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Builder of the Faith in Nineteenth-Century Texas: A Deeper Look at Bishop Jean-Marie Odin, C.M.

By Patrick Foley*

INTRODUCTION

Two decades ago the Texas Catholic Historical Society initiated planning for the *Journal of Texas Catholic History and Culture*—since 1996 entitled *Catholic Southwest: A Journal of History and Culture*—dedicated to the study of the history of the Catholic American Southwest from Texas to California, as well as the Church's cultural roots in northern New Spain and Mexico. At the time, the journal's editorial board asked me to write for its initial volume in 1990 an essay about the French Vincentian missionary and first bishop of Galveston, Jean-Marie Odin, C.M. Well into serious research on the life of Odin for a planned biography of him at the time, and serving as the founding editor of the journal, I felt compelled to respond positively to the request. Thus, the first volume of the journal included my article "Jean-Marie Odin, C.M., Missionary Bishop Extraordinaire of Texas." With years of study on Odin having now passed and the book on his life ready for publication, it appears that a deeper look at Bishop Odin as the primary builder of the Roman Catholic faith in nineteenth-century Texas is needed. Part of Odin's legacy, which I hope to clarify in this article, is the fact that the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston is now headed by a cardinal, the first to serve in Texas. Daniel N. Cardinal DiNardo, archbishop of Galveston-Houston, is the pastor of an archdiocese that grew from Odin's original diocese.

It became clear to me as I worked on this article that there were three foci especially in need of study. First, what was the condition of Catholic life in Texas as Odin arrived in the region in the summer of 1840? Second, how did his background, including his formation and experience as a French Vincentian missionary, inspire him to carry out his labors in Texas with such dedication? And finally, how did his work from 1840 to 1861 strengthen the Church in the Lone Star State?

The historiography of Catholic Texas, from the region's earliest days as a part of northern New Spain, has benefited greatly from the research and writing of a number of outstanding scholars. That these researchers and their works on Catholic Texas are not more known to the larger American public indicates that far too often the educational estab-

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lishment has failed to appreciate the complex history of such an international and cultural nexus as Texas. Félix D. Almaráz Jr. is professor of history at the University of Texas at San Antonio and a noted historian of Borderlands history, the Franciscans, and the San Antonio missions. Professor Almaráz was recently knighted by King Juan Carlos I of Spain with the Isabel la Católica Encomienda in recognition of his decades of outstanding work. Gilbert R. Cruz, recently retired from Arizona State University West, is the former park historian for the San Antonio Missions National Historical Park and an expert on the study of Spanish municipal origins in the American Southwest. His *Let There Be Towns: Spanish Municipal Origins in the American Southwest, 1610–1810* (1988) is a groundbreaking work. James Talmadge Moore, professor emeritus of North Harris College and pastor of Our Lady of Walsingham Church in Houston, is the author of two recent wide-ranging volumes on the Catholic history of Texas.¹ Jesús F. de la Teja, professor of history at Texas State University (San Marcos), is the first State Historian of Texas. He has served as managing editor of *Catholic Southwest* and book review editor of the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*. De la Teja has written several books on Hispanic Texas. Timothy Matovina, director of the Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame, is the author of several books on Hispanic Catholics (especially in San Antonio), one of which won the Foik Award from the Texas Catholic Historical Society. Sr. Sheila Hackett, O.P., is the author of a classic study on Dominican sisters in Texas.² Robert E. Wright, O.M.I., has researched and written excellent studies about the Catholic history of Texas for more than two decades. Roy Barkley, current editor of *Catholic Southwest*, edited the *New Handbook of Texas*, an encyclopedia that provides a broad background for all Texas studies. Steve Landregan, archivist of the Diocese of Dallas, has published in English and Spanish outstanding books on Catholic Texas, including his most recent (2003) *Catholic Texans: Our Family Album* (Spanish version: *Tejanos Católicos: Nuestro Album Familiar*).

Not so current, but foundational in his contribution to Catholic Southwest historiography, is the late Carlos Eduardo Castañeda,³ considered by many to be the dean of Texas Catholic historians. Castañeda's seven-volume *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519–1936*, was both a product and a cause of the foundation of the Texas Catholic Historical Society. Other authors in this still incomplete list—some still living and writing and others deceased—have made important contributions in this field: Sister Mary Loyola Hegarty, C.C.V.I.; Gilberto M. Hinojosa; Luis Torres; Walter F. McCaleb; T. Lindsay Baker; José F. “Beto” Juarez; Bernard Doyon, O.M.I.; Ralph Bayard; C.M. David J. Weber; Marion A. Habig, O.F.M.; and Paul V. Murray, whose studies of the Catholic Church in Mexico provide a background for the history of Catholicism in Texas.⁴

CATHOLIC TEXAS AT THE TIME OF ODIN'S ARRIVAL IN 1840

Primary sources, complemented by the works of these scholars, reveal the state of the Church when Odin arrived in Texas. Odin's own journal and correspondence, as well the writings and other records of John Timon, C.M., visitor of the American Vincentians, constitute the main primary sources. Timon, Odin's closest friend, was an effective advocate of Odin's assignment to Texas.

