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## The Indianapolis Catholic Press, 1876 to 1947

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The Indianapolis Catholic Press, 1876 to 1947

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## The Indianapolis Catholic Press, 1876 to 1947

This chapter deals with the Indianapolis Catholic press in its various guises under a variety of managers from the Gilded Age to just after World War II. Given the damage of Martin Luther's printed placards and pamphlets, the Catholic Church has never been completely at peace with either books or newspapers. But to tell its story, it found it had to produce its own publications. The first newspaper written for Indianapolis Catholics, the Western Citizen, 1876-1882, was not sponsored by the diocese, but since its target audience was the Irish-Catholics of the city and its environs, it qualified well-enough. Lay-owned and edited, it defended the Church against Protestants, but was willing to criticize priests and bishops, too. The first official paper, the New Record, 1883-1899, lasted longer and was remarkable for the anti-Semitism of its French editor. After it failed, the Catholic Columbian Record, of Columbus, Ohio, filled the gap by providing an Indiana section. In 1910, Patrick Joseph O'Mahony founded, with others, and edited the Indiana Catholic and Record until 1932.

O'Mahony, a talented journalist and outspoken defender of the Church and agitator for Ireland independence, was a sharp critic of Protestantism. The latter's support of the Ku Klux Klan and birth control provided him with plenty of scope. He also adhered to the common view that a woman's vocation was wife, mother, homemaker. After World War I, however, aware of the contributions women had made during it, their value to business, etc., O'Mahony concluded that in certain endeavors they were superior to men. Having employed his daughter and niece in responsible positions at the paper, he came to support young women working for wages for the independence it provided—for one thing, they need not marry the first man who asked.

His last years were tragic: Beginning in the mid-1920s, financial pressure led to abuse of alcohol and drugs, to theft, mental collapse, and seven months in Central State Hospital for the insane. Once released, the last three years of his life were spent in desperate efforts to find more capital for the paper or different employment for himself to support his family. Nothing availed until the archbishop of Cincinnati, shortly before his death underwrote his expenses at a Catholic rest home. In 1932 the paper was taken over by a priest-board of diocesan clergy, a change soon reflected in its pages. For example, O'Mahony was relatively enlightened on women's capabilities, while the clergy-editors did not stray from patriarchy.

## The Catholic Press in the Indianapolis Diocese, 1876 to 1947

The hagiographic approach to church history--“nothing less than ‘sweetness and light’ in all that pertained to the lives of churchmen, [is] a *modus operandi* that no self-respecting historian could or would respect.”

Msgr. John Tracy Ellis, Catholic Bishops: A Memoir

“[W]e ought to be willing to face facts. Let the truth be told. . . . Unfortunately, not all Catholic writers and editors have been sufficiently imbued with this spirit. They will suppress evidence for fear of giving scandal or causing harm. It is and always has been a mistaken course. *Deus non eget mendacio* (God doesn’t need lies). Our duty is to tell the truth and the whole truth.”

E. Harold Smith, “An Alarmist Speaks,” Commonweal, January 1, 1937).

Following upon the printing of books by moveable type in the 15<sup>th</sup> century came “news sheets,” printed matter of the gossip and doings of the day. Called “avissa” by the Romans, from the outset the Church looked with disfavor on this avatar of the journalists’ profession. In 1571 Pope Pius V issued *Constitutio Contra Scribente* condemning the writers of such newsheets then springing up in the Papal States. His successor, Pope Gregory XII, shared Pius’ dislike of newsmen and wasted little time in issuing a constitution of his own in 1572; in it Gregory described the budding journalists as, “a new set of men illicitly curious” who write of things “they know or make up out of their own libidinous imaginations, mixing up the false, the true and the uncertain with no restraint whatever.” Like Pius, Gregory banned newsheets, subjecting anyone who received, copied, disseminated, or transmitted them under penalty of “perpetual infamy, prison, or hanging” from a nearby Tiber River bridge. Pius IX (1846-1878) was the first pope to have anything good to say about newspapers, but even he did not take the fourth estate seriously.<sup>1</sup> Yet, almost three centuries after Pius V and Gregory XII, *Pio Nono* had to bow to the inevitable: in 1861, *L’Osservatore Romano*, the daily paper of the Vatican, was born during his pontificate. His successor, Leo XIII, did take the press seriously; a later commentator praised him, saying that the pope saw that the journalist, like the historian, labored under the same rule, “to say nothing that is false

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<sup>1</sup> Chadwick, *Popes, 1830-1914*, 322 ff.

and to conceal nothing that is true.” Leo XIII also was the one who opened the Vatican archives to scholars in 1881.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond question, in America the Catholic press would become of great importance to the Church. The distinguished reporter and editor John Cogley (1916-1976) held that absent the Catholic press the institutions of American Catholicism--schools, hospitals, orphanages--would not have survived.<sup>3</sup> The first regularly published Catholic newspaper in the United States was the U.S. Catholic Miscellany, in 1822,<sup>4</sup> founded by John England, bishop of Charleston, South Carolina. England took pains to show the compatibility between American Constitutional values and Catholicism, his theme when he became the first Catholic priest to speak before Congress.<sup>5</sup> The newspaper’s purpose was to communicate with the thinly scattered Catholics of his diocese (the Carolinas and Georgia) and the non-Catholic alike. Bishop England, who had edited Catholic and secular newspapers in his native Cork, saw as the Miscellany’s chief task the correction of inaccuracies regarding the doctrines and history of the Church. The American bishops in pastorals in 1829, 1833, and 1837 agreed to the “grave need for a Catholic press” to “sustain . . . those journals . . . which explain our tenets . . . defend our rights and . . . vindicate our conduct.”<sup>6</sup> Put another way, the Catholic press existed to connect the laity to the Church, inform its members and those outside of its truths, and counter attacks from critics within and without, especially against the charge in the non-Catholic and the secular press that Catholicism was subversive of republican government and subservient to a foreign potentate. At a minimum, the Catholic press was an exercise in public relations, social calendar, and medium for disseminating the Catholic view on the issues of the day. Given its importance, it is perhaps surprising that in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Catholic periodicals were mainly lay owned, albeit usually operating in close association with the local ordinary.<sup>7</sup>

The first Indianapolis newspaper intended for a Catholic audience was the Central Catholic, founded in 1875 by Fr. Denis O’Donaghue, a priest of the city. It was taken over by L. H. Bell the next

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<sup>2</sup> The American theologian, John Courtney Murray in a speech given in Rome in 1963. National Catholic Reporter, 22 October 2004, 23A. Leo XIII also read Marx and was the first pope to be filmed. The New Yorker magazine (January 3, 2011), 27.

<sup>3</sup> Catholic America, 170.

<sup>4</sup> Begun with 600 subscribers, the paper would last until 1861.

<sup>5</sup> Jay P. Dolan, The Irish Americans: A History (New York, 2008), 57.

<sup>6</sup> Catholic Press Annual, 23 January 1992, 32.

<sup>7</sup> Encyclopedia of American Catholic History, 289, 290.

year and then moved to Louisville, Kentucky, in 1879, as the Central Catholic Advocate.<sup>8</sup> In early 1876 the second appeared, the Western Citizen: “A Journal Published in the Interests of the Irish Race.” While not a religious paper as such, it did cover diocesan doings and its intended readership was the city’s Irish-Catholic community. Its principals were C. E. McSheehy, city editor, his brother Thomas, business manager, and Joseph Marshall, editor. When C. E. McSheehy and Marshall dropped out, March 1879, Thomas McSheehy was left sole owner and publisher.<sup>9</sup> Born 29 September 1849 in County Kerry, Ireland, Thomas McSheehy attended a Christian Brothers school and became a bookbinder’s apprentice. He emigrated to New York, as others did, to better his condition,<sup>10</sup> to Lafayette, Tippecanoe County, Indiana where he worked on newspapers, and to Indianapolis in 1874 or 1875, marrying Mary (Maggie) Ryan in 1875. Irish-born immigrants, like McSheehy, already armed with the English language, found journalism a ready field of endeavor.<sup>11</sup>

In 1880 the Western Citizen claimed a circulation of 10,000, but like many newspapers of the period, subscribers proved slow payers, so pleas alternated with frequent threats of dire consequences to those in arrears. As an Irish paper, it would “always advocate the cause of Irish freedom” at home and abroad. It was so Irish and anti-British in sentiment that its motto, “For God and Our Country,” might have left some readers unsure as to the country meant. At first a mere four pages, five cents a copy or a dollar a year, it soon doubled in size and yearly subscription rate. The Western Citizen sported an elaborate mast head more than four inches high, large enough for the emblems of its Irish and Catholic concerns: in the center, a medallion of a woman in contemplation, hand on cheek, amid a landscape of church, Celtic cross, and round tower (tenth century structures built as refuges from Viking raids), the whole crowned with the papal crest--tiara, stole, keys, crucifix, and all. On the left St. Patrick catechizes Irish warriors and the people; on the right “Erin,” with her harp, lifts a drape revealing a rising Sun to the maid “America,” armed with sword and shield. In addition, there are shamrocks, a second rising Sun, and two more harps.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Fr. Thomas Widner, ed., Our Family Album, 1834-1984, Sketches of the People and Parishes of . . . Indianapolis Archdiocese . . . 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Criterion Press, 1984).

<sup>9</sup> John Miller, ed., Indiana Newspaper Bibliography.

<sup>10</sup> Western Citizen, 24 June 1882, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Other Indiana examples are John R. Dowling, a Catholic, printer, co-publisher, and editor of the Terre Haute Courier, ca. 1832-1841, the state’s printer in the 1850s, editor of the Terre Haute Journal, 1861-1873, and Washington correspondent for the Boston Pilot, 1873-1878.<sup>11</sup> John F. Joyce started as a copyboy, then reporter and editor of the Terre Haute Gazette, 1876-1906,<sup>11</sup> and in the early twentieth century Joseph Patrick O’Mahony, editor of the Indianapolis archdiocesan newspaper, the Indiana Catholic and Record.

<sup>12</sup> Western Citizen, 23 November 1878, 1.

As a newspaper with an Irish-Catholic readership, England, naturally, was the enemy: Queen Victoria, then forty years on the throne, was “an avaricious old woman” and the English far from models of propriety. The Western Citizen drew attention to the immodesty of her ladies, its proof a London newspaper article involving a lady at a reception wearing a dress cut so low that in bending forward she “lost the whole front” and had to be covered with shawls. (For the period, let alone in an Irish-Catholic publication, the item was unusually racy, but apparently too good to pass up.)<sup>13</sup> The paper attacked Protestant ministers of the city who disparaged the Catholic Church, such as the Methodist “Bulldog” Bayless or a judge who held that the absolution of sins in the confessional rendered Catholic testimony under oath “ridiculous.” Other non-Catholics, such as Capt. J. W. Gordon, a prominent lawyer, the Rev. Myron W. Reed, and assorted governors and mayors who participated in the city’s St. Patrick’s Day parades or publicly sympathized with Ireland in her troubles were praised.<sup>14</sup> While references to Bishop Francis Silas Chatard were rare (possibly because he was usually absent at meetings and rallies held to express sympathy for Ireland’s difficulties), the two leading priests of the diocese, August Bessonies and Denis O’Donoghue, openly sympathized with Ireland and much appreciated by the Western Citizen. In 1880 Bishop Chatard did take up a collection in all the parishes for Irish relief and gave a lecture at Masonic Hall to benefit that cause.<sup>15</sup>

The Citizen’s *bona fides* as a Catholic paper was its “Catholic notes” department--papal pronouncements, Lenten fast and abstinence rules, sermons, doings of the clergy, etc. It used a statement of Pius IX many times: The mission of the Catholic press was “to preserve the principles of order and of faith, where they still prevail, and to promote them where impiety and cold indifference have caused them to be forgotten.”<sup>16</sup> Yet despite getting many letters on church matters, the editors refused to be drawn into doctrinal issues: They explained, “[I]t is not within the province of the layman to interfere in ecclesiastical matters. The bishop and the clergy are the only parties interested, hence we have never tried to get any information; and therefore, cannot impart any to curiosity seekers.”<sup>17</sup> While its “Religious Principles will be CATHOLIC,” as a newspaper in a crowded field, it would not expound dogma “nor spurn those who differ from us in matters of conscience.”<sup>18</sup> Significantly, in November 1879 the elaborate masthead was replaced with a simple drawing of a handshake with nothing either Irish or religious about

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<sup>13</sup> Western Citizen, 8 May 1880, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Western Citizen, 17 March 1882, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Western Citizen, 24 Jan 1880, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Western Citizen, 8 June 1878, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Western Citizen, 6 September 1880, 4.

<sup>18</sup> Western Citizen, 7 April 1877, 1.

it. It even published sermons of Protestant ministers and news of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). Such unwillingness to enroll wholeheartedly in the church militant brought attacks from a competitor, Ohio's Catholic Columbian, which claimed that the Western Citizen was a "wolf in sheep's clothing" and no Catholic home should take it. The Citizen defended itself by saying that it had many non-Catholic readers and sought to serve them.<sup>19</sup> Commerce makes for ecumenism.

Yet the Western Citizen was Catholic enough to find the public school "both ridiculous and vicious when it undertakes to teach one particular version of the scriptures to a number of pupils who are of various, and divers creeds or of no faith at all." A Catholic teacher in a public school should not be forced to teach the King James Bible, nor should Catholic pupils be taught from a Protestant one. Indeed, a public school was "no place" for a Catholic child of Catholic parents. Public schools should stick to "only secular instruction . . . We cannot regard these schools at present as being anything but proselytizing institutions."<sup>20</sup>

The Western Citizen's promise not to "intrude in doctrinal issues" still left it with considerable scope for controversy, much of it having to do with Ireland or the Irish. In the early 1880s Ireland was again facing hard times, even famine. In the good years of the early 1870s land rents had risen as had prices. In depression again in 1880, agitation for "fair rents, fixity of tenure, and fair compensation for improvements" were championed by a new organization, the Irish Land League. In 1882 the Western Citizen carried an editorial of the Evansville News that paralleled its own understanding: A Fr. Ryan had argued that no Irish-American had any right to dabble in political questions regarding land holdings in Ireland. The Evansville News, rejecting the "bad logic" of the "sogorth aroon" ("dear priest"), wanted to know "when did love of liberty, love of home, love of family, and the right to recover lost liberty and resist a starving oppression become theological questions?" "If obedience to a church necessitates a surrender of present and future generations to the rapacity of men who do not of right own the soil for which they extort enormous rents, then it were better that the Irish race should die out, than live in one of the worst possible forms of slavery." This was strong stuff, and in printing it on page one the Citizen made it its own.<sup>21</sup>

Undermining what might be called the "informal" standing of the Western Citizen's Catholic nature was its willingness to display ecclesiastical dirty laundry: An 1881 editorial admitted that many of the secular priests were not what they should be. For one thing, the "crime of intemperance" had brought "so much scandal on the Church in the West, in the past decade . . ." Another deficiency espied by the

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<sup>19</sup> Western Ciizent, 31 Jan 1880, 4.

<sup>20</sup> Western Citizen, 16 Nov 1878, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Western Citizen, 25 Feb 1882, 1. There are variant spellings for the Gaelic for "dear priest": "Sogarth aroon" and "Sagart aroon" are two. My mother was born and grew up in Ballysaggart, "priests' town," outside Lismore, County Waterford.

newspaper were the seminaries which, “as a rule, [were neither] thorough in discipline nor proficient in intellectual instruction.” Consequently, many priests were crude and ungrammatical in speech. For this the Citizen blamed the laity for the lack of financial support for seminaries; “An ignorant clergy means a lax, if not a corrupt, clergy.”<sup>22</sup> The Church’s Protestant critics couldn’t have put it better.

