In the beginning of 1879 Bishop William Henry Elder of Natchez received notice from Rome that he would soon receive the bulls of his appointment as coadjutor to Archbishop Joseph S. Alemany of San Francisco. Because of the ravages of yellow fever in his diocese, which had killed six of his twenty-five priests, he was allowed to stay at Natchez until the plague subsided. When Elder heard again the following year, he now was directed to move to Cincinnati. On Sunday, April 18, 1880, almost three months after his appointment as coadjutor to Purcell, Elder arrived at a railroad depot in Cincinnati. From that moment on he dealt with the bank crisis. In the process of attempting to straighten out the financial difficulties, the archdiocese at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—consistent with the general trend in society—became more centralized. As clerical authority grew and the Cincinnati ordinaries tightened their grip on local parishes, there also developed feuds among parishes over territorial lines and tension between diocesan priests and various religious orders.

Because of the financial difficulties in the archdiocese Elder had had reservations about taking the Cincinnati position, but he accepted the appointment out of obedience to the pope and as a personal favor to Purcell. Elder's bishop colleagues also knew of the precariousness of the situation in the "afflicted diocese." Bishop James O'Connor of Omaha was reluctant to congratulate Elder on his appointment. "I really could not find it in my heart to do so," he wrote. Richard Gilmour of Cleveland tried to reassure Elder that "God will see you through. . . ." The archdiocese of Cincinnati was no sinecure. It needed a man of administrative ability, prudence, diplomacy, and piety.
Elder was born in Baltimore on March 22, 1819. One of thirteen children, Elder attended a private Catholic school in his native city. At the age of twelve he enrolled in Mount St. Mary College at Emmitsburg, where the president, John Purcell, greeted him. After graduating from Mount St. Mary Theological Seminary in 1837 he was sent to Rome to finish his theological training. He was ordained to the priesthood in the chapel of the Propaganda in 1846. Elder then returned to Maryland and became professor of Dogmatic Theology at his Alma Mater in Emmitsburg. He aided in the management of the college, taught the seminarians, and did pastoral work in the community. He remained there until his appointment to the see of Natchez in 1857. As the youngest ordinary in the American hierarchy, Elder took charge of a large and sprawling diocese that embraced the State of Mississippi. He was bishop of the diocese for twenty-three years.¹

Elder’s tenure received national attention during the Civil War. When Union troops occupied Natchez in 1864, Elder, whose sympathies lay with the South, refused to obey the commands of Brigadier General James M. Tuttle to offer prayers in the cathedral for the Union army. Not wanting to subordinate his episcopal power to the military authority, Elder respectfully
declined to obey the command on the ground that Tuttle’s order both violated religious liberty and usurped his episcopal functions. Appealing to President Abraham Lincoln for exemption, Elder argued that civil or military authorities had no right to intrude upon purely ecclesiastical matters. “My resistance,” he wrote, “is based simply on the ground that our church service is a matter to be regulated exclusively by the authorities of the Church.” Because of his refusal to comply with the General’s command, Elder was arrested and sent to Vidalia, Louisiana, where he was confined under the custody of the Union commander. But he did not stay there long. When Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton learned of the arrest, he ordered Elder’s release. All told, Elder spent seven days in prison.¹

The main challenge that Elder faced upon his arrival in Cincinnati was to straighten out the financial affairs of the archdiocese. The Purcell bank crisis had grown to gigantic proportions. When Elder arrived in the see city, Archbishop Purcell was in seclusion at the Ursuline convent. About a week later the archbishop went to the cathedral, celebrated Mass, and spoke briefly to those present. He praised Elder and urged the faithful to show their “gratitude to God for sending such a good pastor to atone for all my deficiencies.” Then he addressed the debt issue. “I can appeal to you all today, in the presence of God and of the new Bishop,” he said in a “tremulous” voice, “that there has been no waste and no abuse of your money.”⁵

Relations between Elder and Purcell began on a friendly note. They attended episcopal functions together and collaborated on several appointments. But the relationship gradually deteriorated over the issue of repaying the creditors and the question of Purcell’s salary as archbishop. In his May 1880 deposition before the Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas in the suit, Mannix v. Purcell, the archbishop made clear once again that the deposits that had been entrusted to him had provided much of the capital necessary for the growth and expansion of the archdiocese. Thus, it had an obligation to repay the creditors. He testified that when Edward Purcell contracted the debt, money that was now owed the creditors, he had “acted as his agent and with his consent, and that the debt is his [the archbishop’s].” More specifically, he contended that several churches “had received or borrowed money” from his brother. On January 21, 1881, Edward Purcell died suddenly before testifying about the loans and his role in the running of the bank. Elder’s disagreement with Purcell over the payment of the debt would strain relations between them indefinitely.⁵

After Archbishop Purcell suffered a stroke in the fall of 1880, Elder also became concerned over the amount of influence Father James F. Callaghan, the archbishop’s secretary since 1870, had on him. Over the years a close relationship had developed between Purcell and his secretary, who was on loan
from the New York province. Callaghan gave the aging Purcell unswerving loyalty and devotion. A few days after Elder's arrival in Cincinnati, Bishop Joseph Dwenger of Fort Wayne had urged him to watch Callaghan. Finding the "good old archbishop sometimes vigorous, sometimes absolutely in his second childhood," Dwenger found him too dependent on his secretary. He cautioned Elder "that the hasty and inconsiderate counsels of Callaghan are not always the wisest." As Purcell's condition worsened, Callaghan and Sister Ursula, Superior of the Brown County order, assumed full responsibility of attending to the archbishop. When Elder tried to persuade Callaghan to let someone else take care of Purcell, he refused. Elder also learned that in the spring of 1880 Callaghan had gone to Europe to make a personal effort to restore Purcell's powers as well as to help pay off the creditors. He accomplished neither. Elder now regarded the priest as a troublemaker."

When Callaghan requested Elder's help in paying off the debt, Elder refused. He did not believe the archdiocese was liable and thought it would be best to wait for the decision of the court. This angered Callaghan. He and his supporters used the Catholic Telegraph to uphold Archbishop Purcell's position on the debt issue. Callaghan had served on the editorial staff of the diocesan paper from the spring of 1869 to 1881, at which time Owen Smith, as publisher, and Harry W. I. Garland, as editor, took over its management. Sympathetic to the archbishop and the creditors, these two laymen became a thorn in Elder's side. The newspaper's editorials consistently criticized Elder for mishandling the banking dilemma and for his poor treatment of the archbishop. "[I]t is somewhat worse than cowardly," the Catholic Telegraph editorialized, "... to seek to shun the question of the debt any longer. ... If no one will heed the broken words and heartbroken wish and prayer of the venerable old man, ... the PAPER which has been his Diocesan organ for half a century ... will voice with no uncertain sound his last dearest, earthly wish ... that our Catholic debt should be paid." The paper insisted that if the debt were not paid, the "dishonored diocese will go down in history ... a curse. ..." It would "be better," it wrote, "that every church be sold to pay the debt, and the priests' vestments given to clothe the poor, and the chalices melted down ... to buy them bread."

In the fall of 1882 the Catholic Telegraph also launched a national campaign to raise money to help pay off the debt to the creditors. With his "deepest gratitude" Purcell thanked his supporters and wished them success in their efforts "to pay [his] debts." Toward that goal he made a personal contribution of sixty dollars. "Like the 'Widow's Mite,'" he wrote, "it is very small; yet, like the Widow's Mite, it is literally all I have." But not everyone approved of the diocesan paper's fund-raising scheme. Some local priests withdrew their subscriptions to the Catholic Telegraph. They referred to the
debt as exclusively the Purcell debt. "Whether we call it Father Purcell's debt, or the Archbishop's debt, or the Diocesan debt," the Catholic Telegraph replied, "there it is. Its odour cannot be kept out of the Church." The diocesan paper continued its effort on behalf of the archbishop well into 1883. He "is still our Archbishop; he is still the head of the diocese; and, if his authority can no longer enforce obedience," it wrote, "his prayer and wish ought to win compliance."

As the split between Elder and the archbishop widened over the debts' issue, Elder learned that Callaghan, Sister Ursula, and several priests were spreading the rumor that he had not paid Purcell his cathedricum. The latter was a tax paid annually to the church ordinary by all churches and lay confraternities in the diocese. In the spring of 1882 two anonymous letters to the editor of the Cincinnati Commercial, printed under the name of "T," accused Elder of paying Purcell an inadequate amount for his stay at the convent. Elder denied the allegation. He also assured Sister Ursula that he had every intention of paying any additional funds, when needed, for his support at the convent. In response to charges against Elder, a large contingent of priests came to his defense. In a signed petition they pledged their loyalty and support to him. In May they also joined Elder in his celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of his episcopal consecration. "I rejoice that your priests," Gilmour wrote to Elder, "have at last held up their hands. They should have done so before to strengthen your hands in your heavy and thankless task."

