SYLVESTER ROSECRAWS' CONVERSION

(Excerpts from the "Journal" of Sylvester H. Rosecrans, seminarian, and later first Bishop of Columbus, published here through the courtesy of the Archives, University of Notre Dame.)

June 23 (1848). Roddan and Brown and Carr left today. They seemed a little sorry. They were fine fellows and good missionaries will be. Roddan (1) will go by William's (2). . . . I related tonight to Norris my writing to Pelvi, how it happened and some of the little circumstances of our acquaintance. . .

June 26. We had an earthquake today, slight, but enough to make my heart leap up to my mouth at first.

June 27. We went out tonight and encountered a spy. He attacked Harter. Afterwards he went around us all, explaining himself in terms of voluble compliment when he learned where we were from. . . . He had a serpent of a tongue. He harangued against priests and everybody. He said to Harter, "Why do you make yourself priest? Why?"

June 28. We have a retreat today, it being the vigil of the day of St. Peter and St. Paul. Pa(ter). Rafetti gave the points. . . . . . . .

June 30. I received a letter from William today. He shames me every time he writes to me. For I have the holy calling to the holy life. I am fretting over the slightest disturbance; he is praying, I have the responsibilities, he the virtues. He speaks of the political philosophy and so forth, and he takes as the basis of everything the Great Fact. But what he did for Louise Williamson is what shames me. He wrote to Father Ligouri. He prayed himself; he got a Mass to be said for her. And (the result is what shames me) she got well. And he little thought, my good brother, that I blushed at the thought of interesting the charity of others; little thought that I who am to be a priest to toil and labor for the conversion of the world, had so little faith as that I would not ask for the prayers of others. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

July 15. How foolish it would be for me now to turn to receive my consolations and reward from the world! It was doubtless a special grace of God that I was in former times captivated with a desire of finding out the abstract truth, whence are we? and that other, why are we? Though it was such a use which I made God make of my pride -- I know it was pride, because I scorned the common lot -- I loathed to be one of the multitude. Seeing, therefore, that the generality of mankind did little more than obtain what they could eat and drink, or at most, enjoyed; the pleasure of travelling, of society, of music, of magazines and poetry reading -- in short, of the senses -- I thought to find some other way.
I believed that greatness was the true end of my being; and accordingly I enquired what is it to be great? This was the subject of my Junior Speech at Kenyon College. I saw, moreover, that to preserve the dignity of human nature, this greatness must be independent of material circumstances. Accordingly, I plod in the fixed and determined pursuit of a distant object. The greatness was to be in proportion to the intensity of the pursuit. . . . I began then to have a fair glimpse of the colossal proportions of the Christian, and began to "respect not a little" the white-robed army of martyrs, though it was Protestant respect. From this time I thought with more intensity than before. I was to do something more, to stretch myself beyond the common measure. About this time I received my first Catholic book. It was Halloran. I used to hide it in my drawer, and not to read it when anyone saw me. I was in fear that my roommate would open my drawer and find it. I thought the style was very simple and some of the Scripture wonderfully far-fetched. At this time I could not oppose it. I had before this chosen Religion for my life plan. I had concluded that it was the true greatness.

. . . . . . . But still I did not like to choose the Catholic Religion. The proofs, however, of the truth of the Catholic Religion multiplied upon me until finally I believed in its authority before I was instructed in its doctrines. No sooner did I find such a frightful conclusion staring me in the face than I began to back out of my project of being earnest. My mind began to apprehend dimly the necessity of pursuing some great end. I began to delight in sensual gratifications more, to suit company more. I received my brother's letters with a pang, read them hastily, answered them with labor and forgot them as soon as possible. About this time Old Rector Smith "nailed" me one evening when I happened to be at his house, and he asked me if I did not want to be baptized and confirmed the next Sunday. For others were the thoughts that filled my head when I entered. His address froze me. I revolted from the thought, especially of being confirmed. Accordingly, making the shortness of the time a (legitimate) pretext, I refused flatly. He argued, and I replied. He gave me his opinion that the time was not too short, and I answered with mine that it was. Finally, on my blunt refusal he said, "very well my blood might be on my own head," and left me. I was cut and stunned. I wanted Old Smith to think well of me, and my quarrel with him made me feel very unhappy. But besides this an intense feeling was roused in me; i.e., Here I have waited a year; am I going to wait until my death? I sat up very late that night and felt very unhappy.

