THE CATHOLIC PRESS RESPONSE

TO NATIVISM

IN THE 1850s AND 1920s

by

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Preface

The long history behind this study begins with the American Catholicism class taught by Dr. Regina Siegfried, ASC, at Saint Louis University in spring 1996. Dr. Siegfried's textbook of choice was Jay Dolan's *The American Catholic Experience.* As the grandchild of immigrants and as a committed Catholic, I found intriguing Dolan's treatment of violence toward foreign-born Catholics throughout the Church's history in the United States.

Much of this paper's material on the nineteenth century was produced for a religious communication seminar taught by Dr. William Thorn at Marquette University in fall 1997. The research involved in that seminar paper whetted my appetite for more knowledge of the subject. While it initially appeared that an exhaustive body of work in nativism already existed, Dr. Thorn pointed out the lack of material on the subject from a journalistic, rather than a sociological or historical, viewpoint. That observation translated into this thesis.

The studies involving newspapers' coverage of nativist attacks and propaganda have been limited primarily to mainstream, general circulation papers. A suspicion that Catholic newspapers might have something to say about attacks against Catholics led me to focus solely on that aspect of the religious press. Because the two heaviest periods of nativism in American history were the decade of the 1850s and the decade of the 1920s, I chose one representative Catholic newspaper from each and examined the content of each for its coverage of physical and verbal anti-Catholic attacks.

I hope that my work will help fill at least part of this gap in the history of religious journalism.

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I came to Marquette almost solely for the opportunity to work with Dr. William Thorn, and I have been grateful for every moment. His faith and trust in me, encyclopedic knowledge of his subjects, cheerful willingness to provide ten hours of explanation for a ten-second question, and ability to make me laugh when I was taking it all far too seriously have made my experiences here fruitful and mostly pleasant.

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Professor Richard Leonard, former Milwaukee *Journal* editor in chief, kept me on my toes grammatically and stylistically.

Sr. Regina Siegfried, ASC, gets the credit for initially sparking my interest in this topic. Her Saint Louis University theology department colleague, Dr. Frank Nichols, gets the credit for teaching with enough humor and obvious pleasure to make me remember

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Tony Godby Johnson made that introduction, one of the innumerable things he has done for me that I never can repay. Tony's iron will, pure spirit, and persistence in fighting seemingly insurmountable obstacles continually reminds me of what human beings were intended to be. He has given me hope when I had none, sworn up and down that he would never give up on me and then backed that up, and loved me when I tried my best to make it impossible. I never expected my muse to be a *Yankees* fan, but if anything I have written or will yet write has any heart, know that it comes from Tony.

All of you have aided in whatever success I have had these past two years, and have given me much yet to strive toward. *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam!*

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Statement of problem 3

Methodology 4

Literature Review 6

Chapter 1: Characteristics of Nativism in Different Eras 9
1840s-1850s 9
1880s-1890s 10
1920s 12

Chapter 2: Anti-Catholicism in Different Times and Places 13
European roots 13
Maryland 13
Catholicism vs. democracy 15
1830s 16
1880s 18
Al Smith's 1928 campaign 19

Chapter 3: 1840s-1850s Nativist Propaganda and the Catholic Press 20
Morse and the "Jesuit takeover" 20
Maria Monk and the "Awful Disclosures" 22
The "common school" controversy 23
Origins of the Know Nothings 26
Know Nothing strongholds and ideologies 29
The *Pilot*'s reaction to Know Nothing campaigns 30

Chapter 4: 1920s Nativism and the Catholic Press 34
Americanization 35
Immigration restriction 36
The rebirth of the Klan 39
The *Catholic Register*'s Klan coverage 40

Chapter 5: Conclusion 46

Bibliography 50

Introduction: An Explanation of Nativism

Nativism has been defined by historians and sociologists as a deep-seated American antipathy toward internal "foreign" groups of various kinds — cultural, national, religious, racial — an animosity which has erupted periodically into intensive efforts to safeguard America from such perceived "threats" (Leonard and Parmet, 1971).

Declining national confidence or societal stress, typically produced by change in political or economic conditions, generates eruptions of nativism. Cyclical, hysterical, irrational, and politically inspired, such movements have attempted to safeguard American nationality from the foreign influences which were believed to threaten it (Jones, 1960, 146-147).[1]

The steady industrialization of America and the flood of immigrants – over five million of them from 1830-1860 – produced the most intense outbreak of nativism in American history. Social upheaval awoke latent prejudice against foreigners and translated it into vicious words and attacks against immigrants and Catholics, who often were one and the same. The newcomers, mostly Catholics, became cultural scapegoats for American anxiety over industrialization and urbanization, as well as for changes in class structure and political parties.