The Western Citizen was also as quick as any to take part in the intramural skirmishes in the Midwest between Irish and German Catholics, the two largest sources of Catholic immigrants. In 1882 the newspaper took the part of a Fr. Grogan, a priest from the Ft. Wayne diocese, suspended by Bishop Joseph Dwenger. As the Citizen saw it, Grogan’s “fault” lay in resisting pressure from “his lordship of tyrannical notoriety” (Dwenger), to increase collections to pay off the parish debt. Asserted the Citizen, Fr. Grogan had the sympathies of his parishioners, railroad workers earning a dollar a day. His people knew him “to be a worthy gentleman, while the Bishop is a German tyrant and has favored priests of his own nationality.” There were many Irish in Ft. Wayne, but not a single Irish priest. Taking great familiarity, the Citizen denominated “Joe Dwenger . . . the most unpopular Bishop in America, and deservedly so.”<sup>23</sup> Two weeks later Thomas McSheehy extended his complaint to include the American bishops for “hav[ing] more power than they are entitled to.” The Western Citizen was a real Catholic paper, but the bishops were not infallible: Out of jealousy, every week some poor priest “is smitten down” at “the hands of the tyrant bishop.” Citing Ft. Wayne’s suspended priests and a case where a bishop was deposed and the priest reinstated, the Citizen thundered, “Let Bishop Dwenger, and others, take warning.”<sup>24</sup> A month later McSheehy again raised the objection that some bishops discriminated against the Irish by “foist[ing] German pastors on Irish parishes.” What was wanted was “Irish priests for Irish people.” Understandable criticism of his attacks on the Ft. Wayne bishop and on bishops as a class prompted McSheehy’s admission that as editor he alone was responsible for what went into the paper. A Catholic because of his birth in Ireland, he believed the Church the true church--but “Equal rights to all, exclusive privilege to none” was his motto. The Western Citizen “never asked for an ecclesiastical endorsement nor do we want any.”<sup>25</sup> In his rant against the Church McSheehy seems to have subscribed to “The better the Catholic, the worse the Irishman,” a common saying among Irish nationalists critical of the conservative influence of Ireland’s hierarchy when it came to independence from England.

If Thomas McSheehy’s declaration of independence from ecclesiastical control was an anomaly, for an Irish–Catholic he was also unusual in being a Republican.<sup>26</sup> The Citizen claimed to be politically

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<sup>22</sup> Western Citizen, 23 April 1881, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Western Citizen, 13 May 1882, 4. Dwenger was consecrated bishop of Ft. Wayne in 1872.

<sup>24</sup> Western Citizen, 27 May 1882, 4.

<sup>25</sup> 24 June 1882, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Western Citizen, 1 Nov 1879, 3, has him in Indianapolis in 1875, while the biographical directory of state legislators, has him in the city in 1874 and marrying “Maggie” in 1875. Thomas McSheehy [sic.] Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly, vol. 1.

independent, not identifying with either party,<sup>27</sup> but McSheehy was an ardent Republican, and under his editorship the paper was decidedly partisan. It was typical of the paper to have it that when it came to party nominations the Democratic motto was “No Irish Need Apply,” while the Republican’s was “All men are equal in the sight of the law.”<sup>28</sup> McSheehy contended that the Democrats shamefully abused the Irish habit of flocking to the party, while the GOP willingly put their Irish supporters in positions of trust. In the Republican Party, McSheehy claimed, race, color, or creed were not barriers. It was certainly true that Irishmen were overwhelmingly Democrats. McSheehy worked to change that in the 1878 and 1880 election campaigns. Perhaps that was what he meant in declaring the newspaper’s mission was to “elevate the standard [status] of the Irish American citizen.”<sup>29</sup> In 1880 McSheehy himself ran successfully for the Indiana House representing Marion County. As a legislator, he opposed a compulsory education bill as an invasion of the “sacred rights of parent and child”; moreover, since education and intelligence were not necessarily related, the former was not always necessary if the latter was absent. He also opposed the liquor prohibition amendment to the state constitution, arguing it would not be enforced and would increase drunkenness and crime. Women suffrage? The people were not ready, but let the agitation continue was McSheehy’s attitude.<sup>30</sup>

Two years later the editor was happy to carry the news that Fr. O’Donoghue, chancellor of the diocese, solidly supported the Republican Party for its platform’s stance on the Irish question. The time was past that the Irish were automatically Democrats, thought O’Donoghue. The priest never understood why Irish Catholics voted the Democratic ticket, as the Republicans “have always treated Catholics with equality and fairness” while Irish Catholics on the Democratic ticket always ran behind the party’s vote; it was not so on the GOP ticket. Nor was this Republican priest in favor of prohibition, despite all the temperance organizations in the world (a “reform” highly unpopular with most Irishmen).<sup>31</sup>

McSheehy’s efforts on behalf of the party of Lincoln paid off handsomely. Credited with converting a goodly number of Indiana Irishmen to the GOP, after his single term in the Indiana legislature he was rewarded with a post in the Treasury Department in Washington, D. C. at a salary of \$1,500 a year. The Western Citizen was now on a paying basis and the plan was for McSheehy to place it and his other business interests (he was a local agent for the Cunard Shipping Line)<sup>32</sup> in other hands

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<sup>27</sup> Western Citizen, 7 April 1877.

<sup>28</sup> Western Citizen, 4 Sept 1880, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Western Citizen, 12 June 1880, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Western Citizen, 2 April 1881, 2.

<sup>31</sup> Western Citizen, 14 Oct 1882, 4. [Old joke: Mrs. Ryan to Mrs. O’Doherty: “Have you heard that Congressman O’Brien has joined the Republican Party?” “That can’t be true! Didn’t I see him at Mass on Sunday!”]

<sup>32</sup> As a steamship agent for the Cunard Lines, among others, McSheehy issued sight drafts payable in Ireland (useful for those left behind or for passage money), for one English pound and upwards “at lowest rates.” The Citizen advertised passage from Queenstown, Cork, Ireland or Liverpool for \$36.50, a not inconsiderable sum. Western Citizen, 31 Dec 1881, 1.

until his return a year hence. In May 1880, a Fr. Denis O'Donovan was to have served as editor. But the arrangement lasted only one issue when O'Donovan resigned, the job being "too large a demand on his time." In McSheehy's absence the paper lasted six weeks. With the number of pages cut in half to four, the newspaper became a farrago of items of little news value and no real editorials. The last issue of the Western Citizen appeared 30 December 1882. At a guess, McSheehy, an ambitious and competent man, found greater opportunities in the nation's capital.

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Although the Western Citizen clearly had some title to be regarded as a Catholic paper, its independence from ecclesiastical authority and willingness to criticize the hierarchy and the clergy made it less than ideal from Bishop Francis Chatard's point of view. Thus, McSheehy's absence in Washington may not have been the only factor in its demise. In any case, the line of descent to the Criterion, after 1960 the present diocesan weekly, is traced to 1883,<sup>33</sup> the year the New Record appeared. From its offices in rooms 10 and 11 in the Union Building on West Maryland Street, in Indianapolis, the New Record, "a Catholic newspaper for Indiana," undertook to "defend Catholic principles and . . . furnish news interesting to Catholics in this city and state." As the "official circular" of Bishop Chatard, it served as the official diocesan paper. The proprietors, Butler and McFarlane, approached it as a business enterprise in the belief that there were enough Catholics in the state for commercial success. In a swipe at the Columbian Catholic (distributed in Indiana but published at Columbus, Ohio), they asserted that no paper published in another state could be depended on to carry Indiana "news."<sup>34</sup> Perhaps not, but the paper does not seem to have prospered, and on 29 January 1889, under the editorship of Alexander Chomel, the Catholic Record appeared as a continuation of the New Record.

A native of France, Chomel had been educated there in Catholic schools. Landing at New Orleans in 1848, age 22 or 23, thence up river to New Albany, Indiana, where he was a merchant until 1860. He spent the next twenty years in merchandizing and publishing newspapers in Martin County, worked for the Washington (Indiana) Advertiser after 1884, before coming to Indianapolis in 1889 at the request of Bishop Chatard to purchase the New Record. Changing its name to the Catholic Record<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The source for the New Record as the distant progenitor of the Criterion is Archbishop O'Meara's pastoral letter of 27 May 1980. O'Meara, "Pastoral Letters," 1980-1981, Catholic Archives.

<sup>34</sup> The New Record, 19 July 1883, 4. The Indianapolis Encyclopedia, 1183, has Richard Outler founding the New Record. The Criterion itself, 8 October 2010, calls the New Record, The Catholic Record, and considers it the first newspaper to serve Catholics in the diocese.

<sup>35</sup> Blanchard, History of Catholic Church, vol. 2, 277, 278, and Indianapolis Star, 4 December 1933; The paper was printed on St. John's property, where Bishop Chatard also had his residence. Indianapolis News, 4 December 1933.

("Approved by the bishops of Vincennes and Ft. Wayne"), it boasted of being the "only Catholic paper in Indiana."<sup>36</sup> The paper circulated outside Indianapolis, going to Anderson, Aurora, Baldwin, Blue Grass, Danville, Decatur, Delphi, Elkhart, Elwood, as well as St. Mary's, Seymour, South Bend, Terre Haute, and other places.<sup>37</sup> Its credo was not to be a personal organ nor to air private opinions, but to "defend the Church, promote the interest of Catholicity and diffuse Catholic knowledge; . . ."<sup>38</sup>

In every era every newspaper, magazine, journal—what have you—exhibits the biases of its publisher and its editor. As a French Catholic at the end of the nineteenth century, Alexander Chomel's bias was a deep fear and hatred of Jews. At the very time he complained of the robust anti-Catholicism of the nativist American Protestant Association (APA), Chomel expressed virulent, almost monomaniacal anti-Semitic sentiments.<sup>39</sup> He made frequent references to the "Masonic-Jewish French Republic," finding Jews guilty of bribing half the French parliament and the ruling ministry.<sup>40</sup> French Catholics, usually monarchist in politics and deeply entrenched in the military officer corps, regarded the Third Republic as dominated by Jews, Protestants, and Masons, so did Chomel.<sup>41</sup> He also believed that Germany's Jews were the Church's bitterest enemies during that nation's attacks on Catholicism--the "Kulturkampf" of the 1870s. And when worry over their own persecution led German Jews to ask the Kaiser for protection, Chomel exulted that the "chickens [had] come home to roost."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Catholic Record, 5 May 1892, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Catholic Record, 19 October 1893, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Catholic Record, 9 August 1894, 4.

<sup>39</sup> The years 1893 to 1895 saw the fallout from the "Panama scandal" and the beginnings of the "Dreyfus Affair" in France; each provided fuel for the anti-Semitism burgeoning in Europe at the time shown in the anti-clerical legislation of the French government in the early 1880s and again from 1900-1906. These "laic" laws had as their purpose to punish the Catholic Church for its political anti-Republic actions and to reduce--if possible, destroy--the Church's influence in education both private and public: well over 10,000 Catholic schools, charitable institutions, and hospitals were closed as well as over a hundred religious orders. In 1904, the year France broke diplomatic relations with the Holy See, the right to teach was denied all of the Church's religious congregations and tens of thousands of the clergy and religious became emigres. Gagnon, France Since 1789, 267.

<sup>40</sup> Catholic Record, 5 January 1893, 4. The reference is to the "Panama" scandal in 1892, three years after the bankruptcy of France's effort to build the canal linking the Mediterranean with South Asia. The chief publicists, fundraisers, and bagmen of the failed project were Dr. Cornelius Herz and Jacques de Reinach, both Jews; the latter committed suicide, Herz escaped punishment by fleeing to England.

<sup>41</sup> Alexander Sedgwick, The Third Republic, 1870-1914 (Thomas Y. Crowell Company: New York, 1968), chs. 3, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Catholic Record, 19 Jan 1893, 4.

In 1893 Chomel devoted a long editorial to the views of the new Catholic archbishop of Olmutz, Germany, named Kohn [Cohen?], whose Jewish grandparents had converted to Catholicism and whose parents were peasants. Readers of the Catholic Record learned, according to Archbishop Kohn, that had Christians followed the Catholic Church's regulations they "would not [now] groan under the yoke of the Jews." Condemning anti-Semitism on one hand, on the other the archbishop maintained that the old rules governing relations between Christians and Jews in Europe should be reinstated: Christians, under pain of excommunication, ought not live or be servants in Jewish households, nor serve as wet-nurses, nor use Jewish doctors or medicines prescribed by Jews. They should never raise Jews to positions of power over Christians, nor eat with Jews, nor assist in Jewish marriages or feasts. Chomel went further: The French Revolution (the first to lift legal disabilities from Europe's Jews) had brought persecution to the Church so that "Today France is in the hands of the Jews." Moreover, circumstances of the day were highly favorable to "the ambition and greediness of the Jewish race." They have corrupted France's government and want to rule the world. "Jews," Chomel warned, "have an open field in [America], and if they predominate anywhere, it is certain they will do so here."<sup>43</sup>

When Russia's pogroms against the Jews found "everybody" showing concern for them, asked Chomel, "How would it do to bestow a little of that sympathy on American Catholics who are now passing through the crucible of persecution" from the American Protective Association?<sup>44</sup> When Tsar Alexander III died later that year Chomel expressed disgust at the "rejoicings and exultations of the Jews." Yes, Jews were brutally driven out of Russia, had lost property, and experienced untold sufferings; alas, the innocent suffered with the guilty. But to the editor's mind the Tsar "was trying to free his people from the rapacity of Jewish usury. . . . Centuries of oppression have made the Jewish race meek, deceitful, humble, submissive. But give the Jew a chance and at once his velvet hand show its claws." As to the historic legal disabilities that Christians had placed upon the Jews, they testified to the superiority of the Jewish people for in "open competition their rivals will go down in defeat." Non-Jews "need protection against the capacity of Jews to acquire property. The Jewish aspiration of controlling the world by the acquisition of money is in a fair way of realization."<sup>45</sup>

Another long editorial, "The Jewish Question," summer 1895, blamed Jews and Freemasons for France's secular *laic* laws which attacked the Catholic schools. Because Jews were a distinct race that did not belong to the nations in which they reside, the government of France, a "Judaico-Freemasonic republic," was not French at all. Jews "dream of universal power, and they actually dominate the world in

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<sup>43</sup> Catholic Record, 2 February 1893, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Catholic Record, 10 May 1894, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Catholic Record, 8 November 1894, 4.

a financial way.” How were so few able to succeed so well? God had chosen them; they were “a wonderful people,” but they are deicides. Only Catholicism can meet Judaism’s assaults and the “Jewish Question” solved when they are converted by the Church. After all, the whole Jewish people did not share in deicide; there were Jews at the foot of the cross, too. In the United States and England as yet there was no Jewish Question, “probably due to a strong anti-Semitic feeling among English-speaking people”; in France, however, they are “a constant threat to Christian society.”<sup>46</sup> (Quite a feat for a people numbering only 80,000 at the time.)

In the absence of letters to the editor, how Chomel’s anti-Semitic views were received by his readers are not discoverable, but they were widely shared in Europe and America. The latter decades of the nineteenth century were the seedtime of modern anti-Semitism, and in the few short years of Chomel’s editorship the diocesan paper touched on most of Nazism’s racial themes.

In 1899 the Catholic Record went out of existence, its subscribers given to the Catholic Columbian of Columbus, Ohio, now designated the Catholic Columbian Record. A saddened Alexander Chomel had to admit that despite his best efforts, lack of capital (“and money is the nerve of business as well as war”), falling collections, “and now come old age and sickness to load the last straw on my back. I go out of the Record as light in purse as I came in . . . . The parting is sad to me, for my heart was in the work.” He found some solace in that the Catholic Columbian Record would have an Indiana department.<sup>47</sup>

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Joseph Patrick O’Mahony (Oh **MA** hoe nee) was the bridge that linked the Indiana department of the Ohio weekly, the Columbian Catholic, to a diocesan newspaper published in Indianapolis. Born 14 March 1870, a native of Tralee, like McShee, he was a Kerryman. A graduate of Blackrock College, Dublin, 1889, O’Mahony came to the United States in 1890. As an Irish-born English speaker, journalism—communicating with the larger society—beckoned. Journalism, a partisan and combative profession, and somewhat raffish, being articulate, quick thinking, and gregarious counted as virtues--traits often said to be found in Irishmen. His career began at the Philadelphia Ledger. Visiting Indianapolis, October 1890, the guest of a Sullivan cousin (his mother, Mary, was an O’Sullivan), he joined the Indianapolis Sentinel as a reporter, a telegraph operator for the Evansville Courier for two years, and still later a second stint at the Sentinel as a political editor (1903). Other stops included the Detroit Tribune; Baltimore Sun war correspondent in the Spanish-American War (1897, 1898); Baltimore

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<sup>46</sup> Catholic Record, 20 June 1895, 4. The editorial struck all the most prominent points characteristic of French anti-Semitism. Gagnon, France Since 1789, 260.

<sup>47</sup> Catholic Record, 19 October 1899, 4, the last issue.

American (1899); Washington Post (1900) covering the state, war, and navy departments; and the Philadelphia Record (1901). He married Bridget M. Leane at St. John in Indiananapolis, 17 August 1893, and became a citizen at Baltimore, in 1895. From 1904 to 1907 O'Mahony worked as a traveling agent for State Home Life Insurance Company and then as their general agent for Indiana,<sup>48</sup> before taking over the management of the Indiana edition of the Catholic Columbian Record.

