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Fathers Badin and Nerinckx and the
Dominicans in Kentucky

For J. H. Foster

CP892

By

REV. VICTOR F. O'DANIEL, O.P., S.T.M.

J. H. Foster O.P.

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FATHERS BADIN AND NERINCKX AND THE DOMINICANS IN KENTUCKY

A LONG MISUNDERSTOOD EPISODE IN AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY¹

It is not without considerable regret that we undertake to give the readers of the CATHOLIC HISTORICAL REVIEW an historical account of the early Dominicans of Kentucky in their well-known misunderstanding with Revs. Stephen T. Badin and Charles Nerinckx, two of the most noted pioneer missionaries of that state. Of itself, the episode would deserve no more than a casual reference in a history of those friars; but, unfortunately, Father Nerinckx's first biographer has badly prejudiced the whole story.

Nor is this all. Following the one-sided presentation of the case found in the letters of Fathers Badin and Nerinckx, that author not merely gives his readers to understand that the blame for the trouble which those two zealous priests experienced in Kentucky, is largely to be laid at the door of Father Edward D. Fenwick, later the first Bishop of Cincinnati, and his companions in religion; he even insinuates that the charges of officiousness, of want of zeal and of laxity, both religious and ministerial, may justly be imputed to these early Dominicans.² For forty years

¹ The sources used for this article, besides those directly referred to in the text and notes, are principally: Archives of Saint Joseph's Province of Dominicans; Saint Rose's Priory, Springfield, Kentucky; Saint Joseph's Priory, Somerset, Ohio; Archives of the Dominican Master General, Rome; the Dominican Fathers, London, England, and the Baltimore Archdiocesan Archives. Among the books consulted are WEBB, *Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky*; VOLZ, *A Century's Record*; DECOURCY-SHEA, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*; SHEA, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, Vols. ii and iii; *Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*, Vols. ii, iii, iv, v, xi.

² MAES, *Life of Rev. Charles Nerinckx*, pp. 160-184. Father Maes, when writing of this unpleasantness, is singularly unfair to these early Dominicans. Parts of Father Nerinckx's letters that are essential to show his extravagance and inner spirit, are left out of the translations. In some places, words and even phrases are omitted or added (still they are in quotation marks), without any indication of such tampering; or are so changed as materially to affect the sense of the originals, to make them the more plausible, and to render them the more telling against the missionary's imaginary enemies. Designedly do we call them imaginary, for a careful perusal of the documents in the case shows them to have been largely such. In some instances Father Maes makes the documents practically his own. See originals in DOCUMENTS, pp. 66-88.

this unfair and injurious representation of the friars has gone its rounds, receiving all too wide a credence and tarnishing the fair names of men who have deserved well of the American Church. For this reason, now that the Diocese of Cincinnati is about to celebrate its centenary, we feel constrained to give the public the present article in justification of Ohio's first ordinary. Yet, after all, it is perhaps no more than a belated contribution to our ecclesiastical literature demanded in the interest of historic truth and fair-mindedness.

Rev. Edward D. Fenwick, O.P., was born in Maryland, but was sent in his youth to the college of the English Dominicans, Bornheim, Belgium. On the completion of his classical course the young American entered the Order to which his preceptors belonged. This was in 1788. One of his prime purposes in this step was to establish the religious institute which he had learned to love, in his native Maryland, that it might aid in the diffusion of the Catholic religion through the United States. Basing his plan on that of the English fathers at Bornheim, the young American conceived the idea of devoting his part of the paternal estate to founding a house of the Order of Saint Dominic in the former palatinate of Lord Baltimore. This was to be the beginning of his work, a center whence missionaries might go forth in all directions to carry the light of the Gospel to his fellow-countrymen. Connected with the house he would have a college for the education of youth. This, he felt, would aid in supplying the pious enterprise with vocations and means of support.³

Fifteen years, however, passed before the young divine found the circumstances propitious for beginning his long-cherished design. In the meantime, the French Revolution had thrown a gloom over, if not paralyzed, the religious institutes in France and Belgium. This, together with the anti-Order prejudices in England, but especially the fact that all religious in the countries under French domination were made subject to the diocesan

³ Rev. E. D. Fenwick, Carshalton, England, to Rev. R. L. Concanen, Rome, March 15, 1803, January 3, April 14, August 29, and (London) September 1, 1804 (Archives of the Dominican Master General, Codex xiii, 731); Fenwick, Carshalton, to Bishop Carroll, January 12 and May 5, 1804 (Baltimore Archives, Case 3, R 1 and 2); Concanen to Fenwick, November 19, 1803 (Archives of the Dominican Fathers, London); PALMER, *Anglia Dominicana* (MSS.), Part III, p. 722 (*ibid.*) and *Obituary Notices of the Friar-Preachers of the English Province*, p. 26.

ordinaries, turned the minds of some of Father Fenwick's English confrères towards his American project, which had been warmly espoused by the authorities at Rome and heartily welcomed by Bishop Carroll. These were Revs. Samuel T. Wilson, Robert A. Angier and William R. Tuite, men of much learning and high standing, as well as of great piety.⁴

Fathers Fenwick and Angier, the first to come to America, arrived in November, 1804, and were cordially received by the father of the American hierarchy. Fenwick's design had been to make his foundation in his native Maryland. Great, therefore, was his disappointment when he learned that Bishop Carroll had promised them to Kentucky. This had been done largely in response to the distressed and heartfelt appeals for priests from the Catholics of that state and its lone missionary, Rev. Stephen T. Badin.⁵ Father Fenwick, however, was too good and zealous an ambassador of Christ, as well as too thoroughly trained a religious, to hesitate to go wherever the voice of authority or the salvation of souls called him. Accordingly, in the spring of 1805, at the request of Doctor Carroll, he journeyed on to the west to learn what prospects were held out by that country for his proposed institution. On his arrival in Kentucky, he was received with open arms by both the people and Father Badin. Indeed, this veteran missionary was so pleased with Fenwick that he offered to turn over his own and the church lands in the state to the friars, and begged to be received into the Order of Saint Dominic. On May 15, 1805, he wrote to Bishop Carroll earnestly urging him to give his consent to both these proposals.⁶

⁴ Fenwick's letters as in note 3. Father Wilson, then on his way to Kentucky, writing to Father Concanen from Georgetown, October 14, 1805, says: "Ever since the notice I received from our Archbishop, Monsr. Rocquelaure, that all religious in France, being now secularized by His Holiness, were entirely under his jurisdiction, I have turned my thoughts to America, where a new prospect opens of labouring with success" (Archives of the Dominican Master General, Codex xiii, 731). How different this true reason for his coming to the United States from that excogitated by Maes (*op. cit.*, pp. 171-72). For Cardinal Caprara's decree secularizing all religious in France, see VERMEERSCH, *De Religiosis Institutis et Personis*, Vol. ii, p. 466.

⁵ Several letters of Father Badin and the people of Kentucky in the Baltimore Archives show how they sought to obtain priests for that mission.

⁶ Fenwick, Piscataway, Maryland, to Concanen, August 1, 1805 (Archives of the Dominican General, as above). Father Badin's letter referred to is in the Baltimore Archives, Case 1, G 9. See DOCUMENTS, p. 66.

Satisfied with the promises offered by that new state for the enterprise, Father Fenwick returned to Maryland to report to his ordinary and to Rome, to await further authorization from the Order's General and the coming of the other two recruits, and to make preparations for settling his little band of priests in the west. On August 1, 1805, he wrote to Rev. R. L. Concanen, one of the assistants to the Order's General, telling him of the good prospects for the pious undertaking in Kentucky, and of Father Badin's proposals. These latter, he says, Bishop Carroll "applauds and consents to."⁷ The friar's heart was further gladdened by the arrival, early in September, of Fathers Wilson and Tuite. A month later, came letters from Rome empowering Doctor Carroll to proceed with the foundation of the new Dominican province. Fenwick was detained in Maryland by the settlement of his paternal estate until June or July, 1806. Angier, at the request of Bishop Carroll, was left there to continue his labors on the missions until his presence became indispensable in Kentucky, and did not join his brethren until the fall of 1807. But Wilson and Tuite started on their westward journey at once (October, 1805), reaching their destination in the last days of the year.

In the meantime, however, July 18, 1805, Rev. Charles Nerinckx, a Belgian priest, had arrived in Kentucky. That indefatigable missionary, as a later page will show, brought from his native land a strong prejudice against the English Dominicans of Bornheim which he had imbibed on mere hearsay. He knew none of them. In Kentucky, an intimate friendship soon arose between him and Father Badin. Nor was the new missionary slow to instil his bias into the mind of his friend. It was clearly under this influence that the French priest, October 5-12, 1805, just a few days before Fathers Wilson and Tuite started on their journey to Kentucky, wrote to Bishop Carroll a letter which is a perfect travesty of what he had written to the same prelate in the previous May. Meanwhile, it must be noted, he had seen no Dominican. Yet all is now changed. The French missionary has turned a complete somersault of both mind and heart. It would be not only unwise, but dangerous and uncanonical to

⁷ See note 6.

confer upon the friars the woodlands belonging to the Church in Kentucky. The reasoning and canon law which he adduces for the change must have provoked the venerable prelate to a smile. Five months before, a religious Order was Kentucky's great need. Now an Order might be even a peril to its Church.⁸

Bishop Carroll, it would seem, was not at all pleased with Father Badin's censorious letter announcing his change of mind. At least, another letter from the same missionary, written more than six months afterwards, is proof positive that the venerable prelate never answered it, or even acknowledged its receipt.⁹ Father Badin goes so far in this document (October 5-12, 1805), as to tell his ordinary that Father Nerinckx "does strongly suspect the purity of their [the Dominicans'] faith." This was in consequence of the preconceived prejudices of which we have spoken. Then we read: "He is so much disheartened at the thought of becoming partaker with them in the sacred ministry, that he spoke with resolution of his leaving the State, if the Dominicans trouble themselves otherwise than with a college." But it should be noted in this connection that, although Bishop Carroll did not even acknowledge the receipt of this letter, he took occasion of a later one from the same source to justify the friars, and to assure the other missionaries of their untainted faith and righteousness.¹⁰

Such was the bias which the Dominicans encountered in Kentucky. In view of it, one might expect almost any action or statement on the part of the two clergymen who had preceded them. Father Wilson tells us that, on his and Father Tuite's arrival, the people were publicly warned against them. Although Father Nerinckx had signified his intention of leaving the missions, should these friars undertake any ministerial labors, hardly have Wilson and Tuite set foot in the state when he begins to belittle their zeal and to accuse them of refusing to bear the

⁸ This document has two parts. One is dated October 5, the other October 12, 1805. By an oversight, it has been indexed as two letters, and placed under G 10 and G 11, Case 1 of the Baltimore Archives. It is printed, but with a notable omission, in the *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, xxiii, 166-174. See DOCUMENTS, pp. 68-73.

⁹ Badin to Bishop Carroll, May 28, 1806 (Baltimore Archives, Case A Special, L 14).

¹⁰ Badin to Carroll as in the preceding note.

heat and the burden of the day, of seeking an easy life, and of caring little for the salvation of souls. He declares that, according to their own words, none of them intend to toil on the missions, that their only object seems to be to extend their own Order, and that, therefore, their presence in Kentucky will be of scant benefit to the Church.¹¹

But in view of the fact that it was Father Fenwick's positive intention that some of his confrères should labor on the missions, and that, as may be seen from all his letters, one of his prime objects in the establishment of the new province of Dominicans was to raise up missionaries for the country, it seems most improbable that any of the friars ever gave the Flemish clergyman the information he claims to have received from them. Fathers Wilson and Tuite, the first to arrive in Kentucky, were specially designed to teach in the college and novitiate which they proposed founding. This, if anything, must have been what they told Father Nerinckx; and their words were doubtless magnified into the sweeping assertions found in his letters. Nor must we forget that, even after the arrival of Bishop Flaget and the days of a more plentiful supply of priests, the Friars Preacher continued to devote themselves to apostolic labors to such an extent as greatly to interfere with the welfare of their college and convent. All this, together with their well-known fruitful zeal, their spirit of self-sacrifice, their privations for Christ's sake, evidenced by many documents that might be laid before the reader, proves beyond question how groundless and gratuitous are Father Nerinckx's declarations.

Not in a single line of his early letters—and they are many—does the zealous Belgian missionary (for truly zealous he was) speak a kind word of the friars. It is, therefore, passing strange to see the author of Father Nerinckx's first life, with the documents before him—he cites none to prove the statement—write: "Fathers Badin and Nerinckx had hailed their advent with genuine delight, and gave unsparing and oft-repeated praise to

¹¹Father Wilson to Bishop Carroll, August 25, 1806 (Baltimore Archives, Case 8 B, L 6); Nerinckx to same, February 6, 1806 (*ibid.*, Case 8A, U2); Nerinckx to Joseph Peemans, Louvain (?), as quoted by Peemans in an account of the missions of Kentucky for the Propaganda (Propaganda Archives, America Centrale, Vol. iii, ff. 235-260); MAES, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-69.

these new co-laborers."¹² Withal, it is worthy of note, that if Fenwick's apostolic labors were placed on one scale-pan of a balance, and those of Nerinckx on the other, great and fruitful as these latter surely were, those versed in the ecclesiastical history of Kentucky and Ohio cannot doubt but that the beam would tip in the friar's favor.

Many things conspired with Father Nerinckx's preconceived prejudices to intensify his dislike for the fathers after their arrival in Kentucky. The Rev. Walter H. Hill, S.J., in a letter to the Hon. Benj. Webb, observes: "Some one writes to me, speaking of Father Nerinckx and the Dominicans: 'Father Nerinckx, with all his humility, was too sensitive.'"¹³ So he was. No sooner had the fathers arrived in Kentucky than the people, because of the undue rigor to which they were subjected by the other missionaries, flocked to them from far and wide for the reception of the Sacraments. This, as may be seen from his own letters, Father Nerinckx, pious as he was, could not bear with equanimity; nor can there be any doubt but that his pique added poignancy to his pen.¹⁴

So, too, as Father Hill further remarks, the good priest's notorious letter of June 30, 1808, shows that he was deeply offended by the loss of Saint Ann's Parish, the largest in the State, through the Dominicans. But this was no fault of theirs. Although he had been in charge of Saint Ann's hardly a year when it was placed under the permanent care of the friars by the vicar-general, Father Badin, possibly by Bishop Carroll himself, it was Father Nerinckx's favorite of all the missions. His chagrin, it may have been, was all the greater because he was

¹² MAES, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹³ Rev. Walter H. Hill, S.J., Saint Louis, to Hon. Benj. Webb, July 9, 1880 (Archives of Saint Joseph's Province).

¹⁴ The way in which Maes (*op. cit.*, p. 172) attempts to explain the popularity of the Dominicans in Kentucky, reminds one strikingly of Prescott's elucidations of the Church's influence on the faithful. "Drawn [he says] by the novel ceremonial of the Dominican Order, and its picturesque dress, which, as experience teaches, are powerful attractions in the eyes of people unused to such interesting displays, the Catholics flocked to them from far and wide." Maes' un-Catholic bit of philosophy, however, falls quite flat, when it is recalled that the people began to "flock" to the friars when there were only two of them (Wilson and Tuite) in the State, and while these lived miles apart. Surely there was then little chance for "display" of "novel ceremonial," etc. The true explanation of the friars' popularity is the more orthodox and kindlier ministrations which the people received at their hands.

thus thwarted in the plan which he had conceived of erecting a brick church in this settlement.¹⁵

Father Badin was a Frenchman; Father Nerinckx a Belgian. Three of the Dominicans were British. The other was an American; but he was of English origin, and had spent the greater part of his life abroad with Englishmen. Nearly all the people in Kentucky were Americans, but of English descent. Now experience and history both teach us that different nationalities are often as so many misfitting cogs that prevent even the mill of Christ from running smoothly. This is why we have had friction in church circles through all the country, where foreigners have gathered in sufficient numbers to give play to national prejudices. Documents leave no room for doubt that such an influence had its part in the disagreement of which we speak.

Father Nerinckx's letters show that with his love of God he joined an intense attachment to his countrymen. This led to the desire of surrounding himself with clergymen from his native land, and caused him to conceive the plan of making at least a part of Kentucky a mission principally, if not entirely, in charge of Belgian priests.¹⁶ One cannot in reason blame him for so laudable an aim. But when he suffered himself, as he certainly did, to be so incensed at the Dominicans whose presence was an obstacle to his purpose, as to decry them in all manner of ways, he cannot be freed from censure. This is all the more true because these friars had gone to Kentucky at the earnest solicitation of Bishop Carroll, who had promised them to that desolate part of his diocese before Father Nerinckx arrived in America.

Possibly the most insidious, crafty and disloyal heresy the Church has had to combat was that of Jansenism, so named from Cornelius Jansen, Bishop of Ypres. It taught that Christ died for only the elect, whose salvation alone He willed; and that nothing good done by the reprobate—it held positive reprobation—can avail them aught in the way of eternal life. One can

¹⁵ Father Nerinckx to Bishop Carroll, June 30, 1808 (*Baltimore Archives*, Case 8 A, U 5).—The mission of Saint Ann, it seems certain, was attended by Father Wilson from early in 1806, though it appears to have remained under Father Nerinckx's jurisdiction until after Fenwick's arrival in the summer of the same year.