Despite the founding of one of the original colonies, Maryland, by upper-class English Catholics, anti-Catholic prejudice seemingly was part of the United States from

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[1] Perhaps the earliest of these resulted in the 1798 Alien and Sedition Act aimed at Irish and other undesirable immigrants.

the start. While Catholics of means were reluctant to give up the good times they enjoyed at home under Charles I, English Protestants flocked to the colony and eventually enacted anti-Catholic laws, including one making it illegal for Catholics to hold public office even in Maryland.

The depression of 1919 following the end of World War I paved the way for a resurgence of nativism in the 1920s, prior to the passage of restrictive immigration laws aimed at stopping the flood of largely Catholic Europeans into the United States. Vast waves of Catholics still were arriving from Ireland, Italy, and the Polish areas of Germany or Russia at this time.

John Higham has suggested that the proximate cause of nativism in the 1920s was the Progressive movement's failure to fulfill its expectations and promises. Immigration was once again, however, a pressing issue – although, in this era, not only Catholics were at risk of maltreatment. Incoming Russian and Polish Jews also were forced to combat prejudice and hatred arising from native suspicion.

While some argue that Catholic papers helped increase nativist sentiment by further putting Catholics out of the mainstream, the Catholic press of both eras served to aid the immigrant in many ways, to be discussed further in this work.

Statement of Problem

The problem in both eras studied was twofold. First, there was the sentiment among the public that the Catholic press existed solely to defend the immigrants. While getting outraged in print over the atrocities committed toward Catholics was certainly a significant function of the Catholic press, it was far from the only one.

The second problem, concurrent with the first, is that Catholicism was seen throughout the country as antithetical to hard-won and much-prized democracy. Nativists and those sympathetic to them found it difficult to believe that Catholics, with their duty to obey the Pope, also could obey civil laws. The same issue vexed Al Smith's presidential campaign half a century later.

Methodology

The newspapers studied, the 1854 and 1856 issues of the Boston *Pilot* and the 1922 and 1924 issues of the Kansas City *Catholic Register,* were subjected to analysis following Hazel Dicken-Garcia's criteria of content topic, tone, form, and intended audience. These categories were used in her book *Journalistic Standards of the Nineteenth Century* (1989, 68-71).

Content topic involves categories (Dickens-Garcia used political, business, and social) and whether reports were local, national, or international.

Tone involves the item's overall impression, whether it is personal or impersonal, and the emotional impact. Personal items address specific individuals directly or focus primarily on one or more individuals, with attention to character. Impersonal items report only that an event occurred or discuss ideas as to their soundness, basis, or implications.

Form involves two factors: whether the item was idea- or event-centered, and whether it presented a "story" or straightforward information. *Story* was defined as "any news item emphasizing what might generally be called fictional techniques – suspense, conflict, plot, central character, dialogue" (Dicken-Garcia, 69).

Intended audience is deduced from categories and from the types of items published.

The *Pilot* and the *Catholic Register* specifically were chosen not only for their easy readability, being English-language papers, but for geographical reasons.

Early nineteenth century nativism was strongest in the large Eastern cities where the northern and western European immigrants tended to settle. The Boston of the 1850s was heavily Irish Catholic, and in constant political turmoil. "Physical" nativist outbursts – church burnings and the like – were common to the area in the mid-1850s, and the Know-Nothings won a significant number of city and state offices in the elections of 1854 and 1856.

Twentieth century nativism occurred largely in the South and in the Midwest. Kansas City is only a few hours from Aurora, Missouri, home of the notorious *Menace*, the most rabid of the anti-Catholic newspapers at the time. The Klan's vocal and very public arrival in Kansas City in 1922 was chosen to help personalize the largest threat to Catholics of the time.

Literature Review

Nativists expected instant assimilation – defined by Berry (1965, 247) as the process whereby groups with different cultures come to have a common culture – of the immigrants. They were expected immediately to surrender their Old World ways and become flag-waving Americans. "Common culture," according to Berry, included

> ...such items of the culture as dress, knives and forks, language, food, sports, and automobiles, which are relatively easy to appreciate and acquire, but also less tangible items such as values, memories, sentiments, ideas, and attitudes. Assimilation refers thus to the fusion of cultural heritages, and must be distinguished from amalgamation, which denotes the biological mixture of originally distinct racial strains. . . . Americanization, of course, is simply a special case of assimilation. . . . (247).