In 1910, with money from five Irish-Catholic Indianapolis businessmen (all members of the Knights of Columbus and the Young Men's Institute), O'Mahony went into competition with his former employer. Incorporated as the Indiana Catholic Printing and Publishing Company, capitalized at \$10,000, the first issue of the Indiana Catholic appeared 4 February 1910. "A home journal devoted to the interests of the Catholic clergy and laity," as "Indiana's official and only Catholic Weekly Newspaper," it aimed "to earn the esteem of its readers as a defender of the Faith and an exponent of Catholic opinion on all public matters."<sup>49</sup> As the editor-founder of the diocesan paper, O'Mahony enjoyed a certain prestige and standing, a man to be reckoned with, and enough of a presence in newspaper circles to be in on the founding of the Catholic Press Association, 1911. Age forty, distinguished looking, grey-haired, thin, long-headed and except for a full mustache clean-shaven, O'Mahony was in his prime.<sup>50</sup>

Near bankruptcy in 1913, the newspaper was saved when Paul Martin, a recent University of Notre Dame graduate was hired, bringing with him \$5,000 into the business. (The money came from the Martin's Protestant grandfather; given O'Mahony's habitual disparagement of the separated brethren, this was high comedy.) When his paper absorbed the Catholic Columbian Record in March 1915, it became the Indiana Catholic and Record (IC&R). O'Mahony took pride in its success as a business proposition. Claiming to reach over three-quarters of the Catholic homes in Indianapolis, wholly owned by laymen ("it is edited, printed, published and financed by Indianapolis men"), it received no financial support from the

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<sup>48</sup> The details of Mahony's newspaper career are summarized in the obituary he prepared for the Indiana Catholic and Record, 8 March 1935, 1, and the Indianapolis Star, 5 March 1935, 1, 3. His physical description is based on the Star's obituary photograph. The Criterion's review of the history (8 October 2010, 9) has the Indiana Catholic purchasing a small German newspaper in Evansville, in 1911, the name becoming The Indiana Catholic and Sternbanner. In 1915, when it bought the subscriber list of the Catholic Columbian Record, it became the Indiana Catholic and Record.

<sup>49</sup> The officers were: president, Michael F. Gill, treasurer, Charles L. Barry, secretary, C. J. Lenaghan. Star, 4 February 1910, 3. Its stationery later carried the date of its founding as February 1, 1910, consolidated with "Catholic Columbian Record," March 1, 1915. Published each Friday by Indiana Catholic Printing and Publishing Company, 223-225 North New Jersey Street, Printcraft Building, tel. Riley 5922."

<sup>50</sup> O'Mahony's physical description is based on the Star's obituary photograph, Indianapolis Star, 5 March 1935, 3.

Church.<sup>51</sup> Ten years after founding, O'Mahony claimed for the IC&R the highest circulation of any diocesan paper in the U.S., save one.<sup>52</sup> While every issue included a statement of support from bishops Joseph Chartrand and Joseph Alerding and the announcement "Official Organ of the Dioceses of Indianapolis and Fort Wayne," the prelates seem to have exercised no influence over the paper. The newspaper's motto, *veritas omnia vincit* (truth conquers all), expressed the Church's conviction that its possession of the truth ensured its ultimate triumph.

O'Mahony was not only an experienced newspaperman but also "well known in fraternal circles . . ."<sup>53</sup> Most of his memberships were Irish-related: besides the Knights of Columbus, he was an active member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a founder of the Emmett Club (after Robert Emmett, the Irish patriot and martyr of the early nineteenth century),<sup>54</sup> and in 1893 founder of the first John Barry Club (b. County Wexford, 1745) to promote the commodore's claim to the title, "father of the American Navy." (His campaign succeeded: Congress voted \$50,000 to erect a monument to Barry in Washington, D.C., which was dedicated by President Woodrow Wilson and the secretary of the Navy, 16 May 1914.)<sup>55</sup> O'Mahony's ethnic nationalism extended to actively working for Ireland's independence: He had come to America carrying a coded letter for John Devoy, another Irish-born newspaperman and the head of the *Clan na Gael*, the Irish Republican Brotherhood's fundraising arm in the United States. The Clan and the IRB were dedicated to the liberation of Ireland through force. At Devoy's death in 1928, O'Mahony revealed

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<sup>51</sup> Indiana Catholic, 4 September 1914, 5; White, "Klan," 5-7.

<sup>52</sup> Fr. John F. Noll of Ft. Wayne founded the weekly Our Sunday Visitor in 1912; it may have been the newspaper O'Mahony referred to as having a larger circulation than the IC&R.

<sup>53</sup> Indianapolis Star, 4 February 1910, 3. O'Mahony was in on the founding of the Catholic Press Association the next June 1911.

<sup>54</sup> Another in a long line of Protestant-Irish patriots, in 1803, Emmett intended an attack on Dublin Castle, the center of English government in Ireland, to spark an uprising. His efforts ended as a mere affray on a Dublin street, a fiasco. His words in the dock, however, proved memorable, among them: "Let no man write my epitaph; . . . When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then, and not till then, let my epitaph be written." He was hanged, his body cut down, and his head cut off and displayed to the crowd.

<sup>55</sup> Indiana Catholic and Record, 16 October 1925, 4. The title of "father of the American navy" has been contended between Barry and John Paul Jones. As late as 1959 the AOH complained of a movie depicting Jones as holding the title. IC&R, 15 May 1959, 7. President Wilson's dedication of the Barry monument did him little good among the Irish when he failed to support Ireland's independence after the Great War. Devoy, Post Bag, vol. 2, 402.

that he had known Devoy “intimately” for thirty years and had been associated with him in every phase of the independence movement.<sup>56</sup>

After the 1916 Easter Rising, in the competition for American money that developed between the Cohalan-Devoy’s Friends of Irish Freedom (FOIF) and Eamon de Valera (who was touring the states to raise funds), O’Mahony allied with Cohalan-Devoy, and was listed, “Mr. O’Mahoney” [sic] as subscribing \$25,000 “for Indiana,” at the Irish race convention in Philadelphia.<sup>57</sup> The battle between the Cohalan faction and De Valera continued at the 1920 Republican convention in Chicago over inclusion of an Irish plank in the platform. (As one of five members of the Cohalan’s committee, O’Mahony’s national stature in Irish affairs is clear.) Cohalan’s “plank” would recognize the Irish people’s “right to determine freely, without dictation from the outside their own governmental institutions and the international relations with other states and people”; De Valera’s resolution wanted “full, formal, and official recognition” of “the elected government of the Republic of Ireland . . . .” While the resolutions committee defeated De Valera’s plank 12 to 1 and adopted Cohalan’s 7 to 6, thanks to the feud, no mention of Ireland appeared in the Republican platform.<sup>58</sup>

Unlike his contemporary, Vicar-general, Msgr. Francis H. Gavisk, 1918-1932, a son of Irish immigrants who labored in Indianapolis to establish ties with the city’s non-Catholics, O’Mahony was a Hibernian triumphalist who emphasized the differences between Catholics and all others, remembered old wounds, and delighted in pricking Protestant sensibilities. He scorned their political efforts, especially those of the Church Federation of Indianapolis. For example, he interpreted Protestant efforts to close theaters on Sunday as a scheme to fill their “empty” churches: “The Church Federation reformers should devote their attention to bringing their people to church, and there and then giving them some Christian instruction--if they have it to give,” was a typical O’Mahony screed.<sup>59</sup> News that city Methodists had

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<sup>56</sup> Indiana Catholic and Record, 12 October 1928, 4. Devoy’s published correspondence, Devoy’s Post Bag, does not contain any correspondence of O’Mahony’s, and in the absence of any papers of the latter it is impossible to gauge what O’Mahony did for Ireland’s independence. His claim of intimate association with Devoy is likely to be true since there would be plenty of other Irishmen around in 1928 to deny it if false; O’Mahony was almost certainly a member of the Clan na Gael. See chapter on Chatard and Secret Societies for more discussion of the Clan and the IRB.

<sup>57</sup> Katharine O’Doherty, Assignment: America. De Valera’s Mission to the United States (De Tanko Publishing, Inc., New York, 1957), 29.

<sup>58</sup> Patrick McCartan, With de Valera in America (New York: Brentano, 1932); Dave Hannigan, De Valera in America (Palgrave MacMillan: 2011), 155.

<sup>59</sup> “Is the City Lawless?” Indiana Catholic, 6 June 1913, 4; “Stand Up for Indianapolis and Indiana,” 14 October 1913, 4, and White Mss. Part 3 of 3. See also “Good and Bad Motion Pictures,” Indiana Catholic and Record, 31 January 1919, 4.

allocated \$15,000 for a new mission to evangelize Italians, found him lamenting the neglect of the “Millions of [Methodists] who don’t go to church [and] need care.”<sup>60</sup> A headline in a local newspaper, “Protestant Churches to become social centers” brought the comment, “Well, what else have they ever been?”<sup>61</sup> He was quick to headline news of slumps in Protestant numbers--“Ministers Lament in Decline of Religion” and “Protestant Failure Admitted in Indiana.”<sup>62</sup> O’Mahony did not defend the saloon, but he believed prohibition had been passed into law by legislators “intimidated” by [Protestant] “fanatics”; it would not work, and predicted its repeal within eight or ten years.<sup>63</sup> While he regularly mocked Protestantism, the “fair-minded” among them--those who had a good word for Catholics--were duly noted in his newspaper.

Beyond the domestic religious wars, some of O’Mahony’s opinions on other matters showed plenty of scope: Irish affairs at home and abroad were followed closely as were the doings of the Vatican. Favorite targets were socialism wherever espied, the anti-clerical government in Mexico, and of course England for its oppression of Ireland. There was extensive coverage of the outrages perpetrated on the Irish in the early 1920s by the “Black and Tans.”<sup>64</sup> In his hatred for all things British he took real delight in publishing that part of Cecil Rhodes’ will which looked for the future British empire to include all of “Africa, the Holy land, the Valley of the Euphrates, . . . the whole of South America, . . . the seaboard of China and Japan, [and] the ultimate recovery of the United States of America as an integral part of the British Empire.”<sup>65</sup> The Ku Klux Klan was a favorite and frequent target, likewise the Versailles Treaty, the League of Nations, and the World Court. O’Mahony was anti-Masonic, anti-Sacco-Vanzetti, and anti-Soviet. He didn’t like the American Civil Liberties Union, radicals, anarchists, “Bolshevists,” or U.S. Senator Thomas Heflin of Alabama (an anti-Catholic bigot of national renown). The local press would be thumped for

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<sup>60</sup> IC&R, 8 Dec 1916. See James Divita, Holy Rosary [[needs cite]]

<sup>61</sup> Indiana Catholic and Record, 28 March 1914, 4.

<sup>62</sup> Indiana Catholic and Record, 27 February 1920, 4; 21 November 1919, 4.

<sup>63</sup> Indiana Catholic and Record, “Prohibition,” 17 January 1919, 4. Sadly, in later yers he became an alcoholic.

<sup>64</sup> Denied promised Home Rule, the IRA waged war against the English authorities. “Black and tans” referred to the mismatched uniforms of khaki and dark green worn by the ex-servicemen England sent to put down the guerilla war. The Irish, like my parents, claimed that the black and tans were recruited from the sweepings of English prisons. See the IC&R, 28 January 1921, 4, for Detroit Bishop Michael J. Gallagher denunciation of the U.S. State Department for deporting Donald O’Callaghan, the Lord Mayor of Cork. O’Callaghan’s predecessor, Terrence McSwiney, had famously died in Brixton prison on hunger strike a short while before; see 11 March 1921, for Msgr. Gavisk’s letter to the Indianapolis News.

<sup>65</sup> IC&R, 13 December 1929, 4.

perceived slurs on the Church; his attacks on the Indianapolis Times (“one of the most socialistic papers in America”) was wide-ranging: according to O’Mahony it was anti-religious, pro-birth control, and the serial fiction it published bordered on the “obscene.” In supporting the cancellation of Europe’s war debts owed the United States, the Indianapolis Times was also “un-American.” In short, Catholics should not take the paper.<sup>66</sup> Naturally, O’Mahony’s IC&R lauded Al Smith, the Catholic parties in Germany and Austria, the influence of the Church in Ireland, the Knights of Columbus, the pope, and Mayor Lew Shank and Attorney-general Arthur L. Gilliom (both foes of the Ku Klux Klan).

In the newspaper business questions about bias inevitably arise. For the ideological press there is the matter of the “party line”; for the secular, commercial press it’s what the publisher wants, which comes down to “selling a lot of newspapers.” In the case of the Catholic press, it has to do with the relationship between the editor and the diocesan bishop concerned, and the latter’s view of the independence proper to the former. Francis Satolli, soon after becoming the first apostolic delegate to the United States provided an authoritative view in 1893: a priest-editor in Colorado was engaged in a dispute with his bishop. Satolli ruled that it was not enough to be in accord with all the doctrines of the Church; also required was “uniform respect, deference, and submission to the Bishops, but especially to one’s own [bishop], for it is to them that the Holy Ghost has committed the government of the Church.”<sup>67</sup> Having in O’Mahony no need to ride herd on an editor given to unorthodoxy, Bishop Joseph Chartrand took a commonsensical view: the Church exercised full authority on doctrine and faith and morals; on other matters Catholic editors “are at liberty to express their own views” and he praised the ten year old Indiana Catholic and Record for having “nobly acquitted itself in every way.”<sup>68</sup> When the Catholic Press Association convened in the city, February 1922, Chartrand told the delegates that it was “indispensable that religion should use this modern vehicle of intelligence to spread the truth, to check and to crush that which is false and immoral . . . .” As for editorial independence, while “we might not always agree with the opinions . . . expressed in its columns,” so long as faith and morals were not attacked, “entire freedom of expression ought to be granted to editors. In largeness of mind we should be able to discriminate between essentials and mere personal opinion.”<sup>69</sup> In a pastoral letter a year later Chartrand reiterated: “To be broad-minded enough to know that editors should be left free, and, that as long as faith and morals are not at stake, their personal opinions may be taken for what they are worth, is surely not an unreasonable favor to be expected of the reader.”<sup>70</sup> In their own 1922 pastoral the American bishops

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<sup>66</sup> IC&R, 3 September 1926, 4.

<sup>67</sup> Catholic Record, 7 September 1893, 4.

<sup>68</sup> IC&R, 17 September 1920, 1.

<sup>69</sup> 19 February 1922, pastoral letter, Chartrand papers, Box 18, Catholic Archives.

<sup>70</sup> 28 January 1923, pastoral letter, Box 18, Catholic Archives.

compared a Catholic editor to “a teacher, with largest opportunity to instruct, to criticize, to fashion opinions and to direct movements.” To this O’Mahony added that such an editor speaks to far greater numbers than can be reached in the largest church ever built.<sup>71</sup>

In O’Mahony, Chartrand had an editor who never gave trouble over questions of morals or doctrine, nor any sign that he was troubled by the Church’s stand on either. Regarding divorce, for example, O’Mahony shared the hierarchy’s loathing and harped again and again against it. Shocked that the federal census showed that one in twelve American marriages failed (one in ten, if you eliminated Catholic marriages from the equation), O’Mahony showed his Irish Jansenist side in wanting the divorced ostracized; as for the divorced remarrying, it was “animalistic!”<sup>72</sup> His anger at divorce was nothing compared to his disgust for birth control.

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Birth control has been practiced since time immemorial and was widely used in France from the early 1800s (sent in the mail, condoms came to be called “French letters”), and in the rest of Europe and America from the late nineteenth century at the latest. Infant mortality in Europe was high; medical ignorance, food shortages, and poor nutrition meant that it took seven pregnancies to produce two adults, at a time when children from a young age were an agricultural asset. By the late 1800s lower mortality and greater urbanization reversed the pattern and more recourse to contraception followed. The practice was common enough in the United States to inspire the federal “Comstock Law” of 1873 (Anthony Comstock, 1844-1915, the nation’s semi-official crusader-moralist), banning pornography and the dissemination of objects or information for the prevention of conception. By 1914 twenty-two states had enacted “little” Comstock laws.<sup>73</sup>

For the Church, anything having to do with sex is never *parvitas materiae* (a small or slight matter). Sex is to be limited always to married partners and has as its primary end procreation; artificial means that “frustrate nature” are not permitted, but rather every conjugal sexual act to be licit must be open to the possibility of creating new life. There was neither dissent from--nor controversy among--Catholic moral theologians about the teaching, yet the Church was reluctant to discuss birth control in

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<sup>71</sup> IC&R, 3 February 1922, 4.