Increasingly, Elder suspected that Callaghan, Sister Ursula, and Harry Garland, out of devotion to the archbishop, were fueling the opposition against him. In one instance Garland made clear his unreserved loyalty to the archbishop. When a reporter from the Cincinnati Commercial asked him to clarify his relationship as editor of the Catholic Telegraph with Elder, he responded that it was "certainly not those of master and servant. The Catholic Telegraph," he said, "is private property, in which the Bishop has not a single red cent of interest. I am my own master and use my own judgment, outside of faith and morals." Then he went on to say that the "Telegraph is and has been for half a century the official organ of the Archbishop, who remains to this day the head of this ecclesiastical province. . . . My allegiance is due first of all to the Archbishop, and he has it with all my heart, soul and strength." The day after Garland's interview in the Cincinnati Commercial, Elder instructed Francis Dutton, pastor of St. Martin parish, to go to the convent and ask Purcell to sign a receipt that would show he had received compensation. Sister Ursula denied him admission. Callaghan had to personally check all of Purcell's correspondence before presenting it to him. When Elder learned of this, he informed Callaghan that his personal correspondence with
the archbishop must go directly to him. Similarly, Elder instructed Sister Ursula that no one “can be allowed to interfere between the Archbishop and me—or any one to whom I may give a commission for him.”

After fighting off paralysis for almost three years, Archbishop Purcell suffered his fourth and final stroke on June 29, 1883. Five days later on July 4 he died. A week later Elder held the solemn obsequies in the cathedral. His remains were then sent back by train to St. Martin’s, where they were laid to rest in the convent cemetery. At the cemetery also lay the remains of his mother, brother, and one of his sisters.

On Purcell’s death Elder succeeded him as archbishop. On December 13 he was invested with the pallium, a vestment conferred by the pope on archbishops, at the cathedral. This was the first such instance in Cincinnati. Fearing that Callaghan would continue to work against him, Elder—who was attempting to establish his own legitimacy—ordered Callaghan to stay out of the archdiocese. Bishop Dwenger assured Elder that Roman authorities understood Callaghan “fully,” and that Callaghan would not be able to harm him. After Archbishop Corrigan of New York recalled Callaghan to his home province, there were still a few priests in the archdiocese, like Francis Goetz, pastor of Holy Trinity Church in Dayton, who complained of Elder’s unwillingness “to pay the dead Archbishop’s debt.” They accused him of being insensitive to the financial woes of the creditors.

THE TRIAL OVER THE PURCELL BANK FAILURE

The trial of the celebrated Mannix v. Purcell case against the archdiocese, known as the “Church Case,” began on April 4, 1882, and ended about nine weeks later on June 24. The judges then deliberated on the matter for almost a year and a half, rendering their decision in December 1883. The court decided in favor of the archdiocese of Cincinnati, declaring that the local church was not liable for the bank’s debt. It concluded that Archbishop Purcell had held various churches’ “properties . . . in trust for charitable and pious uses.” The decision was clear. Though head of the local church, Purcell was the trustee and not the actual owner of the properties and therefore could not sell what he did not own. The judges rejected the creditors’ argument that all property in the diocese held in Purcell’s name as archbishop could be auctioned to pay the creditors. They accepted the defense argument that parish fairs and picnics, along with individual donations and offerings, had helped raise money for various churches in the diocese.

Though the court’s decision favored the local church, the creditors were nevertheless entitled to recover some of their money. In the opinion of the presiding judge in Mannix v. Purcell, creditors had advanced some money to
the archbishop or his brother to help buy or build certain church properties and it had not been repaid. Displeased with the overall legal decision, John Mannix, who sought full compensation for the creditors, then appealed to the Ohio Supreme Court. To make matters worse for the creditors, however, Mannix’s report in November 1885 listed $444,793.54 in receipts and $370,000 in expenditures. The creditors, who had not yet received a penny, were outraged. They petitioned the court for an accounting of the financial affair. The court-appointed Mannix immediately resigned his stewardship of Purcells’ personal estates, and the court named two new trustees. By the spring of 1886 the court ordered Mannix to repay the personal estates in the amount of $406,655.16. He had lost it speculating in stocks and bonds. Even though the judge of the Court of Common Pleas reduced the amount of Mannix’s indebtedness to $314,413.91, he was unable to come up with the money. With the help of a hung jury, he avoided going to jail.15

In their efforts to recover their money the creditors also appealed in vain to Rome. Moreover, they distributed placards, both in English and in German, throughout Cincinnati, highlighting the severity of the financial crisis. Many Catholics had lost most or all of their savings in the calamity. Notwithstanding the court’s decision, the creditors maintained to the end that the archbishop had used their money mainly for the benefit of the diocese. They were also resentful that Elder while in Rome in the fall of 1885 gave “a goodly sum of the poor creditors’ money to the Pope in Peter Pence.” They argued repeatedly that hundreds of families, especially the elderly, had “been reduced to destitution” and that many “had lost their faith.”16

During this long ordeal Elder was faced with a major personal dilemma. From the start he empathized with the creditors. Within a few days of his arrival in Cincinnati, he distributed a few hundred dollars among a few poor creditors. The money was a gift he had received from the faithful of Natchez before leaving them. In the early years of his administration he acknowledged privately that for many years the people, businessmen, and clergy of Cincinnati and the bishops of the province saw the business carried on by Edward Purcell to be “in the house of the Archbishop.” Besides, Purcell himself acknowledged the debts to be his own. He always insisted that his brother was his agent in the whole matter. The faithful had trusted both Purcells. They believed that “the Church was not only infallible in doctrine,” Elder wrote, “but she was also the infallible guardian of justice, and so their money was safe.”17

Though sympathetic to the argument that the archdiocese had a moral obligation to repay the debt, Elder thought it advisable to go along with those priests and episcopal colleagues who advised him to pay the creditors only the amounts ordered by the courts. Bishop Casper Borgess of Detroit urged Elder not to allow his sympathy for the creditors get the better of him. He
feared they would interpret his actions as an acknowledgment that the entire debt belonged to the archdiocese. “I know very well,” he wrote, “yes the Catholic world knows, that you are in a sad plight, that you are harassed by the plottings of the evilminded, . . . that your charity impels you to relieve the sufferings of the poor as far as it may be in your power. [B]ut all that,” he continued, “should not drive you into indiscretion under such an unholy pressure as they exercise over you.” Archbishop James F. Wood of Philadelphia, a former priest of the Cincinnati archdiocese, also advised him against assuming Edward Purcell’s debt. “Don’t think of such a thing,” he wrote. “The action of your predecessor in assigning what did not belong to him,” he further argued, “was a desperate and crazy act, in my opinion of no force or value. . . . He had nothing; he owned nothing; all was a trust—unfortunately shamefully abused, but this abuse you have nothing to do with.” Dwenger, also formerly of Cincinnati, concurred with his episcopal colleagues that the debt belonged to Edward Purcell and not to the archdiocese.18

In the summer of 1884, eight months after the lower court decided that the archdiocese was not liable for the Purcell debt, Elder wrote a letter to the clergy and laity under his jurisdiction on the matter. Though he expressed his desire to do all that he could for the liquidation of the debt, he did not view it a debt owed by the diocese. “I have repeatedly consulted Advisers, in civil and Canon Law, and in Moral Theology,” he wrote, and “I have not found one, who on a consideration of the whole case would advise me that I had a right to declare this a diocesan debt binding in justice. It is not a question of magnanimity on my part. I have no right to be magnanimous in imposing obligations on other persons, . . . unless it were very clearly established that the debt was theirs.” He hypothesized that if it were a debt of the diocese, then every Catholic in the diocese would be bound in justice to contribute his full share for paying the whole debt. Though he acknowledged there were times when Purcell used portions of the creditors’ money for the churches and other works of religion, he was convinced that fund-raising events, individual donations, and parish contributions helped purchase most of the lots and build most of the churches in the archdiocese. From that point on the archbishop nevertheless urged the clergy and the faithful to do all they could personally to help the creditors. On the last day of the diocesan synod of 1886, Elder appealed to the clergy to help raise money for the creditors’ benefit. As a result of his plea, a commission was established. By 1887 the archdiocese had raised close to $60,000 for the benefit of the sufferers.19

Elder then tried that year to secure a more substantial gift from church leaders in Rome. He asked Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore and Bishop Camillus Maes of Covington, both then in Rome, to intercede in behalf of the archdiocese. Gibbons, a realist, offered the archbishop little hope of
receiving any assistance from Rome. “Your Grace is well aware,” he wrote, “that the Holy See is not in the habit of coming hastily to the relief of embarrassed foreign missions, . . . still less is it disposed to help a suffering diocese in a country like ours[,] which . . . is regarded as rolling in wealth.” At the end of the year Maes informed Elder that the archdiocese’s request for assistance had been refused. “There is not a doubt,” he wrote, “that the Congregation of Cardinals was in favor of giving us a million, but . . . Leo XIII has seen fit not to grant it.”

