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Notre Dame's Father John Zahm
New Lexington Native, Renowned Scientist,
Theologian, and Friend of President Theodore Roosevelt

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Perry County has long been recognized as the foundational center of Catholicism in Ohio. Pages of this *Bulletin* have routinely featured biographical accounts of famous women and men from the Somerset and New Lexington area. Often these accounts have been about daughters and sons of St. Dominic, the evangelistic Dominicans whose institutions in Perry County spawned tremendous outgrowths for American Catholicism.

Another famous Roman Catholic son of Perry County who was not a Dominican is Father John Augustine Zahm, a native of the southern part of Jackson Township in Perry County. Father Zahm became a member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, taught at the University of Notre Dame, became Provincial of his congregation, and was a well respected and influential scientist and theologian in the late nineteenth century. A friend of President Teddy Roosevelt, Zahm explored various South American rivers with the former president.

Perry County Roots

John Zahm was born on June 14, 1851 in a log cabin located in Perry County's Jackson Township, not far from New Lexington. His

parents were Jacob M. and Mary (Braddock) Zahm. His mother, born in Pennsylvania, was a descendant of the famous English family of General Edward Braddock. John's father had immigrated to the United States from Oldsberg, Alsace.

As a youngster, John attended the well-known one room Pigeon Roost School located on the Logan Road. A classmate at the Pigeon Roost School was J. A. MacGahan, who later would be known as the "Liberator of Bulgaria." Young John spent the summer days working with his father on the family farm. His family appears to have nurtured his studious tendencies which later assisted his development as a first-rate intellectual. The Zahm family eventually moved to a two acre homestead near the German community of Huntington, Indiana. There he attended the school of Saints Peter and Paul. It was from the Huntington farm that the young John ventured to South Bend to begin his education with the Holy Cross fathers at Notre Dame.

At the young age of sixteen, John entered the University of Notre Dame. Like most "colleges" of the day, Notre Dame then was more a preparatory school than a college. There he

developed a strong and abiding sense of literary studies, especially the work of Dante. One historian remarks that Zahm's library collection of Dante materials, eventually containing about eighteen hundred items, at one time ranked the third largest among American Dante aficionados. But it was in the area of science and theology that Zahm's academic interests blossomed. In 1871, he graduated from Notre Dame receiving a B.A. degree with high honors; there were only three members in his graduating class.

Perceiving that he had a vocation to the priesthood, the freshly graduated John Zahm joined the Congregation of the Holy Cross at Notre Dame and pursued his theological studies in preparation for ordination. He was ordained a priest of the Holy Cross on June 14, 1875. While completing his seminary education, he received a Masters degree in 1873.

The Beginnings of a Scientific Career

Upon the completion of his seminary studies, the young Father Zahm probably considered that he would be assigned theological duties by his religious congregation. At that time, however, the science program at Notre Dame was judged inadequate. His superiors decided that their newly ordained priest, with his tremendous interests in and inclination for scientific study, was the person to build up the science departments at Notre Dame. Hence, Zahm was charged with recruiting instructors in science, acquiring the important laboratory equipment and in general assisting Notre Dame develop its program in the sciences. While he continued his interests in theological studies, nonetheless, from the time of his ordination, Zahm devoted himself to the study of science. For the next ten years, he embarked on a program of research and teaching with special efforts directed towards work in chemistry and physics. Later he would become fascinated with evolutionary studies and

would devote his exceptional intellectual energies towards reconciling evolution with theology, which was indeed a Herculean task in the late Nineteenth Century. To these duties were added the direction of the science museum at Notre Dame. Under the auspices of the museum, Zahm traveled extensively in order to add to the collection. At this time, in addition to holding several administrative offices, Zahm was a Professor of Physics.

A person of action as well as possessing a fine scientific mind, the young Father Zahm worked to make Notre Dame the first college campus to be lighted by electricity. In 1884, he supervised the building of Science Hall on the South Bend campus. Zahm served his university as Vice-President from 1885 until 1892. Always interested in student life, Zahm was instrumental in eliminating the dormitory system and introducing the private residence hall model at Notre Dame.

That he succeeded with his efforts to vastly improve science education at the University of Notre Dame is attested in an obituary written in the Notre Dame *Scholastic Magazine* in 1922: "In recognition of his work he was soon made director of the science department. To Father Zahm's enthusiastic labors as director, the student-scientist at Notre Dame today owes the wonderful scientific and theological schools."