Early in the vacation I received a letter from William containing $50 and an order to come on east. I left, half glad, half sorry. In Cleveland how long a delay was male together on the lake shore, Leevi and I. I left and as we glided over the lake and Cleveland faded from my sight in the southwestern sky, I left the sight of all I then in the bonds of worldly affection had linked to my heart. A new world then dawned upon me - and slowly afterwards my eyes were accustomed to its light. My old hopes, my old dreams, my old fears, then began to pass away. "Oh! God of infinite mercy how tenderly Thou didst lead me along. If Thou hadst shown me before I left home the breaking of these ties of love, the passing from a circle of gay and generous friends; if Thou hadst shown me all I would have resisted Thy inspirations and stayed at home! But Thou didst lead me tenderly. Thou didst bear me on Thy shoulders, and while I thought I was following my own will, I was carried by Thee. Blessed forever by Thy name!"

I was bewildered by my journey, and much more bewildered by the new things I saw in my first entrance into the city. William came and I began to feel a little at home. The next day we sailed up among the magnificent Highlands in the Thomas Powell. I went with Mrs. Heyesman and William came afterwards. I saw Annie. After this I was in my new world fairly. I was introduced to
officers and officers' families. There was an end to the frankness of our
western manners. The stiffness and the fllter again bewildered me. I was out
of myself. My shackles, one by one, dropped off. The things I used to love
grew dimmer in my remembrance. That which I once thought it impossible for me
to feel, I began to feel. Those ties that had bound me closely, so closely that
I had thought they would bind me forever, slowly inconsciously one by one
dissolved. This interior revolution went insensibly on that I felt no shock.
I only felt a little cramped, a little out of my native liberty.

The next Sunday I went to the Episcopal Church for the last time. I did
not pay much attention to the sermon, but came home. That week I read Spalding's
Review of D'Aubigni (3), and some of Cobbett's English Reformation. My old con-
viction of the catholicity of the Catholic Church was strong upon me. But still it
did not guile me. I acted according to circumstances. The next Sunday William
asked me if I would go to Mass. I had but a vague idea of what Mass was, but I
did not wish to refuse anything to William. Accordingly, I answered, "Yes," and
got. I have but a dim recollection of my impressions there. Poor Father Villanies
sweat and I recollect feeling sorry that he was obliged to bundle himself up so.
God kept me from any irreverence for I did not see the elevation. I suppose it
was out of human respect that I bowed down my head when I saw others doing so.
What do you think of it, William said. I had not gathered any definite impression,
but I answered that I was struck with the devotion and attention of the people.

