

Archbishop McGuigan of Toronto and the Holy Name Society: Its Role as a Force Against Canadian Communism

by Father Joseph H. O'NEILL

*St. Andrew's Church
Brechin, Ontario*

For more than half a century after the promulgation in 1891 of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII's landmark social encyclical, Catholic social thought was characterized by a positive commitment to social justice combined with adamant anti-Communism. While both Pope Leo and later Pope Pius XI (*Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931) denounced the injustice and materialism engendered by capitalism, they rejected even more vehemently a remedy which was by definition atheistic and which sought to achieve its goal through class conflict. The programme which they proposed was for the reconstruction of the social order based on Christian principles. Social harmony would be attained by balancing the rights of capital against the just demand for a living wage.

This social doctrine, sometimes referred to as "corporatism," was represented in Canada by a number of Catholic spokesmen, including James Charles McGuigan, Archbishop of Toronto from 1934 to 1974. A native of Prince Edward Island and graduate of the Catholic University of America, McGuigan displayed a profound concern for social issues from the time that he received his first episcopal appointment to the Archdiocese of Regina in 1930. Charged with the responsibility of a largely rural flock, which had been driven into poverty by the current economic depression, he promptly organized a relief effort. This included an effective clothing drive which he launched through an appeal to Catholic Women's League Councils in Eastern Canada. He also accepted an invitation from Archbishop Neil McNeil, another proponent of social Catholicism, to preach fund-raising sermons in the Archdiocese of Toronto. In 1934, in the midst of founding a diocesan seminary and reorganizing the catechetical programme, he issued a crucial pastoral letter on social problems.

Called a *Joint Pastoral Letter*, because McGuigan's suffragan ordinaries

cooperated in it, the document stated that it was the duty of the Church to speak out against those forces that caused social disorder. It therefore condemned “the abuses of the materialistic capitalism of our industrial age with its consequent unemployment and misery for the masses and huge fortunes for the few.” It said that this “materialistic” form of capitalism must give way “to a reconstructed social order based on Christian principles.” Communism, on the other hand, was denounced as “the avowed enemy of God” and “the gravest menace facing human society today.” In order to promote “the saving ideal of the Christian world order,” pastors were told to direct groups of men and women in the study of “the two great encyclicals of Leo XIII and Pius XI.” These trained lay people were to then go forth “among the large masses of the public” and promote Christian social principles.¹

Before he had time to implement this social action plan in Regina, McGuigan was appointed to Toronto on the death of the elderly McNeil. Although this Archdiocese was the largest English-speaking diocese in the country, its cathedral city was called “the Belfast of Canada” because of its staunch Protestantism and anti-Catholicism.² Nevertheless, McNeil had gained the respect of Protestants, and when McGuigan arrived in March 1935 he lost no time in building on the good will established by his predecessor. At a public and well-reported reception in Maple Leaf Gardens, the new prelate inspired his audience of 17,000, not only by calling on his flock to be loyal both to their faith and their country, but by asking for a sense of unity among Canadians of all religious beliefs. As good Canadians, they should all work together, he said, “for the upbuilding of the glorious heritage which our forefathers have bequeathed to us.” Then speaking for himself, he extended to all his fellow citizens “the right hand of fellowship and of sincere good will.”³

In Toronto, McGuigan encountered not only a strong Protestantism but also a growing Communism. In Regina, he and his suffragans had been content to warn their prairie faithful about that movement only in a general way; but here, in a large city that was the centre of a highly industrial area and the headquarters of Canadian Communism, he soon felt it necessary to take more forceful action. McGuigan was influenced by a report on local Communism that had been given to McNeil by Toronto’s police chief. It claimed that Communists were making gains in labour unions, having

¹ Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto [hereafter ARCAT], McGuigan Papers, MG CA 05.01.

² The population was 631,207, with Roman Catholics numbering 90,532. The Archdiocese of Toronto covered the Niagara Peninsula, went North to Georgian Bay, and included Long Branch to the West and Oshawa to the East.