Lecturer and Author

During this time, Father Zahm developed his writing and speaking proficiencies. He began lecturing widely on topics in the sciences. He delivered a series of lectures at the newly founded Catholic University in Washington, which series was published in book form in 1891. This book, *Sound and Music*, was an explanation of the physics of sound and acoustics appropriate for an educated lay audience. This book appears to have been his last work in physics; from then

on, Zahm devoted his tremendous talents undertaking research and writing on the relationship of Roman Catholic theology to modern science.

The young Father Zahm was exceptionally proficient at what the late twentieth century would call "networking" and public relations. He knew how to get his name and his work in the public eye. Zahm did the same for his institution, the University of Notre Dame.

In the late Nineteenth Century, the impact of evolutionary theory on religious thought was cataclysmic. Beginning in 1892, Zahm was a participant in this debate, trying valiantly to reconcile the advances in biological and geological science with theological studies common to Western Christianity. In fact, one historian suggests that Zahm was one of the first American Catholic intellectuals to attempt to develop a Catholic understanding of evolution theory. The chasm between evolutionary science and theology was vast indeed.

Zahm's book, *Evolution and Dogma*, which was published in 1896, explicated the Catholic position in this controversy. He attempted to steer a path between special and unique creationism on the one hand and an evolution theory thoroughly explicable through naturalistic means on the other. Through his thought and reflection, Zahm developed what he, and eventually others, called "theistic evolution." Zahm argued that the concept of evolution, when properly understood, would not affect adversely the religious faith of Roman Catholic Christians. Furthermore, Zahm argued that suggestions for an evolutionary theory were found in the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, especially St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. Hence, Zahm argued for the compatibility and reconciliation of modern science, especially evolutionary theory, with Roman Catholic theology and biblical study.



Rev. John A. Zahm, C.S.C.

In this discussion, Zahm and the theistic evolutionists opposed what they saw as the "unscientific literalism" of many theologians who affirmed that God was "immediately and directly" responsible for the creation of all species and forms of life. Likewise, Zahm dismissed the dogmatism of strict evolutionists who ruled out God and attributed all creation to the unfolding of the laws of evolution. Opting for a middle ground position, Zahm and the others holding the theistic evolution position argued for a theory of evolution which was compatible with a properly understood biblical account of creation and reconcilable with Christian and Roman Catholic theology. Zahm noted that the International Catholic Scientific Congress meeting in 1888, 1891 and 1894 had agreed on the following statement:

There is nothing in Evolution which should trouble the faith of Catholics and nothing which justifies unbelievers in using the theory as an engine of war against the Church.

Zahm was very interested in continuing the important dialogue between science and religion. The year, 1896, was a particularly busy publishing period for him. In addition to *Evolution and Dogma* (Chicago, 1896), Zahm also published *Science and the Church* (Chicago, 1896) and *Scientific Theory and Dogma* (Chicago, 1896). Earlier works published during that prolific decade include *Catholic Science and Catholic Scientists* (Philadelphia, 1893) and *Bible, Science and Faith* (Baltimore, 1894). Through these works, Zahm argued that his account of theistic evolution, which was rooted in the writings of St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, was consistent with both modern science and with Scripture. Father Zahm saw as his mission the explication of the reconciliation of evolution and Roman Catholic Theology. Zahm believed that theistic evolution as a theory was in accord with science, scripture and with patristic and scholastic theology. Ralph Weber writes that *Evolution and Dogma* was "...unquestionably... the most important volume on evolution written by a Catholic and published in America" in the last part of the Nineteenth Century. (Weber, p. 82) The *Catholic Citizen*, a newspaper in Milwaukee, suggested that *Evolution and Dogma* indeed was the "Book of the Year" for American Catholics.

Scott Appleby writes the following about Zahm's general influence and importance in this period:

In this regard Zahm played an unprecedented role in the religious history of the United States, for he combined in his person the seemingly diverse perspective of the American citizen, the Catholic priest, and the evolutionist. Among the few American priest-scientists at the turn of the century, Zahm was the most competent, articulate, accomplished and the most prominent. Thus he was uniquely situated to contribute significantly to the process by which the American Catholic community came to know the modern world. (Appleby, p. 13)

In his biography of Zahm, Ralph Weber writes the following:

More than any other American Catholic, he translated Darwin's theory into terms understandable and at least partially acceptable to his American and European Catholic audiences. (Weber, p. vii)

At this time, Zahm was also lecturing frequently in Europe. He was a stellar lecturer at the Brussels International Catholic Scientific Congress. His fame on both sides of the Atlantic was growing exponentially. In 1896, Zahm was assigned to Rome in order to carry on work for his religious congregation. He was appointed Procurator-General and served for two years in this position until his appointment as American Provincial in 1898.