The Church was in the midst of a great transition that came with Texas independence. Franciscan missions had maintained the Catholic presence among Hispanics and indigenous peoples for a century and a half. Widespread belief in miraculous apparitions of the "Woman in Blue" to the Jumanos between 1621 and 1632 had given popular support to the Catholic faith. This nun, Mother María de Jesús de Agreda, had dreamed of teaching the faith in the New World, and her dreams were thought to have been miraculously realized in her apparitions in eastern New Mexico and western Texas. Without leaving Spain, she had appeared to the Indians and taught them the faith. But the mission system had ended, and the political entities that supported it had been vanquished. The Texas that welcomed Odin in 1840 was also populated by Catholic immigrants, especially Irish, French, German, and others from Europe, who had settled even before Texas independence in 1836. Nevertheless, Father Moore reminds us, "In the fall of 1836, there remained only one regular functioning Catholic parish north of the Nueces River: San Fernando Church in San Antonio."⁵ When Odin arrived in Texas, the pastor of San Fernando Church was a Mexican priest, Father Refugio de la Garza. Also residing in San Antonio was an elderly Mexican priest who had fled Goliad during the Texas Revolution, Father José Antonio Valdez.⁶ Unfortunately, both priests appeared to be living un priestly lives, so much so that Odin had to relieve de la Garza of the keys to San Fernando Church. A letter from the Mexican Franciscan bishop of Linares to Bishop Antoine Blanc of New Orleans (21 February 1839) touched on the difficult situation in San Antonio. Bishop Francisco José María de Jesús Belaunzarán y Urefía, of Linares, held ecclesiastical authority over Texas at the time. In his letter he announced to Blanc that he had withdrawn priestly faculties from both de la Garza and Valdez, for the purpose of "putting an end to the scandal of the faithful."⁷

As he traveled north from San Antonio de Bexar following his initial work there, Odin was able to begin assessing what would be needed for the Catholic reevangelization of the region. As he ventured to Austin, the French missionary visited numerous Catholics of varying ethnicities, all of whom needed priests to tend to their future spiritual needs. Thus, Odin realized very early in his assignment to Texas that he had to commit himself to strengthening the Catholic lives of ethnically different peoples. Therefore, throughout his stay in Texas he worked at recruiting priests, brothers, and sisters who spoke the languages of these different Catholics and knew their customs and traditions.

Upon his arrival in Austin, Odin set out to solve another problem facing Catholics in Texas: that of attempting to reclaim for the Church properties, including Franciscan missions, that the government of the Republic of Texas had confiscated during the independence movement. On 21 December 1840, Odin, with the help of the *chargé d'affaires* of France to Texas, Jean Pierre Isidor DuBois de Saligny, and various members of the legislature, petitioned the Texas House of Representatives for the return to the Church of those properties. Within a short time, overcoming some opposition in the House of Representatives to giving title of the Alamo—Mission San Antonio de Valero—back to the Church, Odin successfully negotiated the return to the Church of the titles to all of its properties and lands.

Moreover, Catholic life in Texas in 1840 existed in a situation of fluid population

movements and unsettled boundaries. As people moved westward from the Gulf coast, as well as from the old Spanish Rio Grande settlements, they settled more sparsely, increasing the distances between colonies, towns, and villages. Moreover, the ecclesiastical boundaries were unclear. Later, as Texas became more structured ecclesiastically and politically, boundary lines, especially on the west, had to be drawn more precisely.

JEAN-MARIE ODIN'S MISSIONARY FORMATION AND EXPERIENCE

Just who was the new bishop? In my 1990 article I called him the "Missionary from France."⁸ Odin was born at noon on 25 February 1800, at his parents' home in the hamlet of Hauteville, "a dependency of the historical Benedictine priory of St. Martin d'Ambierle."⁹ Located in the western reaches of the ancient Archdiocese of Lyon, Hauteville was situated in one of the most Catholic regions of France. The seventh of ten children born to Jean and Claudine-Marie Odin, Jean-Marie grew to adulthood in a devout Catholic family environment.

During his early years, however, the Catholic Church in France suffered under the antireligious legacy of, first, the French Revolution and, second, the intense state meddling in religious affairs by Napoleon Bonaparte and his government.¹⁰ Early in his life, Odin showed a deeply pious and charitable disposition, loving his Catholic faith and all those people around him. At age seven he began studying reading and writing under the tutelage of a cousin, a former seminarian, in the nearby village of Tremieres. In 1809 he began his study of Latin while living with his mother's Uncle Serol, a priest who was *curé* of the parish of Neuilly. However, Uncle Serol soon died, and Jean-Marie returned home to Hauteville. Shortly afterward, he received his first communion. Then he resumed his education as a student at a Jesuit boarding school in the city of Roanne. In 1813, Joseph Cardinal Fesch, archbishop of Lyon and a relative of Napoleon Bonaparte, administered the sacrament of confirmation to him. A year later Odin entered the preparatory seminary of Verrieres, located in the mountainous area close to Montbrison. Following his stay there, he matriculated in the seminary of L'Argentiere to begin his studies in philosophy. Not long thereafter, in 1818, the young French seminarian transferred to the seminary college of Alix, near Villefranche. "Jean-Marie reached the apex of his French seminary career when the Priests of Saint Sulpice (Sulpicians) admitted him to their *grande seminaire* of St. Irenaeus at Lyon." There, in 1821, he became a subdeacon.¹¹ At St. Irenaeus, Odin absorbed the spiritual formation of the Sulpicians. Historian Christopher J. Kauffman wrote of that development and training:

the spirit of Saint Sulpice, derived from the charism of Olier [Jean-Jacques Olier (1608–1657), founder in 1641 of the Sulpicians], was manifested in a specific method of mental prayer, in the *haute culture* of the aristocratic concept of the priesthood, and in the Sulpician drive to model the interior and exterior ideal of the priesthood for those aspiring to the sacerdotal life.¹²