¹⁶ This is evident from many of Nerinckx's letters, from Peemans' account to the Propaganda, and from Maes' biography.

readily see to what excesses these teachings opened the door. In a word, Jansenism was Puritanic in spirit, and savored much of the arid and levelling doctrines of Calvinism. Like Gallicanism, it sought to restrain the Pope's authority over the Church in favor of the bishops and temporal rulers. The adherents of this sect looked to the accidentals of religion rather than to the essentials. In practice, they placed discipline—fasting, for instance, penance and mortification—before the life-giving Sacraments of Christ. Thus, again, Jansenism was a species of Christian Pharisaism. Jansenists overlooked the proper part of the heart and the feelings in worship, preached a discouraging rigorism which they adorned with the names of virtue and austerity, and denounced as laxists all who did not subscribe to their gloomy and austere views. Their principles, quite naturally, led to extreme severity in their moral doctrine and in the administration of the Sacraments.

Although the doctrines of Jansenism were condemned time and again, its followers long held their ground, without renouncing their errors. This they did through chicane and by pretense of following the practices of primitive Christianity, of remaining Catholics and of belonging to the Church, in spite of the Church. Their support of the absolutist theories of the times won them the favor of statesmen, while the cloak of austerity with which they colored their teachings, as is ever the case, appealed to many of the faithful with ascetic temperaments. In this way, even the leaven of true Catholic doctrine eventually became tainted with the poison. Confession and communion, the great channels of grace instituted by Christ for salvation, were administered with such severity as to cause them to be woefully neglected. There were, it is true, many holy persons who were imbued with the spirit of Jansenism. But their errors were through no fault of their own, for they imbibed them in spite of themselves. They were in good faith. Withal, had not the Church been divine, Jansenism would have dealt her a death-blow.

As Father Maes correctly states, it cannot be denied that the French and Belgian clergy of the eighteenth century "were considerably tainted by the Jansenistic teachings;" and that the "bitter fruits" of this may still be seen in the neglect of the Sac-

raments by the people and the severity of the priests in the sacred tribunal. Through no fault of theirs, Fathers Badin and Nerinckx had heard this doctrine preached from the pulpit, had found it in their books, had been taught it in the seminary. The Belgian clergyman had practiced it in his ministerial duties at home for twenty years before coming to the New World.¹⁷

These Puritanic principles and exaggerated notions of severe morality they brought to America. In Kentucky their zeal led them to practice the same severity of discipline, and the same rigorism both in preaching and in the administration of the sacraments to which they had been accustomed abroad, but which were not suited to the Anglo-Saxon portion of the New World. The older Catholics of Kentucky had not been used to such extremes in Maryland; and the younger did not always take kindly to them. For this reason, even before the arrival of Father Nerinckx, the French missionary was rather disliked than loved. Many, as may be seen, not only from the letters of the Dominicans to Bishop Carroll, but from those of the other two priests, seldom approached the Sacraments; some never. When Father Nerinckx, stern and unbending by nature, came to the State, his influence seems to have induced his companion to become more rigorous and severe than ever.

Father Nerinckx possessed a calm demeanor, had a quiet even way, and was of serious bearing. This, together with his zeal, piety and personal austerity, made his ministrations more acceptable to the faithful than were those of Father Badin. By many, especially those of an ascetic temperament, the former was loved and admired as a spiritual guide. The latter, as is admitted, was vivacious and changeable, and given to harsh, cutting language. He had not a judicial temperament. Often he was imprudent. Withal, he was not less zealous than his friend. It would seem that his desire to emulate the Belgian missionary increased his stringency and brought about that discontent which, when it was rumored that he would likely be chosen for the proposed diocese of Kentucky, led to many complaints against him to Bishop Carroll. But before this, Father Nerinckx had begun to write bitter things against the Dominicans to the same prelate. Father Badin soon followed suit. How-

¹⁷ MAES, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-170.

ever, as the documents in the archives of Baltimore are both numerous and long, we can do no more here than select four, two from each missionary, which suffice to give a fair idea of their correspondence in this matter.¹⁸

Indeed, Father Nerinckx's letters of June 2, 1806, and June 30, 1808, are so harsh, so reproachful alike of the Dominicans and the people, and so full of invective that, unless we knew otherwise from his contemporaries, they would convict him of no little conceit and shatter one's belief in his humility, piety, charity and spirit of mortification. As it is, they prove that his judgment was often at fault, that he was sensitive in the extreme, and that he gave too ready an ear to idle gossip. His determination to gain his point led him to employ language that was not only harsh and extravagant, but even violent. If the missionary's letters are any index to his dealings with the faithful, his ministrations could not have been otherwise than very distasteful to the greater number. In short, an ultra rigorist spirit shines out on every page. To those who have seen the original documents, and are acquainted with traditions still living in Kentucky, there can be no doubt as to the correctness of the statements which Father Wilson, writing on a pastoral matter, makes to Bishop Carroll:

No place in the world, dear Sir [he says], is more in want of a prudent Bishop than Kentucky, where thousands are living in constant neglect of the Sacraments, through the too great zeal, I fear, of the former missionaries. Young people are not admitted to them without a solemn promise of not dancing *on any occasion whatever*, which few will promise, and fewer still can keep. All priests that allow of dancing are publicly condemned to hell. . . . People taught that every kiss lip to lip between married persons is a mortal sin. . . . Women refused absolution for their husbands permitting a decent dance in their house—not to mention a thousand things far more ridiculously severe.¹⁹

Owing to their length, we can only touch on the more salient points of the two letters of Father Nerinckx selected for discussion. In that of June 2, 1806, he says that Father Badin must now admit that he has seen the realization of his (Nerinckx's) prophecy in regard to the Dominicans. They differ much from

¹⁸ The letters of Father Badin and Nerinckx to Bishop Carroll that touch on this topic would make a portly volume. They run from 1805 to 1810 and are found in various cases of the diocesan archives of Baltimore.

¹⁹ The date of this letter is August 25, 1806 (Baltimore Archives, as in note 5).

Badin in speculative theology, and wholly in some points of practice. Father Nerinckx knows not how much it is expedient to say, yet he can positively assert that: "Perhaps they will multiply the nation; but they will neither increase the joy nor renew the face of the earth." The wanton grow more insolent. Those who had been held in check by fear, if not by love, now that the lines are loosened, rush forth with stiffened necks, boasting that they have discovered the city of refuge. The other friars (Fenwick and Angier) "are expected to bring plenary indulgences that will not only remit penalties due to sin already forgiven, but prevent the incurring of guilt at all."²⁰

Father Tuite, he says, though less learned than his colleague, appears to be more given to discipline. The other (Father Wilson) appears to be a man of great learning; but his learning "has led him, not to madness, but to a laxity which, for want of the flavor of salt, may perhaps be called infatuation." "Father Badin terms him a laxist; the people call him easy. Whether he should be placed among the extreme laxists I do not wish to be the judge. I am considered a rigorist; Father Badin, both more rigorous and harsher." Father Nerinckx, however, seemed quite unable to realize that his practice was at all harsh or stinging.

Before his arrival in Kentucky, the missionary proceeds to say, Father Badin's discipline in regard to matrimony had been the occasion of much complaint and murmuring. But since Father Wilson's coming, he declares, everything in this matter is decided as if it concerned mere brutes, and without any regard whatever to the sacramental character and sanctity of the married state.²¹

Father Nerinckx does not believe that the Dominicans will succeed in founding a convent in Kentucky, as they are not willing to commence in a humble way; and he foresees that they will obtain but little financial aid from the people. Besides, he adds, "they are lovers of themselves, and are unduly terrified

²⁰ Nerinckx to Carroll, June 2, 1806 (Baltimore Archives, Case 8 A, U 1).

²¹ Here Father Nerinckx writes at considerable length, and in a manner that must be pronounced shocking. One of his expressions is: "Ab illius R [everendi] P [atris] adventu res matrimonialis. . . . omnino pro votis equorum ac mulorum in parte carnali decisa est." Maes (*op. cit.*, p. 175) is guilty of considerable juggling in his rendition of this part of the missionary's letter. See DOCUMENTS, p. 80.

of Kentucky that these friars had much of the tenderness of heart and kindly disposition characteristic of Saint Thomas of Aquin and Francis de Sales. Of Father Wilson, against whom these complaints were principally made, and whom Bishop Flaget called the shining light of his diocese, Bishop M. J. Spalding writes:

Of refined and highly polished manners, as well as amiable, modest and learned, he was universally admired and beloved. He was of retiring habits, and much devoted to prayer and study. He was one of the most learned divines who ever emigrated to America. . . . He died, in the same odour of sanctity in which he had lived, in the summer of 1824. Long and reverently will the Catholics of Kentucky remember his virtues, which are freshly embalmed in the recollection of his brethren. He was a bright ornament of an illustrious Order, and its early history in the United States is identified with his biography.²³

Indeed, that distinguished theologian and scholar might have felt complimented at being considered in the same light that Saint Paul was considered by the pagan Festus, mad because of his learning. "Paul [said Festus], thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad. And Paul said: I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but I speak words of truth and soberness" (Acts, xxvi, 24-25). The letters of all these early friars show them to have been gentlemen, as well as possessed of truly priestly characters and scholarly attainments. In regard to their spirit of religious discipline and observance, of which the Belgian clergyman could have known nothing—for he refused to associate with them—no more need be said than that one marvels why he was so critical when it is remembered that only two of them were then in Kentucky, and that they lived some twenty miles apart. Wilson was at Saint Ann's; Tuite near Bardstown. It is still more strange to find Father Nerinckx's biographer claiming that he had "formed a correct idea of the state of affairs at St. Rose's," when St. Rose's did not exist, and proving his contention by Bishop Spalding who states precisely the reverse of what Maes cites him to establish.²⁴

²³ SPALDING, *Sketches of the Early Catholic Missions in Kentucky*, pp. 154-155.

²⁴ MAES, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-76 (note). This author here declares that Father Nerinckx gives "a correct idea of the state of affairs at St. Rose's." But, mark! This letter was written, June 2, 1806. Fenwick was still in Maryland. He purchased the farm on which Saint Rose's Convent stands, in July, 1806, and took possession of it the following December. To prove his contention Nerinckx's biographer quotes a passage from Spalding's *Life of Bishop Flaget*, page 288. Spalding, however, says

at the burden of the day and the heats." Should they, however, succeed in making a foundation, it is his earnest wish that some man imbued with the spirit of religious observance, and quickened with a zeal for souls, should be sent from another house of the Order, and placed in charge. For what real good, he continues, or what glory to religion, can be expected, if such men, far removed from a superior who can act as censor to their lives and as guardian of religious discipline, are placed over the people to form them to their own rule of life? "Be it far from me [he adds, however] to say that they are bad; but I do think that they are animated with too little zeal for religious observance."

This is certainly a severe arraignment. Its only palliation is that Father Nerinckx had been made purblind by the influences of which we have spoken. Apart from every other reason, the very lives of these early Dominicans prove these extravagant statements and veiled accusations too absurd to be believed by even the most credulous. These early fathers had as many, if not more, hardships and privations to bear than the Flemish missionary; they bore them with greater humility and patience. Father Nerinckx asserts more than once that he writes as he does out of his love of God and zeal for souls. One almost wonders if this can be true—if his bitter words were not largely inspired by umbrage and disappointment at the loss of his favorite parish and at seeing the prospect of his proposed Belgian mission dwindle. Be that as it may, history, we think, must pronounce the fathers' zeal and love of God equal to his. Certainly the historian knows that Dominican theology is rather severe than lax. It was for this reason that Father Concanen, when he heard of this accusation, took occasion to observe in writing to Archbishop Carroll:

I wish to be remembered to Father Fenwick and his companions at Kentucky. I am surprised at the controversy arisen between them and Rev. Mr. Badin. It is the first time I ever heard of the Dominicans being accused of lax doctrine. It must be that that worthy and zealous man, Mr. Badin, has poisoned his mind by reading Jansenistical authors; for surely the sweet and lenient spirit of the Church abhors equally the extremes of laxity and rigour.²²

Under the circumstances, it was fortunate for the early Church

²² This letter is dated Rome, August 9, 1809, and is in Case 2, W7 of the Baltimore Archives.

A living, nay, an inspiring tradition in the province of Dominicans which they established tells us that those early fathers were scrupulously exact in the duties of their state of life; and that they sought, even under the most adverse circumstances, to carry out the rules and constitutions of their Order. Owing to the fact that they wrote but seldom, and to the destructive agencies of time, we have few documents bearing directly on this subject. Fortunately, however, we have enough distinctly to establish the truth of this tradition. In 1816, for instance, the Master General writes to congratulate the little band of religious on their spirit of observance. Then, an extract, in Italian, from a letter of the Provincial to Rev. John A. Hill, gives us a very pretty and illuminating account of their life, their studies and their labors on the missions. It informs us that their religious discipline and observance were all that could be desired. Community life, after the convent of Saint Rose had been established, was rigidly kept up in accordance with the rule. The choral office and the devotions of the institute were observed most religiously. The community frequently rose at midnight—never later than four in the morning. Community life was perfect. The beds were of hard straw. Even the canonical tonsure was worn by those not out on the missions; although, for prudence' sake, this practice was afterwards discontinued. Considering the trying labors and the circumstances of time and place, the Order's regulations for abstinence were perhaps followed too rigidly for the health of the community. The country was new and unsettled; eggs and butter, even vegetables, were scarce; fish almost an unknown luxury, cheese entirely so. Corn bread was the fathers' chief mainstay of life. Their beverage for breakfast and supper was warm milk fresh from the cow; for dinner it was usually water.²⁵

that Father Muños was sent to Saint Rose's by the Order's General in 1828, to "reestablish" a discipline that had existed there, but "had suffered some relaxation" through the "distracting cares of the missionary life." This is a far cry from what Maes would have the learned author to say: that is, no discipline had ever existed at the place. Spalding was led into an error by some notes of Bishop Flaget. Muños was sent to Saint Rose's by Bishop Fenwick, not by the Father General. Neither was his mission to reestablish discipline.

²⁵ Father Pius J. Gaddi to Father Wilson, Rome, March 16, 1816 (Archives of Saint Joseph's Priory); Wilson, Kentucky, to Hill, Rome, July 23, 1820 (Propaganda Archives, America Centrale, Vol. iii, No. 138).

From the same document we learn that, owing to poverty, the students, and even the priests, had occasionally to do manual labor. Nevertheless, through economy in time, they managed to carry on classes regularly and to give the young men a good education. Most of them, in addition to the courses ordinarily given in seminaries, knew French and Italian. The fathers (that is, those not engaged in the college) did much missionary work. But the missions were a source of expense rather than of income to the institution. Indeed, they would have been happy had the missions brought in enough to supply the fathers engaged on them with the horses and secular clothing required for that purpose. The greatest drawback to the young province was its extreme indigence, which often made the life of its members quite trying. Yet this did not prevent them from performing all spiritual functions *gratis*. These things, however, observes the Provincial, should not deter the new recruits from accompanying Father Hill to America; for they will still find food and clothing, and with these one should be content. Their labors will bear rich fruit.

Father Wilson's statement is confirmed by a letter of Father Hill who had just arrived from Rome itself. This document is dated November 21, 1821, and is given in the *London Catholic Miscellany*, I, 327-328. He assures us that the diet of the little community was indeed "very plain," and their life "sufficiently austere." That they enjoyed good health, he seems to insinuate, was a blessing from God, who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb."

Having delivered the tirade which has been laid before the reader, Father Nerinckx proceeds to tell how he had formed an unfavorable opinion of the English Dominicans at Bornheim before he left for America, although he hardly knew them even by name. This impression he received from friends. And to give it the greater weight he assures Bishop Carroll that his informants were among the very best Catholics of Belgium—nay, precisely the men who have been so generous to the American missions. One of them went so far as to request him not to associate with the fathers going to America, should they be on the same boat as he. His friends had told him that, in the very midst of the persecution of all the clergymen who remained loyal

to the Church, the fathers of Bornheim were able, God only knows how, to go abroad as freely as the unfaithful priests who had subscribed to the iniquitous civil constitution of the clergy. Furthermore, these Dominicans managed to buy back their confiscated property, using bonds of the revolutionary republic for that purpose. Father Wilson, he continues, was even elected to public office, was held in high esteem by the prefect of that department, and received the sons of the Church's persecutors into Holy Cross College of which he was president. These things, Father Nerinckx says he was informed, aroused a strong suspicion in the minds of all good Catholics that those friars were in at least tacit agreement with the tyrannical government. In Kentucky, he declares, Father Wilson had spoken in defense of the present deplorable state of the Church in France. For these reasons, the missionary cannot doubt but that men of their stamp (*talis farinae*) should be handled with the greatest precaution. If they have not associated themselves with iniquity, they have at least become scandalously lax.

Father Nerinckx now comes to what is evidently the impelling motive behind his furious assault. It is to prevent the fathers from becoming the directors of Kentucky's future seminary, should they succeed in establishing themselves in the State. But if we may judge from their letters, his worry was without cause; for nothing seems to have been further from their minds. Perhaps he wished to see his fellow-countrymen, or those imbued with Jansenistic principles, in charge of this institution.²⁶

We shall let Father Raymond Palmer tell of the conduct of the English friars in Belgium after the revolution. His sober words, besides offering an agreeable contrast to Father Nerinckx's violent declamation, bear the impress of truth and bring conviction:

After the French had established their government and peace was outwardly restored, some of the fathers, in 1795, returned to Bernhem, but durst not openly settle themselves again in the convent. In 1796

²⁶ Although the missionary expressly states in this document that he writes unasked (*non rogatus quidem*), Maes, at the end of his rendition of it, puts in the words (and in quotation marks, as if they were a translation): "I feel all the more free, my Lord, in writing to you as I have done, . . . since you expect me to look after the interests of Religion in this region" (MAES, *op. cit.*, p. 176). These last words are not in the letter. See DOCUMENTS, pp. 76-82.

the possessions of all religious bodies were declared national property and the sale of them was decreed. A commissaire sent to Bernhem valued the property at 24,806 livres; it so happened that five pieces of the best land escaped the man's notice and were not sequestered. As a compensation the directoire executif offered the fathers [because they were Englishmen] the amount in *bons* [that is, bonds], and although those notes were available only for government purposes and their value very precarious, the fathers took them as they were better than nothing.