³ *The Toronto Daily Star*, 21 March 1935.

already taken control of some. It also identified a sizable number of Communist-front organizations, some of which were for adults and others for teenagers, or children.⁴

McGuigan also had Henry Somerville to advise him on the local Communist situation. Somerville was the Editor of the diocesan weekly, *The Catholic Register*, whom McNeil had brought from England to promote Catholic social action. A product of Britain's Catholic Social Guild, Somerville as a secular journalist had visited Communist Russia. A logical and unemotional man, he could deal with a problem like Communism in a rather dispassionate manner.⁵

McGuigan waited for over a year before he issued a social pastoral. When he did speak out, however, he warned his clergy and people in no uncertain terms that "the virus of Communism is being spread in our midst" and that its agents were "unwearied in their work of propaganda." On our part, we have to work "for a more equitable Christian Social order," he said, "without which the danger of Communism will never cease." "The Catholic conscience," he concluded, "must be aroused to attack the problem of world distress and poverty in our midst."⁶ A few days later McGuigan sent a letter to his priests, in which he reminded them of their particular obligation to their people and especially to the poor. Referring to the Spanish Civil War, he stated bluntly that since the Spanish clergy had "largely ignored the plight of the working class," they had to share much of the responsibility for the uprising. Spanish workers, he said, in their "antagonism to religion have burned down churches and murdered hundreds of the clergy." McGuigan believed that the revolution could be seen as a warning to priests in Canada, since "clerical indifference" to social ills might contribute to a similar uprising in this country.⁷

McGuigan had in mind a plan for the Archdiocese of Toronto which went far beyond the modest demands of the Regina pastoral and its call for social action study groups among the laity. This plan relied heavily on the notion of Catholic Action, an increasingly popular papal term for describing the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy. Local bishops

⁴ ARCAT, McNeil Papers, MN AS 01.10. Draper to McNeil, 7 June 1932.

⁵ On Somerville, see Jeanne R. M. Beck, "Henry Somerville and the Development of Catholic Social Thought in Canada: Somerville's Role in the Archdiocese of Toronto, 1915-1943" (Ph.D. thesis, McMaster University, 1978). See also Jeanne M. Beck, "Henry Somerville and Social Reform: His Contribution to Canadian Catholic Social Thought," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Study Sessions* 42 (1975), pp. 90-108.

⁶ *The Catholic Register*, 10 September 1936. The date of the pastoral was 4 September.

⁷ ARCAT, McGuigan Papers, MG DA 02.52 (a), 8 September 1936.

had been empowered by Rome to name various organizations that should be designated as Catholic Action for their individual dioceses. In instructions to the clergy, McGuigan listed under the heading of Catholic Action several organizations which he believed would be effective in promoting the faith and overcoming the forces of atheism. Prominent in this list of existing organizations was the Holy Name Society.⁸

The Holy Name Society was a devotional confraternity, approved by the Church in 1274 and originally placed under the control of the Dominican Order. Its avowed purpose was to promote reverence for the name of Jesus and to make reparation for the prevailing blasphemy and profanity. Men and women were eligible for membership, and they met regularly in Dominican churches for devotional exercises. In an effort to draw attention to their cause, they eventually began to hold processions and rallies. The association enjoyed a sort of renaissance during the nineteenth century. By this time, it had become an all-male organization, with a senior section for men and a junior section for boys. Unlike other Catholic devotional confraternities, whose popularity had been greatest among women and middle-class men, the Holy Name Society succeeded in attracting members from the large Catholic working class.

In 1896, Father Charles McKenna, a Dominican parish priest in New York, obtained the right for non-Dominican parishes to have Holy Name branches, provided they obtained charters from the Dominican Order. It was from McKenna that Monsignor John Hand, pastor of St. Paul's in Toronto, received the charter that introduced the Society into Canada in 1903. Before long other branches were started within the Archdiocese of Toronto and elsewhere, and in 1908 the first Holy Name rally in Canada took place with 3,000 men and boys taking part. The various archdiocesan branches were united in 1910 to form the archdiocesan Holy Name Union, with Hand as director.

Hand died in 1936, a few weeks before McGuigan issued his letters, and was replaced by Father Thomas Manley, Pastor of the local St. Brigid's Parish, where he directed a very effective Holy Name branch. His appointment was for the senior section of the Society only, since the Archbishop had placed the junior section among the groups that made up the newly formed Catholic Youth Organization, which he had introduced as part of his Catholic Action programme. Appointed in August, Manley travelled within a few days to New York City to attend a Holy Name convention, where he hoped to broaden his view of the organization. He returned home so influenced by the affair, that without giving himself time to become better acquainted with the director's role in the Archdiocesan Union, he immediately began to promote the idea of a Toronto-centred convention for

⁸ ARCAT, McGuigan Papers, MG A 02.52 (b), n.d.

the Province of Ontario. The enthusiastic Manley soon won approval for his plan from both his Union executive and the Archbishop and then in January 1937 sent a letter to the Bishops of all the Ontario Dioceses, asking for their support in what would be the first Holy Name event of this kind in the Province.