Nevertheless, Odin reached his maturity as a priest under the Congregation of the Mission, the Vincentians.

In the spring of 1822, Father Angelo Inglesi, representing Bishop Louis William DuBourg of Louisiana and the Floridas, delivered an appeal for priests and seminarians at St. Irenaeus Seminary. Odin responded with a strong desire to join the American mission. After consultation with his seminary superiors—but without being able to visit his parents and other family members at Hauteville—Odin sailed from the French port of Le Havre on 8 May 1822, bound for New Orleans. He arrived on 11 July. A month later the aspiring French missionary, in the company of some other seminarians, was on his way up the Mississippi to the Vincentian seminary at the Barrens Settlement in Perryville, Missouri. There he stayed for most of next eighteen years, until he was sent to Texas in the summer of 1840.

In the fall 1822, when Odin was almost through with his studies and formation for the priesthood, Bishop DuBourg traveled to the Barrens seminary and ordained the Frenchman to the diaconate (12 October 1822). The same bishop presided at Odin's priestly ordination on 4 May 1823, again at the Barrens seminary. Having decided that a life as a member of a religious community was his calling, Odin entered the Congregation of the Mission, taking his final vows on 12 January 1825.¹³ From the time of his ordination to the priesthood until his assignment to Texas, Father Odin served the Catholics of Missouri, Illinois, and Arkansas, as well as different indigenous bands and tribes. He served as a theology professor at the seminary for four years. On 5 June 1824 he was named secretary to the rector of the seminary, Father Joseph Rosati, C.M. After Rosati was appointed first bishop of St. Louis in 1828, Odin had to administer the seminary by himself. A year later, the Vincentians named him rector of the seminary. In 1830 he was assigned president of the lay college attached to the seminary, a position he held through 1834. Not long thereafter he also assumed the duties of procurator (treasurer) of the seminary.¹⁴

It was at the Barrens seminary that Odin first met John Timon, an outstanding Vincentian and later the first bishop of Buffalo, New York. With Timon—who was three years older than Odin but three years behind the French missionary in his clerical formation—missionary jaunts in Missouri, Illinois, and Arkansas became regular. In addition to these labors, Odin became the chaplain of a community of Sisters of Loreto established shortly before his ordination to run a school for girls at nearby Bethlehem, Missouri. Added to his already heavy priestly responsibilities, Father Odin consistently heard confessions of seminarians and college students at the Barrens into late hours of the night. Bishop Rosati increasingly came to respect Odin's spiritual dedication to his calling in all of these areas, including his growing reputation as a professor of theology. Thus it was no surprise that the Bishop of St. Louis asked Odin to venture with him as his official theologian to the Second Provincial Council of Baltimore in 1833. Jesuit father Stephen Dubuisson, on 15 November 1833, described Odin's performance at the council as "*audessus du commun*" (above the ordinary).¹⁵ That the bishops of the council named Odin to carry a report of their deliberations to Pope Gregory XVI (1831–1846) at Rome was a natural result of the episcopacy's confidence in the French Vincentian. While in Europe Odin met with the Vincentian leaders at Paris to discuss the situation of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States. The outcome of this was the erection, in 1835, of an

American province of the Congregation of the Mission. Father Timon was named to head the province as provincial superior, or visitor. But it is Odin's presence as the principal rebuilder of the faith in Texas that now commands our attention.

ODIN AS LEADER OF CATHOLIC REBUILDING IN TEXAS

Father Odin continued to serve as a missionary through the 1830s, mainly in Missouri, but it had become clear in Catholic circles that his appointment to the hierarchy was a certainty.¹⁶ In the latter 1830s Odin was mentioned as a candidate for episcopal office at New Orleans, Natchez, and Detroit. Yet, developments were underway that eventually saw him dispatched to Texas. On 24 October 1839 the Holy See, concerned about the declining presence of Catholic life in Texas, established the republic as a prefecture apostolic, with Father Timon named prefect apostolic. Ultimately Timon, with the agreement of Bishop Antoine Blanc of New Orleans, appointed Odin vice prefect apostolic.

