

## In America

The growth of the Old Catholic Movement in America presents a pattern at once historically unique and tragic, revealing as it does the unfriendliness with which its participants were received and the unhealthy persecution which certain religionists have consistently leveled at it. Here in this land where at last a free religion was finding expression where such an expression was constitutionally guaranteed it was regarded with distrust and suspicion by the more Catholic-minded Protestants who felt the movement to be an "intrusion" and did everything possible to confuse its people. That the Old Catholic Church has survived the heart-breaking opposition of certain denominational Christians to whom she has held out her hands for an expression of brotherliness and understanding, and that her clergy have continued in their ministrations, undaunted by the trying circumstances into which the ignorance of their detractors often placed them, is the more wonderful. The general sentiments directed against the Old Catholic Movement by those who might have been its greatest friends was aptly summed up in the words of Frederick Cook Morehouse, Editor of the Living Church, who wrote an editorial in that paper of January 26, 1907, concerning the first Old Catholic Bishop, "Consecrated in 1897, Bishop Kozlowski began his Episcopate against the indignant protests of American churchmen at what was deemed an act of intrusion on the part of his consecrators. No friendly hand was outstretched to meet him from the American Church (Protestant Episcopal). We had an abundance of sympathy for Old Catholics in Europe, but none for Old Catholics in America." Under this unhappy indictment the Old Catholic Movement was formed under the leadership of brave men who nonetheless could never comprehend the attitude of their Christian contemporaries who refused to understand them and yet could not let them alone to worship in the way their conscience dictated.

Stemming out of the dissatisfaction of several foreign-born groups of Roman Catholics for the temporal administration of their ecclesiastical superiors the Old Catholic Movement soon developed in America into three channels each dominated and limited by its own language. Belgians under the guidance of a former Roman Catholic, Pere Joseph Rene Vilatte, were centered chiefly in Wisconsin near Green Bay, where several parishes had been organized. Under Monsignor Jan Francis Tichy and several assistant clergymen a movement of Czech people with its headquarters at Cleveland, Ohio, was in the process of formation as early as 1890 while under Father Kozlowski in Chicago, Illinois, the largest group, mostly of Polish extraction was making rapid progress. Anton Kozlowski had accepted the Old Catholic faith along with 15 other priests who had left the Roman Church with him to guide the movement amongst American Poles. He was elected to be their Bishop and in 1897 he was consecrated in Berne, Switzerland, by Bishop Herzog, who was assisted by Archbishop Gul of Utrecht and Bishop Weber of Bonn, Germany.

At the Old Catholic Congress of Olten, 1904, Bishop Kozlowski was accompanied by Mgr. Tichy who had been sent to the Old Catholics by the American Czechs as their Bishop-Elect to pray for consecration at their hands. In 1905 Mgr. Tichy was appointed by Archbishop Gul of Utrecht as Episcopal administrator of non-Polish Slavs in the United States with the purpose of bringing them over to Old Catholicism and he was subsequently consecrated as Bishop by Bishop Kozlowski for this work. With the death of the Polish Bishop in November of 1907, many of the Polish members of the movement fell into the defection of one of the clergy, Francis Hodur, who organized a movement now known as the Polish National Reformed Church in America.

In the meantime, a group of English-speaking Old Catholics were being gathered together by the untiring efforts of a former Roman Catholic monk, the learned Dom Augustine de Angelis (William Harding), who had organized a community of men devoted to the Religious Rule of S. Benedict at Waukegan, Illinois. This community along with the missions under its care were received into the jurisdiction of Bishop Tichy in 1907. On St.

Patrick's Day, 1911, William Henry Francis, who had been elected Prior of the Community was ordained to the Priesthood by Bishop Tichy and on April 20th, 1913, he was consecrated Mitred Abbot. Upon the retirement of Bishop Tichy in 1914, Mgr. Francis was appointed to take charge of the diocese.

In 1914 Monsignor Francis was elected to be Consecrated Bishop of the Diocese formerly held by Bishop Tichy whose ill health forced him to give up his duties. Since by this time relations between the American movement and the Old Catholic Church in England had been closely knit and the strengthening of the bonds existing between them was desirable the young Bishop-elect was to have gone to Europe for his Consecration. But the world war made such an undertaking impossible at the time and it was not until two years later that the opportunity of establishing the European Episcopate in America presented itself.