The Catholic Summer School Movement

Father Zahm became involved with a fledgling intellectual movement begun in the 1890's and modeled after the successful Protestant summer institutions, notably Chautauqua in western New York and Lakeside on the Catawba peninsula in Lake Erie. Successful sessions were held at Plattsburgh, located in upstate New York near the Canadian border and in Madison, Wisconsin. For a three year period, Zahm lectured enthusiastically at these summer institutes, which regularly had over a thousand participants for three-week sessions. These institutes gave witness to the beginnings of a challenging intellectual awareness percolating to the surface of American Catholicism. Zahm himself saw these summer institutes as opportunities to make known the correct relation of Roman Catholic teachings towards modern science. Several members of the American hierarchy were both regular participants and often lecturers. For one of the summer institutes, Columbus's Bishop John A. Watterson was listed as a participant.

The Reaction to Zahm's Work

Zahm's reflective position on reconciling theology with the rising work in evolutionary theory, especially as discussed and analyzed in *Evolution and Dogma*, was welcome scholarly work to many Catholics of the late Nineteenth Century. However, his exciting work, as so much scholarship in the Nineteenth Century which attempted to assist Roman Catholics understand the scientific movements of the day, was severely criticized by intellectual conservatives within American Catholicism itself. Some of these reactionaries pressured Roman authorities to have Zahm's work, especially *Evolution and Dogma*, condemned. Rather than condemn Zahm's book outright and become part of a public debate, in 1898 the Roman authorities requested that Father Zahm withdraw it from publication. Portions of the censure from the Roman Congregation of the Index banning *Evolution and Dogma* read as follows:

Office of the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Index:

Rome: September 10, 1898:

Since the published work, 'Evolution and Dogma,' written by the Reverend James [sic] Zahm, a member of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, has been sent to the Sacred Congregation, the most reverend Cardinals in a general meeting on September 1, 1898, having heard the exposition and the vote of the consultors, after mature deliberation have decreed: "The work of the Reverend Zahm is prohibited; the decree, however, is not to be published until such a time that the author will be heard out by his Father General whether he is willing to submit to the decree and reprove his work.... The prohibition...extends to all translations made in any language.

Zahm and his friends worked very hard to prevent publication of the edict. Zahm wrote to

his superior immediately and promised submission to the decree. Appleby writes that "Zahm's mood fluctuated from bitter disappointment to outrage." (p. 49) His frustration is expressed in a letter he wrote to Archbishop John Ireland, a leading American churchman of the time:

We shall win in the long war, for truth and justice are on our side; the intelligence of the world and the increasing might of America are with us. . . it is a fight for progress, for true Americanism, for the Catholic University, a fight against Jesuitical tyranny, against obscurantism and medievalism.... It would, no doubt, be a great victory for the enemy to get me out of my present position [i.e., American Provincial of the Holy Cross Congregation], but it would cripple Notre Dame, ruin Holy Cross & give a terrible setback to our community. (Found in Appleby, pp. 49-50.)

Leo XIII was pope at the time, and a year later the condemnation against what came to be known as "Americanism" was promulgated by this pontiff. Duly obedient, after 1898, Zahm did not publish anything relating to the important dialogue between science and religion. That this was a tremendous set-back to the struggling American intellectual life of the time seems all too apparent.

In 1898, Zahm became the United States Provincial of the Congregation of the Holy Cross, a position he served until 1906. From the end of his term as provincial until his sudden death in Munich in 1921, Zahm spent much of his time traveling, lecturing and writing on topics which were considered safe by Rome.

(To be concluded)

**St. John the Evangelist Church, Zanesville
Marriage Register, 1829-1842**

St. John the Evangelist was the second Catholic church in Zanesville; the first had been a warehouse owned by John Dugan that was fitted up to serve the purpose in 1820 and was called Holy Trinity. St. John's, which stood on the site of the present St. Thomas Aquinas Church, was begun with a cut stone foundation and a cornerstone laying on March 4, 1825; it was dedicated on July 2, 1826. Based on a record begun about 1832 by the second resident pastor, Rev. Richard P. Miles, O.P., the Dominicans of the later part of this century have always insisted (in disagreement with their historian, Rev. V. F. O'Daniel) that the church was named for the precursor of Our Lord. However, Miles was not present for the dedication. Three local laymen who had been present and lived into the twilight of the nineteenth century always insisted that its patron was the beloved disciple.

