

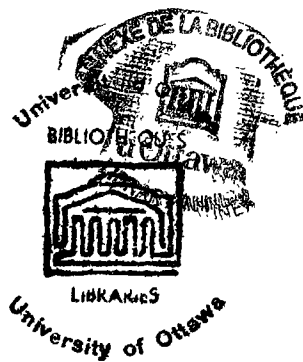
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FATHER JOHN BAPST AND THE KNOW-NOTHING MOVEMENT IN MAINE

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Faculty of Arts of Ottawa  
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## PREFACE

The Know-Nothing Movement reached its peak of fiendish bigotry on October 12, 1854, in the small town of Ellsworth, Maine, when Father John Bapst, S.J., was, by order of a town meeting regularly convened, attacked, robbed, carried around astride a rail, threatened with death by fire and abandoned to drag himself painfully to his ransacked home, after being stripped and covered with tar and feathers. He had been so severely injured that he never quite fully recovered. This is said to be the only instance in the entire history of the United States where an ordained minister of an established faith was persecuted and tortured by order of the official ukase of an elected government.

The newspapers and reviews of the day dedicated much space and attention to this event, for the issue at stake was one concerning the civil rights and the religious liberties of a minority. With the disappearance of the Know-Nothing Party in 1860 due to its own excesses, the Ellsworth Affair fell into oblivion. At the present time, it is opportune to bring it to light once again, since another wave of opposition is sweeping the United States on the same issues and, in some states, with the same intolerance manifested in the middle nineteenth century.

The purpose of this thesis, consequently, is to make the Know-Nothing Party, direct ancestor of our modern Ku Klux Klan, better known by a revelation of its activities in one special instance, through a close scrutiny and detailed analysis of the writings that concern the Ellsworth outrage.

## CHAPTER I

### THE CATHOLIC ORIGINS OF MAINE

In order to clear the ground for a better understanding of later events, it is necessary to preface the discussion of the Know-Nothing Movement in Maine with a brief outline of the historical background of this region. For the same reason, it is likewise essential to devote some space to the political and religious situation prior to the development of this party and to give as well a general picture of the conditions and the personnel of Maine.

The first Catholic Chapel in New England was erected in July, 1604, on Ste. Croix Island, on the borders of New Brunswick and within the jurisdiction of Maine.<sup>1</sup> Pierre du Guast, Sieur de Monts, headed the expedition that had been chartered by King Henry IV, and he was Lieutenant-General of the King in the lands of New France from the fortieth to the forty-sixth degree of latitude. This concession did not encroach upon the territory conceded to Sir Walter Raleigh by the English Queen Elizabeth, for her grant ended at the 40-degree line North Latitude below Cape Cod.<sup>2</sup> The French party included a secular priest, Nicholas Aubry, as well as Samuel de Champlain, who has left

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<sup>1</sup> John Gilmary Shea, History of the Catholic Church in the United States, I, p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Lord and Harrington, History of the Archdiocese of Boston, I, p. 3.

us a sketch in which appears the house of "our Curé" and a map showing a chapel and cemetery. In this land of "Acadie" Father Aubry celebrated Mass until the following year, when the colony moved across the bay to Port Royal, near the present Annapolis, Nova Scotia.<sup>3</sup>

The next venture of the French on Maine lands is attributable to Antoinette de Pons, Marchioness de Guercheville, in 1613. Having obtained from de Monts a cession of all his rights, she fitted out a ship that carried two Jesuits, Father Quentin and Brother du Thet, with thirty persons who were to spend the winter in the country. Her purpose was to establish a mission for the conversion of the Indians where Catholic priests could begin the good work unhampered by any claims or interference of proprietors or merchants. Putting in at Port Royal, the ship picked up Jesuit Fathers Biard and Massé. This same Father Biard had founded an Indian mission in 1611 on the Penobscot River, ancestor of the present Indian church at Old Town.<sup>4</sup> The party's intention was to proceed up the Penobscot, but storms and fogs forced them ashore on Mount Desert Island, discovered by Champlain in 1604. Landing near the present site of Bar Harbor, the missionaries erected a cross and offered the holy sacrifice of the Mass, calling the port Saint Sauveur. They later transferred their encampment to a bay on the southern tip of the island, now known as

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., I, p.4.

<sup>4</sup> Maine - The American Guide Series, p. 30.

Fernald's Point, and established there what some American authors like to call the first monastery east of California in what is now the United States.<sup>5</sup> In September of this year, an English vessel from Virginia under Samuel Argall attacked and destroyed the settlement, later destroying Ste. Croix and Port Royal also. In the encounter on Mount Desert Island, Brother du Thet was killed by a musket-ball and became the first Jesuit to give his life on Maine soil.<sup>6</sup> He was interred on Fernald's Point, but no vestige of his grave was ever found.

As early as 1605, the English had considered Maine as a favorable spot for colonization purposes. Captain Waymouth's voyage in that year is of some importance in the history of the English settlements in Maine and the English claim of title. Waymouth anchored off Monhegan Island on May 17, 1605, and explored the coast. He secured valuable information about the country and assistance for future colonization by kidnaping five Indians, whom he took back to England. To this crime, subsequent Indian hostility to the English on the Maine coast may be attributed. The Maine historian H. E. Holmes claims that these are the Indians referred to by Shakespeare in The Tempest, Act II, Sc. 2:

When they would not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar,  
They would lay out ten to see a dead Indian.<sup>7</sup>

The expedition arrived in England on July 18 with glowing accounts of

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5 A. Hyatt Verrill, Romantic and Historic Maine, p. 241.

6 H. E. Holmes, The Makers of Maine, p. 118.

7 Ibid., p. 141.

the country explored, and with furs, skins and the five captives to substantiate their report. As a direct result of Waymouth's journey to Maine, a new company was formed in 1606, the Plymouth Company, for the lands lying between the 41st and 45th parallels; and in 1607, the Popham Colony, called St. George, was set up on Sagadahoc Peninsula at the mouth of the Kennebec River, where the village of Popham now stands. Although unsuccessful, this was the beginning of British colonization in New England.<sup>8</sup>

Thus did the French and English begin their century-and-a-half long conflict on Maine lands. The Kennebec River was the dividing line between the northern portion of the state where the French Catholics and their allies, the Abnakis, were to predominate, and the southern portion with the English Protestants holding sway.

From 1620 to 1660, the English territorial claim to all lands between the 40 and 48 degrees North Latitude was to receive strong opposition from the French government, which called New France what the English government maintained was New England. While the Protestants began colonizing from Boston and Salem on a large enough scale, few Catholics dared to come to this district because the Oath of Supremacy was exacted from them as a condition to their admittance. It was during this period, however, that the Catholic missionaries made great headway

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<sup>8</sup> Lord and Harrington, op. cit., p. 5.

in converting the Indian tribes along the coast.

In 1632, the first Capuchins landed in America. From 1635 to 1654, they were to labor in Fort Pentagoet, the present town of Castine, Maine, on the shores of the Penobscot River. At least sixteen of these Capuchins are known to have radiated from Port Royal, center of the missions, with stations as far west as the Kennebec. One of them, Father Leonard of Chartres, was to die a martyr's death at the hands of the Puritans after the capitulation of Port Royal to the English in 1654. To him belongs the honor of being the first of his Order to shed his blood for the Faith on the North American Continent.

After a period of disinterest in the Indian missions, the French government in Canada, upon becoming aware of the English threat to Quebec by way of the Kennebec, decided to keep the Indian tribes favorable to it. Consequently, it encouraged the establishment of missions from the Kennebec to the Saint John. The Jesuits thereupon revived their mission in Maine in 1688, when Father Bigot erected a chapel at Narantsouac, now Norridgewock on the Kennebec, and about the same time the Recollect Father Simon established a mission at Medoctec on the Saint John River, near the present Maine border.

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9 John Lenhart, O.M. Cap., "The Capuchins in Acadia and Northern Maine," from the Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, vol. 27, no. 3, p. 202.

10 Ibid., vol. 28, no. 1, p. 57.

11 John Gilmary Shea, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 594.

When the Seminary of Quebec in 1693 refused to assume the charge of all the Indian missions in Maine under Bishop Saint Vallier's promptings, the Jesuit Fathers took the responsibility and established themselves at Pentagoet. The authorities of Massachusetts, which then claimed jurisdiction over Maine, were well aware of the organizing of church work among the Maine Indians. In 1698, there was a meeting of the Bay Colony commissioners with the Indians at Pentagoet, during which the Puritans demanded that the missionaries at that place be dismissed as well as those of Norridgewock and Androscoggin. The Indians' reply was: "The good missionaries must not be driven away." Their answer was undoubtedly based on the fact that they easily recognized who were their true friends. The French sought trade rather than settlement, and unlike the English they made no attempt to dispossess the natives of their ancestral lands. Furthermore, the French Catholic missionaries worked continually with great self-sacrifice and altruism in behalf of the Indians, many of whom became Christian converts. The natives naturally responded to the better treatment the French offered them. <sup>12</sup> Down through the years they were to remain faithful to the missionaries and to their teachings.

While great strides were being made in the conversion of the natives, those strong-willed Catholics who had braved the Puritans' decrees to settle in New England were meeting with legal restrictions that

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<sup>12</sup> Georges Goyau, "Le P. Sébastien Racle" in Revue d'Histoire des Missions, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 162.

were ever on the increase. In all the New England colonies except Rhode Island, Catholics were legally denied religious freedom until 1780. The only break in time was the short reign of the Catholic King James II (1684-1688). It was illegal for Catholics to hold religious services, <sup>X</sup> to organize a church or to preach Catholic doctrine. Furthermore, their priests met with a two-fold opposition from the Protestants, who considered them as subversive agents in the employ of foreign powers, and as deceitful hypocrites who masked their avarice with an affected zeal. <sup>13</sup>

As regards civil and political freedom, all the New England colonies denied this to Catholics. The Puritan had erected his colony as "a bulwarke against the Kingdome of Anti-Christ," to put it in the words of Cotton Mather. He had established a church, provided it with ministers supported by the community, ministers who taught all residents only orthodox Protestant doctrines. At first, he was concerned only with providing his own Protestant form of doctrine and worship; but as the number of "Romanists" increased, especially Irish who were escaping the Cromwellian regime, the Puritan felt himself obliged to protect his church by legislation which aimed not alone against Protestant dissenters but also against Catholic intruders. Thus, the sole freedom legally allowed a Catholic in New England was being present there. Only in 1780 did Massachusetts by its Constitution grant to the Catholics within its borders the fundamental rights of worship. To sum up the effects of these legal restrictions, it can be said that they retarded the growth

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<sup>13</sup> Arthur J. Riley, Catholicism in New England, p. 216.

of Maine by making it difficult for Catholics to settle down and secure permanent homes there. They were also the cause of a large number of defections amongst the Irish who were deprived of priests to instruct and direct them, to say Mass for them and to administer the Sacraments.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, there remained an antagonism between Catholic and non-Catholic that was to flare into open violence within the next five decades.

The diocese of Boston was created in 1810 with Bishop Cheverus, a former missionary among the Maine Indians, as its head. A year after his consecration, he proceeded to the then district of Maine and spent two months ministering to the flock who attended St. Patrick's Church in Newcastle. Then he resumed his labors among the Penobscots at Pleasant Point, who received their old missionary with great enthusiasm.<sup>15</sup>

In 1816, Maine seceded from Massachusetts: three years later, it adopted a constitution that guaranteed complete freedom of religion and removed all the disqualifications against Catholics that were to be found in the test oath of the Bay State. At last, in 1820, the state of Maine came into being as such when it was admitted to the Union.

When Bishop Fenwick took over the See of Boston in 1825, his diocese comprised all the New England States. There were in all his territory but nine churches: two in Boston, one in New Bedford and another in Salem, one in Claremont, New Hampshire, and the four others in

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<sup>14</sup> Theodore Maynard, The Story of American Catholicism, p. 89.

<sup>15</sup> Lord and Harrington, op. cit., I, p. 661.

'the State of Maine, at Damariscotta, North Whitefield, and the two Indian churches at Oldtown and Passamaquoddy. Since there were only three priests in the diocese with the Bishop, five of these nine churches were left without pastors. Scarcely seven thousand Catholics could be accounted for in the entire diocese.<sup>16</sup>

In this period, Maine increased more rapidly in population than any other State of New England. This was due to the increase of industrialism, to the opening-up of new areas for farming and the development of lumbering, and especially to the fact that most Irish immigrants coming to New England then entered by way of New Brunswick, with many of them settling along the Maine coast. In 1844, the state could boast of 5240 Catholics and 5 priests. The rising flood of immigration was to bring on a recrudescence of the old hostility of Protestant and Anglo-Saxon America toward the Catholic Church and the Irish. The chief organized manifestation of religious and racial<sup>in</sup> tolerance was the Native American movement of the thirties and forties, to be followed by the Know-Nothing Movement of the fifties with which this thesis is primarily concerned. Thus do we see a state whose origins were French and Catholic become the scene of violence and strife engendered by the great Protestant bogey of "Popery" and the influx of Irish Catholics seeking the peace which their native land could not provide.

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<sup>16</sup> Lord and Harrington, op. cit., II, p. 31.

## CHAPTER II

### THE KNOW-NOTHING MOVEMENT

Too often, a large number of Americans, in spite of the universal freedom and equal rights of man proclaimed by their Constitution, lose all sense of liberty, truth, and mutual tolerance, only to persecute smaller classes of denominations. Such may be termed the anti-Catholic, anti-foreigner agitation between 1851 and 1858, popularly known as the Know-Nothing Movement. Born out of false notions, fostered by a keen hatred and a passion for violence, the Movement quickly grew into an age of rioting, plunder, arson, bloodshed, and even murder.

This intolerant frame of mind began its formation as early as 1826, when the so-called "New Measures" were passed, transforming the liberal Protestant Church into a severe, Puritanistic society. People suddenly began to honor and venerate Protestantism, while the Catholic Church, an antagonistic system, was proportionately resented. Many religious societies and newspapers, founded around this time, thought it their duty to enlighten their people about Catholicism and its gross errors. The Recorder (1816), the Christian Watchman (1819) in Boston, and the Observer (1823) in New York began filling their

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1 W. W. Sweet, The Story of Religious in America, pp. 396-397.

columns with propaganda condemning Rome and "Popery".<sup>2</sup> "Many Protestants," wrote one editor, "begin to think that Popery has of late assumed a more mild form. It is no doubt true that the Papal Church has lost her power, and therefore cannot play the tyrant as heretofore ... But Protestants ought to remember that it is Papal policy to be mild until they have power to be severe."<sup>3</sup> By 1827, thirty religious newspapers demonstrated the same intolerant spirit, and devoted entire sections to attacks against "Popery"; even secular newspapers joined the one-sided fray in order to increase their circulation.