Odin had much to do in order to get ready for his new assignment: so much preparation and so little time! He had been at the Barrens seminary for more than seventeen years: the institution had been his home. And now he was to move on to a mission field on a frontier hundreds of miles distant, in a land about which he knew pitifully little. It was to be another *adieu!*¹⁷

Odin had decided to keep a daily journal as he ventured to Texas. In it he recorded that on 2 May 1840, he left Saint Mary's Seminary for Texas aboard the ship *Meteor*.¹⁸ Downriver, at Cape Girardeau, Missouri, several passengers boarded the *Meteor* headed for Arkansas, Donaldsonville, or New Orleans. Those people included two Spanish Vincentian priests, fathers Miguel Calvo and Eudald Estany. At Donaldsonville they were joined by a Spanish Vincentian brother, Raimundo Sala. Calvo, Estany, and Sala played major roles in helping Odin build the Catholic faith in Texas.

Though they encountered some severe weather that threatened the *Meteor*, the voyagers soon ended up safely at New Orleans. After spending several weeks making preparations for the continued venture on to Texas, Odin and his Spanish Vincentians finally boarded the schooner *Henry*. At Cavallo Pass, on Lavaca Bay, the schooner anchored on 12 July. Early the next morning, Odin and his *confreres* stepped ashore on Texas soil for the first time.¹⁹ A new era in the Catholic story of Texas had begun. At Victoria, a short distance away, Odin and his fellow Vincentians were hosted for five days by John J. Linn and his wife. Linn was a devout Catholic originally from Ireland who soon was to become mayor of Victoria. In fact, the first Mass that Odin celebrated in Texas was offered in Linn's home. After the initial landing at Linnville and the visit with the Linns at Victoria, Odin proceeded to San Antonio and later to Austin, familiarizing himself with the tasks that lay ahead. He served in Texas from his arrival on 13 July 1840 until the spring of 1861, first as vice prefect apostolic, then as vicar apostolic, and finally as bishop of Galveston. His tenure lasted from the middle days of the republic through the period of early statehood to the eruption of the Civil War, when Texas seceded from the Union. Afterward, he moved on to New Orleans, where he served as the second archbishop.²⁰

Under his guidance, the hierarchical structure of the Church in Texas began to be formed. Thus was laid the groundwork for the present structure (of two archdioceses and thirteen dioceses). From Rome on 31 July 1841 was dispatched a letter to Odin, sent through Bishop Blanc of New Orleans, naming the missionary from France vicar apostolic of Texas and bishop of Claudiopolis (a titular bishopric) *in partibus infidelium*. In the mailing was a papal bull erecting Texas as a vicariate apostolic and the materials formalizing Odin's appointment. On 6 March 1842, at St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans, Bishop Blanc of New Orleans consecrated Odin a bishop. Less than six years later, in 1847, Galveston was raised to the status of a diocese, and Odin was named its first bishop. The first cardinal in Texas, named recently, is a direct successor of Bishop Odin.

Another significant characteristic of Odin's labors in Texas was his obvious love of all cultures. This aspect of him is perhaps not as well known to the Catholic population and public as other features of his missionary character. He believed that knowing the languages of the people was essential for priests, brothers, and nuns coming into Texas. He could speak French and clerical Latin when he left France for Missouri. In Missouri he struggled for several years to learn English and by 1830 had become proficient in the language. Almost as soon as he had settled in Texas he began studying Spanish so that he could labor among the Hispanics living in the vast region. Complementing that effort, Odin regularly sought priests, brothers, and nuns who spoke the languages predominant in the locales where they were to labor. Thus, throughout his twenty years in Texas Odin steadily recruited priests, brothers, seminarians, and, beginning in 1847, nuns, not only from Mexico but from other countries in the Americas and from Europe. Attracting clergy and nuns from Mexico proved to be challenging mainly because of "a tension-filled political, social, military and economic environment that had come to dominate relations between Mexico and Texas in recent years."²¹ On his several trips to Europe, he traveled from Ireland to Italy, bringing back to Texas clerics and religious, both male and female, to serve the people. Thus, Odin's recruitment served the Catholics in Texas and strengthened their immigrant character.

One problem facing Odin was the weak faith of some Texas Catholics. From the beginning of the flow of immigrants from the United States to Spanish Texas, and continuing under Mexican rule, colonists were required to be Catholic. Many immigrants under Moses and Stephen F. Austin and other colonizing empresarios professed the faith in order to be allowed to live in Texas. Sam Houston, for instance, was baptized, though he later renounced the faith. Odin soon became aware that he and his fellow missionaries would need to labor among nominal Catholics in need of spiritual growth as well as among non-Catholics. And because those people were of varied ethnicities, Odin felt compelled to take part in religious and cultural devotions popular among different groups. For example, regarding the Mexican Catholic life of San Antonio de Bexar, Timothy M. Matovina indicates that

Odin...participated in *Tejano* religious feasts like the 1841 San Antonio celebration in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe and...spoke enthusiastically of the religious

zeal demonstrated in those celebrations. Odin learned Spanish and was insistent that those clerics and nuns coming to minister in Texas do the same.²²