The church was built in the form of a cross or, according to one account, was octagonal. The sacristies were outside and formed the arms of the cross; they were five steps below the level of the sanctuary. The church was eighty feet long and a cemetery was located behind it. A bell was obtained in 1828 and was suspended from wooden timbers leaning against the front wall of the church until a steeple was erected in 1829.

The church sufficed only fifteen years for the rapidly growing Catholic population of Zanesville. St. John's was razed to make room for the new St. Thomas Aquinas Church. This new structure had progressed far enough that Mass was offered in its basement on Christmas, 1842. About the same time, the German Catholics were granted permission to begin their own parish, and their new church was dedicated on December 1, 1842. Thus, no vestige of St. John's remained by the end of 1842.

The first resident pastor of Zanesville was Father S. H. Montgomery, O.P., who arrived in 1826. No sacramental registers of his era have survived. Father Miles arrived near the end of 1828 and began registers of marriages and baptisms.

The marriage records from 1829 through 1842 have been transcribed and have been compared with the D.A.R.'s 1946 transcription of Muskingum County marriage records by Irma B. Gobel (courtesy of the State Library of Ohio). Data from that D.A.R. transcription, where it differs significantly from the sacramental register, is noted in braces {}. An asterisk (*) indicates that the marriage is not in the county records. For the records not found in the Muskingum County civil records, Knox and Guernsey County records also were searched.

Marriages by Richard P. Miles, Pastor of
Zanesville:

1829

- Feb. 15, Martin Durbin to Sara Sap [The Knox County marriage record shows this same couple, married on this same date, by Thomas Shaw, J.P.]
- Aug. 28, Thomas Lynch to Agidia {Giles} Corrigan
- Sept. 8, John Wade to Mary Ivory

1830

- Feb. 16, William Putnam to Matilda Workman
- Oct. 19, Robert McCallister to Elizabeth Rogers
- Nov. 17, Jacob Houck to Malvina Reed
- Nov. 21, Robert Gallagher to Elizabeth Jeffries [civil record in Guernsey County]
- Nov. 29, Samuel McLive to Elizabeth Logan {Nov. 23, Samuel McIlwee to Margaret Logan, by S. L. Montgomery}
- Dec. 28, Isaac Spangler to Mary A. Priestly {Priestly}

1831

- Feb. 13, Henry McAnally to Anna McDermot*
May 3, William Silvers to Sara A. Hare {Silver to Haze}
June 2, William Spurk to Eliz. Vanhorne
June 2, John Powers to Cath. Sherlock
June 7, Brice Helmick to Catharine Faust
June 12, Joseph Aker to Eliz. Frank {Elizabeth Ring}
Nov. 3, Elijah McKendry to Susan Kiggan
Nov. 21, William Dilong [DeLong] to Catherine Ensley, by Charles Bowling [civil record in Guernsey County]
Dec. 6, John Hearholzer to Hester Snook RPM

1832

- Jan. 9, Martin Sherlock to Ann {Nancy} Garry RPM
Feb. 2, James Reese to Sara Ward RPM
May 3, Daniel McDaniel to Bidy Ann Gallagher CB [May 1, Guernsey County civil record]
Oct. 8, William Armstrong to Susan Kelly RPM
Nov. 29, James Taylor to Barbara C. Dugan RPM
Dec. 6, Martin Dedibeck? {Dederick} to Mary Slaven {Stover} RPM

1833

- Jan. 22, William Mattingly to Anna Maria Dugan RPM
Jan. 28, William Rosen? {Room} to Elizabeth Ryan RPM
Apr. 25, James Carr to Sara Donaghoe P. V. Bullock [The Guernsey County marriage transcription gives her name as Conaughey.]
July 7, David Whitehead to Julia Scott Charles Pius Montgomery [civil record in Guernsey County]
Oct. 8, John Shearlock to Mary Ann McDonald CPM*
Nov. 16 {15}, Martin Kannady to Ally Owens CPM

- Dec. 23?, Joseph Roll to Margaret Keltz* and James Theabolt to Mary Keltz* and Francis Joseph Rink to Ledy Call*, in the presence of the congregation T. J. Van Den Brock, O.P.