Time passed, I went to Mass again. I continued to read Catholic books a
little, though I considered it really a bore, and to hear William talk. Thank
God for inspiring him with such perseverance! The time, however, was fast
approaching when God was to call me to His Church. William and I had been bathing
and were on the rocks in Washington's Valley talking. I had thought myself
drawing away from Church and was secretly determined to put it off for many years,
if not forever. God, however, pursued me. He might have left me. He had given
me sufficient lights and sufficient motives, so that if I had not become a
Catholic then, it would have been palpably my own fault. But He pursued me still
further. All at once William turned to me and said: "My dear brother, I think
you are sufficiently prepared to receive Baptism, are you not?" I was stunned,
shocked, bewildered. The thing was come to a point. There was no escape. God
helped me and spoke—by my mouth. He made me think, "Well, if I have got to
choose now between Religion and no Religion, I will take Religion." I answered
"Yes". Poor William! His heart must have exulted; yet he remained very calm.
I went home. The die was cast. For weal or woe! I was then a Catholic. It is
wonderful how insensible I remained. Yet not so wonderful, either, for I was
very ignorant. I knew nothing of the particulars of Religion. My study had been
about the catholicity of the Church. I had no idea of what a grace was about to
be conferred upon me. I knew nothing of the enormity of sin. Yet I felt I was about
to do a solemn act. There was a weight upon me, of which I did not know the
cause. I had not even prayed. I did not know how to pray. William told me, "What
ever other prayers you say, I would like to have you say the Hail Mary." I
accordingly got on my knees and said the Hail Mary, and afterwards I said some
other prayers, at least stayed on my knees awhile. That day I went to Mass, and
Father Villanies asked me some eight or nine questions. I was not baptised, as
I expected, at Mass, but in the afternoon. Afternoon came and we went over in
the boat, landing at Mr. Kimble's boat-house and walking from there to the little
church. We went in. There were only four or five there. Father Villanies had
provided a Godfather and Godmother. Good Mr. Phalen and Mrs. Lawson. I have only
seen them once or twice since!
The ceremony was soon performed. Oh, if I had but known the inestimable grace that was then conferred upon me. If I had but seen the angels rejoicing and congratulating with my Guardian; if I had but seen the Blessed Virgin smiling down upon a new soul white with the blood of her own Son, and spotless now. If I had but heard the saints giving thanks to Almighty God for his numberless mercies to his worthless creature; if I had felt one thrill of the joy that filled the hearts of the hosts of heaven, doubtless I would have been quite overcome, and would have been silent and wrapped in thought for many days. O Mother of Mercy, it was doubtless thy prayers besought so earnestly by my pious brother and sister that I obtained that immense grace of which I was then so insensible. And it was doubtless by the prayers that in continuance of that mercy I was placed at St. John's instead of being thrown out on the world among Protestants whereby my weakness and inconstancy might have led me to a renunciation of faith, and back into a more frightful infidelity, that which before had enveloped me. Immediately I was sent to St. John's. There I remained with all my pride and sloth. I revolted from the discipline. I did not like to be mixed up with little fellows. I had never heard Vespers. I was too proud to ask to have them explained to me. But human respect I had. I did as others. And how many times did I bow before the Adorable Host without a single sentiment of my own or a single act of adoration, just as a monkey would have bowed his head had he been in my place.

Time passed along. I would have written more in those times. Things seemed so strange to me, I was still full of old notions. Still imagined my old friends and my old associations to have been good friends and good associations. I thought it was a very great pity that their condition could not be changed and they remaining as they were, be Catholics; or perhaps a pity considering all circumstances that their religion was false.

I never shall forget the time I went walking out towards the Sound, and the vehemence with which I threw away my tobacco, never to use it again. I was exceedingly disgusted with my companions. They were so young and so boyish. The days were weary away. My studies were those that I had often before studied. And I had no reading. I wrote much and often. But still I was not at home. Why? Because I shrunk from the reality of my position. I had renounced the world. Yet I loved the world too much to turn my back upon it. God kept me away from it by my position in the College. But I still kept my gaze upon it and longed after it. As children in a country schoolhouse look often longingly out on the green meadows and the pearly stream that winds among the wide-armed sycamores and sigh that they cannot run and romp. So I gazed out from the prison-house of my baptismal vows, and of my pledged word, and longed to run and riot in the deceitful brightness of all that is in this world. Foolish and cowardly that I was, I feared the brightness of truth.

Oh, that I had thus in the first freshness of my conversion used well the graces that I had! The luxurious habits I had at Kenyon were with the utmost difficulty broken in upon; and continually feeling discomfort and continually fearing it, I suffered a great deal in the winter months. (To be continued)

(2) General William Stark Rosecrans, brother of Sylvester H. Rosecrans.
(3) Most Rev. Martin J. Spalding, scholar-bishop of Louisville, Ky., afterwards archbishop of Baltimore. In 1844 he published a lengthy study of the Reformation in Germany refuting the then popular Protestant approach to the Reformation. The title of his book was D'Aubigné's "History of the Great Reformation in Germany and Switzerland" Reviewed.
1833 (Cont.)

--- 26: Elizabeth Cochran, of Sarah Cochran; sponsor, Hanna Logue.
        -- J. V. Bullock.

--- 9: Henry, b. May 12, of Hugh McNulty and Catherine Martin; sponsors, 

May 30: James Thomas, of David Walsh and Elizabeth O'Neill; sponsors, Edward 
        Slevin and Rosanna Slevin. -- F. T. Martin.

June 2: Mary Cecilia, of James McEnlin(?) and Elizabeth Cortigan(?); sponsors, 
        Thomas Walker and Amelia Walker. -- F. Tho. Martin, O.P.

June 14: Anna Mary Litzinger, of John Litzinger and Juliana Stine; sponsors, 
        William Anderson and Lydia Stine. -- J. V. Bullock.