In his letter, Manley stated that the aims of a convention would be not only to increase reverence for the Holy Name of Jesus, but to help promote a bond of unity and solidarity among members of the Society throughout the Province. These bonds of spiritual unity he thought would be a safeguard and antidote against “the growing influence of Communism.” As proof that the threat of Communism was to be taken seriously he referred to the recent Christmas message of Pope Pius XI, who said that it might very well happen that the conditions presently existing in Spain could spread to other countries. Manley also related that at the American Holy Name convention he had attended, there were frequent references “to the alarming growth of Communism in the United States.” He noted as well that the event was highlighted by a paper called “The Holy Name Society – A Bulwark Against Communism.”

Turning to the local situation, Manley said that:

Here in Toronto, radiating out of Toronto, we already have a well organized communistic movement. This danger has assumed such proportions that we can no longer afford to ignore it. It seems to us that the time is not far distant when concerted action will be necessary to safeguard the property and even the lives of Catholics. We hope we are not being pessimistic, but the recent election in Toronto when a Communist leader polled 31,000 rate-payers, indicates the tremendous growth and strength of the Communist party.

Manley concluded his letter by pointing out the role of the Holy Name Society in opposing communistic forces. “The Holy Name Society,” he said:

makes a most universal appeal to our Catholic men, but the bulk of its members are of the working class; and in as much as Communism seeks to capture the working class, a well organized Holy Name Society truly constitutes the strongest bulwark that we can erect against these forces of atheism and destruction.⁹

⁹ ARCAT, Holy Name Box, 1937 Envelope. Manley to Bishops, 4 January. Regarding Communist strength in Toronto, Somerville reported a few months later that there were two Communists on both the Board of Control and the Board of Education (*The Catholic Register*, 16 December 1937). See also Watson Kirconnel, *The Seven Pillars of Freedom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944). The book reflected alarm at the growth of Canadian Communism, including the situation in Toronto.

Manley thought that the proposed convention could take place during the coming September, but in a follow-up letter to the Bishops in May he said that after consulting with the Dominican who had organized the New York affair, and several others, he had now concluded that the convention must be put off until 1938. Once again, he brought up the question of Communism, claiming that he had not been “unduly pessimistic” in the concern expressed in his January letter, since the movement was gaining even greater strength in labour unions. As proof, he quoted from a Somerville editorial in the *Register* which said that “The Trades’ Councils, the central offices and the locals are doing just what the Communists want them to do.” Manley then went on to conclude that:

More than ever it becomes apparent that the Catholic Church in this Province must be able to muster its man power and present a united front to those who would threaten our civil and religious liberties. Also, we must safeguard our Catholic union men from the pernicious influence of Communism which so often permeates these unions.¹⁰

Shortly after Manley’s letter, McGuigan also expressed his concern about Communism in a personal letter to Archbishop Henry O’Leary of Edmonton, under whom he had served before going to Regina. The Toronto prelate had just returned from a visit to the Vatican and reported that “the Holy See is terribly afraid of Communism,” adding that “the centre of which, in Canada, is Toronto.” He went on to say that “it is unfortunately making progress here, and I would not be surprised if, within a few years, we have a real persecution similar to that in Spain.” He ended with the remark that: “We may, if we have the courage, have the opportunity to shed our blood for the faith even in Canada.”¹¹ O’Leary’s detached reply reflected the Social Credit situation in Alberta, where he noted that, as far as Communism was concerned, “Aberhartism has drawn a red herring across its trail.” Alberta, he went on, was now “organized to death and one or more organizations would make little difference.” It was therefore not difficult for the sheltered O’Leary to conclude with the remark that: “I do not think we will have a persecution similar to that in Spain, although it would be a great privilege

¹⁰ ARCAT, Holy Name Box, 1937 Envelope. Manley to Bishops, 10 May. On the fear of Communist control of unions by non-Communist labour leaders, see Irving M. Abella, *Nationalism, Communism, and Canadian Labour: The CIO, the Communist Party, and the Canadian Congress of Labour 1935-1956. An account of their experience in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. vi.

¹¹ ARCAT, McGuigan Papers, MG FA 03.29 (a). McGuigan to O’Leary, 1 June 1937.

to shed our blood for the faith.”¹²

While Manley placed great stress on the convention, his immediate task was to prepare for the annual Holy Name demonstration which was taking place in the middle of June. This public display of Catholicity had numbered some 25,000 marchers since the 1920s. It was customary for them to assemble at Queen’s Park, accompanied by half a dozen bands, and since the early 1930s their terminating point was the De La Salle “Oaklands” School grounds on Avenue Road. Here, a religious service took place, with women and girls among the participants. A crowd estimated at 30,000 filled the De La Salle grounds for the 1937 rally. In the service, a guest speaker reminded them that it would be impossible to hold such a gathering in countries where there was “a systematic persecution of the Church.” So it was not surprising, he went on, that “we have a natural repugnance to Communism.” Manley said that while Canadians should be grateful for “the democratic institutions which prevail in Canada,” they had to be on their guard against those “who are propagandists for Soviet dictatorship.” When McGuigan’s turn came, he made no reference to Communism in his talk on Catholic education, through which, he said, Catholic young people might be able to contribute “to the regeneration of Christian forces and to the upbuilding of the highest ideals of true patriotism.” Manley then led the Holy Name members in their pledge that included fidelity to “the Holy Catholic Church” and to “the flag of my country,” and the rally concluded with the Archbishop conducting Benediction.¹³