With slight modifications, the Ohio Court in January 1888 upheld the lower court decision that Purcell had held the church property in trust. It decreed that the cathedral was liable for $114,182.92; the cathedral school for $15,442.48; Mount St. Mary’s of the West Seminary for $8,635.18; and St. Patrick Church in Cumminsville for $4,901.30. With the sale of lots in St. Joseph cemetery and other assets collected from the Purcell estates, the amount awarded to the creditors was $409,384.61. Those creditors, still living, recovered seven and one-eighth percent of their money. For twenty-five years, 1880 to 1905, legal action against the archdiocese of Cincinnati ensued in State and Federal Courts. Both Elder and his successor, Henry Moeller, felt that the creditors had been paid the total legal amount due them and that the archdiocese had “discharged its obligation of justice.” During his tenure, Moeller also occasionally gave aid to destitute and elderly creditors. Especially through his pastors, he came to the aid of destitute creditors in the twilight years of their lives. Moeller always felt that Archbishop Purcell “was not to be blamed for the financial cloud that darkened the last days of his life.”

Concerned over both the payment of the debt and the image of the local church, the seventy-eight-year-old Elder in 1895 refused the offer of the palatial residence of Mrs. Bellamy Storer to serve as his archiepiscopal residence. Storer offered her residence and two acres of land, on prestigious Grandin Road, as a gift in commemoration of Elder’s golden jubilee of his priesthood in 1896. “Both my feelings and my judgment,” he wrote, “dispose me to live as near the cathedral as possible. . . . I would do a wrong to the diocese and to every congregation and to each individual Catholic, if I were to weaken the ability of the cathedral congregation to collect and pay” its portion of the debt. He thought that his presence near the cathedral helped solidify the work and fund-raising activities of the congregation. Elder also argued that the residence that had satisfied his predecessor was quite sufficient for him. Though the Jubilee Committee and the clergy in the community petitioned the archbishop to reconsider the Storer gift, he remained firm in his decision. Such “a declination,” the New York Independent, a leading Protestant paper, wrote, “is both unusual and honorable.” Elder never moved out of the two small rooms under the shadow of the sanctuary.
Modest in appearance and small in stature, Elder was never ostentatious. He never seemed proudly conscious of his high title. "Notwithstanding his exalted position," the Jesuit Francis J. Finn wrote, "he was, from the time I first knew him, the most humble of men." He also seldom made use of a carriage. He preferred to walk. A non-Catholic journalist commented on the archbishop's modesty and gentleness. "He is a character worth knowing—one worth studying," he wrote. "His time is more valuable and more sought after than any public office holder in the city of Cincinnati. Yet it is a fact that there is less red tape in gaining admission to shake the kind hand of the highest Church dignitary in the central part of the United States, than it is to gain for a moment the ear of the average public official." Elder never had much interest in the pomp and privileges enjoyed by ordinaries in comparable or more established sees.23

In the end, how much harm did the Purcell bank failure bring to the local church? Evidence suggests that some Catholics, scandalized by the affair, turned away not only from the bishop but also the church. Henry Moeller, who had worked out of the Cincinnati chancery for more than twenty years, estimated that between one hundred and two hundred people left the church in consequence of money that they lost by the financial failure. In addition, for almost two decades there was a slowdown in the building of new Catholic churches and schools. The "dead carcass of the debt," Anthony H. Walburg, pastor of St. Augustine Church in the west end in Cincinnati, wrote to Elder, "... is paralizing [sic] all our energies." With time, however, the diocese weathered the storm and recaptured some of its old energy. In 1887 Mount St. Mary's of the West Seminary, which had been forced to close its doors in 1879, reopened. By the next decade new parishes were slowly formed and schools opened. Doubtlessly, the bank failure caused grief and hardship to many of its depositors and had a devastating impact on a number of them. It is impossible to assess the hurt and feeling of betrayal, especially among the creditors, caused by it. It also had its toll on Archbishop Purcell. Having lived to see the creation of a vast spiritual empire, he received a blow that utterly crushed him.24

ARCHBISHOP HENRY MOELLER, NATIVE OF CINCINNATI

For nearly three years as coadjutor administrator and more than twenty-one years as an archbishop, Elder ably managed the affairs of the archdiocese. On October 28, 1904, he celebrated Mass at Mount St. Joseph Convent in Cincinnati, returned to his residence, and shortly after dinner he was found in his room lying on the floor in a semi-comatose condition. He died two days later. The city pastors tolled the church bells daily at noon for ten minutes until
after the funeral. On November 8, following his solemn funeral services at St. Peter in Chains Cathedral, Elder’s remains were transported to the priests’ lot in St. Joseph cemetery in Price Hill.25

Henry Moeller succeeded Elder as archbishop of Cincinnati. At the cathedral on February 15, 1905, Cardinal Gibbons invested him with the pallium. A man of scholarly attainments and a profound theologian, Moeller became the fourth and first locally born bishop to preside over the diocese. The son of German immigrants, he was born on December 11, 1849, in the west end of Cincinnati in St. Joseph parish. His parents, Bernard Moeller and Teresa Witte, had emigrated from Germany. They had six children, five sons and a daughter. One of the sons died in infancy, three of the four became priests, and the daughter entered the convent.26

After attending St. Joseph elementary school, Moeller graduated from St. Xavier College in 1869. Wanting to become a priest, he attended the American College at Rome to complete his studies in philosophy and theology, where he was awarded the degree of doctor of divinity. In the competitive examinations Moeller earned the highest distinction, winning three first
prizes in theology. On June 10, 1876, Moeller was ordained to the priesthood in the Basilica of St. John Lateran at Rome. Largely because of his scholarly accomplishments and theological studies, eight years later he was one of three candidates considered for the rectorship of the American College in Rome.27

Upon his return to Cincinnati in December 1876, Archbishop Purcell assigned him to the pastorship of St. Patrick Church in Bellefontaine, Ohio. In October of the following year, he joined the faculty of Mount St. Mary's of the West Seminary. In 1879 Bishop Silas M. Chatard of Vincennes, who lived in Indianapolis, asked him to become his personal secretary. Moeller spent only a few months in Indianapolis. When Elder arrived in Cincinnati he recalled the native Cincinnatian and made him his own secretary in July 1880. Six years later Elder promoted Moeller to the position of chancellor, an office he filled until April 6, 1900, when he became bishop of Columbus. Elder informed Cardinal Gibbons that in losing the services of his confidant of twenty years “he lost his right arm.”28

Two years later Elder, then eighty-one years old and lacking vigor and strength, requested the assistance of a coadjutor. The duties of the office weighed heavily on him. “My old age,” he wrote to a relative, “is having its effects . . . [on] my eyesight, my stiff fingers and my memory.” His administrative papers often got “out of order,” he wrote to a local pastor, “and sometimes letters get entirely mislaid.” In January 1903 the consultors and rectors of Cincinnati met at Elder’s residence. For the first time and in accordance with the decree issued by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore about two decades earlier, local consultors, official advisors in matters of diocesan administration, participated in the selection of nominees for archbishop of Cincinnati. In six successive balloting, the result was always the same: Four votes each for Bishops Moeller of Columbus and Camillus Maes of Covington, Kentucky. Both names were sent to Rome. Though Moeller had been Elder’s longtime friend and confidant, the archbishop favored Maes as his heir apparent because of Maes’s “acquaintance & influence with men of prominence . . . in the Church and out of it.” Elder shared his thoughts with Moeller. He preferred the Covington ordinary “not because of personal preference. No one,” he wrote, “can have preference over you.” But if “our Holy Father should send you to me,” he added, “I will be happy to learn my judgement was mistaken.”29

On April 27, 1903, Henry Moeller was appointed coadjutor to Elder. He was known in Cincinnati for his “irreproachable character” and executive ability. Pleased that Moeller would soon assist him again, Elder urged him to come as soon as he had “authority to do so.” When Moeller returned to Cincinnati on June 26, Elder relinquished many of his administrative duties
to him. The diocese purchased a separate residence for Moeller on West Eighth Street.\textsuperscript{10}

**DIOCESAN GROWTH AND CHANGES**

During the course of the nineteenth century the archdiocese of Cincinnati grew in size and became more centralized. In the process clerical control grew and lay involvement in the parishes waned. Priests became more involved in the operation of the parishes. Though the shift from parish control to clerical control came more slowly in the German parishes, by the end of the third quarter of the nineteenth century the trustee system had been considerably weakened. Fifty years later, by the end of Moeller’s term, Catholics in the archdiocese, like most Catholics in the United States, accepted the hierarchical concept of the church. Following the first Vatican Council’s declaration on papal primacy and infallibility, the Third Baltimore Council in 1884 gave a ringing endorsement of the pope’s infallibility. It also renewed emphasis on church authority. Like most U.S. bishops, Elder and Moeller stressed loyalty to the archdiocese and strengthened their grips on local parishes. The archdiocese witnessed the growth of authoritarianism, of centralization, and of increasing influence by Vatican officials. During Fenwick’s and Purcell’s administrations the lay people, especially the German Catholics, were involved in the management and administration of church affairs. They had an enormous responsibility for the development of the archdiocese. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, when the authority of the local church, like that of society in general, became more centralized, more and more power shifted from the parish to the chancery. The American bishops insisted that the laity had no rights with regard to parish government. Increasingly, parishes and charities were brought more directly under the archbishop’s supervision. In the process, notwithstanding the clerical strengthening of authority with regard to the laity, this weakened the autonomy of parish priests. In a society that celebrated the principles of freedom and independence, Catholics were expected to submit unquestioningly to the external authority of the church. As a religion of authority, the church continued to offer stability and expected the faithful to obey.\textsuperscript{11}