And yet, religious newspapers did not reach enough people to be very effective; better means of propaganda had to be thought out. Religious societies began the wholesale distribution of books, pamphlets and tracts, denouncing the idolatry, moral weakness, blasphemy, cruelty, and anti-Christian nature of "Romanism", and warning that if Protestants were not alert, papal power would subjugate the United States. This was extremely effective, so much so that Catholic prelates were forced to spend a large part of their time defending their Faith and warding off Protestant arguments. They resorted to the same medium of expression -- newspapers and journals. In 1822, Bishop England founded at Charleston the United States Catholic Miscellany, in which he attempted to answer anti-Romish objections. In 1825, the Truth Teller, published in New

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2 Roy A. Billington, The Protestant Crusade, p. 44.

3 New York Observer, Nov. 13, 1824.

York, and in 1829, The Jesuit, published in Boston, joined the battle.<sup>4</sup> All this effective journalistic propaganda against Catholicism was instrumental in the creation of America's first nativistic society, the New York Protestant Association, formed "for the express purpose of eliciting knowledge respecting the state of Popery, particularly on the Western Continent."<sup>5</sup> This group was not very active until W. C. Brownlee became editor of its publication, The Protestant.

At this time, debates between Protestant ministers and Catholic defenders became very much in vogue. By the end of the thirties, however, they had lost much of their popularity because of two factors: this type of controversy did not prove exciting enough; and secondly, the attackers realized that they were getting the worst end of the deal -- Catholics were beginning to convince too many Protestants who had blindly accepted as truth all the Anti-Romish writings. A new and better form of propaganda was to come to the fore. Instead of driving forth theological arguments, Protestants proceeded to show the immorality of the Church. Sensationalism had much more appeal than deep reasoning, and the favorable reception of English novels of that type was there to prove it. Thereupon, American writers took up the thread.

Maria Monk's Awful Disclosures, allegedly depicting the lecherous life led by nuns and priests, had a very great influence and justly deserved the questionable distinction of being the "Uncle Tom's Cabin of

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<sup>4</sup> Mott, History of American Magazines, p. 136.

<sup>5</sup> The Protestant, January 15, 1831.

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Know-Nothingism." Other similar works soon followed, which told tales of secret passageways connecting nunneries with the homes of the clergy, of babies' bodies found beneath abandoned convents, and of confessors who abused their trust and the young ladies whom they confessed. People really believed that convents and monasteries were dens of vice and iniquity in which nuns and monks wallowed in a slough of ignorance and corruption.

These notions of anti-Catholicism found great popularity in New England, often called the garden-plot of thorough-going Protestantism. An enduring animosity toward Catholicism had been kept alive both by the activities of the colonists at home, and by the vague reports of Catholic reaction in England. Colonial officials had maintained a constant vigil lest the exclusiveness of the section be violated. So firmly was anti-Catholicism a part of New England life that a recent writer says, "Before the different New England colonies were ever united in trade or political units they had a New England religion marked by an opposition to Catholicism."<sup>7</sup>

The intense jealousy of New Englanders of their dearly bought prerogatives led, as if by a necessity of logic, to the adoption of measures designed to insure the racial and religious exclusiveness of the "Puritan Commonwealth." In effect these measures were nativistic. They gave tone, moreover, to the nativism which was to continue long

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6 Catholic Historical Review, XXII, (Oct. 1936) pp. 283-296.

7 Riley, op. cit., p. 1.

after the colonial period had passed. In general two elements predominated: first, the intense and constant anti-Catholicism manifested in the publications which have been reviewed in this chapter; and secondly, an evident spirit of anti-foreignism which accounted for the land-holding, alien, vagrancy, and suffrage laws passed by the colonists of New England.

No light weight is to be attributed to close-drawn notions of citizenship inherited from pious forefathers. The ideal of government of the founders of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay Colonies was a theocracy: to realize this ideal was the chief end of the citizen. The thought of an absolute separation between church and state would have seemed no less impious. Unconsciously not a little of this old theocratic theory survived from generation to generation. And when, suddenly, in the middle of the century tens of thousands of aliens, most of them of Roman Catholic faith, came clamoring at our doors for speedy admittance to citizenship and to full political privileges, it is small wonder that the apprehensions of the sons of Puritans were profoundly stirred.

For the forty years following the peace of 1815 the tide of immigration rose gradually. It was not until the famine summer of 1847 that the immense acceleration came which for the first time gave this country an immigrant problem. In that single year the number of immigrant arrivals makes a leap of 80,000. Taking the figures of the year 1844 as a standard of comparison, they are multiplied by three in 1847, by four in 1850 and by five and one-half in 1854, the year when

the Know-Nothings began their political career.

The fact that the Irish immigrant was rapidly becoming more and more in evidence aroused a two-fold anxiety which speedily developed into a two-fold prejudice against him. What was to be his part in politics? His training in self-control at home had not been such as to make him a devotee of order and an upholder of government. Would he attack the public school in the interest of his church? Furthermore, in the rapidly growing factory industries the workmen were developing a strong class feeling. The Irishmen were becoming disagreeably numerous. The native "hands" did not like them and did not propose to work with them if they could help it. This combined race-antipathy and craft-jealousy contributed in large measure to swell the ranks of Know-Nothingism in the Bay State as well as in the rest of New England.

Propagandists often aimed their poisoned darts at the problem of immigration, and above all, Irish-Catholic immigration: "Romish troops" were invading the land in large and ever-increasing numbers; before long, American territory would be under the control of the Pope, and free citizens would become his slaves. So thought the people, and so spread the fire of hate.

A factor that did little to discourage the propagandists was the fact that many Catholics, in their retaliations, interlarded their condemnations with enough abuse of American institutions to give some color to the accusations that the Church was unpatriotic. Too many Catholics assumed that Irish and Catholic were synonymous and looked upon the <sup>Catholic</sup> American Church as a Celtic institution. A different view was held by

Orestes A. Brownson, a convert to Catholicism and editor of Brownson's Quarterly Review. He stated plainly that the Church would not grow until it became acclimated to America, and obviously it could not become American so long as it remained Irish. "The sentiment which underlies native Americanism," he wrote, "is as strong in the bosom of American Catholics as it is in the bosom of American Protestants." He went on to urge Catholics to prove by their conduct that there was no incompatibility between honest Catholicism and honest Americanism. Moreover, he declared, Catholicism would lose little by stricter naturalization laws, for the tide of immigration was about to turn, fewer Catholics would enter the country, and a greater number of radical Germans and Hungarians. Brownson thus carried on a brave fight to demolish the popular belief that a true patriot must be an anti-Catholic. His outspokenness, however, was not of the calibre to win him the sympathy of the Irish Catholics of his day. For instance, in a letter to J. A. McMaster, Brownson remarked, "Nobody can deny that in external decorum and the ordinary moral and social virtues the Irish Catholics are the most deficient class of our community," and went on to warn against the tendency to "identify Catholicity with Irish hoodlumism, drunkenness, and poverty."

As early as 1835, Morse and Beecher had demanded an anti-Catholic party in order to stop immigration by means of political action. This

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<sup>8</sup> "The Native Americans," Brownson's Quarterly Review, Third Series, II, (July 1854) Works, XVIII, p. 286.

<sup>9</sup> Brownson Papers, March 14, 1849.

<sup>10</sup> Downfall of Babylon, July 4, 1835.

attempt failed because its leaders had won the support of the low-class only. In order to swing themselves into politics, they would have to appeal to the more sober, religious-minded middle-class. Now, how could this be done? ... By way of the Bible, of course. If only they could show to the middle-class the antipathy with which Catholics regarded the Bible, and convince them of their duty to wipe out such an unChristian society, the elections would bring them victory. It was not long before every Protestant paper had maintained that the Bible was forbidden to Catholics by their clergy lest they discover in reading the true word of God that their religion was false.<sup>11</sup>

By 1839, the American Bible Society had resolved to have the Scriptures read in every classroom in the nation, and both the churches and the religious press endorsed this stand.<sup>12</sup> Naturally, this did not over-enrapture Catholics, since the distributed Bibles were of the King James Version. Conflicts arose, and the storm quickly thickened in a muddled sky.

The following year, due to the hatred bred by the No-Popery propaganda and the fear of the immigrant, an anti-Catholic party sprang up and spread like wildfire. This was the first important outburst of political nativism in which thousands of voters, convinced of papal designs on the country and its Bible, were ready to resort to the ballot for protection.

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11 The Protestant, March 31, 1832.

12 Roy A. Billington, op. cit., p. 143.

In the November, 1854 elections, a wave of Know-Nothing victories swept through the North. In nine states it elected governors. In the national House of Representatives, a majority was claimed by the believers in the new dispensation, and the Senate was not without witnesses to their faith. This party was clearly a native American organization akin to the earlier nativist parties, but now decking itself out with the ever popular ceremonials of a secret order. Its oath-bound members took for their leading principle the defence of American institutions from the dangers to which they deemed them exposed at the hands of men of alien birth and of Roman Catholic creed.

In one form or other the entire separation of church and state, the use of the Bible in schools and the prohibition of the use of public funds for sectarian schools were usually insisted upon. After 1855 no attempt was made to conceal the constitution of the order. From then on, the avowed purposes of the Know-Nothings were well known, and in the Know-Nothing Almanacs of 1855 were declared to be:

Anti-Romanism, anti-Bedinism, anti-Papistalism,  
anti-Nunneryism, anti-Winking Virginism, anti-  
Jesuitism. Know-Nothingism is for light, liberty,  
education, and absolute freedom of conscience,  
with a strong dash of devotion to one's native  
soil.

As described in more sober and responsible publications, the Know-Nothing was a man who opposed not Romanism, but political Romanism, who insisted that all church property of every sect should be taxed,

and that no foreigner under any name -- bishop, pastor, rector, priest -- appointed by any foreign ecclesiastical authority, should have control of any property, church or school in the United States, who demanded that no foreigner should hold office; that there should be a common-school system on strictly American principles; that no citizen of foreign birth should ever enjoy all the rights of those who were native-born; and that even children of foreigners born on the soil should not have full rights unless trained and educated in the common schools.

Concomitant with the sudden rise to power of the Know-Nothings, the American Protestant Association was progressing most rapidly in the field of journalism and pamphlet distribution. The American Protestant Magazine, powerful successor to The American Protestant, achieved a phenomenal circulation, far exceeding "the expectations of its most sanguine friends."<sup>14</sup> And by 1849, more than 2,200,000 pages of tracts,<sup>15</sup> printed in German, French, and Portuguese, as well as in English, were being circulated yearly, most of them depicting the immorality of the Roman Church.

The Catholics found a redoubtable leader in John Hughes, coadjutor and successor to Bishop Dubois of New York. Known to Protestants as "Cross John" or "Dagger John", he was aggressive, effective and

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<sup>13</sup> Billington, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>14</sup> American Protestant Magazine, III, May, 1848.

<sup>15</sup> American Protestant Society, Sixth Annual Report, pp. 24-25. (33 tracts published in 1849)

successful. In 1852, through his Freeman's Journal, he inspired and coordinated a movement in which Catholics all over the country petitioned their governors for a law against reading the Protestant Bible in public schools.<sup>16</sup> The Catholic attack was so sudden and unanimous that Protestants could see only one thing -- a Rome-controlled plot against those fundamental American institutions, the Bible and the school. The anti-Catholic reaction was immediate and violent. Protestants arose in loud clamor and marched to the polls chanting a parody which began:

Roman, spare that Book,  
Keep off thy bloody hand.<sup>17</sup>

All over, Protestants won a resounding victory. The conflict became acute in Ellsworth, Maine, when one Lawrence Donahoe, rather than allow his daughter to read the Protestant Bible, withdrew her from school and instructed her himself, finally sending a bill to the state for the expenses of her education. Angry mobs battled in the streets and wild riots broke out continually. The Ellsworth Herald advertised:

1,000 Men wanted. To Protestant laborers everywhere, we say, Come to Ellsworth and come quickly! for your services may yet be needed in more ways than one!<sup>18</sup>

Though the whole affair was settled quietly enough (the State deciding against the Catholics), Protestants still regarded Catholic

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16 Freeman's Journal, Sept. 18, 1852.

17 Ibid., Oct. 15, 1853.

18 Pilot, May 6, 1854.

attempts to drive the Bible from the schoolroom as a major aggression and were determined to resist. The Bible would not be expelled from American classrooms "so long as a piece of Plymouth Rock remains big enough to make a gun flint out of."<sup>19</sup>

It may seem, up to now, that the Know-Nothing Movement was merely a soapbox affair, with a lot of talk and no action. On the contrary, at least a dozen churches were burned during the middle 1850's, others were attacked, their windows broken. At Sidney, Ohio, and at Dorchester, Massachusetts, Catholic houses of worship were blown to pieces with gunpowder, probably placed by plotting nativists.<sup>20</sup> Another was badly damaged at Southbridge, Massachusetts. One character, by the name of John S. Orr, went about preaching in a long, white robe, blowing a trumpet and calling himself "Angel Gabriel". He was responsible for the destruction of the church at Bath, Maine.<sup>21</sup> Priests suffered from this hostility as much as did their churches -- at least two were badly beaten on their way to administer the last rites to the dying.<sup>22</sup> One Portland, Maine, priest described the popular attitude toward himself and his fellow churchmen:

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19 New York Observer, March 17, 1853.

20 Roy A. Billington, op. cit., p. 309.

21 Lord and Harrington, op. cit., II, p. 669.

22 Pilot, July 28, 1849; June 2, 1855.

Since the 4th of July, I have not considered myself safe to walk the streets after sunset. Twice within the last month I have been stoned by young men. If I chance to be abroad when the public schools are dismissed, I am hissed and insulted with vile language; and those repeated from children have been encouraged by the smiles and silence of the passersby. The windows of the Church have been frequently broken -- the panels of the Church door stove in, and last week a large rock entered my chamber rather unceremoniously about 11 o'clock at night.<sup>23</sup>

All this wild rioting and destruction could hardly have been effective were it not for the flood of propaganda directed against the Church. Conflicts over trusteeism, Irish rioting, lawlessness and disorder, foreign pauperism, school controversies, political "Popery" -- all these factors contributed to the strong anti-Catholic, anti-foreigner agitation; but had not those factors been publicized and imprinted in every American's mind by the great pressure of propaganda, the movement would not have been nearly so effective.