June 21: Michael Byrne, of John Byrne and Mary Cody; sponsors, Henry and 
        Anna Bonistile. -- Fr. D. J. O'Leary.

June 23: William Crosby, of Gilbert Crosby and Anna Timpay; sponsors, 
        Barnabas and Mary Grimes. -- Fr. D. J. O'Leary.

July 21: Helen, of John McGravy and Mary Carr; sponsors, John Nangle and 
        Bridget Dowling. -- J. V. Bullock.

July 21: Anna, of John Patten and Mary Ward; sponsors, Dyonisius McGunicle 
        and Grace Collins. -- J. V. Bullock.

July 23: Thomas, of Henry Sterner and Mary Stoull; sponsors, Thomas McKeown 
        and Sarah Small. -- F. Tho Martin.

Aug. 7: Helen Burgoon, of Levi Burgoon and Anna Iilly; sponsor, Anna Anderson. 

Aug. 7: John, of Christopher Steele and Anna Eberstyn(?) ; sponsors, Conrad 
        Litsick(?) and Magdalen Obel. -- T.G. Van Der Broek.

Aug. 18: Magdalen, of Joseph Mercelli(?) and Mary Anna Bosh; sponsors, Henry 

Aug. 27: Henry, of Michael Metscher and Apolonia Redmond; sponsors, John Kiem 
        and ------. -- T. G. VanDer Broek.

Aug. 29: Catherine, of Thomas McManamy and Rachel Rogers; sponsor, Mary Moran. 
        -- Frater Daniel Josh. O'Leary.

Oct. 6: Elizabeth, of Hugh Murphy and Anna Atkins; sponsors, John Clark and 
        Anna Connolly. -- D. J. O'Leary.

Oct. 6: Elizabeth, of John McGary and Elizabeth Williams; sponsors, Robert 
        McDonnell and Margaret McDonnell. -- D. J. O'Leary.

Oct. 6: Marianna McNally, of James McNally and -----McCavigan; sponsors, 
        Henry McNally and Mary McCristal. -- D. J. O'Leary.

Oct. 6: James, of Brice Walsh and Mary Kense(?) ; sponsors, Frederick Kense 
        and Catherine Starner. -- D. J. O'Leary.

Oct. 13: Joanna Elizabeth, of John Beck and Joanna Cunningham; sponsor, Mary 
        Baum. -- F. Th. Martin.

Oct. 17: Rosanna, of William Sharkey and Sarah Caton; sponsors, James Hanlon 
        and Bridget Dolan. -- F. D. Josh. O'Leary.

Oct. 27: Charles, of Ruger(i?) McDonnel(?) and Johanna Dew; sponsors, 
        John Patton and Rose World. -- T. G. VD Broek, O.P.

Nov. 3: Joanna McCann, of Daniel McCann and Ann Copelly(?); sponsors, Patrick 
        O'Hara and Mary Ring. -- Thos Martin.

Nov. 3: Joseph, of Edward McShane and Catherine McK------; sponsors, James 
        Riely and Elizabeth Campbell. -- Tho Martin.

Nov. 17: Catherine, of Timothy Lavan and Mary Dolan; sponsors, James Gallaher 
        and Mary McGeevy. -- D. J. O'Leary.

Nov. 22: Rose, of James Greec(?) and Mytge(?) War; sponsors, June McNonly 
        and Ros. NCeeal.
1833 (Cont.)

Nov. 22: Patrick, of John Killin and Rosa Ketin; sponsors, Patrick McJame and Rose Ketin. -- T. G. VD Broek.

Nov. 25: James Alfred, b. Nov. 22, 1833, of John Good and Elizabeth Lloyd; sponsors, James Costigan and Anna Clark. -- F. Th Martin.

Nov. 28: Catherine, of Hugh Donnelly and Susanna Gaunly(?); sponsors, Mary Walsh and Erice Walsh. -- F. T. Martin.

Nov. 29: Margaret, of Owen McCarthy and Mary McCarthy; sponsors, Henry Bonesteel and Grace McGuigel(?). -- T. G. VD Broek, O.P.

Nov. 29: John, of John Kientz and Elizabeth Kientz; sponsors, John Dittoe and Margaret Dittoe. -- T. G. VD Broek, O.P.