In the spring of 1881 the diocese of Nashville was assigned to the province of Cincinnati. The following year the tenth suffragan see to Cincinnati was added when the diocese of Grand Rapids was created out of the diocese of Detroit. In April 1910 Pius X approved the division of Cleveland, and Toledo, with a Catholic population of one hundred thousand, was elevated to an episcopal city with Joseph Schrembs as its first bishop. Toledo was the third
suffragan see established in the state, where less than a century earlier there was no Catholic church to be found. This was another illustration of the remarkable growth of Catholicity within Ohio.\textsuperscript{32}

In the period 1883 to 1925 the growth of the local church slowed somewhat from the Purcell days. Whereas 142 parishes were formed during Purcell’s tenure, 66 were established during Elder’s and Moeller’s terms. Moreover, the archdiocese witnessed a remarkable growth in Dayton and neighboring communities. Sixteen parishes were formed, which was more than three times the number since the creation of Emmanuel, St. Joseph, St. Mary, and Holy Trinity before the Civil War. During the first quarter of the new century, industries in Dayton were attracting a number of foreign immigrants, especially from Eastern Europe. They found the German Catholics and their pastor, Charles Hahne, at Emmanuel parish friends who made them welcome to their church. Through the efforts of Ladislas Lipski, pastor of St. Stanislaus Church in Cincinnati, and Our Lady of Czestochowa Society, Polish Catholics helped establish St. Adalbert parish in the northern part of Dayton in 1902. Three years later St. Adalbert Church was dedicated with Boleslaus F. Strzelcokas as pastor. In 1915 four Polish Franciscan School Sisters from St. Louis took charge of the parish school. Over the next decade Holy Name and St. Stephen parishes were formed for the Hungarian congregations in 1906 and 1909 respectively, Holy Cross for the Lithuanians in 1914, and St. Gabriel for the Romanians in 1916.\textsuperscript{33}

Among the thirteen metropolitan sees in the United States in 1892, Cincinnati ranked ninth in Catholic population with 200,000 Catholics, eighth in the number of priests with 238, ninth in the number of parochial schools with ninety-three, and seventh in the number of churches, stations and chapels with 166. Among the 188 churches in the city of Cincinnati, Catholics had the most with fifty-six places of worship, followed by the Baptists with twenty-six. By 1920 the archdiocese had 186 churches with resident priests, thirty-three missions with churches, and sixty-three chapels. There were 391 priests who served a Catholic population of about 210,000. The archdiocese, with its ten suffragan sees, comprised an area of almost 200,000 square miles with a population of approximately 2,010,447 Catholics, served by one archbishop, ten bishops, and 2,573 priests, diocesan and regular.\textsuperscript{41}

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Catholic Telegraph also underwent changes. As the secular press became less combative toward Catholics, the Catholic Telegraph concentrated less on anti-Catholic sentiments and more on the news of the local church and the faithful. After the death in 1882 of its editor, Harry W. I. Garland, the diocesan paper’s owner, Owen Smith, conducted the paper until 1890, when failing health forced him to relinquish his duties. Joseph Schoenenberger, former manager of the
Wahrheitsfreund, then purchased the Catholic Telegraph. Within a few years, however, Schoenenberger found the paper, which had long been burdened with debts, a financially unprofitable enterprise. Bishop Camillus Maes of Covington feared that the diocesan paper was, he wrote to Elder, "on the verge of disappearance." It seemed for a time that the Catholic Telegraph would join the many other Catholic papers that were discontinued in the nineteenth century.¹⁹

In November 1896 Elder asked his clergy to help increase the number of subscribers and do whatever they could to support the paper. Even though the Catholic Telegraph was not an official organ of the archdiocese, in the sense of being conducted by it, it was, he wrote, "the ordinary channel in the English language of the official utterances of the Archbishop." Late in 1897 Schoenenberger was forced to hand over the paper to his creditors. But a group of Catholic laymen headed by Dr. Thomas P. Hart, a medical doctor, formed the Catholic Telegraph Publishing Company and purchased the paper early in 1898. Hart, who gave up his medical practice to own and publish the diocesan paper, became editor. He served the Catholic Telegraph for almost forty years.²⁰

Although they supported the diocesan paper, Archbishops Elder and Moeller maintained a close watch over its publications. In July 1889 Elder reprimanded Owen Smith for publishing articles critical of the action of the Provincial Council of Cincinnati. The archbishop's action was in keeping with the judgment of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore that forbade the clergy or laity of assailing ecclesiastical persons by offensive words in the press. Elder demanded that Smith publish a letter of apology and "promise that hereafter" he would not allow anything to appear in the paper that went against "the rules and the spirit of the Catholic Church." Smith replied that he had been "under the care of a physician" and that the columns of his paper were opened to the archbishop to say what he pleased in regard to the articles. Elder responded by sending him a prepared letter for Smith to sign and publish under the editor's name. "In offering me the use of your columns," Elder wrote, "you forget your respective position. I am not arguing a case as litigant. I am giving judgment as Bishop." Smith published the proposed draft. Appreciative of Elder's overall support of the diocesan paper and perhaps wanting to stay on his good side, the Catholic Telegraph wrote approvingly of him in the summer of 1893. "[A]s priest, as bishop, as administrator, as theologian, as scholar, as friend, as man," it editorialized, "William Henry Elder stands in the very front rank and is conspicuous among his equals. This province is proud of him. . . . Long may he live to rule over us."¹⁷

Early in Moeller's term there was also friction between himself and Thomas Hart. Moeller thought that the editor did not always "deal in an
honest straight-forward manner with him” and that a “half-hostile’ spirit”
dominated the management of the paper. He assured Hart that they would
going along “very amicably” if he demonstrated “[l]oyalty to authority, read-
iness to accept advice, and irreproachable conduct,” which he regarded as the
“befitting traits” of the editor of a Catholic newspaper. Midway through
Moeller’s term relations improved between the Catholic Telegraph and the
archbishop. From this point on the diocesan paper’s news coverage and edit-
orials never deviated seriously from chancery policy.38

CLERGY AND PARISH ISSUES

Like the bank crisis, feuds among parishes during Elder’s and Moeller’s
terms over respective territorial lines called for administrative and diplo-
matic skills. Since the founding of the diocese in 1821, its good fortune inter-
twined with that of the industrial city. The many churches built in
Cincinnati in the middle decades of the nineteenth century were intended to
accommodate a stable Catholic community. By the last third of the nine-
teenth century, however, more and more people left the older parts of the city
and moved to hilltop neighborhoods and suburbs. Such technological
improvements as the horse-drawn omnibus, electric streetcar, incline, and
automobile helped facilitate the movement away from the city. In the face of
commercial expansion and aging housing, like other middle-class Cincinn-
tians, Catholics who could afford to move gravitated to new parishes on the
hilltops and more distant suburbs and the church followed them. In the
process, the movement contributed to clerical infighting for parishioners,
stipends, and territory.

In the wake of the Purcell bank failure, part of Elder’s task was to keep
alive the parishes and institutions affected by it and to help rebuild and refi-
nance the various works of the archdiocese. Shortly after his arrival in
Cincinnati Elder issued a memorandum against parishes raiding other
parishes for members. He instructed the pastors to settle territorial disputes
among themselves and to “avoid interfering with persons and places belong-
ing to another Pastor’s jurisdiction.” He also directed them to send him a
description of their respective territories. Elder always hoped that the feud-
ing priests would resolve their problems in a friendly manner. He argued it
was “very important both for our own peace, & for our due respect from the
people, & for our influence over them—that we ecclesiastics carefully avoid
all appearances of difference among ourselves. . . . We ought to be very
delicate & courteous in our relations with each other.” Notwithstanding
Elder’s admonition, parish raiding continued. In the face of the bank crisis
Elder considered it inadvisable for him at the time to openly challenge the
pastors on parish raiding. Besides, he was unsure how much backing, if any, he would receive from Roman authorities. In the latter part of the nineteenth century the Propaganda occasionally served as a court of final appeal for aggrieved priests. Furthermore, he was very much aware of the disputes Bishop Louis Amadeus Rappe of Cleveland had had with his German- and English-speaking priests that contributed to his resignation in 1870.39

In accordance with Canon Law the clergy could appeal to the Holy See for relief if they believed that local church leaders treated them unfairly. Despite the Roman legislation on clerical discipline in 1878, American ordinaries were determined to maintain their rights over priests. Archbishop Gibbons of Baltimore advised Elder in 1882, who was about to convene the Fourth Provincial Council of Cincinnati, to endorse the broad principle that pastors and priests may be removed without trial by the bishop. “We cannot too much insist on the rights of Bishops on this point,” he wrote. Gibbons felt the exercise of that right was “essential to the discipline” of the local church and to securing episcopal control. Even though the prevailing theology of the church suggested that the bishops were in control, in reality they often had to contend with clerical independence. As the archdiocese, in compliance with Rome, placed more emphasis on church authority in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it became more organized and centralized. Gradually the archbishop acquired more and more control over both priests and people.40

