop could live for some time but would be unable to keep up with his diocesan responsibilities. In May, 1944, the diocesan board of consultors requested a coadjutor bishop, and Kelley agreed that the entire administration of the diocese should

⁹⁰Francis Kelley to Amleto Cicognani, Oklahoma City, October 24, 1942, "A. G. Cicognani" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

⁹¹Southwest Courier, April 10, 1943.

⁹²Southwest Courier, August 12, 1944.

⁹³R. F. Harkin to Estelle Doheny, Oklahoma City, June 14, 1945, "Doheny" file, General Correspondence for 1945, AAOKC.

be placed in his hands.⁹⁴ On November 11, 1944, Bishop Eugene J. McGuinness, formerly associated with Kelley at the Extension Society and the current bishop of Raleigh, North Carolina, was appointed to be coadjutor bishop of the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa with the right of succession upon Kelley's death. Although Kelley would live until February 1, 1948, McGuinness was the chief administrator of diocesan affairs after his installation on January 10, 1945.⁹⁵

The year 1945 thus was a watershed in the history of Oklahoma Catholicism. It not only signaled the end of World War II and its consequent problems, but it also heralded the arrival of a new bishop with a new emphasis. During McGuinness's years in the Oklahoma City chancery office, the diocese created new parishes and speeded up the construction of new buildings, both of which had been slowed by the Depression and by wartime priority allocation of materials. Yet Bishop McGuinness is probably best known for the emphasis he placed upon vocations to the religious life from Oklahoma. Symbolized by the establishment of a diocesan seminary which Kelley dreamed about for twenty years, the diocese finally achieved during the 1950's what Kelley had said was vital to the stability of the diocese--

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⁹⁴Francis Kelley to A. G. Cicognani, Oklahoma City, May 4, 1944, "A. G. Cicognani" file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

⁹⁵"3 Rings in Fifty Years," p. 4.

a native clergy. Consequently, from 1937 to the beginning of World War II, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma had reached a high level of solidity. While World War II presented temporary problems, Sooner Catholicism entered postwar America with its strength still intact, ready to acquire full maturity under a new bishop.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

When the Vatican erected the Diocese of Oklahoma in 1905, Bishop Theophile Meerschaert was living in such a dilapidated building that it shocked one of the priests arriving from Europe.¹ Forty years later, Bishop Eugene McGuinness, the coadjutor bishop of the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa, moved into one of the largest private residences in Oklahoma City. These two buildings speak for the growth of the Roman Catholic Church in Oklahoma during the first forty years as a diocese. From a small nucleus of 25,500 Catholics and thirty-nine parishes,² the Catholic Church in 1945 claimed 67,844 Catholics worshipping in eighty-six parishes.³

This development had to overcome the persistent problems associated with an environment of a predominantly conservative Protestant majority and of a rural orientation. This Bible-Belt environment, consequently, presented

¹Private diary of John Heiring, June 17, 1903, Heiring papers, AAOKC.

²Official Catholic Directory, 1906 (Milwaukee, 1906), p. 493.

³Official Catholic Directory, 1945 (New York, 1945), p. 498.

problems far different from those affecting Catholic dioceses along the East coast with a heavy urban population and a Catholic population which was a significant minority, if not the majority. The problems confronted in Oklahoma related to a few people scattered over a broad area. As a result of these difficulties, it was a greater task to develop the Sooner diocese than the dioceses with a large number of Catholics. As Bishop Francis Kelley commented, "It would look like an easy job to get a small diocese organized, but the truth of it is that it is much harder than the organization of a large diocese."⁴ Yet the Catholic Church was able to overcome these problems and to develop a mature structure.

After the first twenty-five years, it appeared that the Diocese of Oklahoma had achieved stability in 1929. Two new developments, however, would hinder the culmination of the early growth. The Depression placed severe economic strains on the diocese, its religious institutions, the local parishes, and individual Catholics. When it appeared that the Catholic Church had surmounted these financial worries, the United States entered World War II. This conflict brought additional strains to the clergy, who had to handle increased responsibilities as their numbers declined. Yet World War II also brought increased prosperity

⁴Francis Kelley to G. P. Scalan, Oklahoma City, August 29, 1933, "Miscellaneous SA-SC" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

to Catholics and thus to their church and at last solved the financial problems which started with the Depression.