Nov. 29: John, of John Kim and Mary Kim; sponsors, John Dittoe and Mary Reddeman Dittoe. -- T. G. VD Broek.


Dec. 4: James, b. 3rd, of Bernard McCullagh and wife; sponsors, Hugh Clark and Mary Ann Clark. -- F. Tho Martin, O.P.

Dec. 5: William, of John Brown and Mary Clark; sponsor, Catherine Clarke. -- F. Tho Martin.

Dec. 26: Baptized in Guernsey County in St. Dominic Church, Andrew Holtz, of Andrew Holtz, and Martina Felliciaen; sponsors, Bastian and Smitsmester and Rigor(?). Sigele. -- T. VD Broek.

Dec. 27: Mary Magd., of John Dedel and Mary Steek; sponsor, Barbara Steinberger. -- T. G. VD. Broek.

1834

Jan. 1: Frances Ryley, of George and Rosanna Ryley; sponsors, John ----- and Margaret Slim(?). -- N. D. Young.


Jan. 10: John, of Joseph Stuter and Magdalen Stuter; sponsors, Joseph Stuter and Anna Mary Burgoon. -- T. VD Broek.

Jan. 11: Elizabeth, of John Peek and Elizabeth Smits; sponsors, George Peek and Elizabeth Peek. -- T. G. VD Broek.

Jan. 20: Sarah, of William Ward and Anna Gordon; sponsors, James O'Keen and Mary Patten. -- Frater Danl Josh O'Leary.

Jan. 30: Thomas Grimes, of Bernard Grimes and Elenora Cassilly; sponsors, Charles and Elenora Cassilly. -- J. M. M. Grady.

Jan. 31: Cornelius, of George Borer and Margaret Myers; sponsors, Michael Meyer and Margaret Prikkers. -- T. G. VD Broek, O.P.

Feb. 2: Mary Ann Karney, of William Karney and Elizabeth Morra; sponsors, John Flowers and Margaret Bash. -- J. M. M. Grady.


Feb. 9: James, of John Clarke and Elenor Robinson; sponsors, Patrick and Catherine Donnolly. -- F. T. Martin.

Feb. 9: Mary Anna, of Maurice Freel and Mary Freil; sponsors, Patrick Gallagher and Catherine Morrisy. -- F. Th. Martin.

Feb. 9: Frances, of Francis McCambridge and Mary Bradley; sponsors, John Sanders and Eleanor Connolly. -- F. Th Martin.

Feb. 10: Harriet Carolina, of Edward Brown and Elizabeth Collier; sponsors, Tullius Slevin and Susanna Slevin. -- F. Th. Martin.

Feb. 10: Mary Louise, of Edward Brown and Elizabeth Collier; sponsor, Theresa Brown. -- F. Tho Martin.

934 (Cont.)

Feb. 15: Daniel of Anthony Ditoe and Catherine Sanderson; sponsors, Patrick Lints and Patricia Lints. — T. G. VD. Broek, O.P.

Feb. 18: Aloisius, of John Motter and Mary Ann Stalter; sponsors, John Stalter and Elizabeth K——. — T. G. VD. Broek, O.P.


Feb. 23: Rosa, of James Greece and Mary War(?); sponsors, James McConny and Rosa McNew.

Feb. 23: Patrick, of John Cunn(?) and Rosa Katin; sponsors, Patrick McGane and Rosa Katin, Junior. — T.G. VD. Broek, O.P.

Mar. 2: Sarah, of Michael Scully and Anna McDonnell; sponsors, John O'Hara and Catherine Crosson. — T. Martin.

-----: Mary Louise, of Henry Clarke and Julia Walker; sponsors, Michael Caraghty and Sarah Caraghty. — P. Th. Martin.

Mar. 3: Sarah Anna, of Milan Clark and Appolonia Litzinger; sponsors, John Litzinger and Juliana Litzinger. — Frater D. J. O'Leary, O.P.

Mar. 4: John, of Francis Joseph Sur—— and Frances Eringia; sponsors, Francis Lihe(?) and Mary Bernard. — T. G. VD. Broek, O.P.

Mar. 4: Wilhelm, of George Hucks and Rosina Hucks; sponsors, James Gangelhoff and Elizabeth Gangelhoff. — T. G. VD. Broek.