In the meantime a Bishop of the Old Catholic Church, consecrated by Archbishop Mathew of England, had arrived in America. He was the Right Reverend Bishop de Landas Berghes et de Rache, a prince of the house of Lorraine-Brabant who was consecrated Old Catholic Bishop in Scotland but whose relations with the Austrian Royal house marked him in Great Britain for possible internment. At the suggestion of the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, Bishop de Landas came to America late in the year of 1914 with letters of introduction from that English prelate to several sympathetic Protestant churchmen. He was received with great cordiality by the Protestant Episcopal Bishop of New York and was a guest for more than a year within his diocese. On Tuesday, January 12, 1915, by invitation of Bishop Greer, then Protestant Episcopal Bishop of New York, Bishop de Landas took part with 13 Protestant Episcopal Bishops at the Consecration of the Reverend Dr. Huse as missionary Bishop in Cuba of the Protestant Episcopal Church, at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City. The Reverend W. E. Bentley, an Episcopalian minister, wrote in a current journal that, "the participation of Bishop de Landas in this event was of more than usual interest and importance for it was the first time since the Reformation that a Bishop who is in communion with the Holy Eastern Orthodox Church and whose Orders are derived directly from Rome has taken part in an Anglican Consecration."

In the spring of 1916, at the request of the European Old Catholic Bishops, Bishop de Landas took up residence with the Old Catholic community at Waukegan, Illinois, and, with the direct authorization of Archbishop Mathew of England, he consecrated Monsignor William Henry Francis to the Episcopate on October 3rd, 1916, in the community Church in the presence of a large congregation (friends and relatives of the present writer were also in attendance). Although Bishop de Landas was received with the greatest cordiality and respect by his many friends within Protestant communions to whom he always showed the greatest of Christian brotherliness, he received, as did all English-speaking Old Catholic Bishops, the implacable enmity of the "Living Church" group within the Protestant Episcopal Church. Hounded by their bitterly malicious attacks wherever he went, Bishop de Landas, broken spirited and confused by their constant inconsistencies, at last accepted the haven generously offered him by a community of Augustinian monks at Villanova, Pennsylvania, where he retired until his death to a life of simplicity and prayer. His passing away in November of 1920 evoked this written message from the Augustinian superior to the sorrowing Old Catholic confreres of the Bishop at Waukegan, Illinois: "I do not know what was published in 'The Living Church,' but while he was with us he edified all by his humble, retiring and sincere manner of living. He sought no exemptions but performed all his duties as simply as the youngest and humblest Novice."

With the passing away of Bishop de Landas the weight of responsibility in administering the Movement was placed entirely in the hands of the young Bishop Francis of Waukegan. This young man had already distinguished himself by the exemplary work he had conducted in his missions and had earned the good wishes and friendship of many for the Old Catholic cause. Known to the people of the vicinity in which he worked and where as a child he came to reside with his family after their arrival from Nottingham, England, he had forsaken the opportunities of the business world to minister

to the uncared for, exploited immigrants working in the steel mills of the Middle-West. There in the midst of the despised "foreigners" his sympathetic understanding of their problems and his practical attempts to solve them made his mission bountiful in good works. At a meeting of the Old Catholic clergy in Chicago on January 7, 1917, when the Old Catholic Constitution was formally adopted and incorporated under the name of "The Catholic Church of North America (The Old Catholic Church in America)" Bishop Francis was elected Archbishop and the Metropolitan American See was established.

Under the guidance of Archbishop Francis the Old Catholic Movement in America was freed from the bondage of language limitations. Poles, Lithuanians, Englishmen, Italians, Frenchmen, etc., were no longer delineated in separate groups within the movement, but each in his own tongue could hereafter speak to all the brethren.

From a heterogeneous group of transplanted and isolated foreigners, the Old Catholic Movement became a cohesive one, thoroughly aware of its responsibility to the needs of the age. Like the history of the making of the American nation, that of the Old Catholic Movement has been made of up many tongues and many peoples to offer a spiritual haven of freedom and a home for all who sought refuge from the oppression of tyranny--and expression of religious liberty indigenous to the land it serves.