At the same time that Elder and a number of his episcopal colleagues tried to consolidate their hold on local activities, they sought more local autonomy and greater independence from the decrees issued in Rome. They wanted no interference. But the intent of such interference was to limit what Roman authorities perceived as the growing independence of the American hierarchy. In a letter to his suffragan bishop, James Gilmour of Cleveland, Elder argued that the welfare of the American church rested upon granting it as much autonomy as possible. Gibbons became concerned in the 1880s that the pope would use the complaints and appeals of priests “as a pretext” for installing a permanent delegate, or papal representative, to the United States. If that were to happen, he feared, the “dignity and authority of the [Church prelates] would be seriously impaired.” Elder concurred. He believed that Vatican authorities often sided with the priests to check the authority of the American hierarchy. An apostolic delegate, Elder thought, would not only jeopardize the authority of the American bishops but “if he acted as a tribunal to receive complaints, would be an occasion of multiplying dissatisfaction among loose priests.” Indeed, the pope enhanced the role of the papal representative precisely in order to exercise greater control over every diocese and ensure more uniform teaching and practice throughout the church in the world.41
The American hierarchy split into "liberal" and "conservative" factions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They were divided on the appointment of an apostolic delegate to the United States, labor, the necessity of parochial schools, the founding of Catholic University, the separation of church and state, and the status of the American church. In general, the liberals, often designated as Americanists, advocated more autonomy from authorities in Rome, moderate social reforms to remedy social inequities, and a more active role for Catholics in society. They argued that American Catholics should embrace the principles of the new culture and bring the Catholic faith to its fullest realization in the United States. Freedom, equality, democracy, separation of church and state, and liberty of conscience were far more advanced in the United States than any place else in the world. At times the liberals accepted almost uncritically America's sense of mission in spreading its liberties and system of government around the world. In general, Archbishop John Ireland of St. Paul and Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore led this group. Ireland, who took the lead on some of the issues, would become one of the more dominant and controversial figures in the American church, especially in the area of education. Those who favored this liberal approach also tended to support the growing labor movement, recommended greater cooperation with other faiths, and promoted more mainlining of Catholics, especially immigrants, into American society. They believed that national differences among Catholics in the United States should be minimized.42

The conservatives, on the other hand, were deeply skeptical of the relationship between American life and Catholicism. A few Jesuit theologians, German clergy, and bishops, most notably Archbishop Michael Corrigan of New York and his longtime mentor, Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, were convinced that the liberal ways of the Americanists compromised the Catholic faith in order to make it more acceptable to Protestants and secularists. Many Catholics of German-American communities opposed efforts toward cultural and linguistic assimilation. Concerned over the negative and modern influence of socialism, secularism, and Protestantism on the church, conservatives also supported the hierarchical and institutional concept of the church. They became more identified with authorities in Rome and stressed the need for greater authority, discipline, and uniformity. Conservatives argued that the principle of independence in the United States fostered a spirit of individualism, and thus weakened the respect for authority regarded as necessary in the church.43

When Archbishop Francesco Satolli, who was appointed the first apostolic delegate to the United States in 1893, arrived in Washington the previous year a number of bishops viewed him as an "Ecclesiastical Spy." As the
voice of the pope in America, he helped him exercise a more direct role in American church affairs. Believing that the American church was in disorder and that it should be brought more into conformity with European practice, Leo XIII in his famous 1899 apostolic letter *Testem Benevolentiae* to the archbishop of Baltimore attempted to restrain enthusiasm for republican principles in the church. Eight years later Pius X in his encyclical *Pascendi* strongly condemned theological modernism. Modernism, which developed in the 1890s principally in Western Europe, attempted to blend Catholicism with modern thought, especially in such areas as psychology, evolutionary biology, pragmatism, and critical biblical scholarship. Roman authorities made it clear that the American church, especially its liberal faction, should be less supportive of republican ideals and limit its contact with modernism and the secular culture. Pius X further institutionalized the antimodernist stance by prescribing that all seminary, college, and university professors of theology take an oath against modernism. Moreover, the Roman Code of Canon Law, which took effect in 1918, provided a legal framework attempting to insure uniform church life. Though the pontiffs and other Roman officials' actions at the turn of the century generated a spirit of Roman authority and discipline and had considerable impact in weakening “Americanization,” they did not kill it. The influences of American life on the American church continued into the twentieth century.\(^4\)

Like most church ordinaries, neither Elder nor Moeller identified totally with the liberal and conservative factions. On the subject of maintaining a separate Catholic school system, the two Cincinnati archbishops sided with the conservatives. Writing to the pope in January 1893, Elder joined Archbishop Corrigan and others in refuting Archbishop John Ireland’s proposal that Catholics, who he thought needed to become more a part of American life, participate more in public education. Acknowledging publicly the benefits of public education, Ireland went so far as to say that he wished that the need for the parish school “did not exist. I would have all schools for the children of the people be state schools.” Elder strongly disagreed with the archbishop of St. Paul on this matter. When in 1892 Archbishop Francesco Satolli issued a statement endorsing Ireland’s attitude toward the public schools, Elder and all the bishops of the Cincinnati Province but one signed a letter of protest. During their administrations, Elder and Moeller vigorously supported and maintained a separate Catholic school system in the archdiocese.\(^4\)

On most major issues Elder, and later Moeller, sided with the liberals. On the issue of maintaining separate German parishes and schools, they endorsed the assimilationist position. They wanted the German Catholics to become more Americanized. Elder also opposed the appointment of an apostolic delegate. He was skeptical and resentful of interference by officials in
Rome. In the 1880s Elder thought that the future welfare of the American church rested upon being granted more autonomy. An advocate of home rule, he did not want Vatican officials or the apostolic delegate to impinge upon his jurisdiction. Sensitive to the needs of American Catholicism, both Elder and Moeller attempted to create a distinctive and united Catholic culture. That meant keeping authorities in Rome out of their affairs. When in 1905 the apostolic delegate, Archbishop Diomede Falconio, offered to come to Cincinnati to invest Moeller with the pallium, Moeller selected Cardinal Gibbons instead. A few months later, however, upon the request of German Catholics in the community, Moeller reluctantly invited Falconio to come to Cincinnati and help celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the German Roman Catholic Central Society. 

Moeller's concern over the apostolic delegate's potential intrusion in diocesan affairs was not unfounded, as Archbishop Satolli was a party to a number of conflicts between priests and their ordinaries, and in a number of cases he forced bishops to accept compromises. Early in his administration Moeller had to deal with a conflict between the leaders of the Ursuline Order at St. Martin's in Brown County and those at the Oak Street convent in Cincinnati. Mother Fidelis, the Ursuline superior headquartered in Cincinnati, and Mother Margaret Mary, her assistant in charge of the convent at St. Martin's, feuded over Mother Fidelis's authority. At the outset the archbishop sided with Mother Fidelis and was critical of those who behaved "outrageously" toward her. He urged the Ursulines at St. Martin's to acknowledge Mother Fidelis as the duly elected superior of the order. There was also evidence that because of the friction between the two groups some young women hesitated joining the Ursulines. "The sooner harmony is restored," Moeller wrote, "the better." The sisters at St. Martin's, however, paid no attention to his advice and continued to challenge Fidelis's leadership.

By August 1908 both sides voted for a formal separation. Realizing that all hope of reconciliation had vanished, the archbishop reluctantly agreed to the existence of two separate and independent Ursuline communities in the archdiocese. On the subject of property ownership, Moeller sided with the Cincinnati group and insisted that the convent on Oak Street be turned over to them. Once again the St. Martin sisters disagreed with Moeller. They appealed to Falconio, the apostolic delegate, for assistance, insisting that the archbishop had forced them to sign a property agreement favoring the Cincinnati Ursulines. Moeller, on the other hand, urged Falconio to regard Fidelis as the superior of the Ursulines. He also argued that there was no need for two separate schools run by two separate groups of Ursulines in Cincinnati. Whereas the Ursulines in Cincinnati had never given him any trouble and that he had "misgivings" about the community at Brown County, he
thought any “support” given to the St. Martin sisters “will make them,” he wrote, “belittle my authority.” But Moeller’s appeals were in vain. Falconio sided with the St. Martin Ursulines and awarded them the Oak Street convent. In return, Mother Fidelis received a dowry of $52,700 from the Brown County branch. With this money Fidelis and nineteen of her supporters started St. Ursula convent and academy on McMillan Street in Walnut Hills. The Ursulines of Cincinnati later opened the parish schools of All St.s and Our Lady of Visitation in Cincinnati and St. Henry in Dayton. Just as Moeller had predicted, relations between the two Ursuline communities remained strained for years.48