Bishops from each of the eleven dioceses in Ontario had appointed priests to work with Manley and his Holy Name executive in preparing for the convention. As preparations became more complicated, Manley saw that the event would now have to be postponed until some time in 1939. Meanwhile, it was decided to hold a one-day preparation session for Holy Name members in the Archdiocese. It took place in October 1938 and featured McGuigan as the principal speaker. He said that it was important for members of the Holy Name Society to be well organized and to show “to the millions of their fellow citizens” what it meant to be a Catholic. This example, he continued, would have a strong influence in keeping Canada “a truly Christian nation.” Annual demonstrations were therefore very necessary, but what must be stressed, he went on, was the need for active branches in every parish. Here, the members would become more spiritual, especially by receiving Holy Communion in a body each month. The Archbishop also proposed that branches should sponsor at least one study club in every parish, in order to consider “the social teaching of the Church

¹² ARCAT, McGuigan Papers, MG FA 03.29 (b). O’Leary to McGuigan, 8 June 1937.

¹³ *The Catholic Register*, 17 June 1937.

and make it better known” Remarkably, none of the speakers brought up the subject of Communism.¹⁴

McGuigan’s Lenten pastoral for 1939 was a positive call for the reconstruction of society. Called *The Social Message of the Church*, he began by stating that while there were “subversive forces” trying to undermine society, the Church was promoting “social justice and the saving lessons of supernatural revelation across nineteen centuries.” After pointing out that the family had certain rights, as the basic unit, he stated that the “rights of workers” must also be considered, which included the right to have labour unions. He recommended that working men should join social study clubs, as a means of becoming “democratic leaders.” After observing that the Communists had their “labour schools,” he proposed that “Catholic workers schools” should be considered. Finally, he praised the mutual benefit plan called the Cooperative Movement, which had recently been introduced in his archdiocese.¹⁵ Since Somerville not only advised McGuigan on Communism but also on Catholic social action, it seems likely that he guided the Archbishop in writing the letter. This opinion is supported by reading Somerville’s editorials on the reconstruction of society in the *Register*. They called for the kinds of projects that were promoted in the pastoral.¹⁶

The first Holy Name convention in Ontario finally got underway on Friday, June 23, 1939, with a Pontifical High Mass in St. Michael’s Cathedral, at which McGuigan was both celebrant and preacher. The Apostolic Delegate was with him in the sanctuary, as were the Bishops of Ontario, and Holy Name Directors. Delegates and other members from the various dioceses filled the body of the church. During his sermon, the Archbishop spoke of the problems within the Archdiocese “where,” he said, “our numbers are relatively small, where the majority of our people live humble and frugal lives ... and where old errors wrapped in new labels appeal to those who suffer from poverty and unemployment.” What was demanded in such a situation, he concluded, was “the essential work of the education of our Catholic youth and the reconstruction of the social order.”¹⁷

Following the Mass, a series of study sessions began which went on until Saturday afternoon. These took place at the Royal York Hotel, the convention headquarters, and considered not only Holy Name spirituality and organization but also Christian social action. Here, besides talks promoting study clubs and the Cooperative Movement, there was a feature presentation called “The Holy Name Society and Social Justice.” It was delivered by a seminary professor, who used as his authority the encyclical *On Atheistic*

¹⁴ ARCAT, Holy Name Box, 1938 Envelope, 16 October.

¹⁵ ARCAT, McGuigan Papers, MG DA 02.140, 22 February 1939.

¹⁶ Beck, “Somerville,” p. 357.

¹⁷ *The Catholic Register*, 29 June 1939.