What motive could such a great number of writers have had to pound against the Catholics? For one thing, a large majority of them really believed what they wrote -- "Popery" was politically despotic, morally evil, and in all ways incompatible with true democracy. Other propagandists had some political end in view -- the creation of nativist parties, for example. A great number of them penned attacks on Rome merely to share in the profits of this type of book. "The abuse of the

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23 Ibid., Oct. 28, 1854.

Catholics ... is a regular trade," said one critic, "and the compilation of anti-Catholic books ... has become a part of the regular industry of the country, as much as the making of nutmegs, or the construction of clocks."<sup>24</sup> Historians depicted the corrupt and harmful influence of "Romanism" through the ages; politicians showed the incompatibility of Catholic despotism and American democracy; Maria Monk's disciples (William Hogan, Samuel B. Smith, the Reverend Charles Sperry, and many others) attacked the immorality of the papal system. These works were sufficiently licentious and popular to sell well. One of them, at least, went too far, for Sperry was arrested for vending obscene writings when peddling one of his own books.<sup>25</sup> By the 1850's then, this type of propagandistic literature had succeeded in teaching American Protestants that "Popery" was unsanctioned by the Bible or history, that it was determined to usurp universal power, and that it would inflict upon them tortures and corruption reminiscent of the "Dark Ages". It is therefore understandable that American tolerance should give way to a blind, misunderstanding hate before this onslaught of prejudiced literature.

In the light of past events, it has come to be recognized that the real motive behind the whole Know-Nothing Movement was hatred of Catholicism; and that while both the order and the party into which it grew professed vehement enmity for immigrants, the Know-Nothing Party

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<sup>24</sup> Western Monthly Magazine, III (June, 1853) p. 379.

<sup>25</sup> Protestant Banner, Nov. 23, 1843.

was first and above all a "No-Popery" party. This fact alone accounts for its unity, for on more material matters the Know-Nothings were as divided as other political organizations in that era of sectional strife. For instance, American campaign pamphlets issued in the north and south read like those of entirely different parties. We can then conclude that the success of the party, as well as its unity, was centered in a hatred of Rome and a fear of "Popery" that transcended all other considerations, due to the highly effective propagandists of the day.

## CHAPTER III

### JOHN BAPST'S EARLY MINISTRY IN MAINE

Of all the men who came in conflict with the Know-Nothing policies in the state of Maine, none occupies a more prominent place than that of Father John Bapst, S. J. He it was who, by his forthright and uncompromising attitude in the face of strong anti-Catholic opposition, championed the cause of the Indian and of the immigrant and thereby won for himself a niche in Maine church history.

It is necessary to know John Bapst, the man, and John Bapst, the priest, in order to understand the position he later took against those who would destroy Catholicism in his territory. Much of this information, as well as the material used in the fourth chapter, was found in the Woodstock Letters, a record of current events and historical notes connected with the colleges and missions of the Society of Jesus; the circulation of this record is limited to Jesuit houses alone. Another source of equal importance is the correspondence of Father Bapst with his superiors, to be found in the Fordham Archives of Fordham University, New York City, and made available to the writer by the Reverend Edward T. Harrington, Historian of the Archdiocese of Boston. Finally, the newspapers of the day, both Catholic and non-Catholic, of the cities of Ellsworth, Bangor, Portland, and Boston provide us with detailed accounts of the happenings that will be recorded here.

John Bapst was born at La Roche, in Fribourg Canton, Switzerland,

on December 17, 1815. His parents were prosperous farmers, able to give their three sons Joseph, John and Able a thorough education. John first attended the village school, then the College of St. Michael in Fribourg; on September 30, 1835, he entered the Jesuit novitiate of the Swiss Province. A fellow student described him at that time: "He... possessed a really noble countenance, at once handsome and betokening a wonderful candor. He won all hearts from the very start." After teaching at St. Michael's in Fribourg and completing his theology as a brilliant student, he was ordained to the priesthood December 31, 1846. The Sonderbund War and the ensuing expulsion of the Jesuits from Switzerland sent him, an exile, to France for his tertianship. And it was there, in early May, 1848, to his surprise and distress, that he was ordered to the American missions, along with about forty other members of the exiled Swiss Province. At New York, they were welcomed by Father Ignatius Brocard, S. J., formerly Provincial of Switzerland and then Provincial of the Maryland Province.<sup>1</sup>

No sooner had Father Bapst arrived in America than he was assigned to the Indian mission at Oldtown, Maine, located on an island in the Penobscot River ten miles north of Bangor. This community of Penobscot Indians, about four hundred in number, represented the oldest Catholic stock of New England. The first chapel had been built by Father Joseph Bigot, S. J., in 1687,<sup>2</sup> and the mission had continued to

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1 Woodstock Letters, XVII , 2, July, 1888, pp. 222-229.

2 Maine Catholic Historical Magazine, I, 1, p. 37.

be directed by the Jesuits until the suppression of the Society in 1773. From 1799 to 1820, there was a resident Catholic priest on the island, who received a salary from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. When Maine became a state in 1820, it refused to honor its obligations toward the Indians in supporting their priest, but offered to build them a school instead. This compromise was indignantly refused by the Indians, who, "wedded fast to the faith and ceremonies of the Roman Church, would heed the instructions and rebukes of no Protestants." We can even witness them in 1825 refusing to tolerate a school sponsored by certain professors of the Bangor Theological Seminary (Congregationalist), where each Indian child was paid fifty cents a week for attending.<sup>4</sup>

From 1828 to 1840, five different priests were assigned to Oldtown: Father Virgil Barber, S. J., 1828-1830; Father James Conway, 1831-1835; Father Petithomme, SS.CC., 1835-1836; Father Patrick Rattigan, 1836-1837; and Father Edward Murphy, 1838-1839. There was no resident priest from 1840 to the arrival of Father Bapst on August 7, 1848, the mission receiving the visit on alternate Sundays of the priest stationed in Bangor, Father Thomas O'Sullivan.

In a letter to Father Joseph Duverney, S. J., dated June 10, 1850, Father Bapst speaks at great length of the difficulties he encountered on Indian Island. There was first and above all the matter of languages.

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<sup>3</sup> The Christian Examiner, XLIX, as quoted by Father Eugène Vetromile, S. J., in The Abnakis and Their History, p. 139.

<sup>4</sup> Lord and Harrington, op. cit., II, p. 75.

Here was a man who had no knowledge of English, nor of the Penobscot tongue, a man whose French was as incomprehensible to the natives as their Indian jargon was to him. He was fortunate enough, however, to find an Indian who spoke French, the daughter of a great chief, and with her help he set about to study the Indian language with earnestness.

It is interesting to note that Father Bapst found no analogy between the Penobscot and any other living tongue with which he was familiar. He voiced the opinion that the Indians' language was derived from the Hebrew, of which it appeared to be a corruption. He also found it impossible to give a literal rendition of the Penobscot language in French, and mentions the fact that the letter r does not exist, but is replaced by the sweeter sound of l; thus Mary becomes Maly.

After some months of study and practice, Father Bapst knew enough of the language to hear confessions and to give a weekly instruction composed with the aid of an Indian. His increasing knowledge of the tongue brought him greater understanding of the Indians' mastery of it, and however primitive an instrument it might have appeared to him, he noted that it was wielded with the finest of ability and effect:

Theirs is a savage eloquence, but I do not believe that in the eloquence of our greatest orators in the national assembly at Paris can there be found anything so natural, strong and just. I was astonished. Their language abounds with figures, and is graceful and delicate. It is nature that speaks, it is true, but nature freed from all the trammels to which overwrought civilization often subjects our greatest orators; it is a robust nature that, unfolding itself like the oak of the forest, is full of life and majesty.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Father Bapst, S. J., to Father Duverney, S. J., June 10, 1850 (Fordham Archives, 218 S8).

If the difference in languages provided some difficulty to the young missionary, a still greater source of worry for him, one that he would not conquer so easily as the language problem, was the Indians' inveterate love of intoxicating liquors and the deep degeneration that excesses in drink had brought to the tribe in the years that it had remained priestless. Father Bapst called the Indians "drunkards by profession, with every hut a tavern." Drunkenness was all the more evil with these children of nature because, when drunk, they became savage again in the full force of the term.

To cope with the problem, the priest decided that strong measures were needed. He formed a temperance society for all the men and women on the island, and he decreed that whoever got drunk in the future would not be allowed to enter the church until he had asked public pardon for his scandalous conduct. So drastic a measure struck fear in the hearts of these superstitious people, and when Father Bapst applied the sanction to one culprit who let habit get the upper hand, the Indians realized that their missionary would not be budged from his firm stand. Drunkenness appeared to be on the wane, and Father Bapst was congratulating himself on having won a victory over this vice when, suddenly, an unforeseen circumstance spoiled whatever progress had been made.

In the fall of 1849, a cholera plague ravaged the Old Town Indians, many of whom scattered in all directions, spreading the epidemic to Bangor and its surroundings. Within a few days, more than twenty Indians died, and all but three of the island's inhabitants

were successively attacked by the sickness. The priest at Bangor having fallen a victim to the dread malady, Father Bapst found himself in charge of all the sick within a radius of ten miles. He spent himself without stint, to see the plague finally conquered, but at the same time to witness the destruction of the gains made against liquor. Since the only available remedy for cholera at the time was strong drink, Father Bapst had had to recall his decree against imbibing. The Indians joyfully took their medicine, and once the epidemic was over, drunkenness continued to be more prevalent than ever. The lost ground was not to be regained; the dissensions, disorders and miseries that were to follow would ultimately drive Father Bapst away from the island.

The young Jesuit was to have his first taste of "American politics" in his efforts to establish a Catholic school on the island. In order to appreciate the difficulties he encountered, it is necessary to be acquainted with some of the background concerning the school issue.

In the first place, the Penobscot tribe was riven by a schism that dated as far back as 1838.<sup>6</sup> The occasion of the discord had been the sale of common tribal lands by the great chief of the tribe, who kept the money for himself and his friends. This injustice led half of the savages to form a "New Party" that promptly rejected the authority of the chief (elected for life according to an ancient rule),

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<sup>6</sup> Woodstock Letters, loc. cit.

and to choose another chief who was never to be recognized by the "Old Party". There ensued bitter quarrels and even civil wars between the two hostile camps. No amount of effort on the part of the missionaries, nor of the Bishops of Boston, Fenwick in 1840 and Fitzpatrick in 1849, succeeded in effecting a reconciliation of the two parties.

Another difficulty arose from the fact that the Indians were penniless save for the moneys administered for them by the State of Maine; therefore, whatever subsidy was needed to support a school teacher had to come from a State grant. In 1843, when Maine had its first and only Catholic Governor, Edward Kavanagh, the Executive Council had voted three hundred dollars a year for educational purposes, to be divided between the Catholic priest and a school-<sup>7</sup>teacher.

On June 4, 1850, Father Bapst, well aware of the Council's decision and having as yet received no salary from the Maine Government for his services, wrote to the Governor asking for his pay and requesting at the same time a grant of money to establish a Catholic school. Two hundred dollars a year was voted to be paid him through the Indian agent, one Isaac Staples, but, according to Father Vetromile, Father Bapst's successor, the missionary never received<sup>8</sup> the money. As for the school grant, the "Old Party", upon learning

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7 Lord and Harrington, op. cit., II, p. 281.

8 Vetromile, op. cit., p. 102.

of Father's proposal, demanded that it be allowed to administer through the Oldtown School Committee whatever appropriation was voted. This plan was vigorously opposed by the "New Party" and by Father Bapst, who realized that such an arrangement would give control of the school to the Protestants on the Committee. The Indian Agent, on the other hand, was empowered by the State to open a school conducted by him or his agents; but he foresaw that he could not give the "Old Party" sole power to control the school without incurring the disfavor of the "New Party". Furthermore, he also recognized the fact that any school not directed by the priest was doomed to failure. So he worked out a compromise agreeable to all parties concerned. By a treaty that was signed on July 4, 1850, tribal authority was to remain in the hands of the "Old Party", and when their leaders died, their successors were to be chosen at an election open to all the Indians. Father Bapst subscribed to this treaty of peace on the condition that the establishment of the school on the island be entirely under his direction. This con-<sup>9</sup>cession was granted to him.

Father Bapst immediately journeyed to Boston in search of a school-teacher. During his absence, the Protestants of Oldtown persuaded the "Old Party" that the teacher should be a member of their faith; and when the priest returned to the island with a Catholic

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<sup>9</sup> Father Bapst, S. J., to Father Brocard, S. J., Oct. 11, 1850 (Woodstock Letters, XVII, 3, November, 1888, pp. 368-369).

who suited him in every respect, he was met by radicals of the "Old Party" who objected to his choice, giving for their reasons that they desired a Protestant teacher in the hope of strengthening their party, at the time in a rather unstable condition. This reversal of attitude placed Father Bapst in an unpleasant predicament which he summed up in the following manner:

The "new party" declares that it will never accept a Protestant school-teacher. Now how am I to act? If I hold firm and insist on keeping my Catholic teacher, a rupture of the peace will ensue once more, and party hatred become rife with so much the more fury as a religious element will be added to the war. This is evident, for the "old party" combats for Protestantism, and the "new party" for Catholicity .... Mr. Merrill, the Protestant minister, who is the soul of the whole opposition, deludes the poor Indians with respect to the Protestant teacher, "spouting" much about the blessings of liberty, of conscience and of religion.<sup>10</sup>

In the hope that this impasse would resolve itself in good time, Father Bapst chose a delaying action by leaving the affair in its present status quo. This course proved to be ineffective, however, for the "Old Party" soon formed a species of schism from the Church. The winter of 1850-1851 was spent in futile attempts to obtain a peaceful settlement of the dispute. Finally, in late August of 1851, Bishop Fitzpatrick thought it advisable to teach the refractory a lesson by withdrawing the priest from them. The "Old Party" had become so overbearing that the others, by advice of their pastor, emigrated to Caughnawaga and St. Francis, in Canada, where they stayed until 1863.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup> Vetromile, op. cit., pp. 107-110.

So it was that on September 2, 1851, after three years and one month spent in his first mission, Father John Bapst left Oldtown for Eastport, Maine. To all appearances, his stay amongst the Indians had not been successful. Still it could not be termed a failure if we consider that after his departure the Penobscots of the "Old Party" refused to receive the Protestant proselytizers who sought to capitalize on the absence of a Catholic missionary. In later years, they welcomed with great delight their former missionary and other Jesuit priests who made brief visits to them, and to this day, they have kept the faith of their fathers, a mere handful only attending the Protestant church while the great majority receive their education in the Sisters of Mercy School on the island, and worship under the direction of a resident secular priest.