The property was brought to auction in April and August, 1797, and the whole was sold to a perfumer of Antwerp for 13,894 livres more than the government valuation. This perfumer was the agent of the English fathers, and so the convent of Bornhem returned to the rightful owners. The government was paid with its *bons* with an additional sum of about £700. As soon as the fathers had the house back, they formed a small community there and opened the college again. The constitutional oath was tendered to them which they refused; but a trifling bribe offered in the most barefaced manner got over the difficulty. The meanest scoundrels stood at the head of affairs; some whom the fathers had known in the lowest circumstances had thrust themselves by unscrupulous conduct into public notice and held great preferments. . . .²⁷

The convent, as Father Palmer informs us, could not again be opened as such. The people, unable to enter the church, gathered in the church-yard for their prayers. Doubtless, the fathers, naturally less molested because they were Englishmen, cautiously administered to the sorrowing faithful. Thus they were a blessing rather than the scandal that Father Nerinckx would have us believe.

When Father Wilson, more than a year afterwards, heard of the accusations that had been made against him personally, he wrote to Bishop Carroll explaining his conduct in Belgium and his remarks in Kentucky, and offered to produce proof of his assertions. His explanation must have given the venerable prelate such satisfaction that he could now hardly have desired the proof, even had he wished it before. From the Dominican's letter we learn that his argument in Kentucky was to call Father Badin's attention to the difference between the accidentals of religion, or discipline, and the essentials, or doctrine. This he did only to defend Pius VII, then so sorely tried by Napoleon Bonaparte, from accusations which the French missionary seemed disposed to lay at the door of the aged and distressed Pontiff.

²⁷ PALMER, *Life and Times of Philip Thomas Howard, O.P., Cardinal of Norfolk*, pp. 234-35.

Of his relations with the French government at Bornheim the learned friar says simply that, at the request of the bishop, the parish priest of the town and several other clergymen, he accepted, about a year before his departure for America, the position of counsellor to the mayor of Bornheim, a young, scrupulous and inexperienced man. In this capacity he assisted at three meetings of the council, in which were discussed the question of the salaries "for the midwife of our parish" and "for the person who wound up the clock of the parish church, and such like trifles."²⁸ He did not mention the fact that the fathers could not wear their habits, and for a time were obliged to live in hiding; that they could not reopen their house as a convent; and that they were able to reopen their college was because religious institutes devoted to teaching had not been suppressed by the revolution. All this the bishop knew.

Father Wilson tells Bishop Carroll that he is so conscious of his innocence of the charges made against him that he would not have written this letter, had he not been urged to do so by his brethren. But it should be noted in this connection that Father Nerinckx's sources of information about the Dominicans at Bornheim, in his letter of June 30, 1808, seem to dwindle down to one man; and he is not sure whether it was the dead Mr. De Wolf of Antwerp, or the living Mr. Peemans of Louvain, who had told him the ugly things narrated in the document just discussed.

Shortly after writing this letter, Father Nerinckx refused longer to attend the mission of Holy Mary on the Rolling Fork, where he was not remunerated for his services.²⁹ Prior to this, he had thought of joining the Trappists who were then in Kentucky. But now his troubles seem to have turned his thoughts in this direction more seriously than ever. The following year, Bishop Carroll, writing at the request of Father Badin to dissuade him from such a purpose, took occasion to say:

Perhaps it [the inclination to join the Trappists] proceeds from the difference of opinion, and consequently of practice, betwixt you and some of your brother clergymen on certain points of morality. If such be

²⁸ October 14, 1807 (Baltimore Archives, Case 8 B, L 7).

²⁹ Father Wilson to Bishop Carroll, August 25, 1806, as in note 5; Father Badin to same, November 20, 1806 (Baltimore Archives, Case 1, H 6).

the case, you have certainly recollected that this happens everywhere, in all the countries, which I have been in. Often, the rectors of adjoining parishes have imbibed different principles. Each follows those which he approves the best, and as long as they are tolerated by the Church, he suffers his neighbour to pursue them, tho' he himself pursues a different course.³⁰

In the meantime, it having been rumored that Father Badin would likely be appointed the first ordinary of Kentucky, complaints of the most emphatic character against that missionary's extreme harshness and severity began to arrive at Baltimore.³¹ So matters wore along until June 30, 1808, when Father Nerinckx wrote to Bishop Carroll the letter of which we now speak. It is another outpouring of bitter invective against the friars and the people. In his opinion, things are going from bad to worse; and still more serious consequences are to be feared. He thus sums up his charges under four headings:

1°. The dissensions, arrogance and tumultuous impudence of the people of Kentucky began with the coming of the Dominicans. Why these fathers did not inquire on their arrival, as he had done, what virtues were to be implanted, and what vices eradicated, he cannot understand, unless their aim was either to please the people, or to advance their own interests. He doubts whether they have gained the first purpose; but in temporal matters they have met with fair success. They have done nothing for the common good of religion. Whatever they get, they apply to their house. The church of Saint Ann is in the same state in which he left it. Perhaps they intend to transfer it to Saint Rose's. He fears the same fate for the church which he had intended to erect in Springfield. Saint Ann's Congregation, when he had charge of it, was given to the cultivation of every virtue, and was the most exemplary in the state. But now, he *hears*, all this has passed like a shadow. Marriages with Protestants are contracted with the utmost facility. Dances are permitted in the day time, and are no sin. In Saint Ann's Parish, in Scott County, and on Simpson's Creek, where "the

³⁰ Bishop Carroll to Father Nerinckx, April 12, 1807 (Baltimore Archives, Case 10, D 2); Father Badin to Bishop Carroll, February 17 and March 14, 1807 (*ibid.*, Case 1, I 1 and 3).

³¹ These charges commenced to arrive in Baltimore late in 1807, and continued through a great part of 1808.

cat gut" electrifies the feet at that more comical than evangelical practice, dances and marriages always end in tumult. At times these fathers do some missionary work, but only when there is hope of gain. When there is nothing but labor in view, they claim to be religious only. Again, he would emphatically call them to a stricter religious discipline, and have the General of the Dominicans send to Kentucky some men of his Order imbued with its spirit. Of course he means imbued with Jansenistic views. But now Father Nerinckx is not sure whether it was from Mr. Peemans of Louvain, or Mr. De Wolf ("of happy memory") of Antwerp, that he received the evil reports about the fathers at Bornheim, of which he had spoken in a previous letter.

In reply to the charges under this heading let it be said, first, that Father Nerinckx's own letters show that there had been troubles and loud complaints in Kentucky before the coming of the Dominicans. Of the fathers' zeal and self-sacrifice enough has been said to clear them from these renewed accusations of laxity, of selfishness, of want of religious observance. Of this latter the missionary could have known nothing, for the reason that he kept away from Saint Rose's. Nor is it anywhere stated that the friars made the same exactions on the purses of the people as the other two missionaries. Had they been grasping, it is hardly probable that they would have always been in such dire poverty. Maes' assertion (*op. cit.*, p. 173) that: "Many negligent Christians took a malign pleasure in going to the Dominicans and contributing more for their buildings than even the richest were asked to do for the support of their parish priests," is fiction pure and simple. Secondly: it was quite natural that, in those days of few priests and much to do, Saint Ann's and Springfield, as neither place was more than two miles from Saint Rose's, should be merged into the latter parish. This was a matter of economy for the greater good. Father Nerinckx should have told the bishop this circumstance. So also should he have told him that Simpson's Creek was under Father Badin's care, not that of the Dominicans. And he should have added that, although the superior of the friars had sought to place Father Angier at Saint Francis', Scott County, in compliance with the bishop's request, Father Badin had so

far thwarted this arrangement and attended the parish himself.³² Thirdly: real history tells us that, in spite of Father Nerinckx's statement, the Cartwright's Creek Settlement, for which Saint Ann's was built, was never more faithful to its religious duties, or in a better spiritual condition, than after it was placed under the administration of the Dominicans. To this day it remains one of the most exemplary parishes in the State. To this day a mixed marriage is almost unheard of in the congregation. As to the lawfulness of decent dances, the Church, through her theologians, speaks for herself.

2°. Under this heading the good man turns his attention to Basil Elder of Baltimore. There lives in your town, he says, a crafty, contemptible fellow. His name is Basil Elder, but it should be Basilisk; that is, a fabled serpent whose very breath was fatal (*Est apud vos versepellis quidam de grege homuncio, Basilius, melius Basiliscus, Elder*). He has emitted his poison even unto these parts. Through his letters, which are handed about to be publicly read (but Father Nerinckx *has not seen any of them*), he has, though "unprovoked by me, heaped insult and injury upon me," until he is held in contempt by all good people and even by the more honest Protestants. "I forgive him from my heart [he continues], for I admit in him the crassest and most stupid ignorance. . . . He who wrote that list of accusations is a brute rather than a man. . . . I most sincerely believe (*sincerissime judico*) such a man utterly unworthy of any sacrament, until it is established beyond all doubt that he has repaired the scandal given. That sneak (*ille tenebrio*) boasts that he has the approbation and endorsement of your Lordship for all, or nearly all, that he says." Father Nerinckx doubts not that this assertion is gratuitous and mendacious. Should it be true, however, and should Elder's letters contain what they *are said* to contain, the missionary does not see how the affair can be remedied, unless the last chapter of the Book of Esther suggest a way.³³

³² Badin's interference with the bishop's arrangements for Saint Francis' Parish may be seen in several letters of the day, including some of his own. His officiousness in the matter eventually aroused the venerable prelate's displeasure.

³³ In his rendition of this part of Father Nerinckx's letter Maes (*op. cit.*, p. 178) substitutes "B— E—" for Basil Elder. "B— E—" is also made the instigator of the complaints, for which there is no evidence. The most opprobrious epithets

Doubtless the reader has noticed the extravagance and the lack of charity in this language. They become the more patent, when it is remembered that Basil Elder was an exemplary Catholic and the father of the late saintly Archbishop Elder of Cincinnati. Webb informs us that he was trusted, admired and beloved as a friend by the first seven archbishops of Baltimore.³⁴

Basil Elder's relations lived in the Cox's Creek Settlement, now Fairfield, Nelson County. And it was from this section that the greater number, as well as the most damaging, of the complaints were sent to Baltimore against Father Badin who was in charge of this mission. From this it will be seen how unfair and groundless is the following imputation by Father Maes (*op. cit.*, pp. 176-77): "It was especially in these places [that is, in Springfield and Saint Ann's Parish], where his [Father Nerinckx's] influence was no longer felt, that his enemies exerted themselves in the most shameless manner to destroy whatever good he had effected; the Dominicans holding themselves aloof, or being perhaps unable to counteract the evil influences of these rebels."³⁵

30. Under the third heading of his letter Father Nerinckx gives us a list of the accusations against him. As far as he can find out from what has been said or written, and from an examination of his conscience, these are, he says:

applied to Elder by Father Nerinckx are suppressed, and the bitterness of the attack further toned down by dividing the paragraph, and putting a part of it on page 181: "*Tali dedicatore*," etc. Basil Elder's identity is still further disguised by a footnote (*op. cit.*, p. 181), which represents him as a Kentuckian who "was in Baltimore at the time, and had had an interview with the Bishop." But Father Badin's letters, as well as the present document, with its "*apud vos*," leave no doubt as to who "B— E—" was, or as to where he lived. The name Basil Elder, although given in full by Father Nerinckx, is again rendered "B— E—" by the same author (*op. cit.*, p. 180), in No. 10 of the accusations against the missionary. Still again (*op. cit.*, p. 186), we find Father Anthony Sedilla given as "Anthony ———." One wonders why all this suppression of the identity of others, whilst the Dominicans are brought out so prominently. The answer to this question we leave to the reader. See DOCUMENTS, p. 87.

³⁴ WEBB, *op. cit.*, p. 123. See also the *New York Freeman's Journal*, October 23, 1869, and *Character Glimpses of the Most Rev. William Henry Elder*, pp. 11 ff.

³⁵ We have found only one person in Saint Rose's Congregation writing against Father Badin. This was in 1808, and the complaint was about that priest's action in regard to land attached to Saint Ann's. All the other complaints were from places attended by Badin. Some of the "rebels," as Father Maes calls them, afterwards retracted what they had said; but, unfortunately, there are not wanting signs that the retractions were made under some duress.

1. I insist on the people rising at 4 A. M. Rev. Father Fenwick is my accuser on this head, and that is the hour which he himself should keep. But he is deceived when he says that I deny absolution to those who sleep longer. If he knew what the Jesuit Fathers introduced in Paraguay, and the devotions practiced in Belgium, he would say mass at four A. M. for the negro slaves. 2. I promiscuously forbid dances as bad. 3. I prohibit promiscuous visiting between persons of different sexes. 4. I forbid and am opposed to marriages with heretics, etc. 5. Before marriage, I require preparation for the banns and frequentation of the Sacraments. 6. I prescribe rules to be followed in the married state. 7. On Sundays and holy days, I order public prayers to be kept up all the morning, but with intervals of rest. 8. I make continual exactions for the building of churches: fortunately, they do not say that I make them for myself. 9. I forbid excess in clothing and unseemly ornamentation. I will add that I even have women censors of mature age to see that this rule is observed in church. 10. I am too bitter and harsh in giving corrections, etc. Basil Elder calls me a tyrant. 11. Finally, with me is too much confinement [*sic* in his own English; that is, he imposes too much constraint].

As Father Nerinckx then proceeds to glory in the fact that this list represents his ministerial practices, no more need be said here than that they show an excessive severity and Jansenistic rigorism which should have been held in check. It may be remarked, however, that Father Fenwick's character obliges us to believe that he troubled himself about the first complaint no further than to smile and to tell the people that they did not have to obey.

40. In this paragraph the missionary says that many are greatly afflicted by these accusations and offer to sign a protest against his calumniators. But this he will not allow, as he has wronged no man. He leaves everything to God. He rejoices that no earthly hope brought him to Kentucky, that he has received no temporal reward, and that whatever providence has bestowed upon him he has used for the greater glory of God. The affair grieves him principally because the knowledge of it may make his fellow-countrymen less disposed to come to the mission. Still he will not cease to invite them. Then he asks for an *exeat*.³⁶

We do not wish to say that Father Nerinckx did not write

³⁶ This violent letter is in the *Baltimore Archives*, Case 8 A, U 5. See the complete original in DOCUMENTS pp. 85-88.

this letter with a good intention. Yet we venture to believe that the reader can hardly have failed to detect running through all the document a strain of too much sensitiveness; of too pronounced a combative spirit; of too little consideration for others; and of too strong a conviction of being always in the right, as well as of a marked indisposition to allow either honesty, good-will, or the possibility of correct views in those who ventured to think or to act differently from the Belgian missionary. A previous letter shows that he had been greatly irritated on hearing that Father Wilson had spoken unfavorably of the famous Rev. Cornelius Stevens, whom Father Nerinckx considered a second Saint Athanasius.³⁷ Impartial history, however, by no means places Stevens on so high a pedestal.

Father Badin's letters are at once more numerous and, as a rule, of greater length than those of his friend. One of those to which we wish particularly to call attention was commenced November 20, 1806, and finished February 9, 1807. The other was begun March 10, and completed May 6, 1808.³⁸ But since to give even a *résumé* of them would not only extend this article to undue length, but would repeat much of what has already been said, suffice it to state that they are of the same personal nature, and characterized by the same extravagant language and accusations, and the same lack of proof and charity as the documents which we have reviewed from the pen of Father Nerinckx. Both these zealous missionaries were unmerciful to those who did not accord with their views.

Although himself only an ordinary theologian, Father Badin affects to belittle the theological attainments of the early friars and says they are afraid of the learning of Father Nerinckx. But to us the evidence seems to point the other way. More than once the fathers requested Bishop Carroll to use his good offices in order to establish a system of conferences for the clergy in Kentucky, and to suggest some common ground on which

³⁷ Nerinckx to Carroll, January 1, 1807 (*Baltimore Archives*; Case 8 A, U 3). This document is really only the postscript of a letter that cannot now be found in the archives. Together with a letter of March 21, 1807 (*ibid.*, Case 8 A, U 4), it shows that Father Nerinckx made another onslaught on the Dominicans at this time, and that his principal object was to prevent them from getting charge of the future seminary.

³⁸ Respectively in the *Baltimore Archives*, Case 1, H 6 and I 6.

they could agree. He did so in letters to Father Badin; but the letters were never shown to the friars, nor their contents made known to them. The conferences were never held³⁹ The only author whom Father Badin seemed willing to follow for such a purpose was Antoine, a theologian of a pronouncedly rigorous type whose views pleased those imbued with Jansenistic principles.

Like his friend, Father Badin accuses the early friars of all manner of intrigue, as well as of a covetous, worldly and grasping spirit, lack of zeal and seeking an easy life. They tell the people, he asserts, of the want of harmony among the clergy; let it be understood that the Dominicans, because religious, are not subject to the bishop; declare that the other missionaries are too severe; and otherwise sow the seeds of trouble and discord. But again the evidence seems to point in the opposite direction. In one place, the French missionary, evidently to make his charges the more personal and effective, goes so far as to send Bishop Carroll what he calls a quotation from a letter of Fenwick casting a slur upon the Jesuits. On the margin of the document at the side of this assertion, the prelate has written: "Is not this a breach of private correspondence? Is it revealed to me for any beneficial purpose?" But, we think, the bishop had no cause for apprehension. Fenwick's letters and character, no less than his dealings with the Society of Jesus, offer the strongest rebuttal to Father Badin's charge. Indeed, that nothing really injurious to the reputation of these early friars occurs in the manuscript literature of the time, is certainly proof positive that they were men of edifying life and truly priestly character. And in this connection, it should be further noted that the Frenchman's letters reveal not only great love and admiration for his Belgian friend, but implicit confidence in his judgment. They show clearly enough how well founded were the often expressed fears of the Dominicans, that the Flemish clergymen's influence served to bring into fuller play the ultra severe and Jansenistic principles of Father Badin, which lay at the root of the discontent among the people, the complaints they sent to the bishop against him, and his charges against the friars.