Communism, most of which was devoted, he said, to the promotion of a just society.¹⁸ Basic to its call for such a society, he went on, was “a sincere renewal of private and public life according to the principles of the Gospel.” It reassured workers that they had the right to have property, to organize, and to be given a “living wage.” It condemned avarice, which he said was best exemplified by “the materialistic and individualistic philosophy of capitalism.” Finally, he declared that an employer must say to himself: “I must pay my employees a living wage ... or else sin against God and forfeit my right to eternal happiness.”¹⁹

The Royal York was also able to provide for the more than 1100 diners, men and women, who took part in the grand banquet on Saturday evening. When it came time for the speeches, an Ontario government representative praised the work of the Society. Then a Holy Name delegate stated that attacks on religion in some countries were really caused by unemployment and low wages, which were “breeding atheism and Communism.” McGuigan, the main speaker, talked on patriotism, which, he said, “has its roots in Catholic teaching, and is broad, noble, and full of fire because it feeds on the fertile sap of faith and love.” Therefore, while paying due homage to the “Sovereign Pontiff,” as “the highest spiritual power on earth,” he then pledged the “homage and allegiance” of Catholics” to our Sovereigns in the Temporal Order.”²⁰ McGuigan was also present for the closing event of the convention on Sunday afternoon. It took place at Varsity Stadium on Bloor Street, following the march from Queen’s Park. The crowd, estimated at 40,000, heard a visiting prelate speak on Holy Name spirituality, the members repeated the Holy Name pledge, and the Archbishop presided at Benediction.²¹

While the convention had been quite successful, it cannot be said that it reflected Manley’s protectionistic view of the Holy Name Society in regard to Communism. Yet, this “bulwark” role of the Society that he brought back from New York had been a predominant factor in his promotion of the convention, as indicated by his letters to the Ontario Bishops. McGuigan and Somerville were also very concerned about Communism, but they did not allow it to override their positive task of promoting Catholic social reconstruction. As for the convention, it seems quite evident that McGuigan’s Lenten pastoral served as a guideline for its social action thoughts. Accordingly, Holy Name members were being shown that their organization was not simply a “bulwark” against Communism, but rather a

¹⁸ The Latin title of the encyclical was *Divini Redemptoris* (1937). Only a third of the letter was on Communism.

¹⁹ *The Catholic Register*, 29 June 1939.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

body that was to go forth and promote a Christian social order.

At the convention, besides spiritual resolutions and a promise to support Catholic education, there was a general resolve to work for social justice and specific proposals, including the promotion of social study clubs and the Cooperative Movement.²² McGuigan had put all study clubs under the supervision of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, which would therefore include any started by the Society. Actually, the Confraternity simply devoted itself to its own programme for teaching religious doctrine, one which prescribed particular topics each year for fall and spring meetings, such as the Commandments, the Sacraments, or the Mass. According to the Confraternity plan, parish priests or their assistants were directed to organize one or more clubs, with the meetings taking place in the members' homes. Started in 1937, the clubs became popular almost immediately, with some parishes in the Archdiocese having a dozen or more groups. Usually a club consisted of both men and women, with one of their number leading the study session, which was followed by a lunch. The Confraternity clubs continued for several years because they gave parishioners not only an opportunity to learn more about their faith but also an occasion for social enjoyment.

While the Confraternity clubs operated with considerable success, the same cannot be said for the parish study clubs started by the Holy Name Society. At this time, Somerville was not only promoting groups of this kind in the *Register*, but he also directed a club in one of the downtown parish halls. Not surprisingly, he was asked to help the Holy Name Society establish parish social study clubs. Somerville, however, was not a largescale organizer, but a journalist and teacher, and no one emerged from the Society with the ability to make the plan work throughout the Archdiocese. True, a few groups did get started, but they only survived for a short time. It may have been due to the intensive study that was required, but for whatever reason these all-male, social study clubs failed to have the attraction of the Confraternity clubs.

Once Manley and his executive realized that the Holy Name study clubs were unsuccessful, they devised another kind of study plan, this time to present both Catholic social and doctrinal teachings. Called the Speakers' Bureau, it was proposed that a series of talks would be delivered by priests who were specialists in their subjects. They would speak in a selected number of parish halls, so centrally located that Holy Name members from other parishes could participate. Writing to McGuigan about the plan in January 1941, Manley said that he thought the Speakers' Bureau would provide "a real service" in the Archdiocese. Then, after explaining how it was to be organized, he turned to his favourite topic, this time by referring to a talk by

²² *The Catholic Register*, 6 July 1939.

the American radio priest, Fulton Sheen. “According to Monsignor Sheen’s speech last night,” said Manley, “it looks as though we in this Country and the United States will have a real battle on our hands against Communism, perhaps within a year or two. I am still convinced that we need organization to defend our rights, perhaps even our Churches. I am more firmly convinced than ever that the Holy Name Society can and will play a very important part in the future defence of Catholicism in Canada and the United States.”²³

The Speakers’ Bureau began with a listing of twenty speakers and their topics, which included titles like “Social Justice and Christian Charity” and “The Cooperative Movement and the New Christian Order.” Since there are only two listings of talks and no further reference to the Bureau, it can be presumed that like the Holy Name study clubs the project had a very limited existence.²⁴