Father Bapst's second assignment confided to his care a mission made up of French-Canadians and Irish emigrants scattered over a territory more than two hundred miles in circumference; as Eastport appeared to be the most central point at the time, situated as it was on the limits of the United States and New Brunswick, this town was chosen as his headquarters. Here, in the early summer of 1827, Bishop Fenwick had, by invitation, delivered in the Congregational (Unitarian) meeting-house an address in which he invited the Catholics of the town to buy a lot for a church. The following year, on April 29, Father Charles D. Ffrench, O. P., proceeded to the laying of a cornerstone, and before the end of 1828, a simple frame building, 50 by 32 feet, had been erected to

serve as a church. In 1834, this church received its first resident  
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pastor, the Reverend Simon Walsh.

At Eastport, Father Bapst had as companions two brother Jesuits, Father John Force, S. J., a Hanoverian whose real name was Voors, and Father Hippolyte De Neckere, S. J. Within their territory they had eight churches and thirty-three chapels to visit, including that of the Passamaquoddy Indians at Pleasant Point nearby. About nine thousand Catholics comprised their scattered flock; to preserve them in the faith was no easy task, as Father Bapst remarks in a letter to his Vice-  
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Provincial, Reverend Father Joseph Aschwanden, S. J. He had had some experience with ministry amongst whites while he was stationed at Oldtown, caring as he did for the missions of Cherryfield, Bucksport, Frankfort and Thomaston until Father James Moore, S. J., relieved him of these stations. At that time he had found the hearing of confessions a severe trial because of having to deal with penitents who had not confessed for twenty or thirty years, and who were in constant "contact every hour of the day with the American Protestants, upon whom they depend entirely for subsistence." To understand the implication of these last words, one must know how Father Bapst looked upon the American Protestants of his day:

Now the majority of Americans in these parts bend the knee to no other divinities than Plutus and Venus. With many, the most frightful abominations are crimes only when made in public. In

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12 Lord and Harrington, op. cit., II, pp. 67-70.

13 Father Bapst, S. J., to Father Aschwanden, S. J., April 23, 1852 (Woodstock Letters, XVIII, 1, February, 1889, pp. 83-84).

secret everything is permitted. It is a law of nature, they say, and besides there is no hell, or if there is, it is not for men, as Christ ransomed us all. You might know all Ligouri by heart and yet not discover a solution of the difficulties that present themselves in the confessional.<sup>14</sup>

In the same letter he points out another difficulty that he was to experience many a time in his travels:

A Catholic priest in this country is apt to have some differences with the civil authorities who are all Protestants; in these junctions, to whom can he apply for assistance when he is alone and knows not the language of the country? ... a religious deprived of all companionship, depending only on himself, not wearing the ecclesiastical dress, almost always on the road, having no one to edify him, able with impunity and without any one being the wiser to omit for years together meditation, examen, spiritual reading, retreat, etc., -- how, I ask you, can a religious thus situated contend against the torrent that overturns and bears along on its impetuous flood almost everyone about him?<sup>15</sup>

Father Bapst answered his own question by saying that he took counsel from the God who had protected him and who so generously blessed his labors. He had found the secret of internal fortitude, and in his hours of loneliness, of sadness, of longing for his native land, he never failed to turn toward prayer as a source of strength. There is no questioning the fact that he needed strength, both physical and spiritual, to perform the Paulinian task that his ecclesiastical superiors had entrusted to him. A careful scrutiny of the parish registers for the year

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<sup>14</sup> Father Bapst, S. J., to Father Charles Billot, S. J., April 27, 1850 (Woodstock Letters, XVII, 3, November, 1888, pp. 362-367).

<sup>15</sup> Loc. cit.

1852 reveals the following displacements of the missionary in performing 110 baptisms and officiating at 20 marriages:

Jan.	x	- Bucksport	July	25	- Pembroke
Feb.	1	- Belfast	Aug.	3	- Eastport
	7	- Oldtown		5	- Calais
	18	- Belfast		8	- Eastport
Mar.	15	- East Machias		12	- "
	27	- Pembroke		24	- Belfast
Apr.	11	- Eastport		25	- Thomaston
	17	- Trescott	Sep.	1	- Bangor
	25	- Eastport		2	- Oldtown
May	9	- "		3	- Ellsworth
	11	- Pleasant Point		5	- Oldtown
	16	- Pembroke		7	- Bangor
	29	- "		8	- Ellsworth
June	7	- Eastport		9	- Cherryfield
	12	- Trescott	Oct.	24	- Waterville
	14	- Plaster Mills	Nov.	1	- Oldtown
	15	- Eastport		13	- Lubec
	16	- "		14	- Trescott
	30	- Stillwater		16	- South Bay
July	1	- Oldtown		17	- Eastport
	4	- Ellsworth	Dec.	5	- Waterville
	8	- Oldtown		26	- Thomaston
	9	- Frankfort		30	- Searsport
	19	- Eastport			

The distance from Eastport to Waterville, the two extremes of his territory, was about 150 miles over roads which in those days were little more than trails that had to be travelled by rough team or on horseback. Father Bapst travelled these distances in all seasons, as the record shows, often retracing his steps one day to push forward on the next in answer to sick calls, to make appeals for financial aid in building his churches, to give instructions to future converts, to examine the condition of the Sunday schools and sodalities, and to found temperance societies where they were needed the most. In Waterville, for example, his endeavors in this latter field met with so much success

that the Protestant magistrates, witnesses of the change that took place in the town's sixty habitual drunkards, made every possible effort to have Father Bapst establish his permanent residence in their midst. They even induced the Canadians to build a church and promised them generous aid, while many begged the priest to deliver some lectures in English for the Americans.<sup>16</sup>

At Skowhegan, eighteen miles north of Waterville, when Father Bapst could find no suitable place for his meetings, the Protestant magistrates generously offered him the use of the town-hall. Every evening the hall was crowded with an attentive audience, many of whom were Protestants who could not understand the instructions given in French. Here, as in Waterville, his temperance society fared so well that he later received a letter from the Skowhegan chief of police to inform him that, since his departure from their midst, "all had gone well with the Canadians."<sup>17</sup>

The vast distances of the territory confided to Father Bapst and his two aides made it impossible to visit more than six times a year each of their thirty-three stations. This was a source of great anxiety for Father Bapst, who wished to have a fourth priest who would help the small missionary band in the work of the missions. His anxiety was further increased by the fear of having the small number of priests engaged in the Maine Mission diminished to two. He who had

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16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

planned to establish a college in Maine and to "introduce the Society into the north-eastern British provinces" was now obliged to abandon these dreams and to plead with his superiors not to leave him with only one helper. When the Provincial threatened to withdraw all three priests from the mission and to replace them with three others for reasons which are not clearly indicated in the correspondence between the two Jesuits, Father Bapst pleaded his cause in a masterly yet submissive manner to show how impracticable such a substitution would be. His strong appeals were crowned with partial success, for the number of fathers in Maine was not decreased, nor was a total change effected in the personnel of the missionary staff.<sup>18</sup>

It had long been Father Bapst's plan to have two mission centres in Maine, one at Eastport for the eastern missions and another in Ellsworth, a hundred miles to the west, for the missions of Cherryfield, Benedicta, Oldtown, Frankfort, Bucksport, Belfast, Rockland and Thomaston on the Penobscot, and Waterville with Skowhegan on the Kennebec River. It had been the expressed condition of the Bishop that one of the Jesuits should always be in Ellsworth to attend these missions. In the first English letter written by Father Bapst to his Provincial, dated September 12, 1852, he asks to have another missionary given him in order to establish two men in both centres.<sup>19</sup> His call for a "good preacher who

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<sup>18</sup> Father Bapst, S.J. to Father Aschwanden, S.J., May 6, 1852 (Woodstock Letters, XVIII, 1, February, 1889, pp. 86-87).

<sup>19</sup> Father Bapst, S.J. to Father Aschwanden, S.J., September 12, 1852 (Woodstock Letters, XVIII, 1, February, 1889, pp. 90-91).

speaks good English and who is above all a virtuous man" was answered with the arrival three months later of Father Augustin K. Kennedy, S.J.

From the beginning of December, 1852, until the opening of the new year, Father Bapst maintained temporary headquarters of the southern Maine missions at Bangor. During this interval he resided with Father O'Sullivan, the parish priest of St. Michael's Church, Bangor. In the early part of January, 1853, he took up his permanent residence at Ellsworth, where the Catholics had rented a house for him on "Galway Green", near the present railroad station. A small building, purchased in 1843 by the fifty or sixty Catholics of the town, served as a place of worship, but the number of Catholics having increased with the coming of their first resident priest, the erection of a larger church soon became a necessity. Within a few months of Father Bapst's arrival, the new church was built and nearly all paid for.

In April of this year, Father Bapst lost his companion when Father Kennedy was appointed one of the collectors for Holy Cross College, Worcester, Massachusetts. In September, two other Jesuit priests were sent to Father Bapst's aid, but they remained only a month on the missions. Once more he was alone to do the work of several men, without knowing how long he was to be left in Ellsworth by his superiors. His frame of mind, on the eve of the troubles that were to beset him in Ellsworth, can best be understood by an excerpt from a letter he wrote to his Provincial, Father Stonestreet:

I would have no objection to be left alone for a few months more, if I was sure to be removed; but Your Reverence will forgive me for telling you that I feel weary and discouraged at having to live in the state of indecision and uncertainty in which I have been left for a year and a half; a state of

indecision that shakes all the resolution and energy of my soul, spoils my undertakings, checks my zeal, and prevents too my making provisions, which otherwise would be necessary, for the house here and for the ministry in the different missions. I have always present to my mind this thought: "What is the use of doing this or that, if I have to leave the mission soon." And my trouble and embarrassment is greater yet when there is question of commencing a new building or of repairing an old one, as is very often the case; for I am always fearful that, having commenced anything of importance, I may not have time to carry it out.<sup>20</sup>

As it was, Father Bapst remained in Ellsworth until June 7, 1854, when he changed his residence to Bangor by order of the Bishop of Boston who still retained Maine within his spiritual jurisdiction. The narrator of the Woodstock Letters tells us that the Bishop was forced to place Father Bapst in permanent charge of Bangor by a chain of circumstances which left him no choice in the matter. One of these circumstances was the necessary removal of Father O'Sullivan from St. Michael's in the summer of 1853,<sup>21</sup> and the impossibility of the Bishop to find a competent secular priest to replace him. At that time, the Bishop had intrusted the parish for a short time only to Father Bapst, who dispatched Father Moore, S.J., to take over, while he, Bapst, remained in Ellsworth. The events that led to Father Bapst's hasty removal to Bangor provide another set of circumstances in which the ever increasing tide of anti-Catholicism comes to a head in Maine over a question of education: were Catholic children in public schools

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<sup>20</sup> Father Bapst, S. J., to Father Stonestreet, S. J., August 17, 1853 (Woodstock Letters, XVIII, 2, June, 1889, pp. 129-130).

<sup>21</sup> Lord and Harrington, op. cit., II, p. 566.

guaranteed the right of religious freedom or were they to submit to the teachings of the Protestant faith?

John Bapst, the priest who would not let himself be intimidated by the Indians of Oldtown, nor be fooled by the secret machinations of Protestant ministers against him, was not the man to sacrifice his principles at the demand of a School Board. How he dared to defy the edicts of the Ellsworth town officials and publicly insisted by word and pen upon the Constitutional rights denied him and his parishioners, as well as the penalty he paid for his forthright attitude, constitutes a stirring chapter in the annals of Catholic Church History.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ELLSWORTH AFFAIR

In October, 1853, Father John Bapst wrote the following words to his Provincial;

... I have to inform your Reverence of another difficulty. A town school teacher, out of bigotry, being the son of a parson, has established in his school as rule, that all scholars should read the Protestant version of the Bible, or leave the school; he prevailed to a certain extent on the School Committee to have such a rule approved, and immediately, as the two Catholic children he had in his school would not read said version, he turned them out. The case has already created some excitement both among Catholics and Protestants. Next Sunday a petition shall be presented to the Committee requesting that the Catholic children should be free to read their own Bible or no Bible at all in the schools. I cannot foresee the result, the Catholics seem all to be determined not to have their right trampled upon, and will sign the petition.<sup>1</sup>

Here, then, was the incident that was to inflame the already smoldering bigotry of the anti-Catholics in Ellsworth, finally bursting into an open conflagration exactly a year hence with the tarring and feathering of Father Bapst, on October 14, 1854.

Since his arrival in Ellsworth, in January, 1853, Father Bapst had given free rein to his zeal; not content with dispensing the usual priestly services to the Catholics of his extensive territory, he had undertaken a course of Sunday afternoon lectures on the doctrines of the Church. These instructions drew to his service on Sundays a large

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<sup>1</sup> Father Bapst, S. J., to Father Stonestreet, S. J., October, 1853, (Fordham Archives, 221 T8).

number of Protestants, avid to know what could be said in defense of a religious system which, in their opinion, had long before been thoroughly exploded. The priest's endeavors were successful, and within a few months he had made several converts, amongst whom were twelve young ladies, all members of prominent families of the town. Religious feeling ran high in consequence, and Father Bapst was denounced from the pulpit and in the press as a perverter of the young, who "reduced free-born Americans to Rome's galling yoke."<sup>2</sup> All manner of threats were uttered against him; he was told to stop his proselytizing or to suffer the consequences.

Hard on the heels of this affair came the dismissal of the two Catholic children reported by Father Bapst in his letter. As was mentioned in the chapter on the Know-Nothings' activities, this tactic was a familiar one to the bigots of the day, all the more so because Bishop John Hughes of New York had initiated a campaign against the reading of the Protestant Bible in public schools just the preceding year. The Catholics' petitions to their Governors for a ruling against this practice had had the adverse effect of uniting the Protestants and giving them the satisfaction of seeing the measure defeated at the polls. The Ellsworth incident was thus one of many, but because of the extremes to which it was to develop and the loud repercussions it

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<sup>2</sup> "Father Bapst's Narrative of the Beginnings of the Crisis at Ellsworth" (Woodstock Letters, XVIII, 2, June, 1889, pp. 133-136).

was to have in the national press, it is important to follow the sequence of events as reported by reliable sources of information. Five accounts of the "Ellsworth Affair" are available, and though there is considerable confusion on some details, in general there is agreement on the main points of importance and interest.