Of Father Wilson's learning sufficient has been said. So also,

³⁹ This is shown by several of Fenwick's letters to Carroll.

That Bishop Carroll held all these priests of Kentucky in high esteem is certain.⁴¹ It is also certain that he sought to bridge over their differences. His marginal notes and underlining on the letters from Fathers Badin and Nerinckx show that he was often perplexed, if not vexed. Precisely what he said in his letter to the French missionary that brought forth Badin's long reply of August 29-October 7, 1808, cannot now be known. But the fact that the unpleasantness, although the two clergymen continued to hold their rigid principles, begins to wane from this time, would indicate that the good prelate must have insisted on more charity and more moderation. Perhaps, too, the part the Dominicans took, in 1809, in helping Father Nerinckx to escape the administratorship of Louisiana, to which he had been appointed, had its share in the establishment of a better understanding. By the time of Bishop Flaget's arrival in Kentucky, Father Nerinckx, it would seem, had learned to esteem the friars. And during his last years in Kentucky Father Badin appears to have regarded them as his best friends. Indeed, while abroad, the French missionary made two unsuccessful attempts to join the Order of Saint Dominic for the American provinces. Failing to become a member of the First Order, he made his profession as a Dominican tertiary, and returned to the United States to labor under Fenwick, who was the bishop of Cincinnati.

The following words of Father Wilson, written to Bishop Carroll some seven months after the friar reached the missions, present, we think, a fair idea of the state of affairs in Kentucky at the time of the arrival of the Dominicans in the state.

The men [he says], both young and old, of this poor country are very shy of Priests. A little good nature will, I hope, in time bring many to their duty. Some already drop in by degrees. Not one in twenty frequent the Sacraments—few since they left Maryland. They will not be driven, they say. And indeed, with good words, they will do almost anything for you. Considering their poverty, they are beyond expectation generous in our regard. I hope Almighty God will bless their good-

⁴¹ Of the Dominicans, for instance, Bishop Carroll, writing to Father Concannon, November 21, 1806, says that they are "exceedingly and deservedly beloved" by all; and that he views them "as choice auxiliaries conveyed hither by the special appointment of Providence to instruct the young and the old, to extend our holy religion and preserve by their lessons the integrity of Catholic faith" (Archives of the Dominican General, as above). This letter was written when the unpleasantness was at its height, and there is absolutely no indication that the great prelate ever changed his opinion.

though not so profound or so widely read as he, were his colleagues all college-bred men, and possessed of considerable erudition. Like Wilson, Tuite and Angier had won academic honors. Both were lecturers in sacred theology. Again, apart from what has already been said, and the hallowed memories in which they have ever been held by their later brethren, let it be noted, in opposition to Father Badin's gratuitous assertions, that it would be difficult today to find four priests more disinterested than were those four early friars in Kentucky. Certainly they did not deserve all this vituperation. This is the more evident from the fact that the gentle and humble and holy and unselfish Fenwick is singled out as the principal offender—doubtless because the French missionary imagines the future bishop to be still the superior, although he had voluntarily laid down the reins of authority months before. In some of the French missionary's correspondence Angier and Tuite are acknowledged to be gentlemen of pleasing ways and polished manners.

A later document shows that Bishop Carroll was much displeased with many of Badin's actions, and with his letter of March 10-May 6, 1808. The missionary was evidently taken severely to task. In spite of this, however, he sought to justify himself in his characteristic way. The result was a letter begun August 29, and finished October 7, 1808. It is from this that we learn of the bishop's displeasure. It is a document of more than thirty-nine closely written pages, in which its writer endeavors to defend himself by minute explanations, a renewal of his former charges, and the assistance of select friends.⁴⁰

Through all the unpleasantness the friars wrote but seldom—only when obliged to do so through duty, charity or self-defense. Their letters, calm, temperate and judicial, even under the trying circumstances, show not only a broad and kindly spirit, but much self-possession. More than once, as has been stated, they requested the bishop to designate some middle course in which all could concur. On the other hand, Fathers Badin and Nerinckx, stern, inflexible and unable to see any views except their own, wanted no compromise. Neither of them, as far as we have been able to find, ever sought the advice of the bishop in the matters under dispute. Nor did they follow his suggestions. They left nothing untried to have him condemn the Dominicans.

⁴⁰ Baltimore Archives, Case 1, I 10.

will and desire of seeing Priests, as they call them, of their own. I hope we shall agree with Mr. Badin, whose principles, with those of Mr. Nerinckx, are somewhat rigid in many points. But this will be an affair of some prudence and forbearance.⁴²

The characteristic of the people of Kentucky noted by the learned divine, more than a century ago, remains a characteristic of them to this day. No more stubborn people can be found anywhere if one attempts to coerce them. One would look in vain for a more docile people if those who should guide them are but kind and lead the way. Father Nerinckx also remarked this trait of the Catholics in Kentucky. Had he and Father Badin adapted themselves to the spirit of their flocks, doubtless not only would their ministrations have been more acceptable, but the fruits of their labors at once more abundant and more lasting. In his famous letter of June 2, 1806, the Belgian missionary says to Bishop Carroll:

Nevertheless, I will add this in favor of these people: however refractory very many of them are, they offer, in my opinion, much hope for good; if the directors of their souls, be they ever so exacting (or, if you will, even strict), are only kind and gentle, and show sympathy for their weakness. Harshness terrifies and repels them; but paternal piety wins even the unwilling.⁴³

Father Nerinckx seldom mentions the names of those with whom he had had trouble, but Father Badin was less cautious. In this way we learn that their differences were with some of the best and most influential Catholics in the state. Such, for instance, were the Spaldings, the Hamiltons, the Lancasters, the Elders and the Simpsons. In speaking of these families, Father Badin even surpasses the acerbity of Father Nerinckx. A fair appreciation of the French missionary's character and practices may be found in the following words from his own pen:

Mr. Nerinckx says that I mean well, but that, in his opinion, I take the wrong means to gain the confidence of the people. My success in that difficult [affair] and many other affairs for fifteen years undoes his opinion.⁴⁴

Attention has been called to the kindly attitude and spirit of the Dominicans, and to their views of the unpleasantness. Let us now give two concrete examples of this as exemplified in Fenwick. Writing to Rev. Robert A. Angier, who was still in

⁴² July 25, 1806 (*Baltimore Archives*, Case 8 B, L 5).

⁴³ See note 20.

⁴⁴ See note 40.

Maryland, he tells his friend that he may have Father Badin as a companion on his way to Kentucky. Then he writes:

He [Badin] has not yet offered me any of the church lands he once talked so much of. He even objects to giving us the little tract belonging to the chapel which we serve, and which was bought for the Priest who should serve it. . . . For the peace of the Church here, and for the sake of harmony among us, I wish you would request of Bishop Carroll to examine into his and Mr. Nerinckx's whole practice, and to require a clear and minute statement of the whole—and of ours—, and to pronounce whether they or we are singular in our practice, and which of us must reform.⁴⁵

The other example is contained in the closing words of a letter of Fenwick to Father Concanen. The statement was written more than two months after the selection of a bishop for Kentucky and is the only one in which the friar so much as refers to the affair in all his correspondence with Rome. Here he writes:

I have never mentioned to Rev. Mr. Badin that I had leave to admit him in our Order, as I found, on my [second] arrival in the country, his attachment and zeal for us were no longer the same as at our first meeting. His mind, we believe, was changed by associating with a new missionary from Flanders, Rev. Mr. Nerinx, who seems to have imbibed prejudices against us, and to have instilled them into the mind of Mr. Badin. Mr. Badin is a zealous and active man on the mission, and will likely do better under his own control and the Bishop's than in our Order. He is generally more zealous than prudent—in fine, much of a Frenchman. Consequently I think he is an unfit man to be Bishop of Kentucky. I wish him not to be, for our sakes, and for religion in general. Bishop Carroll, in a letter to me, says he fears his nomination will be unpopular, though he was in the first place, recommended among others, in consequence of his zeal and long service in Kentucky, having been [for] some time the only Priest there. I do not mean or wish, dear Sir, to hurt the good man in your opinion, but to say, though he is a man of real merit, yet [he] is unfit to fill a Bishop's place, on account of his overbearing, hasty temper, and his harsh, strict and rigid practice in *Sacro Tribunal*. This, I know, is Bishop Carroll's opinion. If you have any influence in the Pope's Council, you will serve us and the Church in Kentucky by preventing his nomination. The good Doctor Carroll is our real friend.⁴⁶

With this quotation from a document which is a fair exemplar of all the friars' letters on the question, we may close an episode which, even if it is somewhat sad, need offer no cause for shock

⁴⁵ Fenwick, Kentucky, to Rev. R. A. Angier, Maryland [1807] (Archives of Saint Joseph's Province).

⁴⁶ Lexington, Kentucky, July 10, 1808 (Archives of the Dominican Master-General, Codex xiii, 731).

or scandal. As long as men, even clergymen (be they ever so good), remain in this land of trial and probation, such things will occasionally happen. Saints Augustine and Jerome are an example in point. Fathers Badin and Nerinckx were ever the attacking parties; the others necessarily on the defensive. We have dwelt on the unpleasantness at some length, much against our liking, only because misrepresentation, the interest of true history and a just defense obliged us to such a course. Though the affair can hardly fail to throw something of a shadow on the names of two ambassadors of Christ which we should like to see glow with all possible luster, it casts no serious reflection on their character. Neither does it detract from their reputation for piety and apostolic zeal.

Few priests, we venture to believe, can examine the documents in the case and fail to pronounce the teachings and practice of the Dominicans not only kindlier, but saner, more Catholic and better calculated to bear good fruits. Unlike Father Howlett, who deftly insinuates that it is a question whether these friars were a real benefit to the missions, those in possession of first-hand evidence will be constrained to declare the presence of the Dominicans in Kentucky at that time an undisguisable blessing to both the Church and the people of the state.⁴⁷ That they were regarded as such a blessing by the Catholics at large, no bad judges, we think undeniable history. As tells us a traveller, writing from Elizabethtown, Kentucky, January 14, 1825, Fenwick and Wilson, the two fathers specially censured by the Belgian and French missionaries, were idols in the State. They won the hearts of all—the former by his zeal and “engaging and unaffected manners,” the latter by his “moderation and extensive ecclesiastical learning.”⁴⁸

It is with a feeling of no little relief that we now close this ungrateful article. It has been written, we repeat, solely in vindication of good men who have been unjustly maligned.

REV. VICTOR F. O'DANIEL, O.P., S.T.M.,
Washington, D. C.

⁴⁷ HOWLETT, *Life of Rev. Charles Nerinckx*, pp. 163-164. Although this biographer is not so unfair as Father Maes, one must needs be blind not to read his thoughts between the lines. It is indeed strange that neither of these authors could find time to say a single good word of the future bishop of Cincinnati and his companions in religion.

⁴⁸ *United States Catholic Miscellany*, July 20, 1825.

DOCUMENTS

SOME LETTERS OF FATHERS BADIN AND NERINCKX TO BISHOP CARROLL

The following documents are printed from photostat copies of originals in the Archdiocesan Archives, Baltimore. They all have a direct bearing on the historic misunderstanding between Revs. Stephen T. Badin and Charles Nerinckx, two pioneer missionaries of Kentucky, and the early Dominicans in that state, and throw much light on the article which this issue of *THE CATHOLIC HISTORICAL REVIEW* (pp. 15-45) presents to its readers on that subject. They certainly give the question a phase quite different from that to which the American public has long been accustomed. Many letters of a similar character on the same topic might be reproduced, but the fact that they contain much litigious, disagreeable or other matter wholly foreign to the point at issue, determined us to limit ourselves to the publication of those that follow. The first two, as will be noticed, are from the pen of Father Badin, and cannot be overlooked by those desirous of knowing the real origin of the unpleasantness. The others were written by that missionary's friend and companion, Father Nerinckx. For the sake of correct history and illumination, notes and comments will be made on them as they appear in their proper order.

Father Badin's Reception of Rev. E. D. Fenwick on the Occasion of the Latter's Visit to Kentucky in the Spring of 1805

For the historical setting of the following document in the unpleasantness referred to above, the reader is referred to the article (pp. 15-45). Suffice it here to state that the letter reveals a heart filled with gratitude and joy at the prospects held out to the Church in Kentucky by the coming of the Dominicans.

Near Bardstown, 15th May, 1805.

Most Reverend Sir:

I have the happiness this day of enjoying the company of the Revd. Mr. Fenwick which you had announced in former letters, intimating as soon as he arrived in America that, as Kentucky was likely to be a center from which true Religion would be disseminated in the western countries, you would engage him to turn his views towards our desolate congregations so needful and capable of cultivation. I never doubted of your sincere wish to procure for us spiritual assistance, which indeed was not to be obtained in your Diocese without your direction or concurrence. Many are the tokens of your goodness towards me and my numerous congregations, and I have now to return my heartfelt thanks for making Kentucky the first object of your pastoral solicitude upon the arrival of St. Dominic's family. Flattering myself that I seconded your views, knowing the scarcity of Priests in your immense diocese, fully sensible of the difficulty and almost impossibility to replace clergymen as they depart from life or from duty, impressed also with the idea confirmed by former experience that much less good is done by individual clergymen, isolated as they are or unconnected with a regular

body acting uniformly by the same principles of obedience, disinterestedness and zeal, seeing how the missionaries along the Mississippi have already abandoned their numerous flocks to follow the Spanish government, apprehensive also that the service of Alm. God and the salvation of souls cannot be *permanently* secured to this and the neighboring countries but by the exertions of a regular body of pious and enlightened men, who shall not fail of success, when established under the Blessing of heaven in a country where there are no prejudices of the civil constitution to oppose their humane and religious views; evidencing every day the alarming progress of infidelity and vice which threatens us with an almost universal deluge, unless our youth be regenerated and properly educated; actuated by these and other congenial motives, I have made a proposal to Mr. Fenwick which is submitted to your Reverence, and which I earnestly request you to sanction. I have begged this gentleman to exonerate me of the trouble of holding so much ecclesiastical property which in my opinion will do much more good to my fellow-creatures, when vested in the order of St. Dominic, under your episcopal jurisdiction. Wherefore I hope you will grant me the favour or leave of transferring to that religious order the Ecclesiastical property now in my hands, to which I have added 220 acres of my own land, the whole containing upwards of 100 acres of cleared ground, with other convenient improvements. By these means may be immediately started the intended plan of an Academy with a moderate assistance from the Catholics of this State who will undoubtedly join their cordial endeavours to procure their own happiness, that of their children and their children's posterity. I had conceived for these ten years past the desire of seeing in Kentucky such an establishment arise, the which appeared to me almost a chimera, since I saw then neither temporal means for a foundation, nor any probable hope of having the cooperation of such men as would be calculated to answer so useful designs. But how limited are the views of men! and how evident that the Divine Providence over the church is *attingens a fine usque ad finem fortiter disponens omnia suaviter!*

As Mr. Fenwick and his brethren will assume the obligation of fulfilling the duties of the mission as well as myself, and it is important that the missionaries of the country should as much as possible be directed by the same spirit, I do humbly request and confidently hope that you will give me leave to be associated to St. Dominic's family. I conceived that wish as well as the other resolution within two day[s] after Mr. Fenwick's arrival and have never varied.

Should I have been unwilling to apply to its intended use the property trusted by Providence as a depositum in my hands, I would esteem myself accountable for the good not done, which will be otherwise done to my Parishioners and other denominations, and for the evil which might have been prevented and I hope shall be prevented by the instrumentality of Mr. Fenwick and his brethren.

Craving your Episcopal Benediction, I have the honour to be very respectfully,

Most reverend Sir,

Your obedt. Son in Xt,

STEPHEN THEODORE BADIN.¹

¹ *Baltimore Archives*, Case 1, G 9.—Although it is somewhat French in its phraseology, there can be no doubt about the meaning of this straightforward letter, or the impression made on Father Badin by the humble Dominican.

Father Badin's Change of Mind

The reader is again referred to the article (p. 19), for the place which the following document occupies in the controversy. But he must not lose sight of the fact that meanwhile Father Badin had seen no Dominican. Father Fenwick returned to Maryland, with the above letter, and wrote to Rev. R. L. Concanen, as has been stated in the article, telling him of the prospects held out for his pious enterprise in Kentucky, and of Badin's proposals which, he says, Bishop Carroll "applauds and consents to." That the friar also sent Father Badin a similar message, and that Doctor Carroll wrote to the same missionary advising at least such an arrangement for the good of religion in the new west, the document which we now lay before the reader leaves no room for doubt.

The church lands in Kentucky at this time consisted of several hundred acres, mostly covered with forests and of little value. There were also two small log presbyteries. Besides these, Father Badin had a residence of the same character, known as Saint Stephen's. Doubtless the friar hoped to see the day when the land would be brought under cultivation, and used for the same good purposes to which he had seen similar property devoted in his native Maryland. The little rectories would give shelter to the missionaries and perhaps eventually become centers of extensive spiritual activities. However, when he learned that these possessions were not to be his, he bore the disappointment with that spirit of Christian resignation which characterized his whole life.