Although it had been resolved at the Holy Name convention to promote the Cooperative Movement, the immediate success of the Cooperative Credit Unions was the best advertisement for the project. Credit Unions were a substitute for regular banks, in which the members invested their money and from which they were able to borrow and share in the profits of the Union. Already, there were two downtown parishes with Credit Unions, and one of them, a Redemptorist parish, even introduced a Cooperative store. While it looked to its members for patronage, it was also open to the public. The Cooperative store plan never became popular in the Archdiocese, and the one store that was operating eventually closed. As for the Credit Unions, within a short time there were long-lasting groups starting in a large number of parishes, and a few still survive to this day.²⁵

There was at least one convention resolution that the Archdiocesan Holy Name Society implemented with notable results, and that was in regard to promoting Catholic education. In a letter to his priests, written in February 1943, McGuigan informed them that some months previously he had been visited by Manley and his Holy Name Union’s executive. They had requested him, he said, “to set before them a definite and specific work to do in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.” They claimed, he went on, “that the very doing of it would keep energy, zeal and divine grace flowing throughout the Holy Name organism” which would have its effect throughout the Archdiocese. McGuigan said that he then talked about Catholic youth, which led him to

²³ ARCAT, Holy Name Box, 1941 Envelope, Manley to McGuigan, 20 January.

²⁴ ARCAT, Holy Name Box, 1941 Envelope. n.d. In his letter to McGuigan, Manley cited Dr. John Bennett, a Separate School inspector and member of the Holy Name executive, as the one in charge of selecting the topics.

²⁵ St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, sparked the Cooperative Movement in English-speaking Canada.

point out the need for “increased facilities for Catholic High School education.” In turn, the men reacted favourably to the idea, because it “appealed to their hearts” and stirred their “dormant spiritual energies.” As a result, the Holy Name Society had decided on a campaign to provide more Catholic High Schools, and the Archbishop then called on the priests to cooperate with them in their efforts.²⁶ The Holy Name Society not only had its members engage in a successful, if modest, fund-raising drive, but was also responsible for making the faithful of the Archdiocese aware of the importance of Catholic education. The Society therefore prepared the way for McGuigan’s later, large-scale financial campaigns, for the schools as well as other purposes, that would be conducted by fund-raising organizations.²⁷

The annual Holy Name demonstrations continued throughout the Second World War, but the parades were given up and the crowd assembled in a new locale, the Maple Leaf baseball park. In addition to the usual programme, there was added what was called a Living Rosary, in which high school girls participated. While the people recited the beads, the girls formed the Rosary on the field, with each one representing one of the beads. Members of the armed forces took part in the rally, and one of their chaplains was picked to be the guest speaker. McGuigan set the tone of these war years rallies when in June 1940 he called for prayer for “a victorious peace for the allied cause.” Finally, at the September 1945 demonstration, he was able to rejoice, he said, “that the Church in Toronto now has the opportunity of publicly expressing as a body our thanks to Almighty God for victory.”²⁸

In 1946, Manley delivered a talk on the Archdiocesan Holy Name Society at a conference of Holy Name Directors in the United States. Beginning with a brief history of the Society in Toronto, he then turned to the annual demonstration which he regarded as perhaps “the most important role the Holy Name Society plays.” This was particularly true in Toronto, he continued, “where Protestantism is dying and Communism is growing.” Toronto, he explained, had been called “a second Belfast,” because it was predominantly Protestant and anti-Catholic, but he believed the Society had contributed “to breaking down bigotry and prejudice,” since it shared with Protestants in honouring “the Name of Jesus Christ.” As for the

²⁶ ARCAT, Holy Name Box, 1943 Envelope, 3 February.

²⁷ ARCAT, Holy Name Box, 1943 Envelope, n.d.

²⁸ *The Catholic Register*, 27 June 1940; *The Canadian Register* (new masthead adopted in 1942), 15 September 1945. Regarding Russia as an ally, Somerville had noted even before the war that Canada would be fighting primarily for its own freedom from Nazism (*The Catholic Register*, 13 April 1939); later he wrote that while being friendly to the Russian people, there must be a constant condemnation of religious persecution in Russia (*The Canadian Register*, 19 June 1943).