Father Bapst's narrative deals only with the beginnings of the crisis at Ellsworth. It was written by the compiler of the Woodstock Letters from Father Bapst's own reminiscences to him and from letters written to the Provincial at about this period.

A second valuable source is provided by Father Bapst's house-keeper in Ellsworth and Bangor, Mary Hennessey, who later became Sister Mary Borgia, an extern sister of the House of Good Shepherd, New York. Her account of the Ellsworth troubles is recorded in the June, 1889, number of the Woodstock Letters.

A Protestant friend of Father Bapst wrote his reminiscences under the nomde plume of "Lumberman" in the Portland Eastern Argus of September 1884, and entitled them "Narrative of a Protestant Resident of Ellsworth". His report of the outrage is confirmed by the Bangor Mercury of October 17 and 18, 1854, in its notices of the event. The article ends with the following words:

These facts I know to be accurately stated, as I was a resident of Ellsworth at the time of the outrage and had been for thirty-six years. It was my birth-place, and I knew all the facts, and who were the perpetrators of that atrocious act.<sup>3</sup>

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3 "Narrative of a Protestant Resident of Ellsworth," Portland Eastern Argus, Sept., 1884 (Woodstock Letters, XVIII, 3 October, 1889, pp. 304-308).

Another valuable source is the manuscript of Albert H. Davis, written in 1927, entitled Religious Troubles of 1854 at Ellsworth, Maine. Mr. Davis is the author of the History of Ellsworth, Maine, also published in 1927, and has prepared his manuscript with the same care that he brought to his History. He tells us that he has taken his data from the Ellsworth Herald and the Eastern Freeman, two weekly newspapers published at Ellsworth in 1854, and from the city's records and those at the Hancock County Courthouse; on some points where the evidence could not otherwise be obtained, he reviewed the situation with no less than fifteen individuals of various religious denominations, who were closely associated with the facts, selecting only that part of their versions upon which they all agreed.

A final source is found in the newspapers and magazines of the day. No copies of the Ellsworth Herald for the year 1854 are available today in that city; this is the only year missing in the bound collection of that newspaper to be found in the office of the Ellsworth American, the present day journal. The American Antiquarian Society's Archives in Boston and the Bangor Public Library, Bangor, Maine, have some stray copies of this newspaper; their collections, on the other hand, of the contemporary Bangor papers, the Whig and Courier, the Daily Journal and the Mercury are nearly complete. The Catholic review of the affair is to be found in the diocesan newspaper, the Boston Pilot.

Ellsworth, the town where the religious troubles were to occur, was situated on the eastern and western banks of the Union River that

<sup>A</sup>flows into nearby Penobscot Bay. Settled in 1763 by Benjamin Milliken and others, it was known in its earlier years as Union River Settlement and Bowdoin. In 1800, it was incorporated the Town of Ellsworth, county seat of Hancock County, to finally receive its city charter in 1869. For a century and a quarter, shipbuilding and lumbering were the principal industries, and for many years it ranked among the nation's largest shipping ports.

At the time of the troubles, Ellsworth was one of the most flourishing towns of eastern Maine with millmen, lumbermen and shipbuilders constituting the majority of the population of 4,000. Of these, about 300 were Catholics. The people of the town were as a rule educated and refined, with two score of professional men, ministers, lawyers and doctors. However, like many a seaport, Ellsworth had its gang of rowdies that gave the town a bad name. These ruffians considered themselves "pure-blooded Americans" in contrast to the Irish emigrants that labored on the wharves, and they were considered all the more American on the strength of their hatred for Catholicism. Organized under the name of "Cast Iron Band", they spread fear and consternation amongst the peace-loving people of Ellsworth and were a nationally known disgrace to the town. This band was to form the nucleus of the mob that persecuted Father Bapst and burned down both his school and his church. Their rowdiness found an occasion to vent itself in the so-called affliction of sectarian Bible-reading.

Father Bapst's letter to Father Stonestreet sums up well the initial cause of dissension between the Catholics and non-Catholics of

the town. That which had begun as an isolated act of bigoted zeal on the part of one school teacher who wished the Protestant version of the Bible read daily in his classroom assumed proportions of a greater magnitude when the Superintending School Committee of the public schools of Ellsworth, consisting of Seth Tisdale, John D. Richards and Moses R. Pulsifer, confirmed the teacher's ruling and extended it to all the schools in their jurisdiction. Father Bapst visited the Committee and succeeded in convincing them of the Catholics' rights; but, he remarks, they were afraid to become too unpopular by doing their duty.<sup>4</sup>

Thereupon, the priest prepared a petition and presented it in a town meeting asking that the resolution be amended to read: " ... that the Catholic children be permitted to read the Douay version of the Bible." The petition was refused with abuse; Mr. Seth Tisdale, the spokesman of the Committee, after pouring out a torrent of filthy calumnies, asserted:

We are determined to protestantize the Catholic children; they shall read the Protestant Bible or be dismissed from the schools; and should we find them loafing around the wharves, we will clap them into jail.<sup>5</sup>

In order to cope with the situation, Father Bapst recommended to the parents that they instruct their children to read from no other version of the Bible. This, the children did. The teachers then made their report to the Committee; Mr. Tisdale and Mr. Richards visited

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<sup>4</sup> Father Bapst, S. J., to Father Stonestreet, S. J., October, 1853, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> "Father Bapst's Narrative", loc. cit.

the school on the west side of the river at which the largest number of children attended and called upon them to read from a Protestant version of the Bible. When the Catholic children refused, they were told by Mr. Tisdale to take their books and go home, not to return. Sixteen children were expelled on that afternoon of November 14, 1853.<sup>6</sup>

It was under these circumstances that Lawrence Donahoe sent a bill to the State of Maine for his daughter Bridget's tuition; he had instructed his child himself rather than expose her to the School Committee's ruling on Bible reading. Since nothing was done about the bill, Donahoe started a court action against Richards who had expelled his daughter from school, basing his claim on the following clauses in the State Constitution: Art. 1, sec. 3:

No one shall be hurt, molested, or restrained in his person, liberty or estate, for worshipping God in the manner and season most agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience, nor for his religious professions or sentiments, provided he does not disturb the public peace, or obstruct others in their religious worship ... and no subordination nor preference of any sect or denomination to another, shall ever be established by law, nor shall any religious test be required as a qualification for any office or trust under this State.

In *Donahoe vs Richards* 38 Maine 376, Donahoe contended that the act of the defendant was unconstitutional, whether justified by statute or not, because by the Constitution of Maine the schools were "public schools" open to all who did not come under certain prescribed disabilities. By requiring a test which it was known that all of a certain religious denomination were unable to comply with, the schools

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

were no longer public, but sectarian and exclusive. Donahoe furthermore maintained that the act of the defendant was in violation of the clause of the Constitution which provided that: "No one shall be hurt, molested or restrained in his person, liberty or estate, for his religious professions or sentiments," and that his suit against Richards was maintainable at law because it was a suit to establish an important civil right that had been invaded.

The court at Bangor ruled in the defendant's favor, finding that the parent of a child expelled from a public school by order of the Superintending School Committee could maintain no action against its members for such expulsion. Not to be daunted that easily, Donahoe then brought suit in the child's name -- Donahoe, proclaim Ami, vs Richards et als, 38 Maine 379 -- in which he was again defeated, the court finding that the duties imposed upon the Superintending School Committee partook of a judicial character, and that, for an honest though erroneous discharge of them, they were not liable in a suit for damages to the person expelled. The court, moreover, ruled that for the refusal to read from a book by them prescribed, the Committee might expel such disobedient scholar. In delivering the unanimous opinion of the court, Judge Appleton based the decision on the following claim:

If the right to expurgate and interdict is yielded to any one scholar, because of his religious faith, the law would be granting a privilege and preference to a particular denomination. The right to control the selection because of denominational reasons, the scholar still remaining in the school, is liable to the very objection which the plaintiff makes to the selection. If the common version of the Bible is to be objected because of denominational objections, so might the works of Locke, Bacon, Newton and Galileo, or of any ecclesiastical power. This would be a surrender of the

power of the majority to the denominational allegiance of each scholar, to the destruction of all discipline and order in the schools.<sup>7</sup>

The judge's failure to distinguish between the religious act of reading the inspired word of God and the purely secular reading or studying of a secular text-book was an error all too easily made at that time. It cost Lawrence Donahoe his test-case, and the whole affair raised a notch higher the pitch to which the public mind had been excited.

With the wholesale expulsion of the Catholic children, Father Bapst was forced to open a school to provide for their education. The old chapel that was no longer in use was transformed into a school-house, and the services of Miss Mary Agnes Tincker, one of the twelve young converts, were secured as teacher.

In the December 24, 1853, issue of the Bangor Whig and Courier, there appeared a lengthy document entitled "A Statement of the Superintending School Committee" signed by Messrs. Tisdale, Richards and Pulsifer, in which the entire blame for the controversy was placed upon "Mr. Bapst". The following excerpts are typical of the tenor of the whole:

... Mr. Bapst called upon the several members of the Committee, requesting them to reverse their decision. He stated explicitly that personally he had no particular objection to the reading of the Bible as required in our Schools; but that he had instructions from his Ecclesiastical Superiors to forbid it -- that he could not sustain

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<sup>7</sup> Court Calendar reported for the Boston Daily Advertiser, August 12, 1854.

himself unless he obeyed their instructions -- that disobedience on the part of the Catholics would be followed by excommunication, which, in Catholic estimation, would be equivalent to damnation.

Here, then, was the attempted interference of a foreign power in our School management -- a power for which we have no reverence and but little respect, which we regarded as impertinent and insulting.

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Who then is responsible for the agitation of this subject, and all the evil that has resulted? We answer by the statement of a simple fact. All was undisturbed harmony on this subject, until the Rev. Mr. Bapst, a Catholic priest, of the order of Jesuits, came among us. He is a foreigner by birth, education, and allegiance. Under his dictation a portion of our fellow-citizens have deprived their children of the benefits of our schools, many of them stating to us that they themselves had no objection to the rule we have retained in reference to the Bible.

On him alone rests the responsibility. The efforts to transform us into tyrants and persecutors, will not succeed. That is the essence of tyranny, persecution, which denounces from the Altor (sic), and denies the hope of salvation to all who will not do its bidding.<sup>8</sup>

Father Bapst's reply was soon forthcoming. The January 5, 1854, number of the same newspaper carried his rebuttal, point by point, of the allegations made by the Committee. In this writer's opinion, the clarity and emphasis that characterize the priest's statement of his (and the Church's) position in the current debate merit that his letter be included in extenso in this thesis; it is consequently to be found in the Appendix to this work.

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<sup>8</sup> Bangor Whig and Courier, December 24, 1853.

An important factor in all this controversy is the role played by the press. The Ellsworth Herald at the time had as its editor and part owner William H. Chaney, the "brains of the Cast Iron Band's debauchery," as Mr. Davis calls him in his manuscript. This newspaper at first had been slow in making capital of the town's agitation; subsequently, however, it was to whip up such a fine fury by its constant attacks upon Father Bapst and the Catholics that a Bangor paper was moved to comment: "The Herald makes up quite handsomely in zeal what it lacked in speed, and we venture to say will not be caught napping again."<sup>9</sup> In a later number, the same newspaper remarked:

The Ellsworth Herald is this week almost exclusively devoted to the discussion of the Catholic question in Ellsworth, to the lampooning of the Catholic priest, Mr. Bapst (sic) of that town, and to an exposition of the extremes of the Roman Catholic Church. The Herald displays a pictorial cut which appears quite striking.<sup>10</sup>

And a week later, it added: "The Ellsworth Herald keeps up an active war against "Popery" and flourishes its battle axe about the heads of its devotees with great effect. The whole subject is a prolific one."<sup>11</sup>

Prolific, indeed, and a most opportune one at this time for the editor whose journal was on the verge of bankruptcy. Chaney resorted to the same tactics that had won favor for the American Protestant Magazine and for many another anemic weekly: he began an outrageous

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9 Bangor Whig and Courier, January 3, 1854.

10 Ibid., January 23, 1854.

11 Ibid., January 30, 1854.

and heinous attack upon Catholics, filling practically every column of his paper with accusations and calumnies for many weeks. The libelous articles attracted the attention of the more ignorant and biased minds, thereby swelling the subscriptions list of the paper and saving it from ruin. Cheap journalism in its most degraded function, that of nurturing hatred against a minority and inciting mob-rule, was having a field-day, meanwhile its chief exponent was winning for himself a questionable popularity in the eyes of his townspeople who were to elect him their Town Clerk, thereby significantly placing their stamp of approval upon his atrocious policy. <sup>12</sup>

At a meeting held on January 27, 1854, in Lord's Hall, the "Cast Iron Band" was formally organized "... to destroy popery and everything appertinent thereto." Chaney, who had called the meeting to order, was one of eight members who delivered addresses of anti-papal sentiment; Doctor Pulsifer, the Reverend J. French, and J. S. Hawes, principal of the High School, also held forth on the same subject. At a later meeting of the same group on February 3, 1854, Chaney made a motion that Father Bapst and Mr. White be invited to the next assembly to defend their side of the argument. Objection was raised to this motion by S. S. Lord on the grounds that there was only one side to the question, and therefore, there would be nothing for them to discuss. The objection was received

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<sup>12</sup> Bangor Daily Journal, October 17, 1854.

with vigorous applause and laughter.<sup>13</sup>

The first act of violence took place on the evening of June 3, 1854, when an increasing enthusiasm to keep the town from the dread clutches of "Popery" led to a demonstration of window-breaking by the rowdy element of the town, many of whom styled themselves respectable. On that day Father Bapst's housekeeper had had wind of a plot whereby the Know-Nothings hoped to seize the priest and wreak their vengeance upon him. He had just returned to Ellsworth from his missions, this being a Saturday, to find a sick-call from a distant mission awaiting him. Completely in the dark concerning the plot, he was tempted to remain in Ellsworth to say Mass the following day for his Catholics. The housekeeper finally prevailed upon him to go to the sick person instead, and he left the same day of his arrival. That night a mob surrounded the rectory; the members were dressed entirely in white with a dark belt encircling their waists. They thundered at the door and called for Father Bapst until the housekeeper, Mary Hennessey, assured them that the priest was away on a sick-call. Thereupon they expressed their disappointment by casting a large stone through a front window, breaking five panes of glass and a portion of the sash.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Albert Davis, Religious Troubles of 1854 at Ellsworth, Maine (manuscript, 1927), pp. 4-5.