On a regular basis, Odin traveled throughout Texas carrying the Good News to settlements, farms, ranches, and isolated rural families. He frequently visited Mexican, Irish, German, Polish, Czech, and other ethnic groups with a noted Catholic heritage, strengthening their religious lives. When he, Father Calvo, and Brother Sala first set out for San Antonio from Victoria, for instance, they particularly sought out Mexican families. (It is worth noting that in the newly independent Texas, Hispanics were often *non grata*.) Odin and his companions spent an entire day at the Rancho San Bartolomeo, fifty miles east of San Antonio.²³ On the same journey the three Vincentians visited other spreads, three of them *ranchos* whose origins could be traced back to Spanish Texas.²⁴ On that same trek, on 28 July, Odin drew upon his earlier experiences in Arkansas and Missouri when he met with about 160 Lower Lipan Apaches.²⁵ The same day, he met the father of Juan Nepomuceno Seguín, Juan José María Erasmo Seguín. The elder Seguín invited the Vincentians to breakfast with him and his family at his *ranchito*, a spread of several thousand acres named Casa Blanca, just a day's ride from San Antonio de Bexar on the Goliad Road. When they arrived at San Antonio, Odin confronted the scandalous behavior of the priests there. As summer gave way to fall, Odin, Calvo, and Sala perceived a renewal of religious fervor at San Fernando Church. That spiritual revival has not died. The church, now San Fernando Cathedral, is the oldest and one of the most beautiful cathedrals of the Catholic Church in America.

As the early years passed, Odin continued to labor to revive the Catholic life of Texas—serving the Catholics devotedly, building churches, and recruiting priests, monks, and nuns. In January 1847, he brought to Galveston Ursuline sisters, members of the oldest teaching order of nuns in the Catholic Church (founded in Brescia, Italy, in 1525 by St. Angela Merici). The Ursulines had been established in New Orleans early in the eighteenth century, about a decade after the founding of that port city.²⁶ In January 1847 Bishop Odin was able to bring a handful of them to Galveston. Thus began the work in Texas of women religious. As the years passed, the Ursulines were joined by several other orders, among them Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word, Sisters of Divine Providence, Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, Sisters of the Holy Ghost, and Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament.

On 4 May 1847, Pope Pius IX made Texas a diocese, the Diocese of Galveston. On 21 May, Odin was named bishop.²⁷ He did not learn, however, of the establishment of the diocese and of his appointment until September.²⁸ He had written on 18 April to Bishop Blanc at New Orleans affirming his plans to start construction on St. Mary's Church in the bay city. This church became the first Catholic cathedral in Texas.²⁹

He had already begun to focus on education by encouraging the Ursuline nuns at Galveston in their girls' academy. On 11 April 1847, he had stated in a letter to Father Etienne Rousselon at New Orleans, "Our religious Sisters are all in good health, and

[they] already have 54 pupils in their classes."³⁰ A few years later he founded the institution of higher learning in San Antonio that later became St. Mary's University.

As the 1840s drew to an end, Odin undertook a trip of several months to attend the Seventh Provincial Council of Baltimore, which convened on 5 May 1849. That trek was quite significant to the Catholic history of Texas. While attending a dinner given in his honor at the major seminary of the Sulpicians in Montreal, Odin met an Oblate of Mary Immaculate, Father Pierre Telmon. Telmon excitedly volunteered to accompany Odin back to Texas to labor as a missionary, and he promised to bring other Oblates with him. Odin also recruited two Ursuline nuns from Quebec and two postulants from Boston on his journey. He confirmed these recruiting successes in a letter to Bishop Blanc dated 14 September 1849:

I arrived Saturday evening at Philadelphia after a trip of several days in Canada. The good Ursuline nuns of Quebec have given me two of their Sisters for our house at Galveston. I have also found two postulants in Boston. Upon returning to Montreal I met the Oblate Fathers, who offered to provide me with four of their colleagues for the Rio Grande Valley.³¹

Odin and his entourage set out for Texas in late October of that year and arrived at Galveston a month later. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate included, in addition to Father Telmon, fathers Alexander Soulerin and Augustin Gaudet, as well as Brother Paul Celot and lay brother Joseph Menthe.³² Thus more Ursulines came to Texas, and the notable story of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate in Texas began. The Oblates are still at work in Texas, notably at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio; they have given to the Catholic narrative of Texas such highly regarded scholars as the late Bernard Doyon, O.M.I., and the present-day historian Robert Wright, O.M.I.

As a result of Odin's presence at the Baltimore council, the synod fathers decided to assess carefully the growth of the Church in the American Southwest and West, focusing especially on the Diocese of Galveston and the neighboring region of New Mexico. Hearing Odin's report on how expansive the Diocese of Galveston had become with the ending of the Mexican War in 1848, the bishops agreed that further hierarchical structural development for areas beyond the Mississippi River was needed. The bishops of America wrote to the Holy See urging, among other measures to accommodate ecclesiastical growth, that New Orleans become an archdiocese. This step was taken in the summer of 1850, and the Diocese of Galveston was attached to the new archdiocese as a suffragan see. The prelates also entreated Pope Pius IX to elevate the Indian Territory and New Mexico to the rank of vicariates apostolic. When this was done, Galveston emerged hierarchically sandwiched in between New Orleans and New Mexico. This development became a key to the growth of the Church in the region. In retrospect, it can be seen that Odin's influence among the Catholic episcopacy thus increased, though he personally would have disavowed any such claim.³³