<sup>72</sup> Catholic Columbian Record, “The Horrors of Divorce,” 4 December 1908, 4. Note also “Indiana’s Disgrace,” Indiana Catholic, 27 April 1910, 4; “Divorce Figures a Disgrace to Indiana,” Indiana Catholic and Record, 11 July 1919, 4; “Alimony,” Indiana Catholic and Record, 10 March 1916, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Jill Lapore, “Birthright,” The New Yorker magazine (November 14, 2011, 44-55).

public. Pope Leo XIII's encyclical on marriage, *Arcanum divinae sapientiae*, 10 February 1880, made no mention of it, and although the first draft of *Rerum Novarum*, 1891, denounced contraception as a "detestable act" and called upon the pope to stop its growth in Catholic countries the reference was removed ("Is it appropriate to remark on such depravity?"). It has been said that before the 31 December 1930 encyclical *Casti connubii* (Chaste Marriage) the clergy were told not to "trouble" the laity's conscience on the matter.<sup>74</sup>

The chief challenger to "Comstockery" and the Catholic Church was Margaret Sanger, one of eleven children born of a devout Catholic mother and a freethinking, outspoken, atheist father.<sup>75</sup> Sanger came to family limitation having observed the effects of her mother's frequent pregnancies, the breakdown in health that excessive childbearing caused, and the botched abortions she had seen as a visiting nurse in New York City. Influenced by the radical socialists, Sanger saw contraception as a way to enrich women's sexual experience and deny exploitive capitalists an abundant and docile workforce. In 1912 and 1913 she wrote "What Every Girl Should Know," for The Call, a socialist daily. In 1914, she began publishing "The Woman Rebel," an eight-page feminist monthly, coining the term "birth control." Six of seven issues were declared obscene and suppressed. Indicted, she fled to Europe, returning in 1915 after the charges were dropped (prosecutors having judged a jury trial would aid her cause).

Now famous, Sanger spent much of 1916 traveling the country giving her birth control lecture over a hundred times, "always before packed and enthusiastic crowds . . . ."<sup>76</sup> She was certainly well received in Indianapolis in May 1916 at the Claypool Hotel:<sup>77</sup> The topic, her notoriety, and her picture on page one of The Indianapolis Star the day before her lecture brought a crowd--overwhelmingly women--that overflowed the aisles and had people sitting on the floor or standing in every available space. According to Sanger, 250,000 abortions were performed annually in the U.S., with 60,000 mothers dying during the procedure, and a further 300,000 infants dying of poverty and neglect. Wealthy women already

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<sup>74</sup> Greeley, Catholic Myth, 96.

<sup>75</sup> Her Irish immigrant father, Michael Hennessy Higgins, a stone mason, sticking a sharp stick in the eye of the Church, named a son "Henry George McGlynn Higgins," after Henry George, whose book was placed on the Index, and George's champion, Fr. Edwin McGlynn, a thorn and a cross to his archbishop, New York's Michael Corrigan.

<sup>76</sup> Ellen Chesler, Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America (Simon and Shuster: New York, 1992), 141.

<sup>77</sup> Sanger's lecture came at the same time as the national convention on charities and corrections was held in the city, a circumstance that led many to mistakenly assume that Sanger's lecture was part of the program for the charities convention! Beyond confusion, it involved some embarrassment for Msgr. Gavisk, the vicar general, who, as president of the National Conference on Charities and Corrections, presided over the convention.

knew about birth control; working women did not have this knowledge and wanted and needed it. That her message was agreeable to the great majority of the audience could not be doubted. The first question came from a Catholic physician, Dr. Hannah M. Graham, who asked where the country would be if Lincoln's mother had chosen birth control and recited the scriptural passage, "Suffer the little children . . ." This was "hooted, hissed and ridiculed."<sup>78</sup> Hundreds of women immediately agreed to form a local birth control league with nearly 200 the following evening at the English Hotel to begin the work. Sanger, who was present, remarked that she had "never been accorded such fine treatment as I have been here in Indianapolis."<sup>79</sup>

O'Mahony was outraged: "Disgrace, Yes, Worse." Never mentioning Sanger by name, the Indiana Catholic and Record termed the lecture a "message of Cain." While the speaker deplored the quarter million abortions, the editor wondered at her lack of shock at the millions of children lost to birth control "without resource to surgery." Asserting that ensoulment takes place at the moment of conception, "Those who practice this so-called 'birth control' are murderers in the same degree as those who practice abortion a few months or weeks before birth . . . or those who take the life of an infant after it has been born."<sup>80</sup>

On 16 October 1916, on Amboy Street in Brooklyn, Sanger opened the first family limitation clinic.<sup>81</sup> Its staff of three, Sanger, 37, and mother of three, her sister, Ethyl Brynne, a nurse, and a receptionist fluent in Yiddish saw the line stretch down the street and around the block. The police closed it down nine days later. Found guilty of violating the Comstock Law Sanger served thirty days in jail. The sentence and Sanger's going on hunger strike publicized the movement even more.

Its growing acceptance and a new frankness in discussing matters previously regarded as unsuitable for public mention meant that birth control became more openly discussed. By 1920 effective and inexpensive methods of contraception were available in the United States. No longer "bohemian," in Indiana and elsewhere contraception was "very common among the middle class, less so among the

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<sup>78</sup> Star, 16 May 1916, 5.

<sup>79</sup>38. Star, 17 May 1916, 5; "Wherever [Sanger] spoke, she left a trail of ad hoc advocacy organizations behind her, . . ." Chesler, Woman of Valor, 141.

<sup>80</sup> Indiana Catholic and Record, 19 May 1916, 4. Theodore Roosevelt equated the practice with "race death: a sin for which there is not atonement," another reason for O'Mahony to like him. Robert Divine, et. al., America Past and Present, vol. II (New York, 1999), 714.

<sup>81</sup> Organizing the American Birth Control League in 1921, its membership "tended to be well-to-do native white Protestant Republican women." John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, eds. Dictionary of American Biography, Supplement Eight (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1988), 567, 568.

working class.”<sup>82</sup> The Great Depression of the 1930s spread the practice greatly with “extensive support” from doctors.<sup>83</sup> Eleanor Roosevelt was typical of upper class Protestant women who supported the distribution of birth control information by physicians. She attracted national attention as chairwoman of the legislative committee of New York’s Women’s City Club when it came out in favor of such a policy in 1928. Eleanor Roosevelt’s understanding that the issue was a delicate one did not keep her from quietly joining the board of the American Birth Control League that year (she would become a life-long member) nor from speaking at a dinner honoring Margaret Sanger, in 1931. Normally, Mrs. Roosevelt avoided public discussion of birth control after her husband’s election in 1932, but sent money anonymously to a clinic in Puerto Rico. In 1940 the The Indiana Catholic and Record carried the news of a press conference at which she supported the “planning of children,” and revealed her donations to a New York birth control clinic. She met privately with Sanger that year in the White House and at Hyde Park, the family’s upstate New York home. Visiting the Washington, D.C. health department in 1940, Mrs. Roosevelt was told that the department could not legally maintain a birth control clinic.<sup>84</sup> While she refused to accept an award in 1942 for her birth control efforts, in July 1944 she spoke favorably of family planning in her Ladies Home Journal column and after her husband’s death in April 1945 lent her name to international family planning efforts.<sup>85</sup> The IC&R took great exception to her statement in March 1945 that families could be too large for parents to feed.<sup>86</sup>

A cradle Catholic, Margaret Sanger knew that the Church would be the chief enemy of family limitation. Moral theologian and social reformer Fr. John A. Ryan quickly accepted combat: While birth control was a “new subject,” wrote Ryan in a 1916 journal article, it was one on which there was “no possibility of a difference of opinion.”<sup>87</sup> The bishops in their September 1919 social justice pastoral saw true idealism as one that “that sees in marriage the divinely appointed plan for cooperating with the

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<sup>82</sup> Madison, Tradition and Change, 392, based on the Lynds’ famous study of Muncie, Indiana (Middletown: A Study in American Culture (Harcourt, Brace and World: New York, 1929), 123-127. See also Tentler, Detroit, 479.

<sup>83</sup> Madison, Tradition and Change, 340.

<sup>84</sup> IC&R, 26 January 1940, 2. Surprisingly, there was no editorial response to this news from the priests who had edited the IC&R since 1933; O’Mahony would have.

<sup>86</sup> Criterion, 9 March 1940, 1, 2.

<sup>87</sup> “Family Limitation,” American Ecclesiastical Review 54 (1916), 684-696, cited in Encyclopedia of American Catholic History, 44.

Creator in perpetuating the race . . . The selfishness that leads to race suicide with or without the pretext of bettering the species, is, in God's sight, "a detestable thing."<sup>88</sup>

O'Mahony took comfort that although the size of the average American family had declined in the previous fifty years, especially among the old settlers (from five to just under four children), the new immigrants were more fruitful. To him this was evidence that the Poles, Italians, Jews, and Russians "will not stand for the rotten gospel of birth control."<sup>89</sup> From time to time the Indiana Catholic and Record would denounce the practice<sup>90</sup> and run news items such as: President Theodore Roosevelt's order to federal officials in Puerto Rico to desist from "teaching Birth Control";<sup>91</sup> the claim of a London doctor, formerly a professor at Royal College of Surgeons, that "prevention of motherhood" was "a prevalent cause of cancer in women." If women would only revert to the "habits of primitive races,"--maternity at twenty and breastfeeding, it would bring down cancers in reproductive and digestive systems<sup>92</sup>; and the judge who held that most divorces happened to childless couples or those with only one or two children. For the IC&R's editor this was proof that children bring harmony to a marriage. In any case, "God will punish."<sup>93</sup> Yet O'Mahony treated birth control with great reluctance because he believed it a subject for the confessional or a priest conducting a parish mission from the pulpit,<sup>94</sup> not spread in the pages of a newspaper, let alone a diocesan one. Among his fellow Irish the subject was unmentionable not from mere prudery, he explained, but in respect for the innocent pure and good. "But perhaps we were old-fashioned in our Celtic conception of this matter."<sup>95</sup> A year later found O'Mahony lamenting a proposed Washington state law to legalize the sale of contraceptives to married couples: "Public decency will be outraged by discussions of something that should not be so much as even mentioned among Christians." Morals will be injured, everyone will have heard it discussed!<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Pastoral Letters of the . . . Catholic Bishops, vol. I, 1792-1940 (National Conference of Catholic Bishops: Washington, D.C., 1984), 310.

<sup>89</sup> IC&R, 2 December 1921, 4.

<sup>90</sup> IC&R, 3 September 1926; 11 November 1932.

<sup>91</sup> McGreevey, Catholics and American Freedom, 160.

<sup>92</sup> IC&R, 25 December 1925, 2.

<sup>93</sup> IC&R, 25 September 1931, 4.

<sup>94</sup> A parish mission were evening retreats segregated by gender conducted usually by religious order priests, such as the Passionists, to rouse the piety and renew and inspire adults.

<sup>95</sup> IC&R, 27 March 1931, 4.

<sup>96</sup> IC&R, 11 March 1932, 4, and again in 20 October 1933, 4, the editor noted his "extreme reluctance" even to talk about birth control. Still, the IC&R resisted the trend: Reticence reached depths never before plumbed when the IC&R

Irish prudery was a large part of O'Mahony's difficulties in sailing between his desire for reticence and his duty to inform the reader. As the Irish novelist John McGahern (1934-2006) explained in his memoir, thanks to the Church's teaching, many Irish people at the time and even much later married without any knowledge of sex or of the person they were marrying. "The men generally married for sex. There was no other way to have it." The result was a large family in a short time. Seeing the consequences, some determined not to marry and many more could not afford to wed. Long decades under English occupation and the lack of primogeniture meant that landholdings became too small to support a family or having to wait years to inherit. Thus, the ideal was the celibate priest: "The love of God was greater than the love of man or woman; the sexual was seen as sin-infected and unclean." As late as the 1940s in rural Ireland, just as Muslims and Hassidic Jews today, males and females sat on different sides of the Church for Mass. As an altar boy McGahern took part in many "churchings," the practice that women who had recently given birth came to the altar rail of the empty church after Mass "to be cleansed and re-admitted into the full body of the faithful."<sup>97</sup>

Beginning about 1910 articles on birth control and divorce appeared and references to "prostitution" and other words previously avoided came more and more into common use, as well as discussions of the works of Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis.<sup>98</sup> By the end of the 1920s nearly "everyone" had "heard contraception discussed," thanks in part to the Church of England's 1908 and 1920 Lambeth Conferences that debated contraception. While refusing to countenance the practice in those years, in 1930, by a vote of 193-67, the Anglican Church permitted married couples to use artificial methods to limit births so long as their motives did not arise from "selfishness, luxury, or mere convenience." In the U.S. the next March, the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) approved of contraception as "valid and moral." Soon the Universalists, Unitarians, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis followed the Federal Council in favoring "careful and restrained" use of birth control by married couples.<sup>99</sup> To the Jesuit weekly magazine America the decision, in its "pitiful and craven surrender to the loose sex morality of the age," was a "signal and melancholy proof that Protestantism in this country has abandoned all attempts to function as a religious and moral force."<sup>100</sup> The presidents of the Lutheran Church in America and the American Medical Association also condemned the Federal Council's decision. In its own condemnation of the FCC, the IC&R's issue for 27 March 1931 contained

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criticized an article supporting birth control, but neither named the magazine nor the author, yet admonishing its readers not to encourage anyone to read it? IC&R, 14 June 1940, 1, 2.

<sup>97</sup> McGahern, A Memoir, 85, 56, 57.

<sup>98</sup> Leider, Becoming Mae West, 49

<sup>99</sup> McGreevey, Catholics and American Freedom, 161.

<sup>100</sup> "A National Scandal," America (4 April 1931), 614, 615. The article quoted the presidents of the Lutheran Church in America and the American Medical Association who also condemned the FCC's decision.

more on birth control than it had over the previous 21 years. The following week O'Mahony, recalling Theodore Roosevelt's opposition to birth control, questioned President Herbert Hoover's silence.<sup>101</sup>

The papal response to birth control was the wide-ranging encyclical, *Casti connubii* ("Of Chaste Marriage"), 31 December 1930. While nuanced, Pius XI seemed to cede no ground: Since the conjugal act is "destined by nature primarily" to beget children, to frustrate it "is shameful and intrinsically vicious." No reason, "however grave," neither the health of the mother or extreme poverty, can make it moral. Strengthened by God's grace, whatever the difficulties, no marriage need have resort to birth control, for "God does not ask the impossible." Priests were "admonished" not to lead the faithful into error in the confessional "by approval or by guilty silence," and reminded, too, that they would also have to render an account to God.<sup>102</sup> Sterilization and abortion were attacked as well, although the latter word was not used, rather "the taking of the life of the offspring hidden in the mother's womb."<sup>103</sup> Within the family (and while unsaid, of particular importance with regard to intimacy) the husband held "primacy," the wife a "ready subjection . . . and willing obedience" to her husband.<sup>104</sup>

Yet *Casti connubii* opened the door to change. A single line in a document of some 40 pages that Christian law permitted "virtuous continence" was widely read as approving the rhythm method when both spouses consented; moreover, the encyclical explicitly approved of conjugal sex post-menopause.<sup>105</sup> While the conjugal act is intrinsically tied to procreation, the unitive aspect is also licit. It is not against nature when, because of "natural reasons either of time [a woman's infertile period] or of certain defects [menopause and infertility] new life can not be brought forth." Secondary ends also exist—"the cultivation of mutual aid, and the quieting of concupiscence . . . so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved." (Actually, this had been the Church's view of the Sacred Penitentiary in 1853 and 1860, although some theologians did not agree.) *Casti connubii* began the shift toward putting the good of the unitive aspect of marriage on the same level as the procreative, though the former remained secondary to both procreation and the education of children. In October 1951, Pius XII in his "Address to the Italian Society of Midwives" reiterated the ban on contraception, but in the case of "serious reason" explicitly embraced the rhythm method. Still, until the Second Vatican Council, virginity and celibacy retained their traditional superior status. Vatican II saw the role of sexual expression as "the blending of life as a whole

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<sup>101</sup> IC&R, 27 March, 1931; 3 April 1931, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Seven Great Encyclicals, *Casti Connubii*, 92, 93.

<sup>103</sup> Seven Great Encyclicals (Paulist Press: Glen Rock, New Jersey, 1963) secs. 53, 56-58.

<sup>104</sup> *Casti Connubii*, sec. 26.

<sup>105</sup> Casti Connubii, sec. 53. The encyclical also spoke against eugenics and abortion.

and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof.”<sup>106</sup> Until the mid-1960s then, the hierarchy continued to insist that laity hold to the teaching, asking married couples to be “prophetic witnesses.” As a priest-historian has observed, “Prophetic witness is by definition not a mass movement.”<sup>107</sup> At the time, while private Catholic behavior did not always square with Church teaching, public lay dissent on birth control did not exist in the 1940s and 1950s. Who would admit to sinning mortally?