<sup>14</sup> "The Housekeeper's Account of Events at Ellsworth" (Woodstock Letters, XVIII, 2, June, 1889, pp. 133-136).

Father Bapst received news on the road of the attack made on his house and returned so quietly to Ellsworth after dark on Tuesday, June 6th, that his coming was not known to his antagonists. On that very same night, the mob reassembled and rushed the doors of the church. Colonel Charles Jarvis, a Protestant and a great admirer of Father Bapst, hastened on horse-back to the church and by energetic efforts succeeded in stopping the foremost aggressors from completely wrecking the structure, though they did shatter every window in it. No attempt was made that night to attack the rectory, due to the mob's ignorance of Father Bapst's return.<sup>15</sup>

The following morning the priest received a telegram from Woodstock, Maine, about 180 miles west of Ellsworth, near the New Hampshire border, asking his spiritual assistance for a sick person there. He immediately left for Woodstock, and on his return, instead of going to Ellsworth, he went directly to Bangor where the Bishop had assigned him to take up his permanent quarters. News of the attacks on the church and rectory had reached the diocesan authorities, and Bishop Fitzpatrick deemed it advisable to withdraw Father Bapst from the town. He ordered the priest not to return to Ellsworth even for the Sunday services, but to send another priest who was not connected with the school trouble.<sup>16</sup>

The Catholic priest's departure from the town, far from quieting

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15 Ibid.

16 "Father Bapst's Narrative", loc. cit., ibid.

the anti-Catholics, was instead considered an encouraging victory that stimulated them on to greater efforts. Mobs and riots became a nightly outrage; no Catholic could expect to go into the street at night without being stoned and whipped. On the night of June 13th an attempt was made to destroy the Catholic school building on High Street by igniting a canister of powder placed against the outside door. The explosion was so powerful that it burst the door from its hinges, broke out all the glass in the building and very nearly unroofed the structure.

The respectable Protestants of the town were stirred to anger by this act of violence and decided to call a public meeting to denounce the outrage as the work of ignorant bigots. A regular town meeting was called by the Chairman of the Town Selectmen, Mr. Whittaker, a Democrat, for July 8th at the Congregational Church. When the respectable residents went to the assembly, they found that the Know-Nothing element had gathered in large force and taken possession, out-numbering them four to one. The rowdies gained control of the meeting by electing Chairman one of their number, George W. Brown. Speeches, prompted and dictated by a spirit of anti-Catholicism, were made and cheered to the echo. The following resolution was then introduced by G. N. Maddocks:

Whereas, we have good reason to believe that we are indebted to one John Bapst, S. J., Catholic Priest, for the luxury of the present law suit now enjoyed by the school committee of Ellsworth, therefore,

Resolved, That should the said Bapst be found again upon Ellsworth soil, we manifest our gratitude for his kindly interference with our fine schools, and attempt to banish the Bible

therefrom, by procuring for him, and trying on an entire suit of new clothes such as cannot be found at the shops of any taylor (sic); and that when thus apparelled, he be presented with a fine ticket to leave Ellsworth upon the first railroad operation that may go into effect.<sup>17</sup>

The reading of this resolution, still to be seen recorded in the Town Records over the signature of W. A. Chaney, Town Clerk, was received with shouts of applause, and it was adopted without a dissenting voice or vote.

On Saturday night, July 15th, an attempt was made to burn the new church, and, says the Eastern Freeman, a local newspaper of that time, "... if not timely discovered must have proved the destruction of that building and the adjoining Catholic School." The Augusta Age, July 27, 1854, called the unsuccessful attempt the "fruit of a bitter campaign waged for months by the Ellsworth Herald." The Boston Pilot, in reporting the incident, thus quoted the Bangor Mercury:

... We cannot believe that the numerous outrages in Ellsworth against the Irish Catholic population are countenanced by the people, although they are the legitimate fruits of the bitter crusade which the Ellsworth Herald has waged for many months. The outrage in Bath in burning the Catholic Church was entirely unprovoked, and both these places stand disgraced in the eyes of all good citizens. These acts of violence are the more lamentable because they are directed against a religious sect ... one that with all others is carefully protected by the constitution under which we live, and which protection has ever been regarded as the dearest right of the citizen.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Davis, op. cit., pp. 7-8., and "Narrative of a Protestant Resident of Ellsworth", loc. cit.

18 Davis, op. cit., p. 8.

19. Boston Pilot, July 29, 1854.

The final act of this infamous drama was to take place several months later. In October, 1854, Father Bapst was obliged to visit Cherryfield, a distance of fifty miles from Bangor. To get there, he had to pass through Ellsworth. Thinking that the old agitation had died out, and full of hopes that no attempt would be made to molest him, he determined to stop over Sunday in that town, in order to hear the Confessions of the Catholics there and to say Mass for them. He arrived in Ellsworth on Saturday night, October 14, 1854, and stopped at the home of an Irish Catholic named Kent.

It was rumored through the streets that Father Bapst was in town; some doubted, others reasoned that it must be so since the information was said to have been given out by the young Kent boy, Richard. Immediately a meeting was called by the "Cast Iron Band" in conjunction with the Know-Nothing Society at the Know-Nothing Hall on Water Street. The Hunneman Hose Company also called a special meeting at the fire house, located on a pier just around the corner from the Know-Nothing Hall. Meanwhile, an assembly of several hundred men and boys were gathered in the Post Office Square awaiting action.

Shortly after nine o'clock, the members of the Hunneman Hose Company marched from their headquarters to the Square. Some of them remained there, while others entered the Know-Nothing Hall. A few minutes later, the Know-Nothings with fifty or more masked members

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20 "The Housekeeper's Account", loc. cit.

21 Davis, op. cit., p. 10.

emerged from their Hall and marched through a furious rain storm, followed by about five hundred people, up Main Street to the Kent house.

Father Bapst was hearing confessions in the Kent home when the roar of the mob reached him. He insisted upon going out of doors to meet the mobsters, but the Catholics in the house, thinking only of his safety, took him bodily into the cellar and hid him beneath a barrel. Some of the rowdies forced an entrance and demanded the priest; upon being refused, they searched the house but failed to find him. As they were leaving, convinced that he was not there, it occurred to one of their number, Sewall Copp of Trenton, who had built the house, that there was a trap-door leading to the cellar. Pushing aside the table, which stood on the door, they opened it and several of them went down to emerge in a few minutes with Father Bapst led by a rope tied around his neck.<sup>22</sup> Another account has it that the search party was unable to find the priest; when they threatened to burn down the house and "roast him alive", Father Bapst gave himself up in order to spare his friends from harm.<sup>23</sup>

The same narrative states that the priest was carried off to the outskirts of the town where his watch, money and clothes were taken away from him. Here a consultation ensued as to what was to be done with him. At this point, Father Bapst's Protestant friend claims that the priest was dragged into a wood, tied to a tree with brush

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22 Ibid.

23 "Narrative of a Protestant Resident", loc. cit.

piled around him, and that some of the ruffians tried to set it on fire, but that they exhausted their supply of matches before the brush could be ignited. This well could be, there being a terrific storm that night. However, there is no mention of an attempt to burn Father Bapst at the stake in any of the other accounts, and the Bangor Daily Journal report of the proceedings which Father Bapst sent to Bishop Fitzpatrick with the notation that the story contained was correct but incomplete, does not mention the attempt to burn him.<sup>24</sup> What most likely happened is this. Since it had been decided at the town meeting to tar and feather the priest if ever he returned to Ellsworth, the men tried to carry out their plan and start a fire to heat the tar, but were stymied by the lack of sufficient dry timber. Out of this failure to get a fire going probably arose the story that they tried to roast the priest.

The different accounts of the night's outrage agree on the subsequent events. Father Bapst was brought back to Ellsworth to the corner of Pine and Water Streets; dry fuel was secured from a building on the site of the Ellsworth Machine Company's office building, and an extremely hot fire was kindled in the driveway to prepare the tar. Several people along the march had thrown feather pillows to the mob. Then Father Bapst was stripped of his clothes, plastered with hot tar, and feathers were dumped upon him. While this torture was taking place, the vilest blasphemies and indecencies of language were aimed at him. One fanatic cried, "So they persecuted Jesus of old," while another

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<sup>24</sup> Bangor Daily Journal, October 17, 1854.

jeered, "Why don't you call on your Virgin Mary for help?" All the filthy venom that had accumulated over the months in these men's bigoted hearts was spat forth with a primitive savagery much akin to that of the region's first inhabitants.<sup>25</sup> Then carrying out the last part of their resolution to provide the priest with free transportation, they placed him on a sharp rail and thus carried him along for half a mile, hooting and cursing him, while jogging him up and down so as to inflict more pain and injury. Arrived at the Tisdale shipyards, they threw him down on a wharf, totally unconscious from his sufferings. Some of the mob were all for hanging him; others clamored to drown him, but the leader, George Maddox, no doubt fearful of the consequences,<sup>26</sup> succeeded in dissuading them and told them to disperse to their homes.

Some time after midnight, Father Bapst regained consciousness, covered himself with a piece of matting found on the wharf, and slowly made his way through the storm up Pine Street. He was met along the way by a group of heavily armed Catholics who were out searching for him. They took him to the home of John Lee on East Main Street where, with the aid of hot lard, the men removed the tar and feathers as best they could. After Mr. Lee had given him clothing, the men accompanied their former pastor to the Kent house where they desired to stay the night with him, but Father Bapst insisted upon their returning to their frightened families.<sup>27</sup> Notwithstanding all his suffering and

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25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Davis, op. cit., p. 11.

anguish, the good priest would take no nourishment nor quench his agonizing thirst, because he had resolved to say Mass that Sunday morning. When dawn broke, Jeremiah Crowley drove him across the river to the church where he celebrated Mass and preached his last sermon to his former parishioners. He was then taken by Colonel Jarvis to this Protestant gentleman's home to spend the remainder of the day and night, well protected by armed guards posted around the house. The next day, the Colonel drove him to Bangor in his carriage.<sup>28</sup>

So ended the "Ellsworth Affair". Although Father Bapst was to spend the next five years of his life as pastor of St. John's Church in Bangor, he never revisited the town where he suffered the severest trial of his missionary career, a trial of fiendish brutality inflicted by partisans of the Know-Nothing Party and their bigoted satellites, a trial that stigmatized Ellsworth as the only town in the history of the United States where an ordained minister of an established Faith was persecuted and tortured by order of the official decree of an elected government.

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28 "Narrative of a Protestant Resident", loc. cit.

## CHAPTER V

### AFTERMATH AND CONCLUSION

Whenever the liberty of a citizen is invaded, the public press usually mirrors the indignation of the people by strongly denouncing the invader and by greatly sympathizing with the outraged person. There are times, however, when the public press will pass over such an occurrence without comment, or with those faint commonplaces of condemnation usually applied to a brawl in a tavern. "Rowdyism" -- "reprehensible proceeding" -- "disgraceful affair" -- and a few similar expressions at the head of an editorial are all that some influential papers will deem it proper to publish, a mode of action often dictated by the policy of the paper or still by the spirit of the times in which the violation occurred. For instance, people of Japanese extraction enjoyed little popularity on the West Coast after Pearl Harbor, no matter how guiltless they were, and their civil rights were often violated by over-ardent Americans who found delight in destroying their homes and ruining their crops. In reporting the incidents, the papers were careful to couple their information with the statement that the sufferers were "Japanese", the connexion conveying their obvious impression that they were entitled to no better treatment.

By substituting the word Jesuit, German, or French for the word Japanese, we arrive at the same result achieved by the sectarian press of the Eastern States in its coverage of the "Ellsworth Affair". This

attitude was representative of a spirit of intolerance toward the Catholic religion and those who professed it in a section of the country where the Know-Nothing Party was steadily progressing. On the other hand, it must be stated to the credit of the general press that it treated the whole occurrence in a liberal and dignified spirit, even demanding that the "perpetrators of this wrong, outrage and blunder be made to suffer the utmost rigors of the law."<sup>1</sup> The Bangor newspapers especially took the people of Ellsworth to task and rested the blame squarely upon the editorial shoulders that guided the Ellsworth Herald's destiny. Chaney's tenacity, however, was prodigious. He devoted the columns of his paper to absurd defenses of the outrage, maintaining that the outside publications were not acquainted with the facts that led up to what he called, "...a justified attempt to preserve American institutions from the dark clutches of the Papacy."<sup>2</sup> The "facts" which he set forth to justify the crime took the form of scurrilous and personal attacks on Father Bapst. The following synopsis of a colorful story contained in nearly two columns of an issue of the Herald will give the reader an insight of the man's method and material.

It appeared that the husband of an old Irish lady living in Ellsworth (the name, of course, withheld) went to California during the gold rush of 1849, leaving his wife and family at home. In 1853, he died there. The devout wife wished to have his body removed to

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1 The Bangor Courier, October 19, 1854; the Augusta Age, October 26, 1854.

2 Davis, op. cit., p. 14.

Ellsworth but was financially unable to provide for its transportation. Father Bapst, hearing of her desires, sent for her and agreed for ten dollars to pray the body from California to the High Street Burying Ground in Ellsworth. The widow paid the fee and was informed the following day by the priest that during the night he had prayed the body home. He then showed her the exact spot in the cemetery where her husband's body rested as the result of the miracle he had wrought, but admonished her that if she were to dig there to see the remains, the saint (?), being angered by the procedure, would cause the body's return to California, from whence it could never again be reclaimed.<sup>3</sup>

It is not difficult to appreciate the type of mind to which stories of this caliber would continue their appeal for twenty months, and when we consider that it was this type of literature which so overwhelmingly swelled the subscription list of the Herald, we can clearly understand the sorry plight of the people's ignorance and bigotry. The citizens of Ellsworth were not long in fully realizing the savageness and the potent effects of the affair from its effects on the outside world. In order to refute the accusations leveled at them, especially by the Bangor newspapers, they held a mass meeting at Lord's Hall. W. H. Chaney called it to order and nominated Captain Jesse Dutton, who was elected Chairman, with George W. Maddox, Secretary. Here is the account of that evening's deliberations:

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Voted, that a committee of five be supported by the chairman, on resolutions, and Misters John L. Moore, Seth Paddleford, Parker W. Piny, W. E. Packard and Samuel Beckwith, were chosen upon that committee. The committee retired and subsequently came in, and reported the following resolutions, which, after being read, were unanimously adopted:

Resolutions.