The reader, we venture to think, can hardly fail to notice how grotesque, inconsistent and preposterous this document really is. Such, however, are most of Father Badin's letters in which he tries to extricate himself from a difficulty. In spite of all his subterfuge, we fancy that those who read the document with care will have great difficulty in convincing themselves that he had only a few talks with Father Nerinckx on the subject in question, or that the Belgian clergyman was not the inspiration of practically all that it contains.

Near Bardstown 5th 8ber 1805.

Most Reverend Father in God

I am just returning from Madison City and avail myself of an hour of leisure to answer your favors of May 29 and Aug. 12. The last being an answer to my letter sent in May; since which epoch I have not had the honour of writing to your Reverence, both for want of leisure or opportunity and of your last favour which Mr. Fenwick made me expect shortly after his return to Maryland. Indeed the principal subject of our present correspondence is so weighty that it needed time to meditate on it, especially as my venerable companion Mr. Nerinckx seems to be reluctant to give his opinion; and his zeal in the mission forbids frequent communications: for these four or five weeks we have had but very few interviews, although our lodgings be under the same roof.² His constitution must be uncommonly robust to do so much business as he does, and I am apprehensive his example may possibly prove detrimental to my

² This certainly proves the truth of Fenwick's statement to Concanen that Bishop Carroll "warmly applauds and consents to" the two proposals contained in Badin's previous letter. However, the prelate evidently left the final decision of the matter to Fathers Badin and Nerinckx, the latter of whom had started from Georgetown College for Kentucky before Fenwick returned to Maryland.

health, as I am ashamed to be so far behind him. I return heartfelt thanks to Divine Providence for having procured us a Priest who is *in omni sensu* what a vicar of Christ ought to be; and who, if he lives long enough, will operate wonders here. I cannot express the happiness I enjoy in him; it is only allayed by the fear that I have of seeing in Kentucky Priests who would not be capable of imitating his zeal and disinterestedness, the plainness of his manners, his rigid sobriety, &c. &c. which are all necessary in a country situated as this is; where so many scandals have been given in the infancy of the church, and where so much good is to be done at a time when men seem to arise from a Lethargy, and express their amazement at the (dying) follies which have taken place for these three years past among various Religionists, who are ending now or sinking into Socinianism or Scepticism. Twelve Apostles of the venerable Mr. Nerinckx's disposition would make most of the western countries embrace the true faith.

Seeing the necessity in which we are of missionaries, I was willing to make the sacrifice of my all, to procure them and assure a permanency and succession of faithful ministers, raised in the very country where they are to exercise the sacred functions: But since I have made my proposals to Mr. Fenwick, I have evidently seen that not only it would not be advantageous, but it might prove very detrimental to Religion to surrender the whole Ecclesiastical property to one Order, exclusively, which in time will probably claim, besides, privileges and exemptions from the jurisdiction and control of the Ordinary. I shall not comment on the many and valuable reasons your Reverence has adduced in your last.³ I really thought that Mr. F. at the very time I was writing my proposals was, with modesty, however, showing a grasping disposition: for he was not satisfied with one only of the church livings; but as two days before I had show'd a cheerful disposition to part with everything to establish the Order, he insisted on possessing everything: Knowing and expressly mentioning that such a disposition should be submitted to your corrective, I acquiesced although but little edified. This and other traits of character seem to confirm your observation that it is but too common among Religious to think that the splendor of their Order is the greatest benefit to religion.⁴ I have noticed and reflected on whatever passed between Mr. F. and me, and plainly saw that he had a great partiality to Maryland, which I was determined to counteract, according to your wishes; at our first interview in Scott Cty he expressly said within a very few minutes that he was pretty indifferent about Kentucky, and that unless better offers were made here to him than he had received in Maryland where he had very flattering prospects, he could not think of settling in our State; and that he had undertaken his journey rather in compliance to the request of your Reverence. The possession of the church in Scott Cty did not excite at all his ambition. Finally both he and his brother-in-law appeared to be in a great hurry to return home.

³ This also shows that Bishop Carroll advised giving the church lands in Kentucky to the friars. Yet he waited to hear Father Nerinckx's wishes in the affair before making the transfer. So also it may be remarked here that Fenwick's character is so opposed to what is said about him in the rest of this document, that those who have studied the man will be compelled to believe Father Badin drew generously on his fertile French imagination. A number of his letters show him to have done this at times. Here the change is so sudden and the inconsistency so patent that the influence behind it all cannot be concealed.

⁴ Father Badin must have misread Doctor Carroll's letter. The rest of the document, the fact that the bishop himself was a religious and his high regard for Fenwick would indicate this at least.

Being unable to obtain from him the least assistance in the mission of Scott Cty, he was at my house four or five days in my absence, and on my return home, I found them in the disposition of going back the next day to Maryland, without exploring any more of the Country, especially the extensive tracts on Green river, where a new settlement might be made for the poor Catholics who have no land or have had land or are narrowly settled in Washington and Nelson Counties. I had even the obligation of Mr. Davis for 300 acres of good land for an Ecclesiastical settlement. I represented the distress of the poor Catholics who daily importune me for that object, I insisted on Mr. F. travelling in the limitroph⁵ counties, I offered my company: but they appeared so unwilling, especially Mr. Young whom Mr. F. was not likely to disoblige, that my project vanished: I was still more unwilling that Mr. F. should return to Maryland without encouragement; I knew too well that the clergy were not very ready to visit Kentucky, and I feared they would or might receive additional prejudices which would render our present condition still worse. The delays of Mr. Nerinckx, in coming to Kentucky, which I could not account for, since he might have come with Mr. F. who passed by George T. College on his way; the wish of your Reverence that Mr. F. should establish his Academy in Kentucky; the parsimony of the Catholics in general, some of whom had circulated that I countereacted the will of Priests destined for Kentucky lest my (poor) salary should be diminished; in fine everything made me too willing to give. I flattered myself, considering the want of liberality and justice in the people and too often of disinterestedness in clergymen, that the same persons might be both professors and missionaries, that the Academy would supply what would be wanting to maintain the church; and in fine that men who have made a vow of poverty and would lead a temperate laborious life would not make so much expence in a monastery nor need so great salaries, as those who are not restricted by vows and have separate livings. I supposed men to be what they should be, and what yourself trusted the Dominicans of Bornheim are. My own reflections on what I have witnessed myself, and other subsequent information which I have all reason to believe correct, give me too much cause to apprehend that illusion is possible respecting the obligation of the vow of poverty.⁶—I have considered what might be the probable utility in Kentucky for our poor Catholics of a college where \$100 should be paid for board and tuition. I find on a serious reflection that not half a dozen Catholic parents are able to afford so expensive an education to their children, that consequently the labours of Mr. F. and his four companions would be almost entirely applied to the benefit of other denominations, without much service being rendered to the missions which are so extensive and numerous;⁷ that it could not be expected that more than one congreg. and the college could be attended to by the body of the Dominicans. On the other hand we could hardly find secular clergymen willing to become tenants under the control of a regular Order, and consequently the missions would not be sufficiently attended to nor extended and I might have the affliction of incurring censure from the Catholics who have subscribed a considerable sum for the erection of the Dominican college, in hope that they will be able to afford to their children a liberal education for a trifling

⁵ Limitrophe, a French word for *neighboring*.

⁶ All this is evidently the inspiration of Father Nerinckx.

⁷ Yet the college was most beneficial to the Catholics, many of whom received their education practically gratis.

consideration. On this occasion I must observe that the institution of Père Urbain is more likely to answer their expectation, because less expensive.

However as there is a prospect of great services, of edification, of respectability to Religion being procured by the Order; I am ready to comply with your direction and invest Mr. F. and Brethren, in such manner as you will point out, with one seat of land viz. that contiguous to Cartwright's Creek chapel. The land is much better than that I live on. It consists of 112 acres to which I have some prospect of adding the adjacent plantation consisting of 80 acres with good buildings, and orchard.⁸ I think the land near Bardstown should be reserved for a Bishop who probably will have a living also (36 acres) in the suburbs of the Town, having received an assurance from a Catholic without heirs that such was his intention. According to the will of Mr. Fournier, I have put Mr. Nerinckx in possession of the plantation on the Rolling Fork. A Priest is much wanting in Scott Cty, Lexington and Mason Cty; I hope that some virtuous friends of Mr. Nerinckx will soon come, as he expects. A Priest also should be settled in Danville who should attend the Congreg. in Madison, and make excursions about the country. Two months ago I visited two new settlements in Shelby Cty one of which is likely to become considerable. It is about 40 miles n. e. from my residence. Two Priests are wanting about Bardstown, one for Coxe's Creek, Shelby and Jefferson Cties; the other for Bardstown, Poplar neck and Hardin Cty. There are several families where they might be accommodated. I should also have a Priest constantly with me for Pottinger's Creek alone; and after much labour, much will remain undone. I receive frequent communications from St. Vincent (Indiana). The people there appear to be in great distress for want of a pastor, and there is a great harvest to make. Mr. Nerinckx will no doubt inform you of the Catholics in Ohio State.⁹

Bardstown, 12, 8ber 1805.

Most Reverend Father in God

Since I wrote the above, I have had one only interview with Mr. Nerinckx, for the space of half an hour, on the subject of the transfer of the Ecclesiastical property to Mr. Fenwick, &c., although he was unwilling to give his opinion, an ominous circumstance; at length, seeing the business coming to a crisis, he expressed himself fully.¹⁰ He thinks that such a thing is contrary to the Canons of the Church, that it is a subtraction of Ecclesiastical property, not an addition of means intended immediately for the good of souls. Indeed the Dominicans would be made independent of the Episcopal authority, if they were possessors of the whole Ecclesiastical property; and the Bishop, who is by the nature of his office the Governor of the Church, must be governed by those under his jurisdiction, and seeds of schism would be sow'd,¹¹ as is this day exemplified at N. Orleans. For let us suppose that the Dominicans or any

⁸ This shows how it happened that Saint Ann's Church passed to the charge of the Dominicans. However, they did not get the land, although it was given, largely at least, by the people for the use of the priest who should serve them.

⁹ Likely Jacob Dittoe had written of the spiritually destitute condition of the few Catholics in central Ohio. But Father Nerinckx never, as far as we have been able to discover, visited that state.

¹⁰ This is another proof that Bishop Carroll himself sanctioned and advised the transfer of the ecclesiastical property to the Dominicans. We recur to this so often because we have heard a person maintain that this letter shows the venerable prelate demurred to Father Badin's proposal.

¹¹ This letter is published in the *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, xxiii, 166ff. But the part from this comma to the end of the next paragraph is omitted.

other Order should be possessed of the whole Ecclesiastical property; let us further suppose that error or heresy, or any substantial deviation from morals or discipline should take place in individuals or in the body; let us suppose that the Bishop of course should attempt to suspend the delinquents; in that case they will submit or they will not: if they submit, still they retain possession of the temporal property of the church, although they are incapacitated to serve it, and the congreg. must find an adequate salary for a successor: but if they submit not, the which they will probably be inclined to considering their independence otherwise, we have a schism; and the Parishioners who see the schismatic perform the same rites of the church as the genuine Pastors do (this was lately the case in France &c.), and who are not generally speaking capable of Theological discussions, or rather are prepossessed in favor of the clergyman enjoying temporal independence, and who needs or will require no salary to propagate his independence among his adherents; the Parishioners, I say, will naturally prefer such a man, whose practice cannot be rigid, to the true Pastor who has come in the Sheepfold by the door, not as the thief &c., but must receive a proper salary.¹²

These reflections may be deduced from the Bull of Pius VI of Pious memory for the erection of the See of Baltimore, intrusting the Bishop with the management of the Ecclesiastical property; and accordingly I did in my Testament will that now in my hands both to Your Reverance and R. R. Coadjutor, jointly and separately.

Mr. Nerinckx expresses no little surprise at the ambition of the Dominicans of Bornheim, who hold now the property of that foundation which is worth 100,000 crowns and in better times would fetch what it is worth, without mentioning the other resources of Mr. Fenwick.¹³

In fine Mr. Nerinckx, whose Charity hindered the manifestation of his opinion, until necessity urged him, does strongly suspect the purity of their faith who, when clerymen in the low countries were under violent persecution, could be with impunity strolling in the country and in the streets, and amidst the lawless soldiery of the French revolution: Their having redeemed the Bornheim property confirms his suspicions.¹⁴ A letter does not admit of lengthy details; only he is so much disheartened at the thought of becoming partaker with them in the sacred ministry that he spoke with resolution of his leaving the State if the Dominicans trouble themselves otherwise than with a college.¹⁵ This thing I the more heartily deprecate, as his disinterestedness is quite Apostolical, a thing little to be expected in our days; and he looks for some respectable friends, who have been tried in the crucible, and have powerful protectors in Europe, able and willing to support the Missions where they will establish themselves; and in fact Mr. Nerinckx has already received several remittances which prove that this is not an ideal scheme. I speak confidentially, because I repose myself entirely on the experience

¹² This bit of curious English and Jansenistic and Gallican canon law, omitted in the *Records*, etc. must have provoked Bishop Carroll to a smile.

¹³ The property at Bornheim belonged to the Dominicans in England, not to those in America. Just at that time, the house could have been bought for 25,000 florins. So, too, were Fenwick's resources practically consumed by the purchase of Saint Rose Farm.

¹⁴ For this matter see article, pp. 32-33.

¹⁵ Father Badin is afraid that the Dominicans will not labor on the missions. Father Nerinckx says that if they do, he will leave Kentucky. This looks like the friars were "between the devil and the deep blue sea."

and wisdom of your Reverence. Mr. Nerinckx observes also in addition to the above that monks are but auxiliaries, that they have but a delegated jurisdiction, that they enjoy the ordinary only in becoming Bishops, and that the reverse must be the case, if invested with the whole Ecclesiastical property, and armed besides with immunities, privileges and exemptions from the ordinary.¹⁶ I shall add only that Religious communities which have appeared to Catholic Governments so formidable or useless that their property has been unjustly made national, may at a future time become in this *infidel* country exceptionable also, especially if in the course of things feuds, envy, scandals, independence or rivalities were to take place, the which we have but too much reason to apprehend, considering the nature of man. If I be well informed the Legislature of Virginia has already made an havoc among the Episcopalians, a body which appeared to them too wealthy and perhaps formidable: The same alarm might possibly at a future time be raised in this country, where we have already the Trapists [*sic*], probably the Dominicans, and possibly the Franciscans, friends to the Revd Mr. Eagan, as mentioned in your letter of May.¹⁷—To conclude, as there are particular graces for every vocation, and the merciful Providence of God has placed you to rule his church, I shall trouble myself with nothing else but to follow your orders.

I shall briefly advert to other subjects. Fathers Basil and Dominic, Trappists, died at my house two weeks after their arrival in Kentucky; F. Urban has received the Viaticum several times and is now in a poor situation as I am informed. The two thirds of the community have been very sick from the fatigues of the journey. . . .¹⁸ I sincerely rejoice at the restoration of the Jesuits and hope their services will again be felt in America more extensively: they have some enlightened friends in the Government of this State.—As to Mr. Stoddart's land, it might be expedient to receive for church purposes a small tract *unconditionally*, say 500 acres for the maintenance of a Bishop. I shall probably take a ride there with Col. Edwards (once of Maryland) to explore that country, but 30 or 40 miles from this.—Mrs. Abell has not become Catholic and may not become such for several years to come.—We have not as yet published the Jubilee.—I have published lately the *real principles of Catholics*, of which I shall send your Reverence a copy by the first opportunity. I have six dollars in my hands for your Cathedral.

I have the honour to be very respectfully, craving your Episcopal benediction, Most Reverend Father in God,

Your very hble Servant and obedt Son in Xt.

S. T. BADIN.

P. S. I have thought proper to inclose my letter to Mr. Fenwick for your Reverence's inspection, which you will be good enough to seal and send, if you think it answers the purpose.¹⁹

¹⁶ This speaks for itself. But we submit that Father Nerinckx should not have let his desire to establish a Belgian mission in Kentucky, a laudable ambition though it was, carry him to such extremes against the Dominicans sent there by the bishop.

¹⁷ What a change from Badin's previous letter!

¹⁸ The matter omitted here is of a delicate personal nature, and has no bearing on any Dominican, or on our subject.

¹⁹ Father Badin's letter is in Case 1, G 10 and 11, of the Baltimore Archives. Evidently the one who indexed these archives was led, by its double date, to think that there were two letters. We do not know whether Bishop Carroll gave Fenwick the letter enclosed for him; but it is probable that he did not.

Father Nerinckx's First Letter to Bishop Carroll Touching on the Dominicans

It has been told in the article how Bishop Carroll did not acknowledge the receipt of the above letter from Father Badin, but took advantage of a later one to defend the friars; and the reader has doubtless noticed how Father Badin insinuates, in the document just given, that Father Nerinckx would wish to make at least a part of Kentucky a mission under the care of Belgian priests. Indeed, Father Nerinckx's heart was set on this project. He refers to it in a number of his letters. It was a laudable ambition; but the good priest should not have suffered himself to become so embittered against the Dominicans because their presence was an obstacle to his plan. Like himself, they were sent to Kentucky by the bishop. Yet, although he had signified his intention of leaving the state, unless they confined their labors to the proposed college, hardly had the first two sent west, Wilson and Tuite, reached their destination, when he begins to write, belittling not only their zeal, but that of those who were still to come. Both this project of a Belgian mission and this spirit of disparagement may be seen in the following letter to Bishop Carroll.

J. M. J.

Illme.

Illustrissime ac Reverendissime Domine!

