beginning in 1828. Irish Protestants too were reluctant to accept total abstinence, especially when they saw some of their own clergymen given to drink. According to one report, congregations were unimpressed by "drunken ministers reasoning from their pulpits of righteousness, temperance and the judgment to come." 3

Historians point out there had been no serious drinking problem in the colonies before the American revolution, as compared to widespread drunkenness in England. This era of American moderate drinking ended in the turmoil of the new republic.

Perhaps nothing illustrates the tolerance of excessive drinking in the late eighteenth century as much as the heavy use of whiskey at ministerial ordinations, where considerable drinking and frequent drunkenness became customary. This was so much a feature of ministerial conduct that those who tried to apply the earlier norms of moderation were liable to criticism by superiors. 4

REFORMERS WERE SOBER

When the temperance movement got under way, its clergy leaders were not reformed alcoholics, attempting to mend their ways. They and their colleagues among the laity—especially those who later formed the Women's Christian Temperance Union—were sober citizens who deplored alcohol as a personal and social evil. In a pastoral letter, the bishops of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884 wrote:

It is a mistake to imagine that such societies are made up of reformed victims of intemperance. They should be, and we trust that they everywhere are largely composed of zealous Catholics who were never tainted by that vice, but who mourn over the great evil and are energetically endeavoring to correct it. 5

Among the priests who spearheaded the Catholic Total Abstinence Union there was one exception to this episcopal generalization. The first president of this Union was Father James McDevitt, whose "interest in the movement seems to have had its source in personal need." His bishop later said about him that "some years ago, he got into the habit of drinking too much, but reformed, and was doing well." Father McDevitt gave so much time to the Union he neglected his duties as parish priest and was advised by his bishop to resign the presidency. He withdrew from the diocese, but was later reinstated. He died in his rectory in Baltimore while the twenty-fifth annual convention of the Union was in session in 1895. "There was no mention of him in the proceedings of the convention." 6

Only clergymen could hold the two top offices of the Catholic  

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3 This is quoted from Rev. Dr. Edgar of Belfast, Presbyterian professor of Theology, by Patrick Rogers, Father Theobald Mathew, (New York: Longmans, Green, 1945) p. 31.
6 Bland, Hibernian Crusade, pp. 64, 78, 205.