Whereas, The indignities recently offered John Bapst, a Romish priest and Jesuit, while in this village, whither he had returned after having been exiled by force of public opinion, for his treasonable interference with our free schools, has called forth the animadversions of the press abroad and particularly in the city of Bangor, upon the citizens of Ellsworth generally; And Whereas, they have been denounced as "rowdies, ruffians and pirates" upon the false assertions of said Bapst, therefore,

Resolved by the Citizens of Ellsworth in Public Meeting assembled -- That while we deplore the unhappy state of feeling engendered in our community by the intrigues of this designing Jesuit, and while we bitterly regret his indiscretions and bravado in returning here after having made himself so exceedingly obnoxious to all respectable Protestants and true laws of their country and its glorious institutions, we still hold ourselves as American freemen, accountable by law, and that we hurl back the charge of being "rowdies, ruffians, and pirates" to the base source from which it emanated.

Resolved That while we cherish a love for law and order, we still hold as sacred the birthright of the Puritan fathers, by whose blood was purchased the freedom we enjoy -- a freedom wrenched by force and at the point of the bayonet from foreign tyrants -- and that among the blessings thus secured, our free schools, with the free use of the Bible therein, is the most sacred, and that to maintain the same against the intriguing schemes of the Pope of Rome through his will and dearly beloved priests and their allies, false-hearted, truth economizing, treacherous office-holders, office-seekers, and their lick spittles, we are ready, like our sires, to shoulder our muskets if need be, and fight afresh for the liberties transmitted to us.

Resolved, That the language used by the Bangor Press, towards us as citizens of Ellsworth, is more applicable in

that city than here, and that in years past, they have manifested more hostility towards the Papists, have destroyed a thousand times more property, and shed a thousand times more blood, by lawless mobs, led on and encouraged by lawless men, than has ever been done by a few sailors from abroad, headed by a Roman Catholic, in the outrages perpetrated upon the person of John Bapst, S. J., Catholic priest.

Resolved, That as peaceable citizens and lovers of law and order, we do the utmost that lays in our power to suppress and keep down not only a mob spirit in our midst, but that we force down and hold in detestation the spirit manifested by certain men-pulling demagogues, who have so far given countenance to the treasonable efforts of said Bapst and his followers, as to be in a great measure instrumental in producing the unhappy state of society which has existed here for several months past, and finally terminated in the lynching of said Bapst, a deed which we all sincerely deplore.

Mr. Chaney spoke for 3/4 of an hour, then gave short history of R. C. troubles in Ellsworth and was frequently interrupted by cheers. Beckwith, Shaw, Truworth also made "some very happy and truthful remarks." Hamilton of New Hampshire re R. C. made pointed remarks and said he felt safe while remaining in Ellsworth. John D. Richards, Esq. was called for, whereupon he enquired what the question was, and he had nothing to say.

Voted to publish in Ellsworth Herald - Bangor Journal and other Bangor papers. -- Adjourned at 9.<sup>4</sup>

The Bangor Daily Journal added its comments to the above record by stating that "the language of the 'Resolutions' was a mockery of words and a burlesque upon decency." It proved its contention by reminding its readers that the Chairman of this meeting was the same man who presided at the meeting in the Town Hall when the resolution threatening this outrage was adopted; that Maddox, the Secretary, was

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<sup>4</sup> Bangor Daily Journal, quoted by the Boston Pilot, November 11, 1854.

the man who had introduced the resolution to tar and feather Father Bapst, and that Chaney was the editor of the Herald which consistently justified the outrage. The Journal went on to prove the falseness of the statement concerning the sailors by pointing out that for the past ten to fifteen years Ellsworth's lawless mob had outraged public decency by disrupting Temperance, Musical and Lyceum theatre shows, cutting booms, damaging wharves and dams, breaking into vessels, stores and homes, and disgracing the public streets by their furious driving, indecent behavior and shocking profanity. It finally impugned the honesty of the selectmen for having so long shirked their duty of protecting persons and property.

A meeting of another kind was held by the Protestants of Bangor to which Father Bapst was invited. The place of honor on the platform was assigned to him. This meeting was attended by the most prominent Protestants of the city, who came in large numbers and greeted Father Bapst's appearance on the stage with hearty and prolonged applause. Resolutions were read, denouncing the outrage, lauding the priest's admirable patience during the trial, his Christian forbearance after it, his courageous zeal in performing his sacred duties despite the dire warnings to leave the town, expressing the sympathy of the whole Protestant community and declaring that his high integrity and untiring zeal were a source of blessings to the city in which he was so honored a resident. In closing this expression of their sentiments, the framers of the resolution begged leave to present a fitting testimonial of his acknowledged worth, and so, thereby, to make reparation for their State of Maine for the cowardly pilfering that had intensified the baseness

of the unprovoked attack upon him. The Chairman, amid deafening applause, then presented Father Bapst with a well filled purse and a handsome gold watch, to replace the silver timepiece stolen from him by the Ellsworth mob. On the cover of the watch was engraved the following inscription:

To Rev. John Bapst, S.J.  
From the Citizens of Bangor, Maine,<sup>5</sup>  
As a Token of Their High Esteem.

From that time on, Father Bapst's influence with all classes in Bangor was most powerful. Sympathy had begot admiration, and admiration quickly begot love as the people came to know him better.

The reaction of the respectable people in Ellsworth expressed itself differently. In their righteous indignation over the dishonor inflicted upon their town by the outrage, they resolved to punish the ruffians, and got the Honorable George Evans, then Attorney General of the State, and previously United States Senator, to come to Ellsworth and conduct a personal investigation of the affair. Mr. Evans accordingly called a special session of the Grand Jury before whom eleven men were summoned. The Grand Jury, however, was composed entirely of Know-Nothings, and although Evans claimed the evidence he presented was stronger than any he had ever had to present before a Grand Jury, this august body could not find cause for indicting any of the eleven. The Attorney General, thoroughly disgusted with the Grand Jury, left town immediately, saying that he would not sleep a night in Ellsworth if he got a present of

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<sup>5</sup> Woodstock Letters, XVIII, 3, October, 1889, pp. 309-310.

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the whole State of Maine. Well intentioned as the good citizens were, their investigation was doomed to failure from the start because so many people in the town had had a hand in the affair. The Bangor Daily Journal reported that even before the investigation took place the ruffians and their friends, some of whom were very prominent people, had agreed to back anyone arrested and to destroy the jail if they were arrested.<sup>7</sup>

The final scene of the dramatic "Ellsworth Affair" was enacted on April 27, 1856. "Ellsworth has at last crowned the measure of its hatred against Catholicity," wrote Father Bapst to his Provincial. "The Ellsworth church is no more. Last Sunday night between 11 and 12 o'clock it was burned down to the ground; nothing has been left of it but a pile of ashes .... The triumph of the rowdies is now complete."<sup>8</sup> It will be remembered that this was the new church which Father Bapst had erected in 1853, just three years previously at a cost of about five thousand dollars. A dwelling house near the Ellsworth House, belonging to an Irishman named Turner, was also set on fire as the people were returning from the scene of the destroyed church.<sup>9</sup> The only comment that the exasperated Boston Pilot had to make on the incident was the following:

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6 "Narrative of a Protestant Resident", loc. cit.

7 Bangor Daily Journal, quoted by the Boston Pilot, November 11, 1854.

8 Father Bapst, S. J., to Father Stonestreet, S. J., April 28, 1856 (Fordham Archives, 224 T6).

9 The Boston Pilot, May 10, 1856.

What a pity it is that this Ellsworth could not be annexed to Louisville, and both sunk in the bottom of the ocean. They are plague spots upon the map of the country.<sup>10</sup>

Reference is made here to Louisville, Kentucky, where the infamous bloody Monday of August 6, 1855, had seen the Know-Nothings set fire to blocks of dwellings tenanted by the Irish, with entire families being roasted to death or shot as they attempted to escape. Here, too, the riot was precipitated by the violent editorials of a Know-Nothing, George D. Prentice, of the Louisville Journal.<sup>11</sup>

An interesting sidelight to the tarring and feathering of Father Bapst is the general belief preserved among the Catholics of the town that the priest put a curse on every man directly concerned in his persecution. The curse, it seems, was to the effect that every man who had an active part in the October 14th episode would die unprepared for death and with his shoes on. Although the event took place nearly a hundred years ago, this writer has talked with several of the older Catholics in Ellsworth, who all had heard of the curse; the majority gave it their full credence and even brought forth alleged facts to substantiate their belief and the reality of the curse itself.

It must be remembered that in this section of the country, it is a traditional saying among the Catholics that anyone who strikes a priest or does him harm in any way will die a violent death. Then, too,

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Sister Agnes McGann, S.C.N., Nativism in Kentucky to 1860, p. 89.

there seemed to be a very popular hysteria at that time in Ellsworth of people being cursed to die with their shoes on. There is a notable instance to be found in the failure of the Hancock Bank; one of the largest depositors cursed the directors to die with their shoes on; the singular fact is that they did -- all having committed suicide except one, who died of a heart attack.<sup>12</sup> Finally, when we consider the natural kindness of Father Bapst, not to mention the Christian principle involved, it appears incredible that he would pronounce a similar curse, especially when we recall that never once during his long life did he ever mention the Ellsworth incident to even his most intimate friends. Still and all, though many people die with their shoes on who have neither tarred and feathered a priest nor been a bank director, for many years it was an unfortunate blow for any man's reputation to have died with his shoes on in Ellsworth.

A curse of another kind was placed upon the town that was dubbed the "Sodom and Gomorrah of Maine".<sup>13</sup> This curse took the form of a parody twenty-one stanzas long entitled "A Litany for Ellsworth, Maine". It appeared in the New York Herald and was reprinted by the Boston Pilot just a week prior to the burning of the Ellsworth church. Only two rhymes are employed in the whole litany; this parody is an alteration of "O'Kelly's Curse of Doneraile", the words Ellsworth, Maine, being substituted for Doneraile, and must have been incubated by some

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<sup>12</sup> Davis, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Bangor Daily Journal, May 3, 1855.

anti-Know-Nothing who was exercised over the many evils of that town. Five stanzas will suffice to give a fair representation of the litany of curses:

May fire and brimstone never fail  
 To fall in showers on Ellsworth, Maine,  
 May all the leading friends assail  
 The Thieving town of Ellsworth, Maine.

May beef or mutton, lamb or veal,  
 Be never found in Ellsworth, Maine,  
 But garlic soup, and scurvy kail,  
 Be the food of Ellsworth, Maine.

May fame resound a dismal tale  
 Whene'r she lights on Ellsworth, Maine;  
 May Egypt's plagues at once prevail  
 To thin the knaves of Ellsworth, Maine.

May frost and snow, and sleet and hail  
 Benumb each joint in Ellsworth, Maine;  
 May no one coffin want a nail,  
 That wraps a rogue in Ellsworth, Maine.

Oh! may my couplets never fail  
 To find a curse for Ellsworth, Maine;  
 And may grim Pluto's inner gaol  
 Forever groan with Ellsworth, Maine.<sup>14</sup>

The "Ellsworth Affair" was the source of inspiration for still another literary effort, one that it could call its very own this time, for the work was written by one of its finest citizens, Miss Mary Agnes Tincker. Miss Tincker, it will be recalled, was Father Bapst's convert who had taken over the teaching chores in his short-lived school. Her novel, The House of Yorke, written in 1872, purports to be an accurate relation of the incidents that took place during the years 1853-1854 in

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<sup>14</sup> New York Herald, quoted by the Boston Pilot, April 19, 1856.

Ellsworth. It is a highly romanticized version of the difficulties between the Irish and the natives, the Protestants and the priest, viewed through the prim eyes of an eager young convert and portrayed in a style reminiscent of Richardson's Pamela. This first venture into the field of fiction must have proven satisfactory because it was followed by six other novels: Signor Monaldini's Niece (1879), The Jewel in the Lotos (1884), Aurora (1886), Two Coronets (1889), San Salvador (1892), and Grapes and Thorns, or A Priest's Sacrifice, published two years after her death in 1909. In this posthumous work, Father Bapst, or at least a priest closely resembling him, strides through difficulties always insurmountable, apparently, but "with conquering steps that never falter." Miss Tincker's works may have been popular at the time of publication; at present, they are collectors' items to be found in few libraries.

The same year that saw the burning of the Ellsworth church also saw the decline of the Know-Nothing Party in Maine as well as in all the Northern States. The rise of the Party in the elections of 1854 and 1855 had placed the nativists in a position where they could for the first time translate their theories into practice. While succeeding in isolated ventures such as the burning of churches and convents, they failed most miserably when it came time to carry into effect on a national scale the doctrines of anti-Catholic and anti-foreign propagandists. Several causes can be ascribed for this failure. In the first place, the rabble-rousing Know-Nothings that

were elected to office were poorly trained and inexperienced men<sup>15</sup> who lacked the legislative experience necessary to carry through their proposed laws against Catholics and immigrants. Whatever reforms were suggested and whatever amendments were presented by these men met speedy death at the hands of later legislatures.

Another element that hastened the decline of the Know-  
Nothings was the secrecy with which the members surrounded themselves. This secrecy fostered all kinds of rumors about dread plots being hatched against democracy; criticism soon followed on the heels of the rumors, a criticism that took the form of that most telling of weapons, ridicule. The opponents of the Party aimed their shafts at the ritual of the society, by giving burlesque accounts of its initiation ceremonies; at its name, by transforming it into "Owe-Nothing", "Say-Nothing", and "Do-Nothing"; and finally, by taking many a poke at its objectives -- the destruction of the "popish" armies and  
Jesuit spies that supposedly threatened the security of the nation.<sup>16</sup>  
The rioting and bloodshed fostered by the Nativists in their campaigns were to deter many Americans who, while antagonistic to Catholics and immigrants and desirous of keeping "America for the Americans", still could not condone these violent methods of settling their problem.

The coup de gr<sup>â</sup>ce was to come in the presidential election year of 1856. At this time, slavery was rapidly replacing nativism

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15 Boston Pilot, March 25, 1854.

16 Ibid., April 29, 1854.

as an issue which was to decide not only political fortunes, but the very fate of the nation. After serious efforts to nationalize the Party, chiefly by adopting a neutral policy with regard to slavery, the Know-Nothing Party found itself divided; its Northern adherents had adopted a plank which declared the signers' principles to be those of nativism and anti-slavery, whereas the Southerners adopted a platform upholding slavery. There followed a general exodus of former Know-<sup>17</sup> Nothings into the anti-slavery Republican Party. Thus broken up, the nativists won so small an electoral vote in the national election that they suffered a crushing defeat. Various attempts were made to keep the Party alive, but with little success; nativism had subsided, at least until its reappearance in the ephemeral American Protective Association of the 1890's, and later still with the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the South.