Nineteen-thirty also saw the discovery that fertility was limited to a few days in the menstrual cycle and that ovulation occurs 12 to 16 days before menstruation.<sup>108</sup> Independently, a researcher in Japan and in Austria published their findings. Leo J. Latz, M.D. of the Chicago-Loyola University Medical School soon championed the Ogino-Knaus method as disclosing “a rational, natural, and ethical means to space births and . . . regulate intelligently the number of children.” In 1932 Latz published The Rhythm of Sterility and Fertility in Women, the first use of the term “rhythm” in that context. Initially welcomed by the Church, it carried the “Ecclesiastical Approbation in the Archdiocese of Chicago.” The Jesuit who wrote the introduction enthused that Divine Providence had “come to the assistance of mankind . . . by unfolding the secrets of nature.” The new knowledge “shows us the way out of a difficulty, without compromise of principle.”<sup>109</sup> The book was a big seller--more than 200,000 copies by 1942; by 1950 it had gone through six revised editions, 22 printings, and had sold 300,000 copies. Latz published pamphlets for priests to give to couples and parishes gave the book as a Bingo prize. The IC&R carried an article from the Michigan Catholic detailing the new findings, in February 1933,<sup>110</sup> and a few months later Fr. John A. Ryan wrote approvingly of “The Moral Aspects of Periodical Continence” in the American Ecclesiastical Review. Judging rhythm comparable to intercourse during the sterile period of a pregnant or a menopausal woman, Fr. Ryan still condemned its use in the absence of a serious reason--grave

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<sup>106</sup> Thomas C. Fox, Sexuality and Catholicism (George Braziller: New York, 1995), 34-38. Fox regards this move as an historic shift. It opened the way at Vatican II to see conjugal sex as “the blending of life as a whole and the mutual interchange and sharing thereof.”

<sup>107</sup> McGreevey, Catholics and American Freedom, 232, 233. After nearly 70 years of telling priests not to unduly trouble penitents over artificial birth control, after 2000 the American bishops once again insisted that confessors not mitigate its intrinsic moral evil.

<sup>108</sup> The Ogino-Knaus theory: some of the Japanese findings were published as early as 1923; the Austrian’s work appeared in German medical journals in 1930.

<sup>109</sup> Chesler, Sanger, 322, 323. The full subtitle: “A discussion of the physiological, practical, and ethical aspects of the discovery of Dr. K. Ogino (Japan) and Prof. H. Knaus (Germany) regarding the periods when conception is impossible and when possible.”

<sup>110</sup> IC&R, 17 February 1933, 4.

danger to the mother's health or family destitution--and insisted on the subordination of sensual gratification to procreation.<sup>111</sup>

Fr. Ryan's reservations were a harbinger of the Church's more considered response. Despite the "all but the unanimous approval of [Protestant] ministers" and "church organizations . . . advocacy of limited birth control," for the IC&R "periodic continence" was one thing, artificial birth control remained another. As the paper's new editorial board of diocesan priests observed (replacing O'Mahony in October 1932), contraception "is like limited stealing, limited illegitimacy, limited murder, limited blasphemy."<sup>112</sup> Latz himself, a devout Catholic who set aside the profits of his book for Loyola University, was summarily fired from its medical faculty in August 1934. When, in May 1936, the YWCA adopted a resolution that physicians should provide birth control information, the Indiana Catholic and Record objected: birth control remained "a nasty subject," a "filthy pagan practice" indecent for women to even discuss.<sup>113</sup> Catholic journalists and clergy rallied to the pope. On the national level, Fr. Daniel A. Lord, S.J., in his pamphlet, "Speaking of Birth Control" (by 1946 in its 22nd printing and available in most parish church vestibules) called wives who use birth control "daughters of joy," that is to say, prostitutes.<sup>114</sup>

The influence of the Catholic Church, "suddenly marshaled in force and sound[ing] every possible alarm," succeeded in stopping legislation to lift the ban on birth control for more than a generation. With Catholic voters holding the balance of power in many urban congressional districts, many politicians, fearing political death, would not cross the hierarchy.<sup>115</sup> The American bishops, alarmed by a "menacing decline in the birth rate," weighed in with a pastoral against the promotion of the "godless, selfish, and inhuman propaganda of birth prevention." That the Great Depression provided economic justification for family limitation was dismissed as an argument for "a criminal marital life [begotten by the] new paganism of our day."<sup>116</sup> The Jesuit weekly America and the lay-edited Commonweal magazine outdid the bishops: For America, contraceptive intercourse was merely "mutual masturbation"; Commonweal claimed it for leading to sterility, frequent infections, cancer, and "neurological and psychological disorders."<sup>117</sup> In the four volume, standard work on moral theology used in Catholic seminaries, defending birth control was one of four general reasons why a book would be placed on the Index of Prohibited Books: "Books which

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<sup>111</sup> Burns, Notre Dame Story, 45, 46.

<sup>112</sup> IC&R, 11 November 1932, 4. Note, in October O'Mahony had been bought out of the IC&R.

<sup>113</sup> IC&R, 15 May 1936, 4.

<sup>114</sup> Blanchard, Catholic Power, 141.

<sup>115</sup> Emmanuel Cellar of Brooklyn, for example. Chesler, Sanger, 329, chapter 15.

<sup>116</sup> Bishops Pastoral, 384.

<sup>117</sup> Morris, American Catholics, 150, 154.

professedly treat of, narrate, or teach matters that are lewd or obscene, such as the defense of methods of birth control.” For the publisher, seller, author, knowing readers or possessors, excommunication was *ipso facto*.<sup>118</sup>

For over a dozen years, right through 1945, the priest-editors of the IC&R attacked the practice of contraception, for example, reprinting an article by a priest in Liberty magazine comparing contraception with masturbation, biological rape, concubinage, and prostitution. Rejecting the arguments of the health of the mother or for economic reasons, the author expected that honest research by the medical profession would show its harmful effects. In any case, contraception was materialistic.<sup>119</sup> The IC&R, equating birth control clinics with brothels, defended New York Archbishop Francis Spellman’s statement that its advocates were “prophets of decadence” against criticism from a group of New York ministers.<sup>120</sup> In January 1941, the Indianapolis archdiocese was able to deny the Maternal Health Clinic’s inclusion in the city’s Council of Social Agencies on the ground its presence on the council (comprised of all the welfare agencies in Marion County and the parent organization of the Indianapolis Community Fund) would create disharmony, as it was seen as just a birth control agency.<sup>121</sup>

In 1942 the Indiana Catholic and Record fairly characterized the Church’s position when it editorialized, “Even though contraception could be shown that the unholy interference with the laws of man’s nature promoted the welfare of the individual and the good of the State, the Church would still maintain its condemnation. The morality of an act is not to be ascertained by its social or economic results.” Birth control leads to ruin for nations that adopt it; they face the “peril of depopulation.”<sup>122</sup> The IC&R looked on ancient Rome as an example of an empire destroyed by the practice. It was the Catholic Church that saved Europe and only it still speaks authoritatively against birth control. Citing an Oxford University dean’s prediction, within the next century, America would be Catholic because American Catholics did not practice contraception.<sup>123</sup> Only the Church defends the family, standing against “birth control, companionate marriage, and divorce. She still believes that the wife is more than a harlot and that

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<sup>118</sup> Fr. Henry Davis, Moral and Pastoral Theology, vol. II (Sheed and Ward: New York, 1935), 418 ff., cited in Blanchard, Catholic Power, 184.

<sup>119</sup> IC&R, 20 August 1937, 1.

<sup>120</sup> IC&R, 21 June 1940, 4.

<sup>121</sup> IC&R, 31 January 1941, 1.

<sup>122</sup> IC&R, 20 February 1942, 4.

<sup>123</sup> IC&R, 13 April 1945, 4.

no worldly career can compare with that of motherhood.” Concluded the IC&R’s priest-editors, only Catholics and those who believe in her morality “have a right to celebrate Mother’s Day.”<sup>124</sup>

Yet there were signs that the question of artificially limiting births was not so easily resolved. One discordant note was a wide-ranging 1937 article, “An Alarmist Speaks,” in the lay-edited, Catholic weekly, Commonweal magazine.<sup>125</sup> Fr. E. Harold Smith, a priest of the New York archdiocese, placed birth control in the larger context in what he judged the Church’s failure to embrace in sympathy the hardships of the working class. Even in the good times of the late 1920s, he noted, forty percent of the working class in America lived in poverty; moreover, birth control clinics reported that one-third of urban women seeking information were Catholic. Partly due to birth control [and the Great Depression] the parochial school population had already declined. More and more, for economic reasons Catholics were faced with the choice “of practicing heroic virtue or of ceasing to be practical Catholics.” Of sexual abstinence “we know full well that this cannot be the normal mode of life.” What was to be done? Contrary to the clerical habit of the time, the priest admitted he didn’t have the answer:

But it would seem at this late date we ought to be willing to face facts. Let the truth be told. This was the idea that Leo XIII set for historical writing. Unfortunately, not all Catholic writers and editors have been sufficiently imbued with this spirit. They will suppress evidence for fear of giving scandal or causing harm. It is and always has been a mistaken course. *Deus non eget mendacio*, (“God doesn’t need [the help of] lies”). “Our duty is to tell the truth and the whole truth.”<sup>126</sup>

Fr. Smith was correct in his belief that the practice of contraception was growing among Catholics: Between 1923 and 1931, the average client of birth control clinics was a native-born woman with only an elementary school education; married eight years, pregnant four times, with one in five pregnancies aborted. While Catholics were less than twenty percent of the population, they were twenty-six percent of the clinics’ clientele.<sup>127</sup> As Fr. Smith saw the dilemma, all right, the teaching cannot be changed, but how can a poor worker have another child? He had no answer.

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<sup>124</sup> IC&R, 4 May 1945, 4, not the first time this claim was made.

<sup>125</sup> Commonweal, “An Alarmist Speaks (January 1, 1937). The editors admitted concern in publishing such a sensitive article for a general readership rather than limiting it to the clergy. What set the article in a special category was its criticism of the Church for its reactionary politics and the author’s admission that he didn’t have all the answers.

<sup>126</sup> E. Harold Smith, “An Alarmist Speaks,” Commonweal (January 1, 1937), 263.

<sup>127</sup> Chesler, Sanger, 294.

Loath to drop the subject, six weeks later Commonweal offered an analysis comparing “prominent Catholics,”--the 3,800 men and women listed in the American Catholic’s Who’s Who (ACWW)--with those found in Who’s Who in America (WWA). In the second half of the twentieth century, at least the better educated, knew that Catholic practice regarding divorce and birth control, to name two, was indistinguishable from Protestant behavior. The magazine’s data revealed that the fecundity of the upper-class Catholics was as lacking as their Protestant social equals: thirty percent of the ACWW’s Catholic married men had no children (twenty-nine percent of those married over five years); only one prominent Catholic married man in twenty-five had seven children or more, with the average number of children for all married men listed at 2.3, only slightly more than the 2.1 average for married men in Who’s Who in America. This was barely the replacement rate. Of the women in the ACWW only one-third were married; of these, one in three had no children. Of those women married in the last ten years those with no children were double those with children. Overall, the married women averaged only 1.9 offspring. Of the more than 200 Catholic women listed, only two had as many as six children. Obviously, with few or no children, it is easier to pursue a career or avocation and to become “prominent.” Turning from the Catholic elite, data drawn from a study of students in Catholic schools--a cross section of urban Catholic families from high to low social and economic standing--the average family had 4.3 children, twice the number of the Catholic Who’s Who family.

Commonweal concluded that the Catholic elite, just as the Protestant elite, thanks to birth control, was not reproducing itself. It was inescapable.<sup>128</sup> Also of interest, the Catholic “Who’s Who” showed the unmistakable clericalism of the Church in that nearly forty percent of the male entries were bishops and other clergy--one for every 23 clergy in the nation versus one in every 6,000 of the adult laity). The Church’s patriarchal nature was also on display: the religious sisters, despite being several times the number of clergy and holding important responsibilities in running colleges, hospitals, and other institutions, nevertheless comprised fewer than two percent of the entries, (one for every twenty priests’ entries).

In the 1930s and 1940s physicians and social workers commonly promoted contraception, although in some places with conditions. For example, in Indianapolis the Indiana Birth Control League (IBCL) initially served only poor married women with two or more children by referral from a physician or social service agency. If you could pay you would not be given access and there was no attempt to publicize the agency. That changed in the 1940s as the IBC League began to advertise.<sup>129</sup> There were

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<sup>128</sup> Commonweal, “About Prominent Catholics” (February 17, 1937), 459-461.

<sup>129</sup> Encyclopedia of Indianapolis, 1118; In the 1950s the renamed organization, Planned Parenthood of America, had new offices in the English Foundation Building.

other signs of increasing acceptance of contraception: In 1935 the nation's General Federation of Women's Clubs called for the repeal of the Comstock ban of birth control information and devices from the mails, and in 1937 the American Medical Association declared contraception a "proper medical practice" (a stand that the Catholic Physicians Guild, of course, condemned).<sup>130</sup> That year Puerto Rico legalized birth control despite objections by the Catholic Church. By then, 40 of the then 48 states either had no birth control law or already exempted physicians; by 1940 only Massachusetts and Connecticut restricted the sale of contraceptives, and the law there was frequently evaded. In the early 1940s Planned Parenthood of America (the name adopted in 1942 by the Birth Control Federation of America) distributed literature to 300,000 women in 794 Planned Parenthood centers in hospitals, health departments, and clinics, and reported that 21 of 77 medical schools "give adequate instruction on conception control."<sup>131</sup> On the other hand, in February 1939, a bill that would have licensed the sale of contraceptive devices was withdrawn in the Indiana House of Representatives. Such sales continued to be banned in Indiana and federal law still prohibited the use of the mails to send such devices.<sup>132</sup> Legal setbacks in Massachusetts and Connecticut stood until 1965; only in 1970 would Congress rewrite Federal Comstock laws and remove the "label of obscenity from contraception."<sup>133</sup>

The shift toward acceptance of birth control was reflected in polls. When the Gallup Organization asked in 1936 if information on birth control should be made legal, 70 percent said "yes." In 1940, asked if they would approve or disapprove having government health clinics furnish birth control information to married people who wanted it, 77 percent approved. That year the priest-editors of the Indiana Catholic and Record cited a poll more to their liking: at all-women College of New Rochelle, New York, marriage was a given for these Catholic young women who, on average, professed to hope for 6.6 children. Some wanted as many as fourteen, "and a decided preference was expressed for twins."<sup>134</sup> While it is impossible to know whether they were sincere or joking, there is plenty of evidence that from the 1930s priests privately admitted "contraception is the hardest problem of the confessional today." About one-third of married Catholics admitted to using birth control in the 1930s. In view of the Church's condemnation, the practice was more common yet.

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<sup>130</sup> Tentler, Detroit, 480; IC&R, 18 June 1937, 1, 2.

<sup>131</sup> IC&R, 12 March 1943, 1.

<sup>132</sup> IC&R, 10 February 1939, 1.

<sup>133</sup> Chesler, Sanger, 375, 376.

<sup>134</sup> IC&R, 2 February 1940, 1.

A related issue to birth control was the proper place of women in society. In the years after the Civil War some American bishops favored the vote for women, but most did not. Even the motives of those bishops who favored it may have done so to balance the votes of freed black men, rather than simply to grant women their rights. This was the position of the white women reformers of the day who argued against the injustice of giving the vote to Negro men, often illiterate, while withholding it from them. But Catholic clergy and the male laity largely opposed votes for women: The Irish Catholic journalist and editor, Boston's John Boyle O'Reilly, championed many liberal causes but not women's rights. In 1871, with considerable heat, he called votes for women "an unjust, unreasonable, unspiritual abnormality," . . . "a hard, undigested, tasteless, devitalized proposition. It is a half-fledged, unmusical promethian abomination. It is a quack bolus to reduce masculinity even by the obliteration of femininity . . . it is the sediment, not the wave of the sex."<sup>135</sup>

Cardinal James Gibbons was also notable for his denunciations of the women's suffrage movement, in 1904, declaring himself "heartily glad" that women could not vote--"I hope the day will never come when she can vote, and if the right is granted to her, I hope she will regret it." Gibbons did support local suffrage for women who owned property (presumably such women were both conservative and genteel), but he opposed general suffrage on grounds similar to O'Reilly, saying, "You are the queens of the domestic kingdom. Do not stain your garments with the soil of the political arena." Suffragettes were "the worst enemies of the female sex," "brazen," "masculine." Men were by nature coarse, but participation in politics would coarsen women and lead to divorce.<sup>136</sup> In 1916 Gibbons sent a message of support to the First National Anti-Suffrage Convention and in a speech to a Catholic women's group, pronounced voting incompatible with the role of wife and mother: "When a woman enters the political arena she goes outside the sphere for which she was intended. She gains nothing by the journey. On the other hand, she loses that exclusiveness, respect and dignity to which she is entitled in her home."<sup>137</sup>

O'Boyle and Gibbons expressed the storied Victorian Code, at that time the governing mores of English-speaking Protestants and Catholics alike. Under the "cult of domesticity," women, at least of the middle and upper classes, were judged too good for the rough and tumble world; the home, "women's sphere," was to be kept as a refuge for her husband and the school in which she instilled the virtues appropriate to sons and daughters. By nature, as *Rerum Novarum* had it, women's work was homework, for to mix the sexes "in workshops and factories" endangered morals.