Communists, they were foes who were “enemies of Christ and His Church.” For Manley, there was “only one organization in the United States and Canada” which could “effectively oppose” the Communists, and that was “the Holy Name Society.” After mentioning the Society’s work in promoting Catholic education, he concluded by stating that the main roles of the Archdiocesan Holy Name Society were: “to publicly proclaim reverence for the Holy Name”; “to break down prejudice and bigotry”; “to be the principal instrument of Catholic Action”; and “to help the Archbishop in any diocesan project.”²⁹

Manley died early in 1947, and the new director showed little concern with Communism, other than to have prayers said at the annual demonstration for those who were behind the Russian Iron Curtain. He also moved the site of the demonstration from the Maple Leaf ball park to the larger Exhibition Grandstand, where each year there was a particular theme, like honouring the cross or paying homage to Mary.³⁰ The Holy Name Society continued until the mid-1960s when it gave way to the short-lived Council of Catholic Men. As for Communism, it gradually went into decline in Canada, beginning with the 1946 Gouzenko spy trials, which revealed the extent of Russian infiltration into the country. It suffered further setbacks in the 1950s, when labour unions began to rid themselves of Communists and some party leaders deserted the movement, and by the 1960s Canadian Communism was attracting little attention.³¹ But Communism was a local threat until the time of Somerville’s death in 1953, and consequently he never gave up writing editorials on Canadian Communism. As usual, however, he spent most of his time promoting the Christian social order.

Made a Cardinal in 1945, McGuigan continued until the late 1950s to lead fund-raising campaigns that were still largely for Catholic secondary education. And while maintaining an interest in Catholic social action, he now turned to small organizations, such as the Toronto Catholic Labour School, to promote it.³² But although he remained positive in his public views, there is reason to think that he still feared a Communist take-over, judging from a frequent remark that he used to make to his priests. It concerned three new parish rectories that had been built in the 1950s in wealthier areas of the city that he considered too lavish. About them he used to say: “Swank row, that’s what they are, and when the Communists take

²⁹ ARCAT, Holy Name Box, 1946 Envelope, n.d.

³⁰ *The Canadian Register*, 2 October 1949; 8 October 1953.

³¹ Irving M. Abella, *Nationalism, Communism*, p. 207; Ema Paris, *Jews: An Account of Their Experience in Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1980), pp. 172-177.

³² Brian Hogan, “Salted with Fire: Studies in Catholic Social Thought and Action in Ontario” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1987), pp. 257, 261.

control they'll be the very first buildings they'll grab."³³ McGuigan had suffered a number of nervous breakdowns over the years, that were especially severe after strenuous financial campaigns. In declining health, he was provided with a coadjutor in 1960, became an invalid within a few years, and remained that way until his death in 1974.

It can be said of McGuigan that even before his arrival in Toronto, he had acquired his basic views on what a Christian ordered society should be, as indicated by the Regina social pastoral. It not only condemned capitalism, but pointed to Communism as an even greater threat to Christian society. Above all, it called for positive, Catholic social action. Study clubs were to be organized in all parishes, so that Catholics could study and then apply the social encyclicals. In Toronto, he had his first experience with local Communism, and its ominous presence caused him to fear that Canada would eventually be taken over by the Communists. While Somerville kept McGuigan up to date on Communism, his principal contribution was to broaden his Archbishop's views in regard to social reconstruction. Both were already convinced, however, of the value of study clubs in promoting a just society.

It seems evident that Manley's enthusiasm for the Holy Name Society helped McGuigan to realize its possibilities as a means of promoting Catholic social action. When the Archbishop spoke at the meeting to prepare for the Toronto convention, he first noted the importance of the Society's annual demonstrations. Such a show of faith, he said, helped Canada to remain a Christian country. He emphasized the parish spirituality of the Society, especially through receiving monthly Communion in a body, and then said that it should set up study clubs in every parish to promote social action. With Somerville's help, McGuigan wrote his Lenten pastoral that promoted not only study clubs but also other ways of developing social action, and the talks and resolutions of the convention on the subject reflected the pastoral.

Both Manley and McGuigan thought that Canadian Communism might eventually gain control in Canada, but McGuigan was able to rise above his personal fears and promoted social justice as the way to overcome the threat. To this end, he used Holy Name gatherings. Manley, on his part, saw the Society as a defensive organization that would provide a "bulwark" against the force of Communism. It was true, as he said, that the Society brought together all classes of men in a spiritual fraternity, while Communism tried to win over the working class in opposition to managers and employers. And since most Catholic men belonged to the working class, he believed that the Holy Name Society would protect them from Communist influence. This conviction should not be easily dismissed. Certainly, there is no evidence that

³³ Personal recollection of the author.

any Archdiocesan Holy Name men ever became Communists. But Manley's negative preoccupation with the menace of Communism caused him to be so concerned with sheltering Holy Name members from this evil that he seems never to have realized that the promotion of Catholic social action would be the best check to that movement.