During the 1850s Bishop Odin continued his dedicated labors to build the Church in Texas. The work of female religious communities broadened to include establishing hos-

pitals as well as charitable institutions. The Ursuline convent in Galveston became a hospital during the Civil War, and took care of wounded soldiers from both the Confederate and Union armies. One of the patients cared for until his death as a result of action in the war was a young Confederate lieutenant, Sidney Sherman Jr., who was, as Moore reminds us, from a well-known Catholic family. His father was General Sidney Sherman, who, among many accomplishments, began the rallying cry "Remember the Alamo" at the battle of San Jacinto in the Texas Revolution.³⁴

Odin's missionary work continued in his huge diocese. On 22 April 1850, for instance, he began a seven-month-long pastoral journey that took him throughout the southern part of his diocese—and beyond, since he once crossed the Rio Grande into Mexico. During that venture, though suffering with fever and being constantly under the threat of attack from Comanches, he confirmed thousands of Catholics, celebrated Mass daily, heard confessions, preached, and otherwise worked. In a letter to Bishop (soon to be Archbishop) Blanc at New Orleans dated 9 December 1850, Odin claimed that on that trek he had confirmed more than 11,000 Catholics.³⁵ Although this number might seem exaggerated, it must be remembered that no Catholic priest had appeared in that area for decades, and the population there was thoroughly Catholic. Moreover, Bishop Odin was known for his humility, and he never exaggerated.

Meanwhile, the United States Senate resolved a problem that had frustrated Odin by finally settling the Texas boundary question. That development occurred within the context of the passage of the Compromise of 1850. For years the republic and then the state of Texas had claimed the Rio Grande as its western and southern boundary, from the river's "source to its emptying into the Gulf of Mexico."³⁶ This meant that Texas, and consequently the Diocese of Galveston, took in about half of New Mexico and a piece of Colorado. In the United States Senate debate on the Missouri Compromise, Henry Clay, the "Great Compromiser," argued that the Texas position was exaggerated. He supported the "Texas and New Mexico Act," dated 9 September 1850, which stated:

Texas will agree that her boundary on the north shall commence at the point at which the meridian of one hundred degrees west from Greenwich is intersected by the parallel of thirty-six degrees thirty minutes north latitude, and shall run from said point due west to the meridian of one hundred and three degrees west from Greenwich; hence her boundary shall run due south to the thirty-second degree of north latitude to the Rio Bravo del Norte [i.e., the Rio Grande], and thence with the channel of the said river to the Gulf of Mexico.³⁷

At last, Bishop Odin knew what the limits of his still immense diocese were.

But other challenges faced him. He regularly suffered from ill health: migraine headaches that plagued him his entire life, fevers, weaknesses, and more. Moreover, the extensive travel required of his missionary jaunts usually exhausted him. And on some of those treks he had to deal with extremities in the weather: heavy rains, windy days, and the heat and humidity of Texas summers. A need for more clergy and nuns was a seemingly never-ending problem facing the Catholic Church in Texas. Adding to the severity

of that problem, the French bishop was shocked to learn, when he returned from his seven-month tour, that both the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and his own Vincentians had been withdrawn from his diocese by their superiors. The Oblates soon returned to continue their work, and later the Vincentians also came back. But Odin realized that recruitment of male and female missionaries would remain a major chore. Consequently, he saw that another trip to Europe in search of clergy and religious might become necessary. Though because of his weak health he did not want to have to make such a journey, on 19 March 1851 he wrote to Bishop Blanc again:

I am coming [to New Orleans] to consult you on a measure that is very repugnant to me but nevertheless seems indispensable to me. At this moment I would need at least ten more missionaries to fill various posts where a priest would be usefully employed....Perhaps in person I could succeed in finding some devoted men. However, I am extremely reluctant to return to Europe; I am tired of seeking and begging. I really do not know how to decide. Please help me with your advice.³⁸

At the same time, the Church in New Mexico was presented with the same problem, and Odin was called upon for advice. On 24 November 1850 the French priest Jean Baptiste Lamy was consecrated vicar apostolic of New Mexico. Though he was cautious about appearing to give Lamy advice, Odin was concerned about the growth Catholic life throughout the Southwest and saw similarities between what Lamy would have to accomplish in New Mexico and what he himself had had to struggle with in Texas. On 7 January 1851, as the new vicar apostolic stopped at Galveston on his way to New Mexico, Odin urged Lamy to travel to Europe and recruit priests and nuns before going to New Mexico. He also forewarned Lamy that the latter would likely have to institute clerical reforms quickly in New Mexico similar to those he himself had to initiate in San Antonio more than a decade earlier. Odin also encouraged Lamy to continue, even in Europe, his study of Spanish. Bishop Lamy, however, had apparently already made plans to travel to Santa Fe through San Antonio and West Texas. As a result of his discussions with Odin, he agreed to keep in good contact with both the Bishop of Galveston and the new Archbishop of New Orleans.