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<sup>135</sup> Boston Pilot, 4 January 1871, 3, cited in Diner, Erin's Daughters, 141.

<sup>136</sup> Life of Gibbons, Vol II, 782-784.

<sup>137</sup> Hastings, Vatican II and After, 260.

An extreme example of male chauvinism” was the question that arose in 1909 whether women should be permitted to write for the proposed Jesuit magazine, America. In soliciting the views of the order’s provincials, the editor found one wholly against the idea; another would permit it, but only under male pseudonyms, while the rest assented to having women’s submissions appear over their own bylines. Having determined not to exclude women, the editor proposed “only the most distinguished writers among them should be employed.” Implicit in this “solution” was that women had to meet a higher standard for inclusion than men.<sup>138</sup> Did such “gynophobic” objections to women authors have to do with their operating in the public sphere as such or that women’s writings promiscuously appearing alongside male efforts would somehow render the magazine incelibate?

By the 1890s in Europe, America, and even Japan, women’s agitation for their rights grew apace. Feminist speakers of the day attacked the Catholic Church on the issue, saying that no other Western institution was so patriarchal or so confident of its right to legislate morals. In 1913 Joseph P. O’Mahony, editor of the Indiana Catholic, noticed the “woman question” and agreed that the Church had no dogma against women taking non-traditional roles in society; still, he wrote, their place was in the home. While O’Mahony believed that some public boards and commissions would greatly benefit from women’s service--an important concession--he remained sure that only a small percentage would vote and of that small number “the worst element--the Godless Socialistic element would control.” Furthermore, he believed Catholic women did not want the vote.<sup>139</sup>

A few years later, O’Mahony saw things differently, American participation in the World War having intervened. In summer 1918 the Indiana Catholic and Record went so far as to proclaim, “this is the age of the working girl.” Women, it was now conceded, were valuable to business. According to O’Mahony, the unmarried woman who works was a thousand times to be preferred to one who lives off her father’s bounty and presides at “pink teas.” The good news was that such work did not spoil a woman for marriage and motherhood; rather her earnings save her from a marriage of convenience in order to procure a home and a wardrobe--presumably, a working girl could obtain clothes with her earnings and the husband she preferred.<sup>140</sup> True to his new principles, in the 1920s and 1930s O’Mahony employed his adopted daughter and a niece (both unmarried) at the Indiana Catholic and Record.

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<sup>138</sup> America, 19 May 2008, 11.

<sup>139</sup> Indiana Catholic, 26 September 1913, 4.

<sup>140</sup> Indiana Catholic and Record, 9 June 1919, 4. O’Mahony was survived by his wife, a daughter, and a sister (Mrs. Thomas J. Doyle of Indianapolis), a sister in Galway, a nun, and a nephew, Fred O’Mahony. The daughter, Cecelia Agnes O’Mahony, lived at home at the time of O’Mahony’s death. A good guess would be that the daughter never

In February 1919, the American bishops, in their "Program for Social Reconstruction," admitted that women's war service had been second only to the soldiers' contribution. "Mere justice, to say nothing of chivalry, should see [women] suffer no more than necessary from unemployment. But the bishops had reservations: For reasons of health and morals women should no longer be employed as streetcar conductors or in "cleaning locomotives" as they had during the war. And while they should earn equal pay for equal work (a notably progressive view for the times), their presence in industry should be kept as low as possible.<sup>141</sup> That September the bishops, noting the trend in "civilized countries" was to expand women's roles beyond the household toward a larger share in occupations traditionally left to men--the professions, industry, and with the vote--politics. They were willing to imagine that women's suffrage might "prove an advantage" in so far "as she may purify and elevate our political life . . . ." Failing that, however, they implied that women's suffrage was a mistake.<sup>142</sup> True, the women's vote "would raise the level of civil discourse, but most felt the costs outweighed the benefits." What the bishops may not have known is that Benedict XV privately said that he hoped to see women voting universally.<sup>143</sup> In September 1920, America magazine, trying to calculate the consequences of women's suffrage, also wondered if "the contest with men in the 'grimy' game of politics . . . vulgarize and coarsen women's fine nature, or will her love for purity and high ideals enable her to breathe without serious injury the air of the caucus room and the polling place? Time will tell."<sup>144</sup>

For its part, the IC&R pointed out that the bishops' 1919 "program for social reconstruction" conceded the right to vote and also supported the principle of equal pay for equal work. By the early 1920s women were a quarter of the labor force. O'Mahony grasped, as many had not, that women who worked for wages did so to support their families, not for "pin money." "The old theory of women being the homemakers and men the providers no longer holds in practice."<sup>145</sup> In this O'Mahony was considerably advanced over that of the noted Fr. John A. Ryan: In his book, A Living Wage (his dissertation), Ryan held with Pope Leo XIII, Cardinal Gibbons, and the journalist John Boyle O'Reilly that it was "imperative

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married, but she might have had qualities--perhaps even proved herself in the business world--and thus persuaded her father to take a liberal view of women's capacities. Many daughters (and wives) do.

<sup>141</sup> Bishops Pastoral Letters, vol. I, 261.

<sup>142</sup> Bishops Pastoral, 313, 314. Reher, Catholic Intellectual Life in America, 104.

<sup>143</sup> Criterion, 16 March 2001, 13.

<sup>144</sup> Cited in America, 13 April 2009, 51.

<sup>145</sup> IC&R, 20 July 1923, 4.

that the wife and mother should not engage in any labor except that of the household.”<sup>146</sup> Besides his obeisance to *Rerum Novarum* and traditional gender roles, Ryan thought that subtracting married women from the work force would increase the bargaining power of men and result in employers paying a family living wage. This was a point Pius XI had made in his 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*: “Mothers should especially devote their energies to the home and the things connected with it. Most unfortunate, . . . is the abuse whereby mothers of families, because of the insufficiency of the Father’s salary, are forced to engage in gainful occupations outside the domestic walls to the neglect of their own proper cares and duties, particularly the education of their children.”<sup>147</sup>

By the mid-1920s, however, O’Mahony was ready to entertain views of women’s capacities perfectly heretical in the nineteenth century and not much favored generations later. Among them was O’Mahony’s conviction that in certain endeavors women were men’s superior, in particular suggesting that “Commercial and industrial opportunities based on scientific research have a peculiar appeal to the woman.” If “science-bent,” a woman is even more stimulated than a man, he asserted, and she brings more patience to tasks. Embracing the ultimate heterodoxy, O’Mahony allowed that “many women are the intellectual superiors of many men.”<sup>148</sup> That O’Mahoney’s wife’s niece worked at the newspaper in important capacities the last dozen years of its existence and his daughter was the bookkeeper, 1928-1932, helps explain his relatively enlightened views on women (and that neither were married made it easier). A few months later the editor seemed to be backsliding when he praised Wyoming’s female governor for saying that no success in “business or politics approximates the success of a wife and mother.” Declaring himself happy to hear such an old-fashioned thought from a woman, yet he was not responding to the praise of traditional female domesticity, but the governor’s rejection of defining success in those terms of wealth and celebrity, a rejection O’Mahony shared. He, too, believed too many men defined success in those terms, a view quite in keeping with Catholic social teaching.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> McGreevey, *Catholics and American Freedom*, 154. In this and other ways (e.g., church and state relations), clergymen such as Ryan would have found the 1937 Irish Free State Constitution to their liking: With life “within the home” their rightful place and ambition, the Irish government had the power to exclude women from any industry. Mothers were actively discouraged from working outside the home; in practice, even married women without children were not employed. Note Booth Tarkington’s novel, *Alice Adams*.

<sup>147</sup> *Quadragesimo Anno*, sec. 71.

<sup>148</sup> *IC&R*, 28 May 1926, 4.

<sup>149</sup> *IC&R*, 4 June 1926, 4.

Once the Nineteenth Amendment gave American women the suffrage in 1920, in due course twenty-nine other nations granted it before 1939. (Even so, in the 1930s twenty-six states had laws prohibiting the employment of married women.) Although Cardinal Gibbons called it a “plunge into the deep,” he nevertheless encouraged all Catholic women and nuns to exercise it, lest the influence of the church be reduced.<sup>150</sup> In 1926 the IC&R agreed. While the majority of Catholics had opposed votes for women (and no one more than Gibbons), it was now a fact and Catholic women (who had not voted as often as Protestant women), must now do so. “Those who do not vote” are “not only false to womanhood but recreant in a serious moral obligation.”<sup>151</sup> Of course, women were to vote for men, as most traditionalists never imagined that women would, or should, hold political office. In 1928 Eleanor Roosevelt, unhappy that too many women who had fought for the suffrage had gone back to housekeeping, made that very complaint. To the degree women did not participate in public life, she declared, they were not equal. Although women understood the issues readily enough, the IC&R thought few found politics congenial or take to it “naturally.” Men have always run affairs of state; it was a “natural function of the sex.” Were women required to share that task on an equal basis, it would have been known long ago and acted on. “It is highly improbable that the time will come when men will cease to run the parties or hold the reins of government. Nature seems to forbid it . . .”<sup>152</sup>

The deprecation of women was entirely in keeping with Pius XI’s encyclical *Casti Connubii* two years later. Far from supporting women’s emancipation, the pope warned against the neglect of husband, children, and family that such “emancipation” entailed. A “false liberty and unnatural equality with the husband is to the detriment of the woman herself, for if the woman descends from her truly regal throne to which she has been raised within the walls of the home . . . she will soon be reduced to the old state of slavery . . . and become as amongst the pagans the mere instrument of man.” In the “dignity of the human soul” there was equality of rights, but in other things there must be a certain inequality and due accommodation.<sup>153</sup> Someone has to decide, and the bishops were sure it is the man.

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In July 1931, the Indiana Catholic and Record announced that Joseph Patrick O’Mahony had “retired” as editor on account of “continued illness.” There were no further details. In fact, he’d suffered a serious mental breakdown in early June; roaring drunk, his wife Bridget and adopted daughter Cecelia

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<sup>150</sup> Life of Gibbons, Vol II, 788.

<sup>151</sup> IC&R, 17 September 1926, 4; 26 September 1926, 4.

<sup>152</sup> IC&R, 27 April 1928, 4.

<sup>153</sup> Casti Connubii, secs. 26, 98, 76.

had him committed to Central State Hospital, the state asylum for the insane in Indianapolis.<sup>154</sup> In late July, Mrs. O'Mahony, responding to a "sympathetic letter" from Fr. John Cavanaugh, C.S.C., former president of the University of Notre Dame (1905-1919), with whom her husband had exchanged letters since 1926, confirmed her husband's "nervous breakdown." "The Doctors think with rest and care he may be restored to health again." In the meantime, she was helping in the office to keep expenses down and believed the newspaper's future was "very encouraging" as the "new editor, Paul Martin . . . is considered a very brilliant young man."<sup>155</sup> People "from all over the state" had written that "'the heart is out of the paper when O'Mahony's gone,' but I trust this will not be so as we need the paper to keep on." Now "penniless," "deprived of [her] husband's wages," "I must try and hold the paper whilst he is alive." These themes—her husband's indispensability to the IC&R, the odds for his return, hard economic times, the family's looming destitution, explicit and implicit calls for help--would be sounded repeatedly in her husband's subsequent letters to the Holy Cross priest.<sup>156</sup>

Fr. Cavanaugh was worth knowing: an orator and essayist of national renown, he is credited by the university's historian with being one of the two "architects of the modern" Notre Dame (his successor, James A. Burns, C.S.C., was the other).<sup>157</sup> The relationship between the journalist and the priest was based on mutual advantage—Cavanaugh's book reviews, sermons, and speeches provided matter for the IC&R and the IC&R provided the priest and the university good press. Beyond that, they shared a devotion to Ireland's independence and a white-hot hatred of England. His father from Tyrone, his mother from Armaugh, the Ohio-born Cavanaugh and the Irish-born O'Mahony "accepted totally the ideals and values of Irish nationalism."<sup>158</sup> They would see each other when O'Mahony attended a religious retreat at Notre Dame or a speaking engagement brought Cavanaugh to Indianapolis and he'd visit the O'Mahony home.

With the benefit of hindsight, O'Mahony's first letter to Cavanaugh, 11 November 1926, hinted that all was not well either with the editor or the newspaper. O'Mahony wrote of some "health" concerns—he was only 56--which made him desirous to sell the Indiana Catholic & Record or, failing that, attract

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<sup>154</sup> Founded in the early 1890s as the Central Indiana Hospital for the Insane, Indianapolis, in 1927 the name was changed to Central Indiana Hospital.

<sup>155</sup> 27 July 1931. Martin, an Indianapolis native, was the Notre Dame alumnus who had persuaded his Protestant grandfather to give \$5,000 to save the IC&R in 1913; he served as associate editor, 1914-1917. For several years drama critic for the Indianapolis Star, Martin had worked in Washington, D.C., for Chicago newspapers, and taught sociology and literature at Loyola University-Chicago.

<sup>156</sup> 27 July 1931.

<sup>157</sup> Theirs were the "critical" years for Notre Dame's development from a preparatory "school-centered" institution to a "college-centered one." Robert E. Burns, Being Catholic, Being American: The Notre Dame Story, 1842-1934 (University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, Indiana, 1999), 38, 66, 67.

<sup>158</sup> Burns, The Notre Dame Story, 68.

new capital to it: “Altho everything is going well with the paper—and it is making money, I would like to retire and take a needed rest” (emphasis orig.). Did Cavanaugh “know anyone that might be interested? It is paying good salaries and a good dividend and discounts all its bills. I control the stock. Have you any Catholic young man inmind?” A week later he mentioned that he would like additional capital; it “would help to make a higher and better paper.”<sup>159</sup> Nothing came of these hints.

Daughter Cecelia remembered 1926 as the year her father first showed signs of insanity. She told the doctors of her father’s forging, stealing, and bad checks; of taking the “Keeley cure,” but “without benefit,” (a popular program of the time for inebriates which combined drugs and residential living), his use of drugs—verenol, allonol, and luminal, “all the time”; his treatment on three occasions at a St. Louis sanitarium and once at a French hospital for the insane, in 1925. Before his collapse in June 1931, she described his attacks of mental instability as continuous and use of alcohol excessive. Easily excited, at times violent and delusional, in the hospital O’Mahony believed he had been kidnapped and the victim of a frameup. At first, he blamed his wife—she was persecuting him to get his money. Egotistical (he had a high opinion of his abilities), excitable, an incessant talker, he denied drinking to excess or experiencing delerium tremens or that anything was wrong with him mentally. His was a textbook case: mental disorder, persecution complex, alcohol, and drug abuse overlaid by financial anxieties that had predated the onset of the Great Depression. Four examining physicians agreed on a diagnosis of paranoia.

After seven months at the state hospital, his conduct “normal,” with no hallucinations or delusions “at this time,” his wife asked for his discharge and he was “furloughed” Christmas Eve, 1931. Six days later, home, having just read Cavanaugh’s “more than kind letters” of the summer, O’Mahony dismissed the whole business as trivial: To put the priest “at ease at once in your solicitation for me, there was no ‘disaster to my mind’, and no real ‘tragedy’ in the matter. I simply had a domestic quarrel over finances and happened to go to indulging unduly and left home because of conditions into which I will not enter now. I did certain things that any intoxicated man will do, and the result was a ‘vag-mental [mental vagrant] warrant’ “sworn out” by his daughter.<sup>160</sup> “The rest was easy and I was railroaded out to Central Hospital as an ‘Alcoholic paranoid’ of which of course there are thousands at large. I never was one

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<sup>159</sup> 11 November; 18 November 1926. Quoted material hand-written postscripts.