Elder, Moeller, and their episcopal colleagues were of the opinion that Vatican officials unnecessarily meddled in other affairs of American dioceses, such as in cases of priests charged with gross subordination, alcoholism, or sexual deviation. The issue between priests and bishops over the rights of the clergy and the trials of clerics was a national one. Unlike in Europe, priests had no tenure in office until the Holy See intervened at their request. Elder, as one of the archbishops more outspoken on the matter, was critical of Propaganda’s procedures in handling priests’ cases. In the summer of 1885 he complained to Bishop Richard Gilmour of Cleveland that a number of Catholics were “destroyed by scandal,” due to the misbehavior of certain priests. Because of the strict judicial procedures that tended to favor the priests, “people are afraid to testify . . . in any formal way,” he wrote, “though they will talk about them freely & the Bishop sees clearly they are true.” Elder argued that even though he could gather evidence on the behavior of certain priests that would “convice,” he wrote, “any impartial judge,” the evidence was often regarded insufficient according to the “judicial form” demanded by Rome.” To prevent Vatican intrusion into the affairs of the diocese, it became advisable to have a clear-cut case before prosecuting a priest in the diocesan court. The appointment of an apostolic delegate a few years later was in part designed to keep the Propaganda informed of disputes between bishops and priests as well as perhaps to help deter bishops from proceeding irregularly.49

Another issue of contention was the pope’s insistence that the bishops in established dioceses make certain churches “irremovable” posts. When a priest became the pastor of an irremovable parish, the archbishop could not arbitrarily remove him without serious cause. This assured the pastors a certain amount of independence. It gave them security of tenure by making them irremovable pastors. Elder always maintained that by not being free to remove any priest, his authority was diminished. But during the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 Gibbons urged Elder and other American ordinaries to assign irremovable rectorships to prevent papal intervention.
Elder reluctantly went along with his recommendation. The Council also provided for some clerical consultation in diocesan administration and in the election of bishops. The powers of the bishops, then almost unquestioned, were curbed by the decrees adopted by the Plenary Council.\(^{50}\)

At the archdiocese’s second synod in 1886, nine parishes were made irremovable. The synod also reorganized the structure of the archdiocese, giving Elder and his administrative staff greater control over the spiritual and temporal welfare of all the parishes. This was a period in American history of consolidation and centralization in business, politics, and education. Increasing developments in transportation and communication made it possible for a greater integration of social systems. Using standards of efficiency that were characteristic signs of the era, Elder and Moeller, like some of their urban counterparts, centralized diocesan matters from their chancery headquarters. With increasing centralization the diocese was divided into four deaneries, with a trusted priest as dean overseeing each part. The synod further restructured the diocese by designating ten synodal examiners and six diocesan consultors.\(^{51}\)

The duties of a dean were extensive. He visited all the churches and Catholic schools of his deanery. In view of the fact that the archbishop frequently recruited his vicars general, deans, and consultors from among the pastors of big parishes, many priests aspired for promotion to a prosperous parish. What many priests dreaded was being assigned or banished to a small rural parish or “to any inferior petty little town.” The Catholic Telegraph observed that “[a]lmost all the priests of the diocese are . . . looking for big parishes. There is no concealing this fact. It seems to be a perfect mania among them.” During Elder’s administration pastors also began submitting to the chancery annual reports on the size of the parishes as well as on their debts, income, and expenditures. Since the Fourth Provincial Council of 1882 the pastor submitted a financial report at least once a year, which was read to the parishioners after Mass. Increasingly pastors appointed church wardens to assist them in administering the parishes.\(^{52}\)

In the midst of the administrative changes, interparish disagreements and raiding were rampant throughout the archdiocese. As there was considerable infighting among the clergy for stipends, parishioners, and territory, there were charges of priests invading other priests’ domains to steal parishioners or to perform a baptism, wedding, or a funeral. When the commotion over the Purcell bank failure had abated by the 1890s, Elder began addressing the issue more forthrightly. In his letter to the diocesan clergy in the fall of 1896, Elder took a firm stand against parish raiding. No one was allowed to rent pews in another congregation without the knowledge of the pastor of the parish in which the person resided. It was also regarded as unlawful for any
person to attend a church of a language that he did not understand. By doing so he was not fulfilling the Catholic duty of hearing the Word of God. Furthermore, no one was allowed to hear Mass in the chapels of hospitals or religious communities, excepting the inmates of those institutions. Elder informed the clergy in 1897 that if he had not received the description of their boundary lines by the end of the summer, he would “regard the delay as evidence of [their] negligence, and make note of it for future reference.” The archbishop tried to establish clearly defined borders for all the parishes. About half the parishes responded.\textsuperscript{51}

When Moeller succeeded Elder in 1904, boundary fighting and parish raiding continued. The clerical disputes were so intense, especially in the newly created parishes on the fringe of older and more established parishes, Moeller decided not to press the issue. By the end of the decade, however, he attempted to resolve some of the interparish quarrels. “I have never seen,” he wrote in 1910, “greater selfishness displayed than in regard to boundary lines.” A good illustration of a boundary dispute at the time was the quarrel between Holy Angels Church, which lay midway between East Walnut Hills and Hyde Park east of downtown Cincinnati, and St. Mary, the new Hyde Park parish formed in 1898. In the early 1900s the two pastors, James Moore of Holy Angels’s and Patrick J. Hynes of St. Mary’s, fought over families and boundary lines, both wanting the lion’s share of the wealthy families in a square in Hyde Park. Moeller formed an impartial committee of priests to investigate the pastors’ claims. Acting on the committee’s recommendation, Moeller allotted the square to Hynes and allowed Moore at Holy Angels to keep two families who lived in the disputed area and had been attending his church.\textsuperscript{51}

When a group of laymen in the northwestern section of Dayton in 1911 attempted to form a new parish without consulting with him first, Moeller took exception. He argued that the responsibility of establishing new parishes belonged to him and not to laymen who were unable to assess adequately the spiritual and temporal needs of various communities. Moeller informed the Corpus Christi congregation that the committee to establish a new parish in Dayton View, which he deemed too close to the Corpus Christi line, did not have his approval. After three years of quarreling, Moeller allowed the Catholics of Dayton View to have their own church but not on the original sites proposed. Moeller dedicated the new parish to St. Agnes and assigned John M. Sailer as pastor.\textsuperscript{55}

As they attempted to resolve parish feuds, some priests in 1913 blamed Moeller for some of the boundary disputes. They charged that he and other diocesan officials allowed the laity, especially real estate promoters, to multiply parishes needlessly. This issue became particularly acute in Dayton when
Moeller approved a petition submitted to him by a group of laymen to establish St. Anthony parish on the east side. Charles Kemper, the pastor of neighboring St. Mary's, accused the supporters of the proposed new parish of wooing parishioners away from his parish. Moeller advised Kemper to meet with representatives of the St. Anthony congregation and settle the dispute amicably, which they eventually did. He knew from experience, Moeller wrote to Kemper, that “pastors of the Mother church are, as a rule, loath to give up territory and people and are generally unreasonable. They picture all kinds of disasters unless their views are complied with, but disasters never materialize when their views are disregarded.”

The issue that helped trigger a resolution of the boundary disputes in the archdiocese was the rivalry between English- and German-speaking parishes. Since the end of the nineteenth century the distinction between these parishes had broken down significantly and disputes between the pastors over boundary lines and parish raiding increased significantly. At the same time that German parishes found it increasingly more difficult to find German-speaking priests or even candidates interested in learning German, more and more young German Americans attended English churches, where many priests welcomed them. The number of German-speaking parishes declined with the passage of time. Though many older German Americans clung to the customs and language of “the old country,” their sons and daughters frequently did not share their parents’ enthusiasm. By the 1880s most of them were American-born, and many came from homes where some English was spoken. Some of the pastors complained that it did not seem right to preach German during the Mass for only a few. Upon the death of the Irish-born William J. Halley, vicar general of the English-speaking churches, Elder in 1886 discontinued the practice of having two separate vicars general for the German- and English-speaking Catholics. He made John C. Albrinck vicar of the entire diocese. Moreover, on June 19, 1907, after over seven decades of staunchly defending the church, the Wahrheitsfreund came to an end, due to the gradual decrease in the use of the German language in the archdiocese.

Though more slowly than the Irish in the archdiocese, Germans eventually became more fully integrated into American life. As the German congregations declined, however, some German priests conducted some of their services in English and welcomed non-Germans in neighboring communities to their churches. But this effort violated ecclesiastical law. Though Vatican officials permitted Germans to join an English congregation, they prohibited English-speaking Catholics to join a German parish even if the priest conducted his services in English. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a number of German Catholics, especially in the Midwest,
complained to Roman authorities that they were treated as second-class citizens. Father Peter Abbelen, vicar general of Milwaukee, went to Rome carrying a petition to that effect from German priests of Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. As German pastors complained that the ecclesiastical law was unfair and contributed to the decimation of their parishes, English pastors encouraged diocesan officials to enforce the law. Though Elder expressed sympathy with some of the Abbelen demands, he deplored the underhand method employed by him. Abbelen and the German pastors “should be made aware of how unfair has been their conduct in this matter,” he wrote to Archbishop Gibbons, “and how grievous injury it threatens to our peace & unity, & consequently to the deepest interests of religion.”