Cultural assimilation is likely to be the first type to occur, according to Gordon (1964, 77). It may take place regardless of whether other types of assimilation occur simultaneously or at all.

Gordon (71) defines another type of assimilation, "structural assimilation," as a large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society, on a primary group level. Once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow.

Berry, expanding upon Gordon's thesis, notes four principles of assimilation.

1. Assimilation Is Not Inevitable

While it seems likely that ethnic groups forced to live in close proximity to each other will take on some of their neighbors' customs, it is by no means inevitable. It is possible – witness the current Yugoslavian crisis, or the history of Israel – for groups to have a long history of contact with no merging of cultures (251).

2. Assimilation Is a Reciprocal Process

Assimilation often is held to mean "your total absorption into my culture." This philosophy animated the "Americanization" movement, which came into being during World War I as a result of the demonization of the Germans living in America. Yet, while one society may dominate — rarely is there an equal process of give-and-take — assimilation presupposes and in fact requires integration of old and new (252-253).

3. Assimilation Is a Slow Process of Uneven Pace

According to Berry, "[E]ven under the most favorable circumstances it takes a long time for two cultures to fuse" (255). Assimilation does not occur in a generation or two. It has been suggested that cultural assimilation requires a minimum of four generations before all traces of the "old" culture can be replaced by a thorough integration into the "new" one. Even then, families often retain at least some country-of-origin traditions.

4. Assimilation Is Both a Conscious and an Unconscious Process

The immigrant who adopts his new culture's dress and language does so consciously, as a means of "fitting in." More subtle changes (e.g., in gestures and accent), however, are gradual and nearly imperceptible.

Catholic immigrants had a harder road to travel than their peers. In addition to cultural differences, Catholics had to defend much-misunderstood and detested religious practices. Yet, as Abramson (1973, 5) pointed out, "Catholicism illustrates the ethnic and sociocultural heterogeneity of the American people." This largest denomination in the United States, comprising roughly one-fourth of the population, accurately reflects the

American experience: multicultural backgrounds, the representatives of old and new and continuing migrations, social class stratification, and the settling of different areas by different ethnic groups (Abramson, 11).

Ethnic groups in modern society develop an organizational network, as well as informal social relationships which encourage group members to remain within the group's boundaries throughout their lives. Additionally, according to Gordon (35), "some of the basic institutional activities of the larger society become either completely or in part ethnically enclosed. Family life and religion are, virtually by definition, contained within the ethnic boundaries. Education becomes ethnically enclosed to the extent that "parochial" school systems are utilized." It is this sort of boundary-setting by Catholic immigrants that, while necessary and even encouraged, helped intensify nativist disdain and hatred.

Chapter 1: Characteristics of Nativism in Different Eras

1840s-1850s

While the Protestant religious revival and the shift from an agricultural economy to an industrial one certainly were important factors in the rise of nativism in the 1850s, inarguably the most important factor in "No-Popery" was the enormous tide of immigration throughout a large portion of the nineteenth century.

Emigration from Europe was inevitable. An end to the religious wars and revolutions led to a surplus of workers in peacetime, and wages for unskilled labor began to decline as European society became more industrialized. Recorded arrivals on American soil leapt from 8,383 in 1820 to 27,382 in 1828 (Billington, 1974, 54). To most American citizens, this was not at all cause for alarm. The immigrants could easily be put to work in construction and manufacturing jobs, and there were plenty of those to go around.

"Native American" suspicion was aroused by the immigrants' natural tendency to cluster in their own ethnic neighborhoods and build their own churches. The first "national parish," composed of German immigrants, arose in 1787 in Philadelphia. Traditionally, parishes had been organized territorially — they served all those who lived in a specific geographical area, regardless of ethnicity. But immigrants needed their parishes to serve a social function as well as a religious one. The neighborhood parish was a place where they could spend time with people who talked like them, dressed like them, and engaged in the same devotional practices. It was a safe haven and a necessary

transition between the Old World and the New, but native Americans saw such a large aggregation of foreigners as a threat and a slap in the face of the immigrants' adopted country.