With the Protestant majority uninformed about Catholicism, anti-Catholicism ran through the first forty years of the history of the diocese covering Oklahoma. As soon as religious prejudices began in the 1920's, the Catholic Church began to react. But in only responding to specific manifestations of bias, the Catholics remained on the defensive even when religious bigotry reached its high tide in the early 1920's. In the election of 1922, when the Catholic Church organized to determine the electoral result, the Catholics justified their political activity on the grounds that they were merely defending themselves and their religion against unjust attacks. When Bishop Kelley arrived in 1924, the Catholic Church moved to the offensive and launched an educational campaign to explain that its religion was not something foreign to the American system. This educational effort changed in 1934 with the establishment of Catholic Action as a proselytizing effort for converts. Finally, in the late 1930's, interdenominational activities began to involve Catholics and worked to mark the final end to overt religious bigotry. From its height in 1922, religious bias in Oklahoma began to decline rapidly in the mid-1920's. After 1925, only scattered incidents of prejudice marred the history of the Sooner State. The principal exception to this generalization came in 1928 when Al Smith, a Catholic, sought the presidency of the United States and

triggered an intense statewide surge of religious prejudice.

The history of the Catholic Church during the first five decades of the twentieth century witnessed a series of "firsts" for American Catholicism. In 1925, Father John Walde began the first series of doctrinal addresses over the radio anywhere in the United States. As part of Stephen Leven's personal form of Catholic Action, the diocese sponsored a massive street preaching program, the first in the United States. When John Martin spoke in 1935 to a crowd in Bristow he became the first layman to participate as a lecturer in the street preaching effort. Another "first" came when the diocese originated the Young Christian Workers in the United States. In the effort to cover wide areas in a short time, Father George V. Johnson in 1945 became one of the first American clergymen to utilize the airplane in his ministerial work.⁵ John Martin summed up these experiments when he was defending street preaching before the second Catholic Action Congress. At that time, the lay preacher declared that the history of the Catholic Church was characterized by "taking a chance" and concluded that it was necessary that the Catholic Church in the Sooner State must "dare and take a chance if the Church was to go forward."⁶

This originality in methodology extended itself into

⁵Southwest Courier, April 7, 1945, September 15, 1945.

⁶Southwest Courier, October 24, 1936.

liturgical proposals made within the diocese as a direct response to the Bible-Belt environment. In 1925, a group of priests serving the Panhandle and northwestern section of the state suggested that Catholics come together on Sunday even when a priest is unavailable for services. At these meetings, men would lead in the recitation of the rosary or a hymn and then would read the gospel and epistle and would deliver a short sermon. After a brief period of meditation, the services would be followed by lay-instructed Sunday Schools. While adhering to church law by requiring that the lay leaders remain outside of the altar rail, they believed that this "practice is the solution of the problem of how to keep burning the fires of Catholic devotion and faith in such isolated districts."⁷ Similarly, during the first year of World War II, Kelley became worried that rationing would prevent people or priests from reaching the rural churches for Sunday Mass. To meet this crisis, the bishop suggested that the American bishops investigate the possibility of developing a "Spiritual Mass." In this proposal, booklets containing the Mass of the Sunday and a sermon would be distributed to the rural parishioners, who could read and meditate upon the written words.⁸ The situation never became so desperate as to require the use

⁷Southwest Courier, July 28, 1925.

⁸Francis Kelley to Francis Spellman, Oklahoma City, July 26, 1942, "Rationing" file, General Correspondence for 1942, AAOKC.

of this technique, yet Kelley proposed a solution on how to preserve the faith of Catholics in rural districts.