Fasciculum litterarum vobis tradendum curo benevolentia vestra fretus, in finem eum destinandi Rdo Dno Brosius, quem quaeso, ne gravetur ipsas in European transferendas tradere, salva enim fuit prima litterarum missio, quam ipse curavit; plurimum illi debitor sum; Deus remunerator sit ejus! ac in grati erga eum animi testimonium sincerissima mea vota pro illius illiusque familiae dilectae et valetudine et salute dignetur accipere. Unum petere mihi liceat ac requirere ab illustriss. Dntne Vtra, ut scilicet non gravetur vel paucissima verba addere litteris meis ad Dm De Wolf Antverpian; magnum enim hinc litteris meis pondus accedet et fides, in subsidium Americanae missionis et viros et ornamenta et nummos postulanti-bus.

RR. PP. Dominicani bini jam dudum in hanc regionem advenerunt, coeperuntque aliquamdam Religionis rei operam navare, ut egestate spirituali pressis imo deficientibus succurrant; ast ut apparet, modicae durationis erit eorum adjutorium, cum ex repetitis eorum assertionibus constet illos non ad missionum suppetias sed ad ordinis sui propagationem exiisse, quamquam tamen dicant se quod poterunt facturos in monasterii sui vicinia;²⁰ argumentum itaque certissimum incongrue ipsis bona Missionis aut titularium Ecclesiarum fore concedenda, ac spes insuper infirma valde colendi hujus Evangelici agri, ubi sentibus et tribulis spinisque plena omnia, quae semen quodvis suffocant, vix una alterave manu ad rescandum occupari valente; desiderium ergo manifestare cogor habendi in hac regione R. Dm De Cuyper nostratem et si qui sunt alii (non est tamen hic Dominus singulariter mihi notus:) qui huc accurrere vellent; res sane urget; nam est hic videre miseriam. Porro si fas mihi est mea sensa promere, vereor non expedire nostrates in longe dissita a se loca mittere, quia adventantes novi, plane peregrini nec

²⁰ Wilson and Tuite, the two fathers then in Kentucky, were specially intended for the novitiate and college which the friars proposed opening. In view of Fenwick's oft-expressed intention, it is safe to say that this, and this only, was what they told Father Nerinckx.

land parents. For the answer to his charges against the Dominicans, for the sake of brevity, we must refer the reader to the article of which we have spoken (pp. 15-45). Suffice it here to say that Father Nerinckx, through the arrangement of Father Badin or Bishop Carroll, had now lost, or was on the point of losing, Saint Ann's, his favorite mission. There he contemplated building a brick church which would be the first in Kentucky; but this parish was soon to be given to the Dominicans, if it had not already passed under their care. Doubtless this was as fuel added to the fire. Nor should it be forgotten in this connection that the gloomy, rigorist principles with which Fathers Nerinckx and Badin were deeply imbued, also had their part in the inspiration of these ugly letters against the friars, whose teachings and ministrations were not only milder, but more Catholic. This brought the people to the Dominicans from far and wide, which was more than the other two good missionaries could hear with equanimity. But for further information on this point see article.

J.M.J.

2 Junii 1806.

*Illustr**Illustrissime ac Reverendissime Domine.*

Gratissimas vestras, Illustr^{me} Dñe, nec minus desideratas recepi salvas; plurimum me confuderunt expressa in iis benevolentiae in me sensa, quibus qualiter respondeam non invenio.

Rvdum De Cuyper et mihi et populo huic ereptum summopere dolui, ob hoc maxime, quod casus hic sit nostrates alios a capessendo itinere absterituros, et, circumstantiis quibusdam praeter haec attentis, videatur praesagire frustra fieri tentamina ad Missionem quamdam Belgarum, quam quidem ordiri tam fatuus non praesumerem, sed adventantibus ad hoc a Deo viris esse a servitio, quantum mediocritas mea fert, peroptarem; ast Dominus est, quod bonum est faciat.

Ut ordine pergratis vestris respondendo prosequar, pauca de desiderato hic Episcopo tangere nunc occurrit: doleo simulque horreo, tantae rei tantillum me sive in modico sive in magno ad arbitrium compelli, pietati tamen ac observantiae in patrem judicans cedendum, quod Dominus voluerit suggerere exponam, cujus maxime causa agitur; parcat, quaeso, Deus optimus miseriae meae: Condonetque Illustris. Dñatio Vtra adolescentulo et contempto, qui de seniore sensa edere cogor! Addecet sane, ut, si fieri potest, vir eligatur et regionis et morum populi gnarus, qualem, in superioribus vestris memoratum Rvdum Dm, iudicio quoque meo designasti; scientia ejus in utrisque litteris, si ipse iudicio quid valeo, apparet mihi supra mediocrem, quae si per tempus et negotia liceret, fusior haud dubie ac magis profunda esset; ratione plurimum valet iudicioque et prudentia (: mense proximo, qua nescio die, annum aget trigesimum nonum); doctrina existimo sana est, paratus decisioni superioris audiens esse; zelus ejus sat superquerque est notus, qui forte Gallici fervoris plusculum habet et subamarae cujusdam rigiditatis, quique, si modico mansuetudinis melle temperatus esset, et suorum palato magis gratus esset, et majoris in inveteratis curandis putidisque vulneribus esset usus, quod quidem in causa est quod non tam generatim diligatur — quamquam et hoc fatendum, populum hic multam partem difficilem, indocilem, ingratum, immorigerum, dyscolum, indifferentemque esse, et sine ullo omine religionis, ejus venerandum nomen blasphemare facientes. Mea quoque ipsius sors est, diris a pluribus convelli, odioq' adjectis, etiam de morte minis, satis acerbo devoveri ac proscindi, dum

quo se recipiant, cum advenerint, commode invenient, nec cum laborando defecerint seniore aut morbo languerint, ubi mortem praestolentur felicem, ut apud suos facile reperient; ad hoc quae ex patria nostra forte possent subsidia expectari in unam aptius regionem quam in dissitas a se mitterentur, sic ut horum concessa veritate unicum fere videatur superesse, delectus scilicet istiusmodi regionis; quae autem praeferenda sit, notissima Illustrissimae Dnatis Vtrae sagaxque prudentia pro gloria Dei determinare dignabitur; omnia, apprime nosco, loca in universa vestra Dioecesi vehementissime desiderant operarios, sed vix credo fieri posse, ut major inveniatur penuria, quam hac in parte, ubi mea quidem opinione fructus sat uber, tardus licet, insuper datur sperari; nolim tamen cuiquam importunus nimis persuasor esse, ut huc advolet, nisi solo Dei zelo et proximi charitate ferveat, solum quae Christi sunt quaerens, certus, quod quae sua sunt, non sit inventurus, atque hisce tantum sub promissis volentem omnem huc amantissime invito.

Non possum non repetere ardentissima mea vota, ut cum operariis aliis Episcopus unus adveniat, non qui videat semel gregem transiens, sed qui visitet semper illi cohabitans vir omni exceptione major, cui committatur grex, ipse fere miseria miserior.

Casuum duorum in causa matrimoniali statum ad Illustrissimam Dnatam Vtram transmissi, qui quaeso ne oblivioni trandantur. Litteras quoque cambiales 100 Dalerorum recipiendorum per Illtm Dm Vtram per virum in George-town itinerantem misi, ex quibus 90 designaveram pro tribus campanis in turribus appendendis, quae si emptae sint bonum est; quae si non sint, optarem unam tantum emi valoris ut in praecedentibus notavi, ac de reliquis nummis coemantur libri precum, piarum instructionum ac catechismi & notato in charta quadam eorum pretio, plurimum enim hic libri desiderantur; inter illos optarem aliquoties invenire libellum, cui titulus *Fifty Reasons*. Hoc negotium forte R. Ds Brosius non dedignabitur cordi habere, ut autem huc adferantur opportunitas, puto, proxime aderit, cum multos audiam huc transire paratos. Coeterum paternae vestrae sollicitudini quam possum

Commendatissimus tota observantia signor

Illustrissime ac Reverendissime Domine

Humillimus obseque

vester servus

C. NERINCKX,

pbr.

6 febr, 1806

*Holy Mary's at the Rolling F.*²¹

P. S. Multum salvere opto R. D. Beeston. Oro placeat inclusas pro R. D. De Bart destinandas ipsi curare.

The following document shows its writer to have been a master of bitter invective. It almost staggers belief that a pious and humble man could employ such violent language. If his ministrations among the people were anything like as harsh as the way in which he speaks of them here, they could not have been otherwise than unpopular with many. Few, we think, will be found who will accept Father Nerinckx's characterization of the early Catholics of Kentucky, nearly all from the old Maryland colony, or born in Kentucky of Mary-

²¹ *Baltimore Archives*, Case 8 A, U 2.

interim alii, nec forte numero minores nec minus religiosi, dociles, alacres et in pietatis officiis ferventes nec male erga me affectos sese demonstrant; in quo priores gravem vix intelligo; non in temporalibus sane, cum nil recipiam, et annum medium ad Ecclesiae restaurationem remiserim, quae quidem ipsa nil hinc sibi sperare potest, non enim ad sacras liberalitates usque hujus religio populi provecta est hactenus, qui vix si Deus aut spiritus est, audivit aut vere credidit; puto spumas lunaticorum illorum ex eo maxime provenire, quod qui captivos ipsos tenet infernalis tenebrio, Domini correptus verbis, timensque expelli miseros miserrime afficiat, sed novimus haec apostolicorum operariorum esse fercula et obsonia post labores ac defatigationes; at justo longior modo haec digressio²² — temporalia negotia satis dextere tractat, pietatis studiosus est, a cujus exercitio forte aliquantulum consortiorum amantior impeditur, quae tamen ab adventu meo, in ejus domo aut nulla aut rara fuerunt; ast cum foris est, invitatus non summa reluctantia renititur, quod quidem facere se inquit intuitu boni hinc sperati; haec de ipso assertio potius aliena est quam mea, quamquam tamen quoque mea; dicebat enim haereticus quidam honestioris sortis; I like very well Mr. B., but he is too fond of company. Et revera quamvis bonum aliquod forte subinde sperari detur, vereor tamen ne mala nimium praeponderent; ego potius a parte priscorum starem, v.g. Conc. Aquil. [?]: "Convivia et nimiam laicorum familiaritatem multarum offensionum et scandalorum originem debent clerici in quocumque gaudio constituti declinare ac fugere," et S. Hier. ad Nep.: "Convivia tibi vitanda sunt, et maxime eorum qui honoribus tument," & ac alibi: "Nunquam petentes, raro accipiamus rogati . . ." "Saepe fit, ut contemptui sit ecclesiastici ministerii dignitas," dicit Conc. Med. IV. Et iterum S. Hier.: "Valde despicitur clericus, qui saepe vocatus ad prandium, usu recusat etiam necessitate aliqua compulsus," & alia plura, quae quidem omnia magis in hac patria quam in nostra, ubi ea verissima ipse comperi, vera arbitror; haec sunt, quae praecipue notare potui; nec in iis quidpiam videtur apparere, quod a ministerio, terribili quidem, arcere ipsum debeat; nam supposita etiam allatorum veritate facile emendari emendanda [sic] poterunt seria ipsius ministerii consideratione; coeterum neminem ego nosco huic loco magis aptum;²³ interim rogo atque obtestor, ut, quam possunt minime, mea sensa in hanc determinationem influant, qui in peccatis natus sum totus.

Pro campanulis illis tribus, de quibus in anterioribus, schedulam illam cambialem 100 Dalerorum destinaveram, quam Illustr Dñatio Vestra litteris inclusam ad me misit, saltem ad tantum ex eo capiendum, quantum illis solvendis erat necessarium; in posterioribus tamen mentem meam parum immutatam reperi, casu quo necdum sint emptae; nempe praeferam (:attento quod ipse solus sumptus haud dubie sim factururus, voluntate populi, quae quondam veleitatis cujusdam speciem habuit, vix aut ne vix ad contribuendum inclinata:) ex residuo, empti unica campanula 30 dalerorum pro Ecclesia residentiae meae, libros pios, precum, catech., &, coemi quorum magna hic penuria; inter hos Scripturam S. mihi mitti optarem; quod si emptio facta sit campanularum, bene est. Mittantur in Louisville in ripa fluvii Ohio situm vicum, cum inscriptione ad virum catholicum, *De Gallon* vocatum, pistorem ibidem, quem

²² This harsh language about the Catholics in Kentucky certainly forms a strong contrast to the praise which the friars unfailingly bestowed upon them.

²³ This certainly sets aside the statement which one reads here and there, that Father Nerinckx did not think Father Badin a suitable candidate for the miter.

quamprimum rei certiore faciam. Novas litteras cambiales huic includo in hunc finem, missas ad me particulari quodam, ut exprimit Dñus De Wolf in litteris suis; valent 105 daleros; alia adjumenta vix expecto, quae tamen non negantur sed offeruntur potius, verum cum intelligam illos circa Jesuitarum et Trappistarum institutiones plurimum occupari eisque allaborare, satius duco illis impensas fieri quibus major Dei gloria procurabitur; de me minus sollicitus pro modulo, quantum licet, conabor, nec deerit mihi nunc qui semper paterne mei curam gessit utcumque indignissimi. Modica, ut mihi scribunt, spes est obtinendi ex patria nostra viros, cum qui zelosi sunt ibidem ipsi sint necessarii, et inertibus non indigeamus. Trappistae in patria nostra magis magisque tolerantur et increscunt, religiosas hospitales et filiae *charitatis dictae* a praefectis et Episcopis expetuntur, pastores fere ex mendicato vivunt, et reliqua rerum facies, aiunt, sat lugubris est. Promittunt benevoli isti homines cistam aut cistas ad petitionem meam mittere, ornamentis altaris plenas, quorum distributionem Illustriss. Dñationi Vtrae relinquent, in qua, quaeso, meminisci hujus loci non dedignabitur, populo hic praeter paupertatem bonae voluntatis defectu laborante; amant ipsi generosi et religiosi viri domum sibi assignari Philadelphiae aut New Yorki, cum directe Antverpia in alterutrum portum saepe occasio occurrit mittendi; valde autem raro Baltimorum, nisi prius Amstelodamum missio fiat, quam incommodam dicunt et sumptuosam; sed ego nescio utrum cum Philadelphiam appellant non sit plus solvendum quam Baltimori, quod adventitii Dominicani innuunt, qui ultra 135 Daleros ibidem solvere coacti sunt, quod Illustriss. D^a Vtra melius noscere poterit, qualiterque se res habeat, aveo edoceri, ut ipsis quam potero citissime locum designatum annuciare valeam, et modum quo procedatur.

Fideles ad *Post Vincennes* cum R. D. Badin invisi, cui itineri mensem prope dedimus, errantes sicut oves quae perierunt invenimus, et certissimus videtur eorum totalis interitus nisi adjutrix manus advolet; pessimi sunt homines, vitiis variis libidinis maxime et perjurii immersi. Ecclesiae praecepta de festis observandis, legesque jejunii ac abstinentiae pro nihilo habentur, verbo, non est species neque decor sed contritio et infelicitas. 80 ibi circiter, puto, sunt familiae, sed plures in circuitu dispersae; vehementer desiderant sacerdotem habere, qui eis opituletur, quamquam multum timeam ut ipsi pareant; gens est otio diffuens, a labore aliena, sequax voluntatis. Necesse est sane pastoris habitatio sit ibi tristis, amara, desolata; de temporalibus tamen R. D^s Rivet curam habuit. Gubernator loci operam suam offert, ut advenienti sacerdoti procuret annue 200 Daleros, quos recipiebat D^s Rivet; quibus ego potius renunciarem, quos non dubito religionis libertati maxime nocivos, uti ex relictis quoque in domo mortuaria scriptis palam est. Sylvestrium praeterea duae tribus sunt, nempe *les Myamys* et *les Loups*, in quibus magna spes apparet conversionis; prior populosa habens 1500 viros ad arma aptos, posterior 800 capitum; hi jam eo processerunt [?], ut Ecclesiam habeant, in qua congregantur Dominicis et festis ad audiendum cathechismum &, qui per duos laicos mercede conductos populo proponitur; distant hi a Post Vincennes 400 fere milliaribus, illi autem in ejus fere vicinia sunt siti; obtuli me ad quamvis ex eis stationem, si ita superiori fuerit visum, uti per hasce Illmae Dñtñi Vtrae me offero, quamquam ipse fatear, non obstante bona quacumque voluntate adjuvandi proximum, oportere me magis inquirere locum, in quo numerum mensium meorum flendo lugendoque transigam judicium durissimum expectaturus; instantissime tamen iterum repeto, insisterem ut ad aliquos horum derelictorum mitterer,

nisi absolutissima nullitas mea contrarium clamaret; videtur omnino quoque necessarium in aliquo locorum istorum Episcopatum erigere, attentis locorum distantis cujus consilio, statutis ac decisionibus stetur, nec suspensi animi in varia detorqueantur, multoque promptius is media adinveniret, sine obice aut dilatione de mediis judicandi ac decernendi quae e re Ecclesiae esse valerent.

In Louisville spes magna apparet obtinendae quamprimum Ecclesiae, si sacerdos sit, qui hanc subinde valeat visitare; imo audeo dicere ac certum videtur, pro numero sacerdotum fidelium quoque numerus augetur: O mittat Dominus operarios in messem, quia multa jam alba sunt ad illam! Quod autem illustriss. Dñatio Vestra dignetur hic me consolatore consiliariumque agere viri luminis tanti ac experientiae, videtur mea quidem mente abs re esse, nisi dicendae sint tenebrae luci lucem tenebrositate sua addere, aut, quod fere idem innuit, ut luceat lux magis efficere. Certum interim est Rvdum illum Dm nullo meo consilio aut re indigere, quo tamen obstante non longius migrare intendo nisi in domum illam, in cujus possessionem me induxit, ubi, quo res melius agantur praesentem me esse oportet, cuique soli loco, utcumque modico, invigilando, toto, ut dicitur, meo homine opus habeo, sicut duae congregationes reliquae Sti Caroli et Stae Annae nimirum quantum vires meas excedant. Hoc est dictamen mentis meae, paratae interea ad maxime contraria quaevis; obedientia enim excusationi locum tribuet aliquem, ubi ausus temerarii ratio sufficiens nequit inveniri.²⁴

Trappistarum res satis tarde procedunt ac lente, cujus congregationis quidem ruinam timeo, nisi novis auxiliis hominum ac nummorum, quae utraque promittuntur ex patria nostra, fulciatur; prospere magis, videtur, omnia fierent si R. P. Urbain, quod frequenter ipsemet illi suggessi, ab humilioribus fundamentis ordiretur, nec de eligendo loco ad defatigationem usque anxietur; verendum ne continuis suis excursionibus rem minuat, minusq' bonae de Trapistis opinioni ac famae consulat.