After his visit with Lamy, Odin determined to make his recruiting trip to Europe. He sailed from Galveston in late May 1851 and arrived at Liverpool on 15 July. His journey lasted almost a year. In Ireland he was promised priests. He also recruited two Ursuline nuns and two postulants from the convent at Waterford (a well-known port from which Irish emigrants departed for decades for America). At Westminster Cathedral in London on 27 July Odin assisted in the consecration of two bishops, a ceremony that resulted in part from the recent reestablishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England.³⁹ Then Bishop Odin crossed the English Channel over to the continent, where he recruited from Paris to Rome and spent some time with his family at Hauteville. He also visited with Bishop Charles de Mazenod, ordinary of the Diocese of Marseilles and founder of the order of Oblates of Mary Immaculate. As a result of that get-together, Mazenod approved sending priests and brothers from his community back to Texas. When his trip to Europe was

finished, Odin had gathered for his flock in Texas six Oblate priests, one lay brother, four nuns of the Incarnate Word, two Ursuline sisters, four Brothers of Mary (Marianists), and eighteen seminarians. They departed France for Texas in March 1852, aboard the ship *La Belle Assise*.

After the French ship docked in New Orleans, the seminarians headed up the Mississippi River for St. Mary's of the Barrens Seminary to finish their studies for ordination, after which they were to serve in Texas. The remainder of the group went on to Galveston. Odin, after his return to Paris and before coming back to Texas, wrote to the Propagation of the Faith at Lyon, expressing his delight that among the 340 passengers on the *Belle Assise* were many Alsatians venturing to Texas.⁴⁰ Odin was happy with the results of his recruiting trip, after which the Church in Texas was well on its way to becoming situated on a bedrock. By mid-July Odin himself had returned to his diocese and had begun assigning his new recruits to various locations. The previous year, he had stationed Ursulines in San Antonio to establish a school and convent. Now the four Sisters of the Incarnate Word and Blessed Sacrament who arrived with the contingent from France—Sisters St. Ange Barre, Dominique Ravier, Ephrem Satin, and Claire Valentin—augmented the presence of female religious already laboring in Texas.⁴¹ Their numbers would only grow in the future. The Brothers of Mary were dispatched to San Antonio to found a school. While keeping a few of the Oblates of Mary with him at Galveston, Bishop Odin sent the others to the lower Rio Grande valley; they worked in Brownsville and eventually Laredo.⁴² "In all of this, Odin reaffirmed his commitment to having his priests laboring in predominantly Mexican-populated areas of Texas learn Spanish."⁴³

Odin was also influential in the establishment of Panna Maria ("Virgin Mary"), the first permanent Polish colony in America (1854), by settlers from Upper Silesia, led by a Franciscan priest named Father Leopold Bonaventura Moczygemba.⁴⁴ Moczygemba had learned about the need for Catholic missionaries during Odin's recent recruiting trip to Europe. With some difficulty, but enjoying the complete confidence of Odin, Moczygemba brought his immigrants to a site about sixty miles southeast of San Antonio. There they established a thriving Polish-American Catholic community. When in September 1987 Pope John Paul II visited San Antonio, practically the entire town of Panna Maria closed down so that the citizens could go to see their beloved Polish-born pope.

The remainder of the 1850s brought new challenges to the Catholics of Texas, but Catholic life still flourished. Anti-Catholic nativism had blossomed nationwide, and its threats to Catholics in Texas were strongly felt. The conflict over slavery was increasing across the nation. Odin, even though Father Timon had sent him a slave to work as a servant at his residence in Galveston, lamented the existence of the "Peculiar Institution." At its highest levels, the Church had spoken against the enslavement of human beings for centuries.

As the end of the 1850s drew near, Odin convened the diocese's first synod. "In terms of rules, organization, and structure the synod acted as a foundation for both the immediate and distant future of Catholic Texas."⁴⁵ The fathers who met at the synod realized only too well that Texas was still a missionary region. But at the same time, the synod mirrored the fact that Odin had been the chief agent in laying the base for the Church. His

influence is still felt. The synod, which opened on 13 June 1858, enacted decrees and statutes that helped form the character of the diocese. Those included prescriptions for the erection of parishes, clarifications of rules for clergy and nuns, the setting of budget principles, and guidelines for Catholic life in general. The synod's acts were declared in harmony with the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and the seven provincial councils and one Plenary Council of Baltimore.

Bishop Odin, as he continued to evangelize throughout his diocese following the diocesan synod, became increasingly concerned about the health of his dear friend Archbishop Blanc of New Orleans. He knew that he would be able to observe Blanc's condition at the forthcoming Second Provincial Council of New Orleans, which Blanc had scheduled to open on 22 January 1860. Odin assumed a greater role at that council than had been planned, as Blanc's health was declining noticeably.

A few months after Odin's return to Galveston, on 20 June 1860, Archbishop Blanc died. Not long thereafter Pope Pius IX named Jean-Marie Odin to succeed Blanc as the second archbishop of New Orleans. He arrived at New Orleans just as the Civil War was erupting. He served dutifully as the pastor that southern archdiocese and then presided over it during Reconstruction. But his greatest legacy was that of building the faith in nineteenth-century Texas.

NOTES

¹ Moore's two books are *Through Fire and Flood: The Catholic Church in Frontier Texas, 1836–1900* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1992) and

Acts of Faith: The Catholic Church in Texas, 1900–1950 (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002).