<sup>160</sup> To avoid putting mental cases in jail until an inquest could be held, they would be charged with mental vagrancy (though there was no such charge), and sent to Central State Hospital. This was still the remedy in the 1940s in Indianapolis. See John Lewis Niblack, The Life and Times of a Hoosier Judge, Wheatland ed., 2012 (Hawthorne Publishing: Carmel, Indiana, 1973), 266, 267.

minute off my head.” It was “the most terrible experience and ordeal a sane man ever suffered.” He professed wonderment at “Poor Father Con Hegerty” who had written him that he “ought to have ‘been put away twenty years ago’.” “What do you think of that?” “But enough of that.” Now “hale and hearty,” at five feet, 156 lbs. (he’d weighed 115 lbs. at admission), he insisted he never “felt so well in twenty-five years.”<sup>161</sup>

As to his “persecutors,” having first fastened first on “My poor wife” and “my very dear daughter,” he absolved them for having “unwittingly” cooperated with his enemies (“now both see the light”).<sup>162</sup> Several others made his enemies list and never left. Singled out was “my Italian Business manager,” Humbert J. Pagani, for plotting, ingratitude, and incompetence. Despite all O’Mahony had done for him—taking him “off the steets jobless seventeen years ago,” giving “him five shares [in the IC&R] for nothing and put[ting] him on the board,” he was always “trying to buy the paper or control it.”<sup>163</sup> “[A] natural born Italian miser and you know what that means”), that Pagani owned four double houses and other real estate especially vexed O’Mahony whose own bank balance was next to “Nil.” Yet it was, he, O’Mahony, who brought in ninety percent of the paper’s business. Pagani’s “mismanagement has been awful and his ‘business ability’ shown to be worthless and incompetent.”<sup>164</sup>

A second villain was Paul Martin, his replacement during his hospital stay. Martin, who had served before as IC&R associate editor, 1914-1917, it was he that Cavanaugh recommended when in 1926 O’Mahony asked if he knew of “any good Catholic young man” who “might be interested” im taking over the paper. O’Mahony dismissed the suggestion; while “a splendid writer,” Martin was a “one story man,” not an editor. He “has contempt for little details and routine, which he would never get down to when he was here”<sup>165</sup> Now, five years later, O’Mahony found fault with the way his departure was handled. “That streamer headline ‘New editor for the Indiana Catholic,’ practically burried [sic] me before my time.” As with Pagani, he had been Martin’s benefactor—getting him jobs with the Knights of Columbus, a press agency with the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and a writing contract with the bishops’ National Catholic Welfare Conference. That neither came to see him in the hospital “in six long months

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<sup>161</sup> 30 December 1931.

<sup>162</sup> 31 May 1932.

<sup>163</sup> 30 December 1931.

<sup>164</sup> 31 May 1932; 16 July 1932.

<sup>165</sup> 18 November 1926.

though everyone else did,” also rankled. As the controlling owner of the paper, O’Mahony had his revenge: “I am going back to the editorial desk. Paul will have to find something else.”<sup>166</sup>

Barely two months after his return, however, disaster struck again in the form of a serious car accident, 6 March 1932. Suffering a broken leg and “busted hip,” O’Mahony spent seven weeks at St. Vincent’s Hospital. His letters to Cavanaugh grew more frequent (nine from May to November 1932), and more desperate. Home five weeks and editing the paper from there, he was still on crutches. In a two-page, single-spaced letter, much of it criticisms of Pagani, O’Mahony painted a bleak picture: The days when the newspaper had paid 6 percent interest to stockholders every year since 1911--sometimes more--were over. The paper, “like many big corporations,” had to pass on paying a dividend and to reduce salaries. Still, some years it had paid 10 percent and it can do so again “with proper and loyal management.”<sup>167</sup>

Desperate, he looked to draft this person or that institution to deliver him from his difficulties. First and last, Fr. Cavanaugh and the University of Notre Dame were the preferred nominees for the savior’s role. To Cavanaugh he mused how he “often wished that Notre Dame had the paper. It would be a great asset for the University . . . or perhaps you can think of some other way of helping me out.”<sup>168</sup> He hatched a plan to get the president of a Columbus, Ohio, savings and loan company to invest in the IC&R; as a “very wealthy” fellow patient at St. Vincent Hospital (we “became great friends”), and father to two recent Notre Dame graduates, O’Mahony wanted Cavanaugh to be his go-between. One son wanted to go into the Catholic newspaper business and the father “seemed very anxious that he should. Let me hear from you on this at your earliest convenience.”<sup>169</sup> Five weeks later, “For the first time in thirty-nine years of married life, I find myself without any weekly salary income & and we have nothing saved.” He “could always say that I tried to do much for Notre Dame and particularly for the retreat movement. . . . I don’t know anything you can do for me except remember me in your masses. . . . Confidentially[,] we would like to sell control of the paper. If you know of anyone . . . .”<sup>170</sup> In August he continued to play up his

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<sup>166</sup> 30 December 1931. Before leaving the IC&R, Martin took editorial aim at O’Mahony’s practice of denigrating Protestants by admonishing Catholic editors not to “antagonize our separated Brethren” and to “abstain from carping at or criticizing Protestant services.”

<sup>167</sup> 31 May 1932.

<sup>168</sup> 31 May 1932. In this letter, for the first time, Chartrand, the “good bishop,” also came in for extended criticism. See below.

<sup>169</sup> 10 June 1932.

<sup>170</sup> 16 July 1932.

efforts on behalf of Notre Dame—"You will notice that we gave the retreat a pretty good notice—he'd "had a nice letter of thanks from Fr. Duffy."<sup>171</sup>

O'Mahony finally resigned the editorship 25 June 1932 (he continued to write the editorials anonymously), and in early October the O'Mahonys were bought out.<sup>172</sup> Still clutching at straws, a "kindly" letter from Cavanaugh prompted him to ask the priest to suggest to the new manager and his clergy associates to retain him as a columnist or page editor, even providing the priest with a draft of his own letter of recommendation:

*Mr. O'Mahony has a great number of friends who have supported the paper for years, . . . I feel I am speaking for many of them when I say that they would feel more kindly towards the paper if he was in someway [sic] connected with it. . . . It would hold his friends [as subscribers] and they are legion. . . . You will excuse this intrusion, but I assure you it is written with the best intention by an old friend of the paper and a close personal friend of Mr. O'Mahony and his family.*<sup>173</sup>

Since the point of buying the O'Mahonys out was to get rid of him, there was no chance the new owner would agree to it. Ten days later, courage gone, he wrote Cavanaugh that his adopted daughter, "poor little Cecelia," four years the book keeper, had been fired, her \$17 a week salary lost leaving the family without income. And though Eileen Leane, his wife's niece, twelve years at the paper, was kept (they "could not make up the paper without her"), her salary was cut one-third. He didn't know what would become of them "if something does not turn up for me soon. How often I have wished and prayed that . . . about this time of my life I could make myself useful in some place like Notre Dame? It would be a privelege [sic] to live there and work for nothing. But that I suppose is a vain hope with conditions as they are."<sup>174</sup>

Vain indeed. Fr. Cavanaugh replied:

"My dear Joe,

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<sup>171</sup> 12 August 1932.

<sup>172</sup> Notice of his resignation appeared in the IC&R 1 July 1932; IC&R, 21 October 1932, 1, noted it as the sale meant he was "obliged to relinquish the editorship."

<sup>173</sup> 19 October 1932. "Perhaps I am going to [sic] far in asking you to do this for me." He ended, "With great feelings of personal regard for your good works, . . . and best wishes from Mrs. O'Mahony and Cecelia, I am my dear Father Cavanaugh, Your old friend."

<sup>174</sup> 29 October 1932.

The misery of the present situation is that everybody seems flat on his back. If you can get through this depression I have no doubt there will be plenty of work for both you and Cecelia. The world was never so deep in sorrow, I think. Not a day passes without a number of pitiful letters, and alas, I cannot help.<sup>175</sup>

It is a measure of his disjunction with reality that O'Mahony persisted in looking to Cavanaugh and Notre Dame. His pleas became formulaic and repetitious: Feeling "not yet done" [emphasis orig.] at 63, he could "do a great many things in the newspaper line, or in publicity if he gets a chance." The need being great, he did not want "to cry 'quits' especially" with "a poor wife and daughter . . . with no income whatever . . ." August 1933, taken by a friend to the university, ostensibly to make a retreat, he tried twice to see Cavanaugh but failed. "I had an idea there might be something at Notre Dame I could do even at smallest wage or none." Reminding the priest of spring 1933 when the O'Mahonys drove to up to see him, "and had such a lovely time," he hoped "for a line from you. . . . Your old friend."<sup>176</sup> His last letter to Cavanaugh, St. Stephen's Day, 1933, employed the same sad structure: lack of employment was "a sad trial" because, "apart from a little lameness," "as capable as I ever was . . . and I must do some thing. . . ." His wife and daughter "are in a bad way," in Indianapolis [he was in Cincinnati] "and they really need some little income from me as they have none." Feeling "a forgotten man," he'd be "delighted and much comforted" to hear from the priest, if he "could spare the time."<sup>177</sup>

O'Mahony's disappointment in the Holy Cross priest never showed in the letters; at worse, his tone was wistful. His displeasure with Bishop Joseph Chartrand's failure to help, however, was unalloyed: Of thirteen letters to Cavanaugh, December 1931 to December 1933, eight complained of Chartrand (only three laid out Pagan's sins). Nominating Cavanaugh in May 1932, to be his "ambassador" to "The good bishop" (O'Mahony's invariable ironic trope), Chartrand could easily help, yet he had never given "the paper a dollar though he designates us the Diocesan paper," a situation O'Mahony believed unique to the Indiana Catholic and Record. He could "tide us over until September" when things normally picked up by taking \$4,600 of unissued common stock backed by the O'Mahonys' 82 shares (held in escrow) until the money was redeemed. "This would assure the Diocese absolute control and the bishop could put some one on the Board of Drectors to represent him personally."<sup>178</sup> Chartrand knew of the IC&R's situation as

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<sup>175</sup> 4 November 1932. To Cavanaugh's suggestion that he not "lose courage" and to try writing "some good articles for magazines," O'Mahony responded that all the stress made it "hard to get in the writing mood for magazines." 7 November 1932.

<sup>176</sup> 4 December 1933.

<sup>177</sup> 26 December 1933.

<sup>178</sup> 31 May 1932.

well as O'Mahony's personal "situation and plight [emphasis orig.], but he never now or any other time offered any help of a practical nature." "He could do it with the stroke of a pen."<sup>179</sup>

Chartrand never had any intention of riding to the rescue: on 4 October 1932, two days prior to the O'Mahonys' sale of the IC&R on unfavorable terms, without telling O'Mahony that two of his friends, Peter C. Reilly and William J. Mooney, had offered to pay the paper's debts (about \$9,500), give Chartrand the newspaper and finance it--provided O'Mahony was retained as editor. O'Mahony was "astounded" when "The Bishop turned down the proposition flat [emphasis orig.], saying he wanted to have nothing to do with a paper." "It was in his power to save me and the paper, and his word was all that was necessary." Still lame from the car accident and his insurance claim yet to be settled, after all the bishop's "verbal support . . . for twenty-two years, it seems strange that he would take such a course. It is the greatest cross of my life . . . . "[I]n our talks in the confession box [?!] he always said 'Don't worry about the paper. It will come out right.' "<sup>180</sup>

What made it all worse was that Chartrand's habit of showering money on all and sundry was common knowledge; there were tips for altar servers, tuition for seminarians, financial aid for the penurious college-bound. His refusal to relieve O'Mahony's financial distress was thus doubly hard to take. What O'Mahony did not know was that Chartrand was sending money "for cigars," and what have you, to Fr. Cavanaugh with insistent instructions that the money was for the priest's "personal use," "yours absolutely," "as you wish," etc. Particularly outsized was the \$500 honorarium to the priest for his June 1932 Cathedral High School commencement address. While spared that knowledge, that he knew of Chartrand's habitual largesse explains O'Mahony's sarcastic references to the "good bishop."<sup>181</sup> If the paper went under it would be the fault of those who "lauded" it so much, but "never gave any help whatever." The "good bishop" knows "my situation and plight, but never now or at any other time offered any help of a practical nature. He could do it with one stroke of his pen."<sup>182</sup>

A week later, late July 1932, the paper reduced in size due to fewer ads, his insurance settlement still "held up," O'Mahony was "on the anxious seat, waiting for something to happen, or something to drop." The "good bishop" was made aware of his situation but "has done nothing."<sup>183</sup> In mid-August the paper was "just hanging on" and the family "in a quandary" and a "very bad plight"; they owned their house outright, "But one cannot subsist on a house." The paper could be saved if someone came "to the

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<sup>179</sup> 16 July 1932, sentiments O'Mahony repeated 22 July 1932 and 12 August 1932.

<sup>180</sup> 12, 19 October 1932. Peter C. Reilly and William J. Mooney.

<sup>181</sup> Nine of Chartrand's 26 letters to Cavanaugh contained money which, except for the commencement, was never specified. Chartrand letters to Cavanaugh, University of Notre Dame archives, 1 November 1905 to 9 April 1933.

<sup>182</sup> 16 July 1932. Apparently, Cavanaugh also found Chartrand's response inadequate, for O'Mahony praised Cavanaugh for "hit[ing] the nail on the head."

<sup>183</sup> 22 July 1932.

rescue, and if I was not crippled up and confined to home as I am,” he was sure he could “pull it out.” The bishop knows the situation, “but has not” heard any intimation that he “would do anything for the paper.”<sup>184</sup>

In contrast to Chartrand’s indifference, in November 1932, O’Mahony told Cavanaugh of a “lovely letter” from Cincinnati Archbishop John T. McNicholas who, knowing of his difficulties, had asked him to visit. A year later saw O’Mahony in residence at St. Theresa’s, a Catholic rest home in Silverton, Ohio, just outside Cincinnati.<sup>185</sup> Having learned of “my plight some months ago” (most likely from O’Mahony himself), the “good and great” Cincinnati archbishop, a regular reader of the Indiana Catholic and admirer “of what he called “my ‘Irish spunk’ as an editor,” had tried to find him a newspaper job in Cincinnati. Failing that, MacNicholas arranged a place for him at St. Theresa’s. This was to be for three or four months, “until things are better when he says he has something in view for me.”<sup>186</sup> As far as O’Mahony knew, McNicholas was “footing the bill himself” [emph. orig.], which was “more than ‘North Meridian Street’ [Chartrand] would do for this ‘Veteran editor’ who served them so long and I never did anything for Archbishop McNicholas in my life that I know of!”<sup>187</sup>

Chartrand’s refusal to help is easily explained: The Church’s aversion to scandal. The shame attached to mental illness then was far greater than today and as a public man well-known in the city, the nature of O’Mahony’s collapse would have been widely discussed. And while we don’t have Cavanaugh’s side of the correspondence with Chartrand, whatever confidence the Notre Dame priest had in O’Mahony had to be shaken by the increasing desperation with which he importuned him. However much or little Cavanaugh shared his reservations about the editor with Chartrand would not have been to O’Mahony’s benefit. The proposal of O’Mahony’s friends to pay the newspaper’s debt and give the IC&R to the diocese--providing only that he remain editor—was a non-starter; Chartrand didn’t want O’Mahony on any terms.

Of the manner and circumstance of his departure from the Indiana Catholic & Record, O’Mahony provided Cavanaugh with two versions. The first was a measured, straightforward account: John T. Harris of Washington, Indiana, “a country newspaper man formerly, and more recently a newspaper broker,” bought out the O’Mahonys and Pagani, 6 October 1932. The O’Mahonys received \$1,000 in cash and given notes for \$1,500 due in two years. The two biggest creditors, Pratt Printing and Pauley Typesetting, both owned by friends, urged O’Mahony to accept the offer (Harris having paid them \$1,000 of what they were owed). “It was either that or a receivership.” Harris was associated with Fr. John O’Hare,

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<sup>184</sup> 12 August 1932.

<sup>185</sup> 7 November 1932.

<sup>186</sup> 26 December 1933.

<sup>187</sup> 4 December 1933.