De Dominicanis nostris binis haud dubito, quin R. Ds Badin sit sua sensa traditurus. Vix equidem jam haesitare potest quin prognosticam meam assertionem oculatus arbiter agnoscat, speculatione tanta differunt ab ipso, praxi vero in quibusdam tota. Quantum vero jam dicere expediat, quantumve dici valeat, vix ausim censor esse; interim hoc asseveranter, puto, pronunciare possum: Fortasse gentem multiplicabunt, sed non magnificabunt laetitiam nec faciem terrae renovabunt. Hoc verum est; petulci nostri insolescunt magis, et qui sin amore metu saltem tantisper coercerantur laxatis jam habenis proruunt ac extento collo incedunt refugii civitatem invenisse se ovantes; plurimum sibi insuper promittunt ex adventu duorum residuorum, qui indulgentias plenarias non de poenis peccato remissa culpa debitis sed et de reatu culpa incurrendo allaturi expectantur vel ardentissime; forte minus exactus sum dum plurali numero promiscue utor, nam videtur P. Tuite, paucioribus tamen litteris excultus, justae disciplinae addictior; alter autem ut apparet, multis litteris, siquidem multis, non ad insaniam sed ad mollitiem, quae forte propter salis acrimoniae defectum infatuatio dici potest, adductus est: mollem illum vocat R. Ds. Badin, apud populum *easy* audit; utrum tamen ad exorbitantes laxistas relegandus sit iudex nolim esse.

²⁴ This indicates that Saint Ann's was still under Father Nerinckx's jurisdiction; but it seems certain that Father Wilson attended the mission from early in 1806, and that it had already been determined to place it permanently under the Dominicans.

Ego rigidus censeor, R. Ds. Badin rigidior et acrior;²⁵ verumtamen plerique ab acribus ac pungentibus (:si tamen nostra talia revera sint:) veram sanationem potius citiusque sperantes, mellitaq' apium arbitantes fastidire incipiunt, ac pristina remedia inquirunt, pacem inter et pacem justum tantaque, id est, aeternae consequentiae, discrimen subolentes.

Ab illius R. P. adventu res matrimonialis (:haec enim antequam ipse huc advenerim, multi rumoris ac murmuris occasio fuerat:) omnino pro votis equorum ac mulorum in parte carnali decisa est, quamvis in re sacramentali pro sanctitate nihil hactenus videatur inventum; omnia jam licent in matrimonio et forte brevi omnia expedient. Res eo est, uti relatum est mihi, ut quaedam dixerit, laxato hoc ursi sui fune se amplius ferenda non esse: *I kan no more*; quae antea intra honesti tori repagula naturae regulis laeta vivebat, religionisque gaudebat adjumentis ac sacris laetabatur juribus, a bruti insanientis secura excessibus. Porro doctrina ista si vera sit, actum est de ritualibus nostris, de pastoralibus, &., de omnibus dicam christianae praxeos regulis; insulse sane (:sit dicto venia:) Tobias egerit, priusquam hoc sacramentum magnum in Ecclesia esset, tot sanctae castitatis conjugalibus, finisque conjugalibus copulae sancti tam expressa edendo vota ac specimina; vereorque ne forte quaedam (:pudet dicere!) sortem subeant uxoris illius Levitae Jud. 19, non alienis exfornicatae libidinibus, sed propriorum enecatae carnali furore, succumbant. O quam pulchra est casta generatio! Istae similesque speculationes ac praxes, si pro genio cujusque contra mandatum Domini, apostoli repetitum consilium omnemque sanorum scholasticorum opinionem pro praxeos regula debeant haberi, non video, quid spiritui privato haereticorum valeat juste opponi. Hoc solum restabit, ut cum pagano condoleamus infelicitati Ecclesiae saeculorum praecedentium, et fideles illorum temporum dicamus miserrimos, quibus haec porta empyrii fuit clausa, quorum plurimi essent damnati, qui quod honestum est turpe existimantes, a propriis sacerdotibus male instructi ac decepti ex conscientia erronea peccaverunt. Longior hic fortasse sum, quamquam vix dicendi finem inveniam; sed parcet solita vestra benignitas, confido.²⁶

Hoc interim ardentissime desiderarem, ut (:si forte iste ordo figat mansionem, quod vix credam, attenta quam praevideo modica pecuniaria assistentia, consideratoque quod non a tam humilibus videantur initiis velle incipere:) ut regularis observantiae verus amator et animarum zelo plene accensus ex alio quodam ordinis illius coenobio huc advocari posset; quid

²⁵ Compare Father Nerinckx's original given here (from the words: "*Fortè minus exactus sum dum plurali numero promiscue ulor,*" to this point) with Maes' rendition of it (*Life of Rev. Charles Nerinckx*, p. 174); and do not overlook that author's quotation marks. The "*alter*" pater was Father Wilson. Here is Father Maes' translation: "The people call these reverend gentlemen *easy*; Rev. Badin pronounces them extreme *laxists*, and I (who, although severe, look upon my colleague as altogether too rigid and stern,) think that he is not mistaken in his estimate of them." Compare also Maes, parenthetical clause with the parenthetical clause in the next line of the text: "*(si tamen nostra talia revera sint).*"

²⁶ All this exhortation of the Dominicans is one paragraph covering three long, closely written pages. We have taken the liberty of dividing it into several. Compare this paragraph with Maes' rendition of it in *op. cit.*, p. 175. In a footnote on the same page he attempts to prove that Father Nerinckx had "formed a correct idea of the state of affairs at St. Rose's" when no such place as Saint Rose's existed. But for further information on this matter see article, pp. 15-45. Surely no one, not even Father Maes himself, can justly take exception to our attempt to set right all this misrepresentation and unfair treatment.

enim de tali institutione Religioni decoris sperandum aut veri nominis boni, ubi homines seipsos satis amantes, pondusque diei et aestus plusculum exhorrescentes, a regularis disciplinae censore ac custode tanto remoti spatio, plebis catholicae mores cui praeerunt, ad suorum normam formabunt? quos quidem absit ut improbos dicam, tamen vix religiosae observantiae zelo animatos aestimabo. Plura hic scribere nec jam vacat, R. P. Urbain jamjam has in itinere ad vos secum assumpturo, nec forte rebus non satis hactenus plenius ac maturis convenit. Quae autem querulus satisque fortasse acris, miserrimus ipse ego ac nequissimus patri ac Episcopo scribo non rogatus quidem²⁷, solius, confido, gloriae Dei zelo, si modo discreto [discreto?] satis, et rei christianae amore sunt exarata, ut quantum fieri potest, si religiosae institutiones, quod optandum, hic locum inveniant, allaboretur ut viri perfecti, quod perfectionis status sonat, obtineantur; quorum enim vana est religio aut vix a saeculari discreta commercio, novimus in patria nostra nunquam satis flenda experientia quantum religioni obfuerint, hic autem majus hinc timendum malum, si quos nos perfectos vocatione viros gloriamur communis aut mollioris forte vitae homines deprehendant, sicque pro aedificatione iis, qui ex adverso sunt, scandalum detur. Ideam quidem minus favorabilem mihi impresserant de hujus collegii patribus vix ante ne nomine quidem mihi notis omni exceptione majores viri nostrates, illi ipsi, qui missionis Americanae rem tam zelose amant curare, cum unus eorum mihi dicebat velle se, ut si forte comites illos haberem in maris trajectu, tamen quantum possem a familiari consuetudine abstinere; noverant enim R. PP. viam media in persecutione totius electi cleri nostri libere incedendi et obambulandi tyranno ipsis, quo titulo Deus scit, uti juratoribus parcendo, quod saltem bonis omnibus violenter suspectum semper visum fuit; ad hoc *bons* usi sunt ad emendas possessiones suas, quod zelantes pro religione plus satis probarunt fieri non potuisse sine expressa vel tacita accessione ad tyranni votum; deinde P. Wilson ipse in officialem publicum a gubernio electus fuit, Praefectoque Departiment multum acceptus, collegium eorum varios numerabat alumnos, filios hominum parti tyranzanti aut addictorum aut subservientium, quibus si addamus expressiones quasdam in favorem status miseri Ecclesiae Gallicanae, quam pius nullus non videt amaritudine amarissima repletam, vix dubitare ausim, quin talis farinae viri cautissime sunt tractandi, qui si iniquitati volentes nomen non dederint, tamen usque ad scandalosam molliem condescenderunt; praevidensque jam, quod illi ipsi, talium principiorum morumque viri (:deliculi enim sunt, sat bonam valetudinis et corporis curam agentes, non tamen sunt potui multum dediti:) sint aliquando futuri, si res ipsis succedat, Seminarii KKyani professores, aut saltem pro longo tempore, ni aliter misericors providentia disponat, numerosiorem constituturi cleri hujus partem²⁸. De his omnibus paulo amplius verba facere ad cautelam oportere me censui, ne fortasse tacuisse postea poeniteat, seroque paretur aliquando medicina; interim non pluris haec mea

²⁷ These words prove conclusively that Father Nerinckx wrote these things solely on his own initiative. But see Maes's translation (*op. cit.*, p. 176, second paragraph) of the end of the document: "Since you expect me to look after the interests of religion in this region." These words, in spite of that translator, are *not* in the document.

²⁸ In rebuttal of all this see article, pp. 31-33.

expositio valeat opto, quam attenta frivolitate mea, ac pudenda miseria valere judicabitur.^{28a}

Sunt et alia quaedam quae scribere luberet, sed per tempus non licet. Hoc tamen addam pro laude populi hujus plurimam partem utut dyscoli, multam in iis mea opinione spem boni inveniri, si animarum eorum directores utut exacti, et, si placet, etiam stricti, modo mansueti, mites et infirmitatis eorum condolentes sint; acerbitas ipsos terret, sed pietas paterna etiam invitos trahit; defectu tamen *sacerdotum* necesse est ut plurimi pereant, quod quidem quantopere me, utcumque indolentem, affligeat non sum [par?] exprimendo."

Alias hic iterum includo litteras cambiales, quas particularis quidam per D. DeWolf ad me misit; dignabitur opto Illtriss. Dñatio Vtra illius curam habere, expensasque quae in gratiam meam factae sunt, solvere. Veniam itaque humillime petens de omni gravamine quod vobis causo; precibus, si quid valeo, conabor resarcire. Coeterum enixis votis pro duplici vestra prosperitate bonorum omnium largitorem incessanter obtestans, qua par est filiali observantia, debitq' reverentia, studio animoque signor

Illustrissimae ac Reverendiss. Dñationis Vtrae

humillimus obedientissimq.

SERVUS C. NERINCKX,

prbr.

P. S. Plurimum salutis illustrissimo coadjutori, Rdis DD Beeston, Brosius, &c., aliisque benevolis nostris, quorum post vestras, precibus sacrificiisque totum me commendo.²⁹

Document No. 5 is only a postscript to a letter that can no longer be found in the Baltimore Archives. Taken together with a later letter of date, March 21, 1807 (Baltimore Archives, Case 8 A, U 4), it shows that the document of which it was a part, was long, largely devoted to the missionary's ideas of the Dominicans, severe in the extreme, and aimed at preventing the friars from becoming the professors of the future diocesan seminary. With this latter point, however, Father Nerinckx needed not to have troubled himself, for nothing seems to have been farther from the friars' minds.

P. S. Paratis jam ad discessum litteris sat temporis superest ut notulas quasdam superaddam. Mors viri vere plorandi a digna tanto viro vidua matrona nunciata nulli dubio locum linquit; Dominus De Wolf ergo obiit, verum mihi amicum ereptum lugeo damnumque non vulgare ambae Indiae sentient; interim Dominus est, qui disposuit, quod bonum est in oculis suis faciat! Erat huic religioso viro intimus amicus, zelo hujus simili aut eodem animatus, rerum gerendarum justitia ac theologica etiam scientia supra sortem

^{28a} One cannot suppress a feeling of astonishment at seeing Father Maes (*op. cit.*, p. 176) translate the latter part of this paragraph: "I feel all the more free, my Lord, in writing to you as I have done, from the fact that I foresee that the Dominicans will be professors of our Ecclesiastical Seminary, or at least will constitute a majority of our clergy, if providence does not interfere; and I might be sorry afterward, but too late, not to have spoken my mind on the subject, since you expect me to look after the interests of Religion in this region. . . ." Our surprise is all the greater because the last clause is not only an interpolation, but is in ill accord with Father Nerinckx's statement referred to in note 27; while the whole paragraph, as rendered by Maes, is so toned down as to make the Belgian missionary's charges the more plausible by making them less bitter and extravagant.

²⁹ *Baltimore Archives*, Case 8 A, U 1.

suam instructus, confessorum nostratium hortator et consolator, principique De Gallitzen, quam pariter vita functam intelligo ac doleo, familiaris; est viro huic nomen J. Peemans. Mercator est satis dives Lovanii, ubi habitat prope canalem, quem quidem puto ad Revdiss. Dnatem Vestram litteras dedisse. Videtur omnino e re Christiana in hac regione futurum, si zelotae hujus pius zelus litteris foveatur, casuque quo ego aut alii, inter quos praesertim Jesuitae duo novelli ex ea regione adventitii, aut forte Illustriss. Dnatio Vtra ipsa, cui et novum hunc annum et alios post hunc multos totis votis benedictione coeli plenos exopto, e vivis evocaretur, res taliter disponantur, ut cooperatione viri illius iter servetur apertum et Missionariis in hanc Regionem, et iis, quibus Missiones valeant juvari.

Nuperrime mihi dicebat R. P. Urbanus expectare se ornamenta ex Europa, quae ipsi et Rdiss^o Episcopo competeabant; nil ad hoc respondi, sed ad me scripsit Ds Peemans & Ds De Wolf, quod coemissent ac congregassent varia ad ornatum Ecclesiarum nostrarum, qualiter res se habeat ignoro; sed et praeterea scribit ad me soror mea varia quoque comparata ex pecunia ad me pertinente et ab aliis procurata, quibus forte pecunia quoque aliqua addetur, imagines pro catechese, Crucifixi, Rosaria, & pro quibus jam tertio scripsi; horum non dubito quin mentio sit exprimenda in litteris; idem nuntiat vidua Dñi De Wolf, quae etiam addit Remonstrantiam, Ciboriumque et casulas, & mittenda fore; hos ergo articulos, quantum fieri potest, ad me mitti optarem, cum partim sint futuri mei proprii, partim mihi donati, cumque nullum hic sit medium super habendi quidquam in Ecclesiis, nisi quod ex propriis coeminus, totumque meum, quod valde modicum est, in hunc finem expenditur. Ipsa vidua De Wolf spondet se pro me facturam uti piae memoriae maritus ejus mihi promiserat, petitque assignari modum faciliorem, de quo in superioribus mentio, mittendi quod volunt in Americam ad certum correspondentem, et an similia quaevis liceat huc inferre, ad quod respondi ipsi licere. Sic enim opinor.