Since the "bulwark" role of the Society was never voiced at any of its gatherings, it is obvious that Manley's view gained little ground. It might have been thought, however, that there would be at least an occasional talk on Communism, especially since Somerville wrote editorials on the subject. But while he advised McGuigan on social matters, the Archbishop seems to have become so convinced of the need for positive social action that he saw no place for talks on Communism at Holy Name meetings. McGuigan himself had referred to the danger of Communism in his early social letters, but later on he mentioned it only indirectly, if at all, in his public statements. In fact, McGuigan was in his element when he was talking positively, and he tried to inject this positive spirit into the Society by promoting Holy Name practises, patriotism, Catholic education, and social action.

McGuigan had reason to be pleased with his Holy Name Society for its annual demonstration, fraternal spirituality, and help with Catholic education, but he must have been disappointed at its failure effectively to promote Catholic social action. In an attempt to discover why both the parish social study plan and the Speakers' Bureau project failed, it ought to be noted that there were three independent groups in the Archdiocese of Toronto that had a fair degree of success. The first was started in the 1930s by Father Joseph Keating, a Jesuit trained in Catholic social teaching. Called the White Front, it had spring and fall sessions attended by about thirty business and professional men and continued for some years.³⁴ The second, and most notable, was the Toronto Catholic Labour School, initiated by another competent Jesuit, Father Charles McGuire, in 1950. It was encouraged by McGuigan, who likely thought it would become a Catholic worker school, which had been one of the proposals of the Lenten pastoral. It seems obvious that the model of such a school would have been the full-time Catholic Worker School that Somerville himself started in England in 1919 as an offshoot of the Catholic Social Guild.

Although the Labour School never reached that stage, it carried on its spring and fall study sessions into the 1960s, with an average attendance of eighty. In addition, it gained a reputation for preparing students to oppose Communism by proposing Catholic social principles in the workplace. Yet the Labour School failed effectively to bring management and labour

³⁴ Interview with Rev. Nicholas Scandiffio, a former member, 5 November 1985. The group was called the White Front to distinguish it from the Red Front Communist study groups.

together to study social justice as it had hoped, for it became increasingly evident that managers were disinclined to participate. Accordingly, McGuire set up a Management School in 1953 that he continued to guide. While its numbers were never large, it did become a third study group that met regularly for several years.³⁵ The success of these groups leads to the belief that social study demanded not only a trained leader but one who was willing to concentrate on one club before attempting another. In addition, there is evidence to support the view that Catholic men who were not part of the working class preferred to meet by themselves.

As for the Holy Name Society, it would appear that the procedure to organize effective social study clubs was at fault. In his zeal, the ever-busy Somerville, strongly encouraged by McGuigan, tried to get groups operating in every parish. To this end, he not only visited many parishes within the Archdiocese but even accepted requests to assist parishes beyond its confines. He obviously spread himself too thin, and if the experience of the Jesuit groups is considered, he might well have begun by concentrating solely on his own downtown study group and giving it some continuity before proceeding further. Instead, it appears to have been a project that had rather irregular sessions, attended by small groups of working-class men whom Somerville hoped to train as union leaders.³⁶ While the Jesuit-run groups did operate for a number of years, they eventually disappeared, leaving one wondering if they hinged overmuch on one leader and why more leaders were not prepared both to keep the original group going and to start new ones. In any event, the Holy Name Society might have contributed in some degree to promoting Catholic social action if it had been willing to begin in a small way, either with a study club or through some kind of Speakers' Bureau plan. In either case, however, it would have required a leader with the time and ability to get the project operating effectively, and without the likelihood of persuading men of all classes to study together, as had been hoped.

Although the Holy Name Society failed to develop an effective social study programme, this does not mean that McGuigan thought it had no positive role as a force against Communism. For in referring to its annual demonstration, he believed it contributed to keeping Canada "a truly Christian nation," rather than becoming, as can be inferred, an anti-Christian, Communist nation. He also saw Catholic young people as contributing "to the regeneration of Christian forces and the upbuilding of the highest ideals of patriotism," in one of his talks promoting Catholic education. Again, this "regeneration" can be seen as helping to overcome Communism, with the Society's fund-raising drive for Catholic education as

³⁵ Hogan, "Salted with Fire," pp. 261-265.

³⁶ Interview with Jeanne Beck, 1 December 1988.

helping to bring it about. Finally, in stressing the importance of monthly communion, he was focusing on the private devotional life of the members, which was the reason why the Society began in the first place. And it was here that McGuigan called for the primacy of the spiritual role of the Holy Name Society when men of all classes knelt side by side to receive divine strength. For he undoubtedly regarded this role as fundamental in promoting what he called “the saving ideal of the Christian world order,” and therefore the basic force in overcoming Canadian Communism.