

ALTENBURGER (Óváry) Charles dr.
(Born 1875)

Dr. Óváry Károly
presbyterian and pap.

WHY I LEFT THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

After a long membership among the Catholic clergy, I am offering my services to the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. It is, therefore, necessary for me to give a circumstantial account of myself and my intentions.

Important and clinching reasons "are the motives"—as I wrote in a book for the use of my Hungarian acquaintances—wherefore an earnest man in mature age separates from the society for whose sake he sacrificed himself. This separation is a result of a long and bleeding struggle when in consequence of this fact he is compelled to give up his distinguished and sure position, and when he leaves an ideology—considered as true formerly, but—in course of time recognising its erroneousness, the importance of his proceedings increases mightily.

I served twelve years as a Roman Catholic clergyman. I obtained my ascetic philosophical and theological education far from my country in the heart of ultra montanism in the midst of the Jesuit order. After finishing my studies I was ordained and became professor of theology. During my activity for seven years I spent an enormous amount of strength in or-

der to realise in myself the Jesuit and Catholic ideals and to transplant them into the spirit of my audience. And the end of this long exertion was my separation from the Romish Church.

An intrusive and independent theological study with a rich practical experience compelled me to the discernment that I was born in a church, where human ingredients deformed the original and pure Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. I made every possible effort in order to strengthen myself in the Romish religion. The day, however, approached when I perceived that the continuation of my spiritual struggle would be aimless and wrong. Did I not suffer enough in order to know from experience that it is more painful to tread with the feet the conscience than the heart.

I withdrew from the Romish church a year ago and joined after a mature consideration—on account of my invigorated faith in Jesus Christ as the only Mediator—the Calvinist Church. The spirit of the Gospel rules here undivided and undiminished. And I find here hearts expanded to every yearning of the conscience for the Father of mercifulness and for the Divine Love revealed in Jesus Christ.

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I am full of longing for the ministry of our Lord. The realising of this desire in Hungary is for the present and for myself so to speak impossible. The liberty of religion there is only on paper. The Roman Catholic hierarchy—as the bearer of the practical religion of State and as the ruler over Hungarian public life of today—crushes the Catholic priest who sets himself against it.

I came to the United States of America, where full liberty of religion is in existence and where I find an immeasurable field of activity.

A million and a half Hungarians live in the United States. Day by day thousands and thousands are coming to this country. More than one-third of them are born Protestants.

But a great many of the immigrants don't care for religion. Their eyes are pointed only to the material benefits.

I offer my modest abilities in order to help introduce those abandoned souls into the Master's Kingdom. I don't choose this new start in life as an inexpert young fellow, but as a man of mature mind. I came here not for a few years, but for my whole life. I consider as my life-work to help to lead and conduct the Magyar and German immigrants from Hungary into the Presbyterian Church.

My idea is: As a professor of Theology (eventually of Hungarian Church History, Hungarian Church Polity and Hungarian Rhetoric) to fill the Hungarian students with enthusiasm for the new American country and the glorious Presbyterian Church, being an abstinent I would educate them to be combatants against alcohol.

I rely on the wisdom of the leaders of the Presbyterian Church to assign me a convenient preaching station,

that I may carry out the above mentioned project.

I state, concerning myself, the following:

I was born in Hungary (A. D. 1875). My grandfather was a Protestant pastor and my mother a Protestant woman. I received in a Roman clerical college the external predestination to become a Catholic priest. As a graduate I entered the order of the Tremonstransian canons. I got the degree as Doctor of Divinity at the Imperial University of Innsbruck and the degree as Doctor of Philosophy at the Academia Pontificia L. Thomae of Rome. I studied also classical and modern (German-Magyar) Philology and Literature during three years at the Royal University of Budapest. I taught after my ordination for seven years (1899-1906) Philosophy, Biblical Introduction and Exegesis and Ethics mostly in the Theological Seminary and Training College for professors, Norbertinum, of Budapest. I was also engaged for a year (1902-3) as assistant professor of German Literature in the Training College for lady teachers of Budapest. I spent for the sake of completing my knowledge and practical experience the winter and summer vacation in the great centres of European culture—Vienna, Paris and Berlin. I have held services during this summer in the Magyar Presbyterian Churches of Scranton, Wilkesbarre, Throop, Pa., New Brunswick and South River, N. J. I have full mastery of the German, Magyar and Latin. I also speak the English, French and Italian—but more or less imperfectly.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." (I Mos. 12,1.)

furnish fuller particulars about my personality.

I say, Phil. III, 13, 14: "Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ."

I don't promise that all my doing will be absolutely perfect. There is no absolute perfection on this earth. But I promise with my mature mind to deserve with all myself the confidence of the Presbyterian Church.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee." (I Mos. 12,1.)

1907, September.

CHARLES ALTENBURGER.

MY PAPERS.

1. Diploma from the Imperial University of Innsbruck. Doctor of Divinity.

2. Diploma from the Academia Pontificia L. Thomae of Rome. Doctor of Philosophy.

3. Certificate from the Theological Seminary and Training-College for Professors, Norbertinum in Budapest, Activity as Professor of Theology.

4. Certificate from the Training-College for Lady Teachers in Budapest. Activity as Professor of German Literature.

5. Index from the Imperial University in Innsbruck. My theological studies specified.

6. Index from the Royal University in Budapest. My studies of Classical and Modern Philology and Literature specified.

7. Certificate from the Calvinist Church in Budapest.

8. A Magyar book on my separation from the Roman Church. Contents: Letter to the Prelate. Psychological analysis of my mental evolution. Apostasy and ultramontan critic. Monastical vows. Professio fidei. Satisfixio dell' intelletto.

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