Kelley made another proposal to aid the ministry to the widespread rural areas when he tried to obtain Rome's permission, readily granted for missionary countries, to allow some priests to confer the sacrament of confirmation on those who were unable to be in the church when the bishop was present. Although Kelley did not receive this permission, the Vatican did allow the abbot of the Benedictine monastery at Shawnee to administer confirmation.⁹ While Kelley had no authority over who was to confer confirmation, he had control over his personal image. While traditional church etiquette suggested that Catholics greet a bishop by genuflecting and kissing the episcopal ring, Kelley urged that Catholics refrain from such formality so as not to embarrass non-Catholics.¹⁰

A controversy regarding a liturgical proposal raged under the surface in 1937 when Father James McNamee, in the Southwest Courier, argued for the use of English in the Mass. Considering that Latin was "non-essential," the priest believed that the vernacular would aid conversions by demonstrating that Catholicism was not "an alien

⁹Amleto Cicognani to Francis Kelley, Washington, D. C., August 24, 1934, "Amleto Cicognani" file, General Correspondence for 1941, AAOKC.

¹⁰J. A. Dudek to Mrs. J. S. Buchanan, Oklahoma City, December 11, 1932, "Mrs. J. B. Buchanan" file, General Correspondence to October 1, 1934, AAOKC.

creed."¹¹ After publication of this article in the official diocesan newspaper, the editor and Kelley received letters from across the country which severely condemned the idea and the currency which the Courier gave to the argument. With most protests coming from beyond Oklahoma's borders, some even suggested that the Catholic Church should excommunicate McNamee for heresy. Under the storm of criticism, which was the largest reaction to any article ever published in the Southwest Courier, many Oklahoma priests agreed with McNamee, but were afraid to say so publicly. One such "priest" was none other than Bishop Kelley, who had given his permission for the original publication of the article. In reaction to the critics rather than a condemnation of McNamee's suggestion,¹² Kelley politely replied to the suggestion by gently offering the opposing arguments for the use of the vernacular.¹³ The only letter which Kelley kept in his personal correspondence regarding this controversy came from a layman in Burlington, Oklahoma. Claiming that he knew the Protestant mentality by "having lived the most of my life among non-Catholics," the writer supported McNamee's position because it "would Americanize the Catholic Church" and "would do more to double the membership of the Catholic Church" than anything else. The layman also

¹¹Southwest Courier, December 11, 1937.

¹²Telephone interview with James McNamee, Stillwater, Oklahoma, to Tulsa, Oklahoma, February 4, 1974.

¹³Southwest Courier, December 18, 1937.

wrote that "the average Catholic would also get much more from the Mass if it was in an understandable tongue."¹⁴

Another area of controversy, while not as great, came when the Courier published a news article stating that the choir of a black Catholic Church in Tulsa would sing a liturgical Mass based upon Negro Spirituals.¹⁵ When someone sent a clipping to the Diocesan Music Commission of the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh, the commission's chairman protested to Bishop Kelley that the Catholic paper was advertising "a liturgical sacrilege."¹⁶ In his reply, Kelley sarcastically wrote that "'the Dust Bowl' diocese of Oklahoma has no Music Commission. In the past it was often the case that the only music we had was wind moaning through the cracks of the mission churches: moanings of the glory you have in Pittsburgh." While defending the spirituals as folksongs rather than Protestant hymns and as effective in making black converts, Kelley conceded that the Courier would no longer make reference to the use of spirituals in Catholic liturgy.

When these proposals for priestless Sunday services, bishopless confirmations, and liturgy in the vernacular are

¹⁴Henry C. Doherty to Francis Kelley, Burlington, Oklahoma, December 2, 1944, "Miscellaneous D" file, General Correspondence for 1936-1937, AAOKC.

¹⁵Southwest Courier, November 16, 1944.

¹⁶C. Rossini to Francis Kelley, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, December 2, 1944, "Miscellaneous R" file, General Correspondence for 1944, AAOKC.

added to the actual use of folksongs and Stephen Leven's development of Catholic revivals, the general thrust of the liturgical changes appear. The changes were less an effort to Americanize the liturgy than an effort to make the Catholic services more compatible with the Protestant tradition of the Bible Belt. In this sense only, these proposals and usages would for some "Protestantize" the Catholic liturgy. Obviously the heavily Protestant majority had influenced the Catholic Church, its clergy and its communicants.