The approach American bishops took against the German Catholics resembled the stance Orestes Brownson and others had adopted a half-century earlier. They accused German Catholics of perpetuating through its schools a foreign nationality in the United States and, in the process, hurting the church by giving credence to the allegation that Catholics were not true Americans. Moeller responded to the rift among German- and English-speaking parishes in the archdiocese by attempting to reclassify as English parishes all parishes that no longer used German as their main language. Many pastors in charge of English parishes, however, complained that they would lose parishioners for the sake of maintaining semidefunct German parishes. German nationalists also opposed Moeller’s scheme. They accused the archbishop of trying to anglicize their parishes and contributing to the decline of their Catholic faith. For over three-quarters of a century German Catholics had built and maintained their own separate parishes and neighborhoods.

In the tradition of the German priest John Henni, Father Anthony Walburg, pastor at St. Augustine Church in the west end of Cincinnati from 1877 to 1910, reflected the belief of many of his parishioners that true Catholicism was tied together with language and cultural heritage. The first person of German descent born in Cincinnati to be raised to the priesthood, Walburg publicly criticized attempts to Americanize German Catholics. A longtime champion of the cause of perpetuating the speaking of the German language among those of German extraction, he eventually established an endowment of fifty thousand dollars from his own fortune for a chair of German language, literature, and history at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. Even though Moeller’s parents were also from Germany, the archbishop was not sympathetic to Walburg’s argument. He did “not believe,” he wrote in 1906, “that the Faith is bound up in the language, and that if the German language goes the Faith will go with it. I am inclined to believe and my belief is based on experience,” he argued, “that the children of German parents are
lost to the Faith because they have not learned their religion in the English language." During his tenure Elder had expressed similar concerns, protesting against the overidentification of the German language and customs with faith. Although the German language and customs helped bring up "children in piety and in the family spirit," he wrote to Gibbons in 1886, they were "in many respects a hindrance to the development of many Christians and a vehicle of many irreligious influences . . . after they get out in the world."  

Both Elder and Moeller opposed demands for ethnic separatism and through the schools, parishes, and other institutions they promoted the Americanization of Germans and other immigrant Catholics from Eastern Europe. Wanting Catholics to be accepted as part of mainstream America, the two Cincinnati ordinaries encouraged immigrant Catholics to get rid of their immigrant stigma by shedding foreign loyalties, customs, and languages. Moeller, like his predecessor and other American church leaders, feared for the "church in America if either foreignism or national antagonism" were established. He was also of the opinion that when all Catholics under his jurisdiction spoke English, it would help bring them "closer together and enable . . . [him] to organize the diocese." By the turn of the century the Catholic Telegraph also wrote several articles in favor of assimilationism.  

In mixed parishes, such as St. George's in Cincinnati, the archbishop insisted that catechism be taught in English. Though he stressed the importance of the English language, Moeller was not opposed to knowing a second language, such as German. He thought his views in that regard were misrepresented. "One of the matters that has always grieved me," he wrote in 1916, "was that . . . I have so often been accused of acting out of a spirit of 'Anti-Germanism.'" Though at times Moeller proceeded more cautiously in his criticism of the German language, perhaps hoping that the matter would "gradually adjust itself," his Americanist stance was evident. When it came to choosing between the German language and the Catholic religion, his position was unmistakably clear. Though German was taught in some public schools during World War I, it was not in parochial schools. During the war the German language was also banned from church services. When a parent inquired about sending her child to public school to learn German, Moeller replied "that if a choice must be made between giving the child instruction in German, and giving him a thorough drilling in Religion, the former must be sacrificed, and not the latter." By the end of the war Moeller came to the conclusion that "for the good of the state and of religion . . . all the foreign languages ought to be excluded from the primary grades."  

As the rift among parishes grew and some of the priests complained that Moeller and his staff seemed unable to settle the boundary feuds, the archbishop thought that his hands were tied. "If you knew the obstacles in the
way of establishing territorial boundary lines in the Archdiocese,” he wrote to one of his critics, “you would soon realize that you are mistaken in your contentions.” Moeller appealed to the apostolic delegate several times for his support to discontinue the ethnic division of the diocese into German and English parishes and establish territorial boundary lines. Local church officials concluded that as long as the issue remained unresolved, the confusion and constant quarreling among the parishes made it “impossible to organize the Diocese or take proper care of souls.” Following a meeting of the archdiocesan consultors in the spring of 1919, the local church again proposed to officials in Rome that territorial parish limits be drawn for the whole diocese.  

In the summer of 1921 the pope finally allowed Moeller to establish territorial boundary lines. By this time nearly all the former German parishes used the English language. To smooth matters, some German-speaking families, such as those from St. Mary’s and St. Paul’s in Cincinnati, were not compelled to attend an English-speaking church. The following year Moeller also took a firm stand on parish raiding. For those parishes that could not reach an amicable settlement, Moeller and his staff appointed a special court of four judges to resolve the disputes.

RELATIONS WITH REGULAR CLERGY

Boundary disputes and parish raiding in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the archdiocese of Cincinnati also intensified tensions between the archbishop and the regular clergy, priests who were members of religious orders. Not unlike the tension and conflict between bishops and religious orders in other dioceses, a number of controversies flared between the Cincinnati ordinary and religious orders. Though Purcell had had his struggles with local Dominicans, Jesuits, and Vincentians, Elder’s and Moeller’s relations with the regular clergy were tense. What helped trigger the conflict was Elder’s effort, like that of many of his episcopal colleagues, to revamp the organizational structure of the archdiocese, foster more centralized control over church affairs, and strengthen his position as the supreme authority in the local church. When Elder in 1896 appointed a diocesan priest, Francis Quatman, as dean of Montgomery, Fayette, Greene, Madison, Darke, Shelby, and Mercer Counties, he alienated relations with the Precious Blood priests. Elder sought to exercise greater control over the spiritual and temporal welfare of the parishes in the deanery. Some Precious Blood priests countered that the appointment of a dean in their portion of the archdiocese encroached upon the authority of their provincial. They also feared losing their best parishes to the diocesan clergy. They provided the order with a good income and a wonderful source for recruiting new members.
To protect their vested interests the Precious Blood priests wanted the provincial of the order to control both the internal affairs of the community and also all the parishes under his care. Through his chancellor, Henry Moeller, Elder made clear that Dean Quatman, and not their provincial, was their immediate superior in parochial affairs. Acknowledging that matters regarding their community life fell under the jurisdiction of their provincial, he stressed that it was not so in matters pertaining to the administration of parishes. The issue became more heated in 1898. In an effort to end all the bickering over parish borders, Elder directed his deans to get the pastors to cooperate in establishing more clearly defined borders for their respective parishes. When Quatman attempted to canvass all the parishes in his deanery, some Precious Blood priests, suspicious of the archbishop’s intentions, believed that this was probably “a scheme” on Elder’s part to get their parishes. Some feared that the archbishop and his staff would do “anything to kick out religious and get these parishes for themselves.”

In the midst of the mistrust and suspicion between the Precious Blood priests and the secular clergy, Elder also grew suspicious of the Franciscans’ motives. He thought they were interested less in the spiritual needs of the diocese and more in increasing the status and prestige of their own order. As more and more German parishioners moved away from downtown Cincinnati to the hilltops and suburbs, Franciscan parishes in the city, like St. John the Baptist’s and St. Francis Seraph’s, lost many members. From the 1880s to the turn of the century the sizes of the two congregations decreased from 1,400 and 900, respectively, to about 800 each. As the Franciscans expressed concern over their future role in the archdiocese, they were accused of parish raiding and placing obstacles in the way of establishing new parishes adjoining theirs. When they requested to be relieved of their duties at St. Charles Borromeo, a small parish on the northern periphery of Cincinnati, the archbishop suspected that they wanted to get rid of their smallest parish in order to focus on larger parishes. Elder consented on the condition that the order would continue to provide chaplains at various public and private institutions. Because the ranks of the diocesan clergy continued to increase, the archdiocese became less dependent on the religious societies. As a consequence, the Franciscan Lucas Gottbehoeede, the local superior of the order, asked Elder in 1885 to sign an agreement that would place Cincinnati’s parishes of St. Clement, St. Stephen, St. Bonaventure, St. Joseph, and St. George permanently under the supervision of the Franciscans. The archbishop agreed to give them the first two, but he deferred decision on the others until such time they assured him that they would continue to staff St. Aloysius Asylum, the hospitals, and the prison.
Even though Elder questioned some of the Franciscans’ motives, he nevertheless supported the movement for the erection of a Franciscan Province, a territorial division of the religious order. Before the end of Purcell’s administration, the Franciscans had requested the archbishop to petition the general of the order for the erection of a province. By 1885 the Franciscans had three convents or monasteries, fifteen residences in nine dioceses, and 130 members, including fifty-seven clergymen. They felt their establishment warranted being erected to a fully constituted province. Pope Leo XIII approved the Franciscans’ establishment of the Province of St. John the Baptist. In the spring of 1886 Elder implemented the papal decree with Hieronymus Kilgenstein as the first American-born friar to be elected superior of the Cincinnati foundation of Franciscans.68