² *Dominican Women in Texas: From Ohio to Galveston and Beyond* (Houston: Sacred Heart Convent of Houston, Texas, 1986).

³ See Félix Almaráz's biography, *Knight Without Armor: Carlos Eduardo Castaneda, 1896–1958* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).

⁴ See Murray's compelling study *The Catholic Church in Mexico: Historical Essays for the General Reader*, Volume 1 (1519–1910) (Mexico: Paul V. Murray, 1965).

⁵ James Moore, *Through Fire and Flood*, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Belanzarán y Ureña to Blanc, 21 February 1839, Vincentian Collection, Archives of the University of Notre Dame (hereafter referred to as AUND).

⁸ Foley, "Jean-Marie Odin, C.M.," 44.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹² Christopher J. Kauffman, *Tradition and Transformation in Catholic Culture: The Priests of Saint Sulpice in the United States from 1791 to the Present* (New York: Macmillan, 1988), cited in Foley, "Jean-Marie Odin," 45.

¹³ "Odin, Joannes Maria, C.M., Rev., 1800 Febr. Natus en Ambierle. Dioc. Lyons in France," Vincentian papers, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis (hereafter referred to as AASL).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Letter regarding Jean-Marie Odin, C.M., that Father Stephen Dubuisson, S.J., wrote on 15 November 1833, from Philadelphia, located in the Propagation of the Faith Archives, Folio 71, Lyon,

France. The author thanks Father Jean-Marie Jammes of St. Martinville, Louisiana, for this source.

¹⁶ Blanc to Purcell, 29 August 1838, Vincentian Collection, AUND; Rosati to Blanc, Vincentian Collection, AUND.

¹⁷ Foley, *Always a Missionary: Jean-Marie Odin, C.M., First Bishop of Galveston and Second Archbishop of New Orleans* (under consideration for publication by Texas A&M University Press), 141.

¹⁸ Jean-Marie Odin, "Daily Journal," 2 May 1840, Catholic Archives of Texas, Austin (hereafter referred to as CAT).

¹⁹ Odin, "Daily Journal," 13 July 1840.

²⁰ Roger Baudier, *The Catholic Church in Louisiana* (New Orleans, 1939), 410–41.

²¹ Foley, *Always a Missionary*, 232.

²² Timothy M. Matovina, *Tejano Religion and Ethnicity: San Antonio, 1821–1860* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 43.

²³ Odin, "Daily Journal," 25 July 1840.

²⁴ In his "Daily Journal" Odin recorded that there were twenty-eight *ranchos* on the way. Castañeda states that Odin visited fourteen to sixteen of them (*Our Catholic Heritage in Texas, 1519–1936*, Volume 7 [Austin: Knights of Columbus of Texas, 1942], 46).

²⁵ Odin, "Daily Journal," 28 July 1840.

²⁶ See *The Letters of Marie Madeleine Hachard, 1727–28*, trans. Myldred Masson Costa (New Orleans: Laborde Printing Company, 1974), *passim*.

²⁷ Charles N. Bransom Jr., *Ordinations of U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1790–1989* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1990), 18.

²⁸ Castañeda, *Our Catholic Heritage in Texas*, Volume 7, 109–10.

²⁹ Foley, *Always a Missionary*, 349.

³⁰ Odin to Rousselon, 11 April 1847, "Odin Letters," CAT.

³¹ Odin to Blanc, 14 September 1849, "Odin Letters," CAT.

³² Odin to Purcell, 30 September 1849, AUND. See also Bernard Doyon, O.M.I., *The Cavalry of Christ on the Rio Grande, 1849–1883* (Catholic Life Publications, Bruce Press—Milwaukee, 1956), 17–18.

³³ Foley, *Always a Missionary*, 360.

³⁴ Moore, *Through Fire and Flood*, 132.

³⁵ Odin to Blanc, 9 December 1850, "Odin Letters," CAT.

³⁶ Foley, *Always a Missionary*, 364.

³⁷ William C. Pool, *A Historical Atlas of Texas* (Austin: Encino Press, 1975), 83.

³⁸ Odin to Blanc, 19 March 1851, "Odin Letters," CAT.

³⁹ Patrick Foley, *British Reaction to the Papal Aggression, October 1850 to August 1851* (MA Thesis, Santa Clara University, 1968), *passim*.

⁴⁰ Odin to Propagation of the Faith, Lyon, 28 March 1852, "Odin Letters," CAT.

⁴¹ M. Monica LaFleur, C.C.V.I., "They Ventured to Texas: The European Heritage of Women Religious in the Nineteenth Century," *Catholic Southwest: A Journal of History and Culture* 8 (1997): 51–52.

⁴² Robert E. Wright, O.M.I., "The Parish of San Agustin, Laredo, 1760–1867," *San Agustin Parish of Laredo Abstracts of Marriage Book 1, 1790–1857*, ed. Angel Sepulveda Brown and Gloria Villa Cardena, 24–28.

⁴³ Foley, *Always a Missionary*, 374.

⁴⁴ See T. Lindsay Baker, *The First Polish Americans: Silesian Settlements in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1979), 24–25.

⁴⁵ Foley, *Always a Missionary*, 392.