Thus did the slavery issue sound the death knell of Know-Nothingism. The resentment of public-spirited men of prominence who revolted against the un-American principles of the Party are best expressed in Abraham Lincoln's oft-quoted letter of August, 1855, to Joshua Fry Speed:

I am not a Know-Nothing; that is certain. How could I be? How can anyone who abhors the oppression of negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation, we began by declaring that "all men are created equal". We practically read it "all men are created equal, except negroes." When the Know-Nothings get control, it

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17 McGann, op. cit., p. 130.

will read "all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners and Catholics."<sup>18</sup>

Father Bapst long outlasted the career of the Know-Nothings who had done their best to shorten his. He had a full life that was variegated in its undertakings, rich in the numerous friendships that he made and well rewarded by the many souls he brought closer to God. During the first of the five years he lived in Bangor, he built the present St. John's Church, the largest of the State at that time, at a cost of \$60,000.<sup>19</sup> In connection with the building of this church, there are two items of interest well worth noting.

A plot of land in a fashionable section of the city had been bought by Father Bapst's predecessor as a site for the proposed church. A committee of Protestants who lived in the district objected to the erection of a Catholic church on this land, using the argument that a large number of people attending services each Sunday would disturb the peace of the neighborhood and monopolize in wet weather the boards on the muddy sidewalks. Father Bapst, against the wishes of his parish trustees, honored their protests and sold them the lot,<sup>20</sup> for he saw no reason to irritate a large number of influential people, nor of placing a church in a part of the city where no Catholics lived. With the money realized from the sale, he bought land in a respectable

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<sup>18</sup> The Filson Club History Quarterly, XVII, April, 1943, p. 120, quoted by McGann, op. cit., p. 158.

<sup>19</sup> Boston Pilot, December 20, 1856.

<sup>20</sup> Woodstock Letters, XVIII, 3, October, 1889, pp. 314-319.

locality on York Street near a street entirely inhabited by Catholics, and there St. John's Church was built. Since 1928, there stands on the disputed lot a multi-million dollar Catholic High School where 400 of the city's Catholic boys and girls receive their education under the guidance of the Xaverian Brothers and the Sisters of Mercy. This High School, the finest in the State of Maine, bears the proud name of John Bapst. The writer will be forgiven for recalling here an incident that took place in Frankfort, Maine, at the time of the Bible reading difficulties. Catholic boys had been expelled from the village school for refusing to read a portion of the Scriptures approved by the American Bible Society. When the father of one of the boys was asked why he and Mr. Smith of the School Committee did not get together like men and settle the vexing school problem, the Irishman replied: "We will leave that for our children to solve; Smith has  
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none; I have ten."

The second interesting detail to be noted is that the cornerstone of St. John's Church preserves what may be the most unusual memento to be found in any church in the United States. On December 8, 1854, the day on which the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed, Bishop Fitzpatrick of Boston, assisted by Bishop Bacon of Portland, laid the cornerstone of St. John's Church. By direction of the presiding Bishop, Miss Mary Hennessey, the priest's housekeeper,

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21 The Maine Catholic Historical Magazine, II, 6, June, 1914, p. 20.

placed in a bottle pieces of the clothing smeared with tar and feathers which had been torn from Father Bapst at Ellsworth and which the housekeeper had treasured as relics. Into the same bottle went the explanatory note penned by Bishop Fitzpatrick himself:

This is a piece of the clothing worn by the builder of this Church, Rev. John Bapst, S. J., on the night of Oct. 14, 1854, when he was tarred and feathered, in hatred of the Faith, by the Know-Nothings of Ellsworth.<sup>22</sup>

This bottle was then placed beneath the cornerstone of the church.

Father Bapst continued to live in Bangor as pastor of St. John's until 1859 when the Fathers of the Society of Jesus were withdrawn from Maine by their Provincial. His subsequent life was spent in Worcester, Boston, Providence, New York, and in Maryland. He was named spiritual father at Holy Cross College, Worcester; then rector of the Jesuit Scholasticate in Boston College in 1860. He became pastor of the Immaculate Conception Church of Boston in 1863 and vice-rector of Boston College in 1864 when this institution opened its doors to day scholars. From 1869 to 1873, he was Superior of the New York and Canada missions, then pastor of St. Joseph's parish in Providence, Rhode Island. Everywhere he served, he was the friend of the poor, the courageous champion of principle and the exemplar of Christian virtue.

In the autumn of 1879 while still in Providence, his mind, harrowed by the unforgettable tortures he endured at Ellsworth, began

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22 "Housekeeper's Account", loc. cit.

to fail, and he suffered what he dreaded most in his life, a mental lapse. He told one of his friends in confidence:

I have all my life thought any disease, however terrible, would be welcome to me provided my mind were left me, whereby to know God more and more, and excite my heart to increase daily in His love. But God! blessed be His holy name! --- has decided against my wish, and is about to take from me what on his account I prized the most. Blessed may that holy will be forever. Despite the terrible revulsion of nature, I welcome for His sake, the dark valley I am about to enter -- a living death.<sup>23</sup>

Father Bapst was sent by his superiors to the Jesuit novitiate on the Hudson, at West Park, New York, where he remained until 1883, when it was decided to remove him to the milder climate of the South. At the novitiate in Frederick, Maryland, his malady grew worse and his mind became more and more darkened. The horrors of the Ellsworth outrage began to harass his mind, and the scene of violence was reenacted in his imagination. Even in the middle of the night he would sometimes run to one of the Fathers for protection against his fancied pursuers. He suffered untold agony from this source. In May, 1885, he was committed to the care of specialists at Mount Hope Retreat, near Baltimore. There he died on the Feast of All Souls, November 2, 1887. His remains were interred at Woodstock College, the Maryland Jesuit House of Studies. He who had had the courage to cry out: "Sume, Domine, et suscipe, accipe<sup>24</sup> meum intellectum," had gone to receive the reward granted to such self-sacrificing souls as his.

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23 Woodstock Letters, XX, 3, October, 1891, p. 409.

24 Ibid., p. 411.

Today, the Catholics of Ellsworth enjoy the peace and quiet that comes from better understanding and Christian tolerance between all religious groups. The one hundred and fifty families of St. Joseph's parish worship in a beautiful modern church built and dedicated in 1939 and located on High Street, near the site of the former Kent home. This church replaces the smaller one that was built in the early 1860's on Chapel Street; it is more centrally located than the old church and can accommodate the large number of Catholic summer residents who live in nearby Hancock and Blue Hill. The present pastor, the Reverend William McDonough, takes an active part in the civic affairs of the town, where respect and consideration for the priest have replaced the feelings of old. No small factor in creating this spirit of harmony is the high standard set by the Catholic judges, doctors, dentists and business men of the town. Their integrity as a professional group and as individuals has greatly contributed to make Ellsworth a pleasant place in which discrimination no longer exists.

In concluding this thesis, it is fitting to comment briefly on the growth of the Catholic Church in Maine, for this development is a testimonial and a tribute in itself to the long line of priests, both regular and secular, who labored in this region. When Bishop Bacon was consecrated as first Bishop of the Portland diocese, April 22, 1855, in all of Maine and New Hampshire, which constituted his diocese, there were only seven priests: three seculars and four Jesuits, ministering to the wants of some 9,000 Catholics. In 1889, five years after the separate erection of New Hampshire as a diocese, the Catholic

Directory lists the Catholic population of Maine as numbering 71,000, served by 54 priests. Still more amazing is the progress achieved within the last forty years. In the course of these four decades, the number of faithful has nearly tripled, while the number of priests has quadrupled. There were 96,400 Catholics in 1910; today there are 226,186; the clergy's ranks have swelled from 85 priests in 1910 to 343 in 1950. These statistics are all the more remarkable in view of the fact that strict immigration laws were passed in the 1920's which greatly limited the number of French Canadians entering Maine.

On every hand in the history of the Catholic Church in Maine, there are instances to show that "Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again." To cite but one of many, it will be remembered that on Mount Desert Island, the Jesuits Biard, Massé and du Thet established in 1613 the first monastery east of California in what is now the United States, where they lived until the English under Argall, committing the first act of aggression against Catholics in New England, destroyed the settlement and exiled its inhabitants. Mount Desert Island is now the home of the easternmost seminary in the United States, that of the French-speaking Oblates of Mary Immaculate, some of whose ancestors came to America with Champlain, the discoverer of the island in 1604.

The bitter opposition and prejudice which the Catholics encountered in Maine as early as 1613 is now mostly a thing of the past, although it would be idle to deny that in certain social circles and in certain branches of business the gulf between Catholics and Protestants is still far from obliterated. It may also be noted that the

Faith which the immigrants brought with them from the old countries has, as a general rule, not withered under the influence of the American environment; if anything, it has been strengthened and intensified by the conflicts it had to wage and by the ideal conditions that followed and now prevail. Truly, Bishop Fenwick of Boston had the vision of a prophet when, addressing the Prefect of Propaganda, Cardinal Frasoni, in January, 1845, he told of the Native American organization and its terrible doings, adding, "...that fiercely as they sought war on us for a time, and much as we may suffer in person, and in loss of property and of our churches, we shall triumph in the end. 'Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?'"<sup>25</sup>

L.J.C. et M.I.

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<sup>25</sup> Shea, op. cit., IV, p. 148.

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## APPENDIX

The following is Father Bapst's letter on the School Question in Ellsworth, published in the Bangor Daily Whig and Courier, Thursday, January 5, 1854:

To the editor of the Whig and Courier:

One of the late numbers of your valuable paper contains a statement of the Superintending School Committee of Ellsworth, on the School Question. It was certainly to be expected that a statement from such a source should be full and correct. That, however, it is neither full nor correct, will clearly appear by the following remarks.

The Committee faithfully acknowledge having decided that the reading of the Protestant version of the Bible should be forced on the Catholic children. So far their statement is correct; but what I cannot conceive is how they could forget to inform you that, not satisfied with such a decision, they went so far as to expel in fact all the Catholic children from the Town Schools. I thought that such expulsion was worth mentioning, and I consider it not as the least point in the controversy.

That all the Catholic children have been dismissed from the Schools by the Committee is a public fact. Now, what is the real and only cause of that wholesale expulsion? The real and only reason is because the Catholic children refuse to read a version of the Holy Scripture which has always been, and is yet, forbidden by the Catholic Church, and which no Catholic can read without perjuring his conscience and apostatizing from his faith.

That the Catholics of Ellsworth never asked for anything else, but that their children should be excused from reading such a version, appears evidently from the petition they presented to the Committee, which petition is in their hands yet.

Therefore, the statement of the School Committee is a false statement.

It is false that the Catholic children, with a single exception, ever misbehaved more than the others, even by the

testimony of the teachers, and of Mr. Richards himself, the Catholic children were among the best scholars; and in any case it is entirely false that any of them have been dismissed for such misbehavior.

It is false that I ever made any application for the division of the School money. I enjoy the right of having my own opinion about the best system of education, and that opinion I have expressed whenever called for, and even to Mr. Richards himself. But I solemnly deny that I ever made an application for dividing the School funds. Mr. Richards himself cannot testify to the contrary without perjuring himself; and here all the Catholics of Ellsworth who signed the petition, are requested to bear testimony against me if I ever made them a proposition to that effect, before our children were excluded from the Common Schools. And in any case is it for that reason that the Catholic children were turned out of the Schools? I am sorry that gentlemen like Mr. Tisdale and Mr. Pulsifer have given the authority of their names to such a statement.

It is false, entirely false, as it appears by our petition, that the Catholics ever requested that the Protestant Bible should be excluded from Schools. They always expressly conceded to the Protestants the right to use whatever Bible they think proper. All they asked for was that their own children should be allowed to read the Catholic Bible, or at least, to be excused from reading a version essentially against their conscience. Never have we had even the idea of asking that the Protestant version should be excluded from schools for the Protestant children.

It is false that I ever stated, "that personally, I had no particular objection to the reading of the Protestant Bible in the Schools by the Catholic children." Every gentleman who knows anything about the Catholic rule of faith will immediately understand how absurd it was in the writer of the above statement to put such language on my lips.

The following is a bare-faced falsehood: "Mr. Bapst," say the writers, "stated explicitly... that he had instructions from his ecclesiastical Superiors to forbid it (the reading of the Protestant Bible); that he could not sustain himself unless he obeyed their instructions.... Here, then, was the attempted interference of a foreign power in our school management." I solemnly declare that I never received

from any of my ecclesiastical Superiors any instructions whatever to forbid the reading of the Protestant version in the Schools; for the very simple reason that such instructions would be perfectly unnecessary; the Catholic Church having forbidden all such readings long before the Committee, I and my Superiors were born; at the very commencement of Protestantism. I never spoke or wrote to the Bishop a word about our School difficulty; and I am sure that he knows nothing about it, except, perhaps, what he has read in the newspapers.... Where is, then, and who is the foreign power who interfered in our School management? Nowhere except in the imagination of the writer of the statement.

For brevity sake, I omit a number of other misstatements. But suppose now, for the sake of an argument, the statement of the Superintending School Committee to be true, and every part of it correct; I maintain that they have avoided, altogether, the main point of the difficulty, and that their whole statement has very little to do with the question now at issue in Ellsworth!

The controversy between the School Committee and the Catholics of Ellsworth, divested of all foreign and false statements, and reduced to its simplest expression, resolves itself into this sole question: Has the School Committee the constitutional power to force on the Catholic children the reading of a version of the Bible, which is forbidden by their Church and their conscience, and in case of refusal, to dismiss them, for that reason alone? If the Committee has such a power under the Constitution, then the Committee is right, and the Catholics are wrong. But if the Committee has no such power, then the Catholics are right, and the Committee is answerable for the whole agitation. -- But the question has not yet been decided by a competent tribunal. Therefore let us wait.

Yours respectfully,

John Bapst, S.J.

Note: When the question was settled by the courts, in Donahoe vs Richards. 38 Maine, 379, the decision given then made it possible for school authorities to force the reading of the King James version of

the Scriptures, and it remained the leading case on the subject for many years, despite Catholic objections.\* Students were expelled from Boston and New York schools as late as 1858 and 1859 for refusing to read the Protestant Bible. Not until 1890 was the decision *Donahoe vs Richards* reversed; the *Egerton Bible Case*, tried in Wisconsin courts, made it possible for Catholic children to attend public school without having their religious beliefs interfered with.\*\*

\* cf. *New York Observer*, August 31, 1854.

\*\* *The Protestant Crusade*, p. 315.