1834

- Feb. 8, Ambrose Hayden to Sara? Sapp CPM*
May 6, Anthony Burger? to Mary Hoff CPM*
May 25, Jacob Kinseloe to Catherine Shearlock CPM*
Sept. 26, Joseph Bredel to Catherine Stob J.B.V. DeRaymaeker*
Oct. 27, John Bagley to Gracy F. Dugan CPM
Nov. 23, Lewis Kerner to Elizabeth Kerr CPM

1835

- Jan. 11, Jacob Harman to Mary Logan. CPM
Jan. 29, William Hall to Winefrid Kiggan CPM [civil record in Guernsey County]
Feb. 8, William Bennett to Mary Fitzsimmons. {Fitzsimmons} CPM
Sept. 1, Anthony Eberst to Catherine Grayden. J. T. Jarboe {at Tailorsville}
Sept. 20, Jacob Maune? to Anna Mary Miller; witnesses John Miller, Francis Colerin? [J. G.] Alleman*
Oct. 5, Matthew Kary to Sara Sockman. JTJ*
Oct. 26, Bernard Rogers to Lydia Davis JTJ [Barney C. Rogers to Lidia Davis, by Jacob Mongen, J.P., Jan. 14, 1830 in Knox County]
Nov. 22, Ferdinand Vogel to Alicia Reynolds {Rennolds} JTJ
Nov. 26, Joseph Parker Clark to Mary Tigner. JTJ

1836

- Feb. 14, Patrick Haughran to Alice Sheran JTJ
May 1, Xavier Resocker to Marian Lye CPM*
May 8, Henry Neilson to Margaret Freel CPM
May 29, Jacob Row to Ellen Doyle CPM
June 7, Henry Flood to Elizabeth Love CPM
Sept. 15, William Cuninghame to Margaret Callaghan CPM*

Nov. 6 {7}, Ferdinand Boeshertz to Catharine Huff CPM

Nov. 24, John Bailes to Atty {Halley} Devore CPM

1837

Jan. 9{8}, Peter Powell to Barbara Sink CPM

Jan. 15, Alfred Merrick to Meranda Teresa Hasket CPM

Apr. 3, Gregory Hinley to Barbara Beeshartz CPM

Apr. 3, Perry Newberry to Cynthia Wine CPM

May 18, Peter Musselman to Anna FitzSimons CPM

Sept. 10, John Mullen to Martha Hardeny {Mrs. Martha Harden} --- Wilson

Oct. 9, Caspar Keltzer to Ann Fix H. D. Juncker

Oct. 12, Eusebius Stahle to Theresa Evers HDJ*

June 24 {22}, Thomas Hughs to Ellen Kiernan CPM

1838

Jan. 8, Jerry Murphy to Maryann Dillon CPM

Jan. 11, Thomas Mullen to Mary Stillwell CPM*

April [no day]{16}, John McEntire to Catherine [no surname given] {Sullivan} G.A.J. Wilson

Apr. 23, James Elmore to Eliza King CPM

June -- {July 1}, Joseph Keist {Samuel J. Kist} to Mary {Mary Ann} Mullen GAJW

July 25 {29}, Patrick Kennedy to Rosanna Ward GAJW

Sept. 11, Henry Beeson to Susan McKibben GAJW

Nov. 14, William Lang to Mary Bile GAJW

1839

Jan. 7 {8}, Thomas {Thomas Jefferson} Ramsey to Sarah E {Elizabeth} Dugan GAJW

Nov. 3, Francis McShane to Elizabeth Patman {Eakman} GAJW

1840

Jan. 14, Patrick Doran to Briget Ocononnor --- --- {O'Conner} GAJW

Jan. 22 {21}, Abel Hall to Cecilia Roberts GAJW

May 19, Peter Durand to Elizabeth Brockker; wit. John Durand, Catherine Powel GAJW

June 22, Zaver Saeil? to Regina Rost {Kost}; wit. Francis Staili, Elizabeth Murphy GAJW

July 6, Joseph Keever? {Haver} to Maximilliana Rost {Kost}; wit. Francis Stailey, Elizabeth Roner GAJW

Aug. 12, Jacob Cashman to Cecilia Teinan; wit. Philip Haffey, Eillina Roakley GAJW *

Aug. 31, 'Melchius' Stailey son of Thadaeus Steily and Teresa Egar to Barbara Kek daughter of Christian Kek and Teresia Lee -----; wit. Francis Staily, Catherine Grader GAJW *

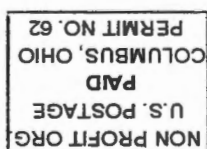
(To be concluded)

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