Washington, Indiana, Fr. Joseph P. Clancy, Loogootee, Fr. Elmer Ritter, “and some others who get a share of stock each.” They were to “push the paper.”<sup>188</sup>

Fourteen months later a bitter O’Mahony saw the transaction as a swindle: “If you knew the real story of how we were “euchered” out of the “Indiana Catholic” it would make the subject of a novel . . . .” “Two certain priests,” O’Hare and Clancy, hired Harris to buy the newspaper “and even gave him credentials and letters of introduction to me. After trying to wreck it and get it for nothing he finally offered \$1000 in cash \$2500 in notes for the O’Mahony stock and . . . we took the offer.” Harris named a board of priests at the head of the Column and called it “the Clergy paper.” The week before the notes owed the O’Mahonys fell due, October 1933, Harris “got a bogus receivership and beat us out of the \$2,500 due.” The receiver then sold the paper at public auction. Five priests met and approved Evansville Msgr. Francis P. Ryves “as a committee of one to bring it in for them.” Ryves bought it from the receiver for \$1,800 at auction and then turned it over “to the Board of reverend gentlemen who now run it.” “So your old friend and his poor family were ‘chisleled’ out of \$2,500 we expected to put us over this winter . . . It is all very tragic and hard to bear.”<sup>189</sup>

Bishop Joseph Chartrand died on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1933. O’Mahony wrote Cavanaugh, “it was tragic and sad” how the bishop had failed so suddenly, “but he had not been himself for a long time” [emphasis orig.] and it was not unexpected news to me.” He “was a greater Saint than a Bishop,” and though his endorsements of the paper “through the years were wonderfully written [and] frankly too strong, but he never helped the paper financially even to the extent of a postage stamp, when he could easily have carried it in the early days of the depression when I met with that terrible accident.” Turning, as always, to his own situation, O’Mahony confessed to feeling “a forgotten man,” and asked Cavanaugh to “please write”; he would be “delighted and much comforted to hear” from him.<sup>190</sup> It was his last letter to the priest.

Joseph Patrick O’Mahony died following surgery at St. Vincent’s Hospital, 4 March 1935, twenty-five years after the founding of the Indiana Catholic and Record.<sup>191</sup> In the volume celebrating the

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<sup>188</sup> 12 October 1932.

<sup>189</sup> **Emphasis orig.**, 4 December 1933; 26 December 1933.

<sup>190</sup> 26 December 1933.

<sup>191</sup> During O’Mahoney breakdown and commitment to Central State Hospital, July to December 1931, Paul Martin was editor; O’Mahony, as the controlling owner, resumed the editorship until his serious car accident of 6 March

newspaper's silver anniversary it was written that O'Mahony, "typical of the school of editors" of his day, he focused on the editorial where the charge of "lack of vigor" could be "seldom made" against him. Bishop Joseph E. Ritter called him "one of the most fearless Catholic editors" in the country. In the judgement of O'Mahony's *bete noire*, Humbert P. Pagani, the business manager who had worked with him for more than two decades: "He always wore a literary cartridge belt and his masterful style was admired by those who shared his views, but feared and strongly condemned by his enemies." O'Mahony had admitted as much: In the mid-1920s--before his troubles--Cavanaugh wrote O'Mahony that he rated him as "one who has always dealt kindly and gently with his friends and all the world." Calling the priest, a "flatterer," O'Mahony denied it, it wasn't true, wasn't "accurate." "Even some of my best friends have accused me of being anything but gentle even in my editorial capacity, and I am afraid my trouble has been handling men and things without gloves—and not gently."<sup>192</sup> A gifted editor, but as one student of the period noted, his sharp criticisms of the Protestant establishment meant that he was in no position to exchange views with it, which limited his influence to the Catholic community.<sup>193</sup>

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A year after its sale the Indiana Catholic and Record was bankrupt and in the hands of a receiver, John Francis Madden, a certified public accountant. Reorganized under new management, a board of twelve priests would set policy; Madden functioned as overall editor, with editorials written by Fr. Joseph Clancy, vice-president, and Fr. Elmer Ritter, president.<sup>194</sup> Under the new dispensation, clericalism reigned. That the newspaper was no longer owned and controlled by laymen was a good thing, readers were told, since "the most valuable auxiliary of the pulpit and the functions most important to it are those which custom and even ecclesiastical law decree belong by right to those in holy orders." In taking responsibility for the newspaper the priests were making a great sacrifice. And, since the world was godless, the Catholic press must wield both offensive and defensive weapons. In that spirit, "any of our reader friends are welcome to express their views on any subject . . . freely, provided they do not conflict

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1932; his resignation letter as editor, dated 25 June 1932, appeared in the IC&R, 1 July 1932, 1. When the O'Mahony's were bought out in early October, the IC&R, 21 October 1932, 1, noted he was "obliged to relinquish the editorship."

<sup>192</sup> 11 November 1926.

<sup>193</sup> The Indiana Catholic and Record, 25 Years (Indiana Catholic Press, Inc., 1935); Joseph White mss., part 3 of 3.

<sup>194</sup> "Elmer" Ritter would become "Joseph E. Ritter," and Chartrand's successor, (died, 8 December 1933). Harris was gone by the 6 October 1933 issue, replaced by Madden. In 1934 Fr. Clancy wrote an editorial criticizing clergy appointments and Bishop Ritter fired him; he was replaced by Fr. Bernard X. O'Reilly. Criterion, 8 October 2010, 9.

with Catholic doctrine.”<sup>195</sup> True to its promise that all purely partisan issues, “political or racial,”<sup>196</sup> were out of bounds; no reference to the November 1932 presidential election appeared (except for a Franklin D. Roosevelt comment quoting *Quadragesimo Anno*). The new Indiana Catholic and Record would serve but one cause, “the cause of God.”<sup>197</sup>

In that spirit, the priest-editors exhibited the triumphalism then common in the Church: Bishop Joseph Chartrand’s 1933 Lenten pastoral had put it succinctly: “The mind of the Church is the mind of God. The mind of the Church on anything, on everything, is the mind of God on anything, on everything.”<sup>198</sup> The clerics of the Indiana Catholic and Record denied that Catholics held mere “religious opinions”; rather, “Their belief is in objective truth taught by the Church whose teachings are the absolute truth.” As the “sole judge of religious truth . . . conscience is subject to her judgement.”<sup>199</sup> As the later long-time editor of the paper, Msgr. Raymond Bosler remembered his Jesuit textbook at Rome’s Angelicum in the 1930s, truth alone had the right to be protected, and since the Church “alone possesses the whole truth, she alone had the right of protection.”<sup>200</sup> Five years into the Great Depression the IC&R asserted that Church knew what was wrong and how to put it right, thanks to its “set of right and just principles,” its “long unbroken experience” of 2,000 years, its “disinterested,” “unchangeable” nature, and its “assurance of Divine guidance.” During World War II the IC&R declared that when the pope “defines an article of faith or morals, he acts as the teacher of mankind” and all must accept.<sup>201</sup>

As an historian of American Catholicism has remarked, from the 1920s through the 1950s, its clergy and laity “became publicly more aggressive” each decade. In July 1940 *America* magazine

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<sup>195</sup> IC&R, 15 July 1932, 4.

<sup>196</sup> At the time, “race” was commonly used to denote ethnicity--the “Irish race,” the “English race,” etc., and not necessarily “white,” “black,” etc. The reference was perhaps another veiled criticism of the Irishness of the paper under O’Mahony; or possibly, the tension between the ethnic communities.

<sup>197</sup> IC&R, 21 October 1932, 1, 2, 4; 28 October 1932, 4. On 6 January 1933, the feast of the Epiphany, the three editorials dealt with the Holy Family, Catholic Charities, and the feast, respectively. Over time, the number of clerical board members shrunk from eleven, to eight, to three, and eventually to only two by April 1945.<sup>197</sup> Some years no editor was named.

<sup>198</sup> IC&R, 24 February 1933, 1. Ten years later Bishop Ritter used the same formula (“the mind of the Church, and it is the mind of God”), IC&R, 6 August 1943, 1. Similar usages could be cited.

<sup>199</sup> IC&R, 2 February 1934, 4. Crucially, this is where Vatican II departed from the old view.

<sup>200</sup> Bosler, “New Wine,” 49, 50.

<sup>201</sup> IC&R, 5 January 1934, 4; 3 July 1942, 4.

boasted that as the only worldwide religion [sic], Catholicism possessed the only philosophy “that makes sense and gives purpose to life.” Only its principles can bring “harmony.”<sup>202</sup> In condemning birth control, divorce, and evil movies, the clergy unhesitatedly saw the Church as the nation’s “moral conscience.” It was a time when Catholic intellectuals hoped and expected that Thomistic scholasticism would soon permeate America’s culture making it Catholic, a time when “Doubt was . . . scorned as a sign of weakness.” Indeed, many American Catholic cultural leaders between the wars seemed to gloat over Catholicism’s philosophical and moral certainty in contrast to the “confusion, drift, and doubt outside the scholastic world.”<sup>203</sup> The indices of Catholic growth--numbers, bricks and mortar, vocations—also made for confidence and optimism in pew and pulpit, (the novelist, Flannery O’Connor, thought it made for “smugness”).<sup>204</sup>

Following O’Mahony’s replacement by the priest-board the Indiana Catholic and Record retreated on women’s suffrage and other gender issues. The IC&R scored the League of Women Voters for insisting that women be compelled to serve on juries; such service should be optional; modest women did not want to “co-habit” the jury box with men and it took them away from household chores.<sup>205</sup> As for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) (first proposed in 1918), the priest-board saw women as fragile, needing to be protected from life’s rough and tumble. The National Council of Catholic Women likewise opposed the ERA. Fr. John A. Ryan, in his role as director of the bishops’ social action committee, testified before Congress that “many, if not all” of the female leadership supporting the amendment have “genuine resentment and even envy” of men.<sup>206</sup> To be fair, both Fr. Ryan and the IC&R put more reliance on the argument that the amendment would endanger recent, painfully won legal protections of women workers—minimum wages, maximum hours, rest periods, etc. During World War II and later this was not only the view of the National Conference of Catholic Women (NCCW), but of Eleanor Roosevelt and such national organizations as the Conference of Jewish Women, the Consumers League, Women’s Trade Union League, League of Women Voters, and the American Association of University Women.<sup>207</sup>

Under its clerical auspices the Indiana Catholic and Record (IC&R) continued O’Mahony’s practice of denigrating Protestants and Protestantism. If anything, the editorial board was more dismissive

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<sup>202</sup> E. W. Orchard, “The Church in the States,” America (13 July 1940), 368-370.

<sup>203</sup> Edward Shaughnesy, O’Neill, 196, quoting Arnold J. Sparr, Catholic Literary Review, 153; Dolan, American Catholic Experience, 351.

<sup>204</sup> Dolan, American Catholic Experience, 352.

<sup>205</sup> IC&R, 13 March 1936, 4.

<sup>206</sup> IC&R, 11 February 1938, 1, 7.

<sup>207</sup> IC&R, 26 February 1943,1; 12 March 1943,1; 16 April 1943,1; 11 February 1944,1.

of non-Catholics than O'Mahony had been--after all, he recognized well-disposed Protestants when he saw them; a 1939 editorial scoffed at the uneducated ministry in many rural Protestant churches, places where mere "ability to read the Bible," provide "weird interpretations" of scripture, and "possession of a loud pulpit voice" are the "only assets necessary."<sup>208</sup> Since the Catholic Church is the one true church, it follows "that all other churches are not from Christ and therefore are wrong."<sup>209</sup> Harking back to an O'Mahony pet theme--Protestant decline, a 1942 editorial, "Doomed and Dying," sneered that Protestant ministers, having no touch of the divine and unable to fill the pews, the collapse of organized Protestantism drew nigh. The next year the IC&R offered that there was nothing narrow about Protestantism because "its members may believe anything or nothing . . . ." With nothing "constructive in its theology . . . Protestants are making a gallant last stand for existence but the end is very near."<sup>210</sup>

But wasn't America a Protestant nation, as the separated brethren claimed? Nonsense, argued the Indiana Catholic and Record. Catholicism had the better claim: its discoverer was Catholic and Mass was said in America before Protestantism was ever thought of; the Atlantic coast was discovered by a Catholic in the service of an English king and most of America west of the Alleghenies was discovered, explored, and settled by Catholics. The Common Law? It was an inheritance predating the English Reformation, and so "Nearly all Americans, whether Protestant or Catholic, are of Catholic ancestry."<sup>211</sup> As to the future, an October 1941 editorial, "Making America Catholic," admitted that the conversion of all its inhabitants was the "very purpose" for which the New World was discovered. It was no secret that the Church intended to bring all Americans to Rome and prophesied "it will not be very long until America is Catholic."<sup>212</sup>

In the meantime, the problem of the Indiana Catholic & Record was not dissension over doctrine, but finances. Having been started on something of a shoestring in 1910, and although the circulation reached 10,050 by 1926, subscribers were too few and too slow paying.<sup>213</sup> O'Mahony had some success with a subscription contest in 1928 with its goal of 2,500 additional readers--the prizes five automobiles to the best salespersons and fifteen cents of every dollar raised kept by the sellers.<sup>214</sup> But matters worsened after the 1929 Wall Street crash. The priest-editors' pleas for subscribers became constant, one such

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<sup>208</sup> IC&R, 1 September 1939, 4.

<sup>209</sup> IC&R, 16 January 1942, 4; 23 January 1942, 4.

<sup>210</sup> IC&R, 27 February 1942, 4; 10 July 1942, 4; 26 March 1943, 4.\*\*

<sup>211</sup> IC&R, 27 December 1940, 4.

<sup>212</sup> IC&R, 31 October 1941, 4. See also Dolan, American Catholic Experience, 351, 352.

<sup>213</sup> White, mss., "Klan," v, vi, 3.

<sup>214</sup> IC&R, 30 March 1928, 1.

appeal taking up a third of the front page.<sup>215</sup> Tiring of non-payment, the editors took to threatening to publish the names of those in arrears (it did not follow through).<sup>216</sup> In 1936 and some subsequent years, as an inducement, the editor distributed the paper *gratis* during Catholic Press Month.

When it came to the newspaper many pastors dragged their feet. Fr. Omar Eisenman of St. Mary's, North Vernon, was not one of them. A great booster of the Indiana Catholic and Record, in pulpit announcements throughout the 1930s Eisenman invariably stressed the importance of reading Catholic publications. An abundance of such reading material was available in the church vestibule; parishioners were asked to pay the pennies they cost if they could, but if not able, to take a copy of the IC&R, Our Sunday Visitor, or the Denver Register anyway. Alongside the newspapers were religious pamphlets, such as those of Fr. Daniel A. Lord, S.J., carried by every parish.<sup>217</sup> Yet champions of the Catholic press like Eisenman were the exception: In 1941 a survey of the reading matter subscribed by over 21,000 Catholic households in the diocese found that nearly all took a daily paper and a secular magazine. Of Catholic reading matter, Ft. Wayne Bishop Noll's Our Sunday Visitor came into the homes of 9,689--more than double the 4,284 who received the Indiana Catholic and Record, while only 177 households subscribed to America and 133 to Commonweal.<sup>218</sup>

Chartrand's successor, Joseph E. Ritter (1933-1946), as noted, played a major role in the shift to clerical control of the diocesan newspaper. In his view, the laity needed instruction in the faith and a corrective to the pagan excesses of the secular press: Only "a strong, vigorous Catholic Press, providing pure, wholesome, Christian thought" could answer the need.<sup>219</sup> The IC&R subscribed to the Vatican view that the world was a vale of tears and the times, a world of secularism, communism, and other subversive movements, unusually calamitous. During Catholic Press Month, in 1937, in letters read at all the Masses, Ritter heralded Catholicism as a "powerful antidote" to "counteract the effects of this poisonous atmosphere." "People who do not possess the Faith even though they be well-intentioned, have distorted and biased viewpoints and it is the writings and opinions of these people, . . . that the secular press gives us."<sup>220</sup> He blamed a century-long, irreligious education for the immoral magazines available at newsstands, at "circulating libraries, and the publications dealing with Communism and other subversive

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<sup>215</sup> IC&R, 13 January 1933, 1.

<sup>216</sup> IC&R, 1 September 1933, 1.

<sup>217</sup> North Vernon, St. Mary's, Box IX, "pulpit announcements," 1939.

<sup>218</sup> North Vernon, Box VI, "Catholic literature" file. The survey was taken by the Indianapolis branch of the National Council of Catholic Women; 177 took America and 133 subscribed to Commonweal magazine.

<sup>219</sup> Ritter papers, 29 January 1936; 15 February 1937; 17 February 1938. Catholic Archives.

<sup>220</sup> IC&R, 18 February 1937, 1.

activities.” “In a society which neither knows nor fears God, the pestilence of immoral literature takes a heavy toll.”<sup>221</sup> “In vain will you build Churches, preach missions, found schools. All your efforts will be destroyed unless you can wield the defensive and offensive weapon of a press that is Catholic.”<sup>222</sup>

This was the Church’s image of itself--in the midst of battle and at its most militant, ceding no territory, giving no quarter, advancing the holy cause, the Church as fashioned four centuries earlier by the Council of Trent.

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<sup>221</sup> Ritter pastoral letter, 17 February 1938, Ritter papers.

<sup>222</sup> IC&R, 3 February 1939, 1.