Another example of the Bible Belt's impact upon the Catholic Church was in the area of lay involvement in church affairs. In missions without pastors, the laymen were generally responsible for the physical administration of the missions. In combating religious prejudice, the laity were forced to assume a heavy part of the burden since many parts of the state distrusted Catholic priests. As to religious education, lay men and women were heavily involved in the Catechetical Instruction League for minority children, the Vacation Religion Schools in rural areas, and in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. In 1925, a priest in southern Oklahoma pin-pointed the need of lay involvement and conducted a series of classes on leadership. He concluded that the clergy needed to have lay co-helpers in all activities in order to build up the Catholic Church in Oklahoma.¹⁷ This lay involvement was necessary for

¹⁷Southwest Courier, March 21, 1925.

Sooner Catholicism, since priests had to spend much of their time in dealing with the strictly religious care of a far-flung flock; besides, it was highly compatible with the Protestant tradition of lay leadership.

The laity also had close associations with Protestants in their everyday social and business life. In Tulsa, for example, the first board of directors for the Young Men's Christian Association included a very prominent Catholic attorney.¹⁸ And the board traditionally included at least one Catholic, generally some leader in the petroleum industry of Tulsa. These Catholics had agreed to serve on the YMCA's board although the Vatican had formally disapproved of the organization because of its sectarian and Protestant overtones. During World War I and World War II, Catholics while helping the war effort on the home front under Catholic auspices worked very closely with non-Catholics in raising funds, rolling bandages, and caring for the social needs of the troops. These non-religious involvements with Protestants helped to prepare the way for the interdenominational brotherhood of the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

During the renewal of the Catholic Church during the 1960's as a result of the Second Vatican Council, the Diocese of Oklahoma City and Tulsa achieved a national reputation as a progressive diocese willing to experiment and change. While there were many reasons for this attitude

¹⁸Interview with T. Austin Gavin, Tulsa, February 9, 1974.

among its clergy and the laity, a national magazine spotlighted this change and commented, "Catholics number less than 5 percent of the total population in the area it covers--a very small minority in the midst of Oklahoma's conservative Protestants, who are mostly Baptists. No one knows to what extent the ultra-liberalism . . . is explained by this fact. . . ." ¹⁹ One of the reasons for this "ultra-liberalism" is the fact that the diocese matured in a Bible Belt environment in which it had to experiment and, in the words of John Frank Martin, "to dare and take a chance if the Church was to go forward." The Bible-Belt environment had thus conditioned the Catholic Church to suggest liturgical proposals, to stress lay involvement in church affairs, and to work closely with Protestants. Consequently, the Bible-Belt environment not only exerted its influence on the Sooner Catholic Church in the 1960's, but it also had begun to condition the Catholic Church more than fifty years earlier. By maturing in such a surrounding, the Catholic Church in Oklahoma had grown to accept experiments and "to take a chance."

¹⁹Duncan Norton-Taylor, "The Catholic Layman Confronts His Changing Church," Fortune (December, 1966), p. 173.

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APPENDIX

THE FALSE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS OATH

For over twenty years, a spurious Knights of Columbus oath was circulated throughout Oklahoma. Since it was a prominent piece of anti-Catholic literature and captures the tone of much of the anti-Catholic propaganda, the full text of the bogus oath is reproduced here in full as it appeared in the Congressional Record. (Source: Congressional Record, 62 Cong., 1st sess., February 15, 1913, Vol. II, p. 3216.)

I, _____, now in the presence of Almighty God, the blessed Virgin Mary, the blessed St. John the Baptist, the Holy Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, and all the saints, sacred host of Heaven, and to you, my Ghostly Father, the superior general of the Society of Jesus, founded by St. Ignatius Loyola, in the pontification of Paul the III, and continued to the present, do by the womb of the Virgin, the matrix of God, and the rod of Jesus Christ, declare and swear that His Holiness, the Pope, is Christ's vice regent and is the true and only head of the Catholic or Universal Church throughout the earth; and that by virtue of the keys of binding and loosing given His Holiness by my Savior, Jesus Christ, he hath power to depose heretical kings, princes, States, Commonwealths, and Governments and they may be safely destroyed. Therefore to the utmost of my power I will defend this doctrine and His Holiness's right and custom against all usurpers of the heretical or Protestant authority whatever, especially the Lutheran Church of Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway and the now pretended authority and Churches of England and Scotland, and the branches of same now established in Ireland and on the Continent of America and elsewhere, and all adherents in regard that they may be usurped and heretical, opposing the sacred Mother Church of Rome.