1 Januarii 1807.

Diu multumque deliberavi, utrum hanc de Dominicanis mentionem facere deberem; nempe miserrimus ipse confundi deberem, cum vel minima de proximo defavorabilis suspicio animum pulsaret. Sed ad scribendum compulerunt me rationes sequentes. 1^a Videtur gloria Dei et bonum proximi, in nova Ecclesia hac, requirere ut omnes possibiles cautela adhibeantur. 2^a Memor praesertim quot modo infelices sacerdotes haec nova Ecclesia passa sit, ac ipso hoc tempore iterum (:qui casus hic quidem populo huic hactenus ignotus est) patrem Flyn [*sic*] spatio aliquo temporis hibernum [?], nullis instructum credentialibus ex Episcopi parte; hic vir ex testimonialium defectu si non suspectus, saltem minus probatus, ex consensu tamen R. Dñi Badin in quibusdam Ecclesiis conciones habuit congregationesque varias obivit nunquam tamen confessarius nisi paucissimorum, quem quidem ego judicabam satius in monasterio Trappistarum remansurum. Ut vero fatear verum non sunt hic fundatae contra ipsum quaerelae factae, sed ut jam ex rescriptis ejus intelligimus in Sti Ludovici aut alio ibidem Louisianae loco, ut litteralis est epistolae ejus sensus, intrusit se pastorem, vel potius a Laicis, aeditus nempe, intrusus est, quamquam, benignius interpretando, credere debeamus a vicario ibidem generali ipsum jurisdictionem habuisse, nullis tamen instructum testimoniis episcopalibus, quia, ut jam videmus, Illustma Dantne Vtra omnem illi denegante positive jurisdictionem; faxit Deus, ut negotium hoc

infaustum non habeat finem!³⁰ maxime cum vicarius ille ipse, Maxville [Maxwell] opinor nomen est, apud catholicos nostros non tota famae integritate gaudeat, cujus R. Ds Badin se dicit aliquando mentionem ingessisse in litteris ad Illustrissm Dntm Vtram datis; absit tamen simile quid de Dominicanis suspicari, quod potius de me ipso timendum esset, cujus quidem timore et securius certiusque uni necessario, animae scilicet saluti propriae consulendi causa, in animum iterum admisi cogitatum quem in patria nostra tantisper foveram, Trappistarum nempe ordinem ingrediendi, maxime summa Regulae observantia post novorum adventum virorum illectus, ac praesentissimae certissimaeque ruinae meae in missionaria vocatione periculo ad stuporem perculsus, arbitransq' legatione mihi imposita functum me abunde, cum transmarinum iter primus tendando aliis occasio et hortator fuerim ad sequendum in hanc regionem, in qua sperandum fore ut fructum centesimum faciant. 3^a Quia Patri certus sum me scribere, cujus sagaci pietati ac discretioni res scrutanda tuto justequae committatur. 4^a Ut verum fatear, stomachum mihi parumper moveri sensi, intelligens Patrem Wilson gratis asseruisse Dm Stevens, quem alii melioribus argumentis temporis hujus Athanasium vocarunt, interdictum aut suspensum esse et censura notatum propter importunum scriptandi zelum, sub eadem sane censura erat S. Athanasius et alii quivis qui pro muro aeneo Ecclesiae fuerunt adversus quosvis Ecclesiae desertores aut persecutores et ignavos propugnatores. Praeterea falsa nimis est et a calumnia vix distans assertio, meliusque esset solidas quasdam redargutiones in medium adducere, quibus moderni illius Athanasii oracula labefactentur, sed tam vasto in imperio tota saeculi illuminatione adjutus nemo hactenus id attentare publice verbo aut scripto ausus est, nedum P. Wilson praetendet facere³¹. Omnibus ergo bene combinatis videtur in cunctis hisce transparere, salvo meliori, segnior pro defendendis orthodoxae fidei principiis zelus, justo quaedam major in erraticam pravitatem indulgentia, ac tepescens quidam ad currendam arctam Evangelii viam fervor, contra praeclarum effatum Excell. Episcopi Grassensis (A. Godeau) dicentis: "In declarationibus casuum contingentium sequimini hoc generale axioma; ut eligatis semper eam opinionem, per quam Deus magis glorificatur, et quae majorem habet conformitatem cum arcta via Evangelii." 5^a Quod nihil intenderem nisi Illustm Dnatm Vtram pro modulo meo rogare obtestarique, ut quantum fieri potest, alii ordinis ejusdem viri probati vereque ad Religionem propagandam apti religiosi advocentur, qui hic praesint ut prosint. Hisce unis ac solis vicibus mentem sat superque expressam autumans finio, ac si quaedam ausu temerario aut indiscreto sint expressa veniam precans, ausim protestari sine bile aut felle, sed propter solam conscientiam scripsisse, quod cum

³⁰ Bishop Spalding (*Sketches of the Early Catholic Missions in Kentucky*, pp. 259ff.), speaks of this clergyman in terms of high praise. Certainly could anything of a really serious character have been said against those early Dominicans, it would have found a place in the uncharitable documents of the day. That nothing of the kind is recorded proves them to have been splendid priests. It may be further submitted here that Father Nerinckx's frequently recurring "*miserrimus ipse*," his confusion at casting the slightest suspicion on others, and his protests at writing thus solely "for the glory of God and the good of his neighbor" ill accord with his many caustic strictures. Perhaps, after all, Rev. G. I. Chabrat does not deserve the censure that has been passed on him for consigning that missionary's writings to the flames.

³¹ As the reader will doubtless remark, Father Nerinckx, as is the case with nearly all the others, makes this charge on mere hearsay. However, history would hardly place Rev. Cornelius Stevens on so high a pedestal as Father Nerinckx would have him occupy.

fecerim forte nunc ad nauseam in posterum exoneratum me ac exemptum censendi ratio erit abundans.³²

Father Nerinckx's letters, with all his humility, show him to have been superlatively sensitive—too much so for his own happiness. This, it seems to the writer, was the cause of much of his worry. The documents again indicate that his troubles were largely imaginary, and that he gave too ready an ear to gossip. Pious and zealous though he was, his sensitiveness, imagination and proclivity to accept idle talk at its face-value led him, at times, into the most bitter and violent language. In harsh invective the document, which we are now to lay before the reader, surpasses even that of June 2, 1806. For the reply to these reiterated charges against the Dominicans the reader is again referred to the article mentioned (pp. 15-45). The extravagance to which the good man could go, in his perfervid moments, is evidenced by the ultra-severe attack of this letter on Basil Elder, father of the late saintly Archbishop Elder of Cincinnati, an exemplary Catholic, and an intimate and trusted friend of the metropolitans of Baltimore from Carroll to Spalding.

J. M. J.

Illustrissime ac Reverendissime Domine!

A paucis septimanis litteras vobis destinandas Revdo Dño Badin tradidi; post has rursum officiosissimas ab Illustrissima Dominatione Vestra accepi, quae quo sunt magis sinceræ eo quoque magis ad confundendum me sunt aptae. Litteras meas sat longas invenies, minus tamen quam, eas esse optarem, sed taediosas nimis. In ipsis mentionem facio dubii debiti numerarii, quo forte obstringor, rationem reddo deinde de distributione facta ornamentorum sacrorum, quae maximam partem ex propriis meis et consanguineorum liberalitate religiosa sunt comparata; tum unam aut alteram paginam impleo, non Apologistam agendo pro me, cuius hactenus, pro summa Dei optimi in me clementia, necdum indigui, et dubito perquam, utrum etiam illius unquam, nisi gloria Dei aut bono proximi id requirente, usum sim facturus, sed aliquam reddo rationem praxis meae, quam 20 et amplius annos, sub oculis tot venerabilium virorum, martyrum forte aut intrepidissimorum orthodoxae fidei certo confessorum in agitatissima patria nostra, sub insignissimo Duce Joanne Henrico Eminen-tissimo illo Cardinale, sine ulla contradictione secutus sum, et ad quam sequendam ab iisdem ipsis sum et verbis animatus et scriptis, quae reposita apud me servo, non ut laudis hinc aliquid circumferam, cum praeter confusionem nil mihi juste supersit in tempore et in aeternitate, sed ut sint quasi quaedam regula, quam inoffense liceat sequi. Tandem facta matura reflectione super actuali rei catholicae hic statu et positione mea praesente ac illa, quam sine dubio futuram tandem praevideo ex rebus contingentibus et anfractibus, per quos inimicus homo mala sua pellit, priusquam major procella fiat, finivi litteras meas dando dimissionem meam cum gratiarum actione infinita pro tot tantisque in me beneficiis ab Illustrissima Dominatione Vestra toties

³² *Baltimore Archives*, Case 8 A, U 3.—Another letter of March 21, 1807 (*ibid.*, U 4), shows that the lost document of which the above postscript was a part, contained a whole list (*elenchus*) of charges against the laxity, want of zeal, etc., in the friars; and that the object of all this was to prevent them from getting charge of the future diocesan seminary. The words: "*Hisce unis ac solis vicibus mentem sat superque expressam autumans*," etc., at the end of the postscript, would indicate that Father Nerinckx had forgotten how often he had written on the same topic. In spite of his protest that he is now finished with the matter, he recurs to it, at least, again and again in his letters for the next three years or more.

repetitis; hoc unum addebam, ut liceret pro tempore, quo hic degerem, in privata domo sacra facere.

Res, mea quidem opinione, pejores, magis seriae et sequelarum pessimorum evadere possunt; notitiam aliquam dare, quamvis non dubitem, quin tota res sit amplissime vobis referenda, mei muneris duxi pro gloria Dei, quam, prout affectus sum et sentio, nullo tamen ordine, promam.

1^o Dissentionum, arrogantiae et tumultuantis petulantiae hujus populi verissima Epochæ est adventus Dominicanorum in hanc Regionem; ante hoc tempus nil, quod inveniri potest, in publicum hujusmodi prodit, et si quaedam minus grata laterent, a discipulis quibusdam clam absumenda erant sine ullo multitudinis damno, cujus erat passim, sin modo, anima una saltem brevissime unienda ad opus quodlibet etiam perfectum; res porro sic processisset, si RR. illi PP., uti ego volens obligatus feci, inquisissent a vicario Episcopi et Pastore loci de vitiis eradicandis, de virtutibus plantandis, &c. Nec ego hactenus video, cur ab hoc ordinario, canonico et necessario ac indispensabili modo deviarint, nisi vel ut hominibus placeant, quod nescio utrum consecuti sint, aut sine ministerii injuria consequi possint; vel ut commodis suis studeant, quæ res satis ipsis, ut puto, ex voto cessit, cum interim pro bono generali Ecclesiæ nil sit, quod factum ab ipsis possit monstrari. Quaecumque congerunt quomodocumque ad domus propriæ usum applicant; fabrica, forte quia animum habent titulum illius Ecclesiæ extinguendi et ad S. Rosam transferendi, quod etiam de Ecclesiâ sperata in Springfield vereor, Stæ Annæ in eodem omnino statu est, in quo illam ipse reliqui. Quoad regimen spirituale, (in insipientia dico:) erat ibi melius ante adventum illorum quam in ulla alia congregatione; abhorrebant a publicis conventiculis maxime nocturnis, a choreis, a matrimoniis cum hæreticis et consanguineis, ab habitu mundano et ornatu; infantes et adolescentes maximam navabant pietati et doctrinæ christianæ operam, publicis nempe certaminibus et præmiis stimulabantur. Conjugati ab omni licentia statui injuriosa scrupulose et ex virtutis motivo abstinebant, Dominicis diebus religiose ac pie a summo mane ad finem usque officii pars maxima et vere magna in templo præsto erat; nunc autem, uti audio, omnia hæc transierunt velut umbra; matrimonia cum hæreticis ineuntur vel facillime. De causis matrimonialibus alias scripsi. Miror ego quod de hæreticis aliquando Erasmus, laxistarum et molliorum confessoriorum eorumque poenitentium semper in nuptias aut choreas exire tumultus, indeque comicam magis quam Evangelicam videri praxim. Nempe in Scot [t] Cty, in Stæ Annæ in Simpsons Creek felium viscera plurium pedes electricarunt. O miseram pietatem quæ hisce eget animalis exercitiis!!! Saltationes diurnæ permittuntur et peccata non sunt, et sic de aliis (:nam amo brevis esse:) quæ quidem, quod nunquam somniavi, si concederem mala non esse, numquam tamen adhuc eo potui penetrare, cur saltem recepta hic, et sine murmure servata (:paucis exceptis:) non servarint, cum nullis immutatione sua prosint, et plurimis, quod forte magis postea patebit, obsint; nec de hac novorum daemoniorum annuntiatione Ecclesiâ habet quod sibi gratuletur. Quod si ab insensato etiam audire consilium liceat, ego cathgorice ab ipsis exquirerem, velint ne Missionarii esse aut Religiosi tantum manere? Nempe jam passim missionarium agunt ubi commodi hinc aliquid sperare datur, et Religiosos tantum se dicunt ubi tantum labor subeundus, hujus ego testis esse possum; pro parte autem, quam in Missionibus habere velent, omnino jurisdictioni Vicarii illos subjectos vellem et communi Ecclesiæ bono intentos; pro parte vero monachali omnino ad severioris disciplinæ nor-

mam adhortarer, ad ipsosque evocarem homines quosdam, vero illius ordinis spiritu plenos, aut ab ordinis generali postularem. Cujus autem characteris hi religiosi sint, ipse quantum potui aliquando vobis coram exposui, ac certior fieri poteris, illustrissime Domine, per excellentem illum amicum Lovaniensem D. Peemans, qui (:nisi forte pia memoriae Ds De Wolf fuerit:) de caute cum eis agendo me praemonuit. Nam modice mihi noti erant. Haec sufficiant pro semper.³³

2^o Est apud vos versipellis quidam de grege homuncio, Basilius, melius Basiliscus, Elder qui plurima venena in has usque partes evomit, quamquam quidem a bonis quibusvis, imo et ab haereticis honestioribus, cum paucis adhaerentibus sibi, contemptui habeatur; pro injuriis, quibus, a me nunquam provocatus, me afficit publice (:nam litterae ejus publice legendae traduntur:) ex corde ipsi remitto, quia in eo crassissimam admitto ignorantiam et stupidissimam. Tali dedicatore damnationis nostrae etiam gloriamur. Tertul. de Nerone. Addito huic, quod et qui accusationis schedam conscripsit a pauculis signatam, sit homo de animantium potius quam hominum genere; hoc volo tantum, ut recordetur in amaritudine animae suae, si callosa necdum sit, quas turbas concitaverit in Domo Dei, quarum sit causa sequelearum, et serio de reparatione cogitet. Ego sincerissime judico hominem hujusmodi sacramentis ullis indignissimum priusquam de reparato scandalo planissime constet. Gloriatu tenebrio ille, se ab illustrissima Dominatione Vestra omnium quae dicit, vel plurimum saltem, testimonia ac faventes habere rationes. Ego vero non dubito, quin mendaciter et gratis id asserat; tamen, ut candidus sim, vereor, ne litterae (:ego nullas hactenus vidi:) quae nomine illustrissimae Dominationis Vestrae circumferuntur a paucis istis hypocriticis et rebellibus familiis, multum pondus tribuant calumniis eorum; lugebo multum, si unquam verae sint, et quod ostentant contineant, quia, quomodo reparari res possit, non invenio, nisi forte cap. ult. Libri Esther suggerere modum quemdem valeret.³⁴

3^o Summa capitum accusationum contra me, quantum expiscari possum ex dictis et scriptis et propriae conscientiae interrogatione, haec est: 1^o. Surrectio matutina hora 4^a. Hujus accusator est R. P. Fenwick, et haec quidem hora est, quam ipse tenere deberet. Sed fallitur, dum dicit me longius dormientibus absolutionem negare. Si nosceret R.P., quid in Paraguay Jesuitae introduxerint, et devotiones in Belgio usitatas, ipse hora 4^a pro servis et ancillis missam celebraret.³⁵ 2^o. Prohibeo promiscue choreas ut malas. 3^o. Prohibeo visitationes promiscuas inter diversi sexus personas. 4^o. Prohibeo et aversor matrimonia cum haereticis &. 5^o. Requiro ante matrimonium praeparationem ad Banna et Sacramenta frequentanda. 6^o. Regulas in ipso Matrimonio servandas praescribo. 7^o. Preces diebus Dominicis et festivis toto mane, publicas, servatis intersticiis, mando. 8^o. Continuas exactiones facio pro fabricis Ecclesiarum (:fortunate non dicunt quod mihi ipsi illas faciam:). 9^o. Prohibeo excessum vestium et ornatum obscoenum (:addam ego, quod et censors foeminas habeam aetatis provectae, quae in Ecclesiis huic invigilant:). 10^o. Acerbior sum in correctionibus dandis &. Basil Elder vocat me tyrannum.³⁶

³³ For the reply to these renewed charges see article, pp. 35-36.

³⁴ For further information on Basil Elder, and how Maes gives the name as "B—E—," and otherwise renders this paragraph, see article, pp. 36-37.

³⁵ Maes, *op. cit.*, p. 180, translates the second sentence of this accusation: "Rev. Father Fenwick is my accuser on this head, and that is the hour that he himself as a religious ought to keep." But, as the reader will notice, the clause "as a religious" is not in the original. Yet the last sentence, about Paraguay, etc., which shows the mind of Father Nerinckx, is left out altogether by that author.

³⁶ Maes, *op. cit.*, p. 180, again renders Basil Elder "B—E—"

Tandem dicunt: apud me is too much confinement. Hoc si verum sit, miror cur quotidie tam multi a mane ad vesperam quocumque vado fores et aures meas obsideant? Si sint alia praeter haec crimina, de quibus accusor, ignoro; ego autem cum similes praxes in vita S. Caroli aut alterius sancti lego, puto has ad eorum commendationem plurimum facere, et ego nescio quale foret ferendum iudicium de illo confessario, qui attentaret poenitentes suos ad directe oppositam praxium mearum obligare vel inducere: v.g. nullam ante matrimonium requiri praeparationem, nullas in Mat.^o sequendas rglas &. Deinde si vera nostra sunt crimina, cur non canonice citamur &. &. ad quid condemnatur in populo priusquam convincamur in iudicio?

4^o Plures de populo nostro lugent hanc calamitatem, turmatim se offerunt ad signandam contra calumniatores protestationem; id quidem me inscio fecerunt, et Dominica seqte intendo omnino prohibere, ut causam meam agant, quia nemini injuriam me fecisse cognosco; ideoque cuncta Domino commendando, qui quod bonum est in oculis suis faciet. Interim gaudeo, quod huc venerim nulla temporali spe animatus, gaudeo insuper quod nil hic temporale acceperim, sed et cuncta, quae divina providentia mihi fuerat largita, expenderim ad maiorem ut puto ejus gloriam. Unum omnino doleo, quod cum nostrates mei sacerdotes horum notitiam habuerint, animo minus alacri forte sint adventuri; ego tamen ad veniendum invitare illos non desinam. Haec sunt pauca, Illustrissime Domine, quae superioribus meis addenda judicavi. Iterum atque iterum orationibus benevolentiaeque vestrae commendatus, cum voto quantocius recipiendi dimissoriales vestras, quae simul testimoniales aliquae sint, signor votis perfectissimis

Illustrissime ac Reverendissime Domine

Humillimus obedientiss'q'

Vtr Servus,

C. NERINCKX.

30 Junii, 1808.³⁷

The above documents may be considered in the nature of *pièces justificatives* to the article in the present issue of the REVIEW. Many other documents might be added as source-material for the subject, but we venture to state that those given will enable the reader to form a truer perspective of the well-known misunderstanding between these two pioneer missionaries and the Dominicans of Kentucky.

V. F. O'DANIEL, O.P.

³⁷ *Baltimore Archives*, Case 8 A, U 5.

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