Mar. 6: Theobald, of Peter Hoeled(?) and Catherine Clas; sponsors, Theobald Reesner and Margaret Pieron.

Mar. 11: Leo (b. 1831) and Edward (b. 1833), sons of Edward deLaong and Rachel Delong; sponsors, Michael ------ and Anna McGorge. — T. G. VD. Broek, O.P.

Mar. 22: Mary Magdalen, of Martin Tumuld and Anna Mary Kobel; sponsors, Nicholas Tumuld and Mary Magdalen Kobel.

Mar. 24: Mary Anna, of Wendelin Tol(?) and Mary Anna Stuter; sponsors, Myrrael Boujour and Mary Mourte. — T. G. VD. Broek.

Apr. 6: Anna Mary Crossin, of Samuel Crossin and Margaret Crossin; sponsors, Cornelius Crossin and Catherine Crossin. — Frater D. J. O'Leary.

Apr. 13: Anna, of Hugh McGongal and Mary Quinn; sponsors, John Naugh and Mary McGongal. — Tho Martin.

May 8: Elizabeth, of Francis Clark and Rabita(?) Flowers; sponsors, Joseph Flowers and Elizabeth, his wife. — Tho Martin.

June 1: Chrisostom, of William McConogle and Anna McFadden; sponsors, Cornelius Crossin and Margaret McFadden. — J. M. M. Grady.

June 8: Joseph, of John Cane and Catherine Slaven; sponsors, Patrick Slaven and Anna Slaven. — J. G. A. Allmann.

June 15: (baptized in Leesport) James, of Laurence Peek and May Peck; sponsors, John Wirzburger and Mary Faeldt. — John G. Allmann.

June 22: James Gallagher, of James and Mary Gangle; sponsors, Maurice Fitzgerald and Sarah Johnston. — J. M. M. Grady.

June 22: Note: Sequentes tres infantes quos baptizavi in ecclesia St. Louis in Rchst, pretant eorum nup—— ex Pensylvania in hunc Status convertit.

Sarah, of John Hoy and Margaret Hoy; sponsors, James Gordon and Sara Rheinhart.

Eleonora, of John Hoy and Margaret Hoy; sponsors, James Clark and Mary Slaven.

Margaret, of John Hoy and Margaret Hoy; sponsors, Richard Slaven and Susanna Slaven. — J. G. A. Allmann.

June 24: Margaret, of John Welsh and Catherine Welsh (alias McCassally); sponsors, James McBarron and Mary McBarron (alias Gallager). — J. G. A. Allmann.
July 27: Baptized in Lancaster Elizabeth Magdalen, of Galli Thurhimer (?) and Elizabeth Wild; sponsors, Laurence Kortz and Magdalene Bish(?). -- J. G. A. Allemann.


Aug. 2: Margaret Cassily, of Charles G. and Eleonora; sponsors, John Brennan and Anna Slevin. -- J. M. M. Grady.

Aug. 8: Mary Higginse, of John M. and Margaret Slom; sponsor, Elizabeth Anderson. -- J. M. M. Grady.


Aug. 20: Joseph, of Maurice Carter(?) and Mary Ann Hardin (alias Toll); sponsors, Anthony Toll and Mary Anna Bernard. -- J. G. Allemann.


Sept. 25: Ellenora Cassily, wife of Charles Cassily; cincter 25 years, converse; sponsor, Bridget Slevin. -- J. M. M. Grady.

Sept. 28: Elizabeth M. Christian, of James M. Ch. and Joanna M. Goary; sponsors, Michael Kelly and Sally Largy. -- J. M. M. Grady.

(End of book)

Acknowledgements

The Collection of Diocesan Authors grows steadily. The Catholic Record Society is grateful for the most recent additions, seven volumes from the Rev. Charles Curran, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Loyola University, Chicago. Doctor Curran is the author. He is presently publishing a series of homiletics entitled, The Word Becomes Flesh. Thirteen of the 16-volume series are now available in paperback.

Doctor Curran's books, gifts to the Society:

La Psicoterapia Autagogica Coined by Counseling y susAplicaciones Educativas y Pastora les (Spanish edition of Counseling in Catholic Life and Education) published in Madrid, Spain. 1969.