I do now denounce and disown any allegiance as due to any heretical king, prince, or State, named Protestant or Liberals, or obedience to any of their laws, magistrates, or officers.

I do further declare that the doctrine of the Churches of England and Scotland, of the Calvinists, Huguenots, and others of the name of Protestants or Masons to be damnable, and they themselves to be damned who will not forsake the same.

I do further declare that I will help, assist, and advise all or any of His Holiness's agents, in any place where I should be, in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Ireland, or America, or in any other kingdom or territory I shall come to, and do my utmost to extirpate the heretical Protestant or Masonic doctrines and to destroy all their pretended powers, legal or otherwise.

I do further promise and declare that, notwithstanding I am dispensed with to assume any religion heretical for the propagation of the Mother Church's interest, to keep secret and private all her agents' counsels from time to time, as they intrust me, and not divulge, directly or indirectly, by word, writing, or circumstances whatever, but to execute all that should be proposed, given in charge, or discovered unto me by you, my Ghostly Father, or any of this sacred order.

I do further promise and declare that I will have no opinion or will of my own or any mental reservation whatsoever, even as a corpse or cadaver (*perinade ac cadaver*), but will unhesitatingly obey each and every command that I may receive from my superiors in the militia of the Pope and of Jesus Christ.

That I will go to any part of the world whithersoever I may be sent, to the frozen regions north, jungles of India, to the centers of civilization of Europe, or to the wild haunts of the barbarous savages of America without murmuring or repining, and will be submissive in all things whatsoever is communicated to me.

I do further promise and declare that I will, when opportunity presents, make and wage relentless war, secretly and openly, against all heretics, Protestants and Masons, as I am directed to do, to extirpate them from the face of the whole earth; and that I will spare neither age, sex, or condition, and that I will hang, burn, waste, boil, flay, strangle, and bury alive these infamous heretics; rip up the stomachs and wombs of their women, and crush their infants' heads against the walls in order to annihilate their execrable race. That when the same can not be done openly,

I will secretly use the poisonous cup, the strangulation cord, the steel of the poniard, or the leaden bullet, regardless of the honor, rank, dignity, or authority of the persons, whatever may be their condition in life, either public or private, as I at any time may be directed so to do by any agents of the Pope or superior of the Brotherhood of the Holy Father of the Society of Jesus.

In confirmation of which I hereby dedicate my life, soul, and all corporal powers, and with the dagger which I now receive I will subscribe my name written in my blood in testimony thereof; and should I prove false or weaken in my determination, may my brethren and fellow soldiers of the militia of the Pope cut off my hands and feet and my throat from ear to ear, my belly opened and sulphur burned therein with all the punishment that can be inflicted upon me on earth and my soul shall be tortured by demons in eternal hell forever.

That I will in voting always vote for a K of C. in preference to a Protestant, especially a Mason, and that I will leave my party so to do; that if two Catholics are on the ticket I will satisfy myself which is the better supporter of Mother Church and vote accordingly.

That I will not deal with or employ a Protestant if in my power to deal with or employ a Catholic. That I will place Catholic girls in Protestant families that a weekly report may be made of the inner movements of the heretics.

That I will provide myself with arms and ammunition that I may be in readiness when the word is passed, or I am commanded to defend the church either as an individual or with the militia of the Pope.

All of which I, _____, do swear by the blessed Trinity and blessed sacrament which I am now to receive to perform and on part to keep this, my oath.

In testimony hereof, I take this most holy and blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist and witness the same further with my name written with the point of this dagger dipped in my own blood and seal in the face of this holy sacrament.

VITA ^γ

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