Moeller, like his predecessor, also had an abiding suspicion that religious orders cared less about the needs of the archdiocese than upon their financial status and power. The “grasping spirit of the religious,” he wrote in 1922, “is really amazing.” Throughout his administration the archbishop attempted to secure diocesan rule over the separate religious orders. Though titles of various religious institutions were often invested in the religious orders in charge of the institutions, Moeller made it clear that the institutions were nevertheless diocesan because they were “under his control and jurisdiction.”69

Boniface Russ, the Provincial of the Precious Blood Order, and his clergy distrusted Moeller even more than they had Elder. When the Precious Blood priests in 1904 expressed interest in establishing a parish in Cincinnati, Moeller gave them permission on the condition that they relinquished some of the places they now had in the archdiocese. “[T]his I am sure,” he wrote to Russ, “would satisfy the [diocesan] clergy.” The following year the order was given permission to establish St. Mark parish in Evanston, one of Cincinnati’s newer middle-class suburbs. There were more than one hundred Catholic families in the region. In return, the secular priests acquired four parishes, St. Henry and Holy Trinity in Mercer County and St. Sebastian and St. Patrick in Shelby County. Before they could establish schools in their new parish in Evanston, however, the order also had to establish a mission house to help out the diocesan clergy. Russ would doubtlessly have agreed with the comment Moeller later made to a parishioner that “Bishops are human and sometimes have some vanity and selfishness in their make-up.”70

When in 1911 Moeller asked Russ to surrender the chaplaincy of institutions in the archdiocese to the diocesan clergy, Russ, concerned over the erosion of the holdings of the Precious Blood Order, became more convinced that Moeller was unreasonably partial to his priests. He wrote to the archbishop that he should “care for the Religious in his diocese as well as he does for the [diocesan] and even more so because the former are as it were his body
guard.” Though Moeller acknowledged the contributions of the Precious Blood priests and assured them they were needed in the archdiocese, he admitted that he was partial to his clergy. Being “directly under me,” he wrote, “I naturally feel a greater solicitude in providing for them. Whilst the Religious may rightly be called the body-guard of the Bishop, the [diocesan] clergy may . . . be said to be members of his household.”

Relations between Moeller and the Precious Blood priests improved significantly following the election of a new provincial, George Hindelang, in 1914. More diplomatic than his predecessor, Hindelang worked on improving relations by frequently seeking the archbishop’s approvals on various parochial matters, by rendering clerical assistance whenever he could, and by urging his priests and parishioners to contribute generously to the archbishop’s special collections. No longer did the Precious Blood priests seriously question the archbishop’s authority in running the parishes. Similarly, Moeller praised the “laudable services” they rendered religion in the archdiocese and their efforts to build a new seminary at Carthagena.

When Moeller announced in 1904 that he planned to establish Holy Name parish for the Catholics living in Mount Auburn in Cincinnati and expected the Franciscans’ St. George parish to surrender the eastern portion of its territory, he encountered resistance from the friars. They appealed to the apostolic delegate. Before the delegate had an opportunity to investigate the matter, however, Moeller and the Franciscans worked out an agreement. But Moeller’s selection of a diocesan priest as pastor of Holy Name Church and his partition of St. George parish intensified the Franciscans’ suspicion that the archbishop favored the diocesan clergy over the religious in the distribution of parishes. This suspicion became even more intense in the fall of 1910 when Moeller revived plans, which had started under Elder, of establishing St. Monica parish in Fairview Heights. Moeller expected the Franciscans at St. George and St. John parishes to relinquish parts of their territory. The Franciscans perceived this latest move as posing a severe threat to the survival of St. John. During the next three years Moeller, the Franciscan Provincial, Eugene Buttermann, and the pastors of St. George, St. John and St. Monica parishes deliberated over the boundary lines. By the summer of 1913 Buttermann and the pastors reluctantly agreed to a boundary settlement.

In 1918 the controversy between the Franciscans and the secular clergy became more heated over a dispute regarding St. Stephen parish for Hungarians in Cincinnati. After several years of searching for a Hungarian priest who could speak both Hungarian and German, in the fall of 1914 Father Edmund Neurirhrer from Hungary came to the city to minister to the spiritual needs of the parish. At the time there were about four thousand Hungarians in Cincinnati, among whom approximately two hundred families
spoke Hungarian and German. A few spoke Slovak. Though Moeller believed that the days of forming an ethnic parish in the see city were numbered, a year after Neurihrer’s arrival he nevertheless authorized him to organize a parish and to make repairs on the former chapel of the Good Shepherd Sisters in the west end for their use.74

Neurihrer made plans to remodel the rest of the Baum Street property into a priest’s house and thirty-nine apartments for Hungarian families. Underestimating the cost of the renovation, he had to borrow $65,000 from the Philadelphia Fire Insurance Company to cover the total cost for repairs and alterations. To make matters worse, few Hungarians occupied the apartments or attended St. Stephen Church on a regular basis. They preferred attending neighboring St. John the Baptist and St. Francis Seraph Churches. Meanwhile, Neurihrer accused the Franciscans of stealing marriages and funerals from him and denying Hungarian children the opportunity to attend the Franciscan parochial schools unless their parents rented seats in one of their parishes. Rudolph Bonner, the new Franciscan Provincial, not only denied the charges as “calumny pure and simple,” but accused Neurihrer of having alienated many of the Hungarian families. Bonner also urged Moeller to assign the friars to the Hungarian parish. Though the archbishop generally liked the idea and initially promised the new parish to the order, he chose instead to appoint Henry Meyer, a diocesan priest, who had already been working with the Hungarians.75

But Meyer had no more success with St. Stephen parish than did Neurihrer. When he tried to borrow money from the archdiocese to help pay Neurihrer’s debt, Moeller refused. “St. Stephen is insolvent,” the chancery wrote, “and the Archbishop had no power to require the other congregations of the Archdiocese to assume its obligations.” Each parish was expected to shoulder its own debts without expecting any help from the other parishes. Moreover, when the Philadelphia Fire Insurance Company appealed directly to Moeller for repayment of the loan, he refused. Moeller contended that the loan was not given to him personally, nor to the Catholic Church, but to St. Stephen parish. When the company appealed to John Bonzano, the apostolic delegate, Bonzano backed Moeller. The loan was eventually settled out of court.76

As the issue over the Hungarian parish unfolded, the Franciscans, intending to embarrass the archbishop, complained to the apostolic delegate that Moeller had used some of the funds earmarked for missionaries and for Catholic University in Washington, D.C., for diocesan purposes. Moeller did not deny the use of funds but indicated that it had not been his intention to mislead the laity or the clergy. Because of this incident, a Franciscan parish chose to contribute little in the diocese’s annual collection for the pope. In his
attempt to improve relations with the Franciscans, Moeller now allowed them to staff the new parish for the Hungarians. In the spring of 1919 the Hungarians, with the archbishop’s assistance, secured St. Joseph of Nazareth Church at Liberty and Elm Streets in the west end. But when it came time for Moeller to transfer the parish to the order, he chose not to hand it over directly to the provincial but to his representative. “[U]ntil you apologize for your unfairness towards me,” Moeller wrote in April 1919, “. . . your presence would be undesirable.” That spring Bonner apologized. The archbishop, in turn, asked him to “obliterate from [his] mind the sharp things” he had said.7

During Moeller’s tenure the Jesuits, like the Precious Blood priests and the Franciscans, also ran into problems with the secular clergy. The Jesuits had two parishes in Cincinnati, St. Francis Xavier on Sycamore Street and St. Ann on New Street. St. Francis Xavier was the largest parish and one of the most prosperous in the archdiocese, whereas St. Ann was among the poorest. Because of Cincinnati’s commercial and industrial expansion, the people who lived within the boundaries of St. Xavier parish gradually took up their residence in the suburbs. As the number of resident parishioners slowly decreased, the prestige of the church attracted transient worshippers. The diocesan clergy complained to the chancery that Jesuits at the St. Xavier Church stole marriages, funerals, and parishioners from them. Though the Jesuits may not have actively solicited Catholics from other parishes, they did not turn them away when they sought membership on their own.8

Because the religious orders at the turn of the century had “charge of quite a number of churches,” Moeller granted permission to the Jesuits to build a new parish and college in one of the suburbs on the condition that the St. Xavier parish in the city “be given up.” When the Jesuits purchased twenty-six acres of land east of Cincinnati from the Avondale Athletic Club in 1911, they chose to keep St. Xavier Church rather than form another parish. Eight years later St. Xavier College was transferred from Sycamore Street to its new location, marking an epoch in the history of the institution. The college and the high school were now separate. The buildings on Seventh and Sycamore Streets were reserved for the high school and the evening extension classes. In 1920 two new college buildings, Alumni Science Hall and Hinkle Hall, were erected in Avondale.9

By the end of Moeller’s tenure in 1925 the archdiocese had fostered over four decades more centralized control over church affairs. In the process, Archbishops Elder and Moeller in their relations with the separate priests’ orders strengthened the local ordinary’s position as the supreme authority in the archdiocese.