Immigrant Catholics found order in hierarchy and authority, whereas Americans believed strongly in democracy (Olson, 1987). This was the heart of nativist sentiment, the idea that Catholics, with their allegiance to an overarching religious official, could not also pledge allegiance to the ideals of representative democracy. Bishops John Carroll, in the eighteenth century, and John England, in the nineteenth, both fought to prove that Catholicism and democracy could indeed coexist.

While native Americans refused to practice the equality they preached, Catholics ignored it, accepting inequality as normal and natural. The Puritan traditions of striving toward perfection and moral reform left Catholics skeptical of the natives' ability to pull it off, given man's sinful nature (Olson, 1987). Catholics also countered the native ideals of geographic mobility, by sticking to their neighborhoods and national parishes; job perma-nence, largely by moving up, if possible, within the jobs they held; and assimila-tion, by standing up for pluralism. The native Americans expressed their fear and lack of understanding in violence of one sort or another.

1880s-1890s

Businessmen, as well as other white-collar workers and nonunionized labor, were the 1880s xenophobes. The economic downturn of 1883-85 awakened Americans' dozing social conscience and summoned middle-class reform desires. Reformers believed in the

tradition of homogenous culture, and saw it threatened everywhere. Most put the heart of the trouble in the expanding cities, where immigrants concentrated (Higham, 1992, 38).

The tremendous immigrant influx of 1882, followed by the industrial depression of 1883-86, persuaded many wage-earners that the whole incoming stream directly threatened their own livelihood (Higham, 1992, 46).

The Immigration Act of 1882 gave the Secretary of the Treasury executive authority over immigration but cautiously delegated the actual inspection of immigrants to existing state agencies. The United States was to accumulate an immigrant welfare fund by taxing each entrant fifty cents (New York had been collecting $1.50). Also, convicts, lunatics, idiots, and persons likely to become a public charge were denied admission (Higham, 1992, 44). In the late eighties, legislatures excluded unnaturalized immigrants of all nationalities from certain types of employment, such as construction of public works (Higham, 1992, 46).

Economic collapse and social chaos became the main trends of 1890s xenophobia. Prior to the 1890s, the restrictionist movement (discussed more in depth in Chapter 4) generally was limited to the North, where most immigrants had chosen to settle. The West and South believed immigration was the key to growth – until farming declined and the country spiraled into a depression, helping bring the rest of the country on board for anti-immigration.

Aside from the Protestant churches themselves, there were three types of anti-Catholic agencies in the 1890s: ad hoc committees, which mobilized broad support for specific legislative objectives; fraternal orders, which were more "prestige" than pressure

groups; and political secret societies, of which the American Protestant Association (APA, discussed in Chapter 2) is the best example.

1920s

Twentieth-century immigration took something of a different tack. Whereas the nineteenth century version had involved primarily northwestern Europeans – the sort who looked like, if not believed like, the Anglo-Saxon majority – the immigrants of the twentieth century were largely southern and eastern European. It had been bad enough the first time around, when native Americans' biggest worry was that the new arrivals would steal natives' jobs. In the 1920s, with an agricultural depression beginning the decade and an economic one on the way to end it, natives were consumed not only with the employment picture but with one of the strongest animating forces throughout American history: racism. Some of the natives' intimidation techniques would have been familiar to their nineteenth-century brethren, but the race issue was a new and difficult one.

Chapter 2: Anti-Catholicism in Different Times and Places

European roots

Anti-Catholicism had its European roots in the "wars of religion" throughout the sixteenth century. Philip of Spain, perhaps the most powerful monarch during that time, was a committed Catholic and tried his best to return Europe to papal obedience. Other monarchs, such as Elizabeth of England, used their powers to promote Protestantism. France's pitched battle between Catholics and Huguenots (Protestants) came to an end only with the Edict of Nantes, which decreed freedom of conscience for the people of France.

The 1555 Peace of Augsburg was ended in Germany in 1618 by the start of the final "war of religion," the Thirty Years' War, a three-way affair among the Catholics, Lutherans and Calvinists. The French intervened on the Protestants' side, a harbinger of things to come in the eighteenth century, and the war was stalemated until 1648 and the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia.

Maryland

Carved from an extant crown colony, chartered as a feudal barony by a Roman Catholic convert under the auspices of a Protestant king, Maryland was founded in 1634 by George Calvert's son Cecil, the second Lord Baltimore, and governed by Cecil's brother Leonard. Despite its reputation as a Catholic refuge in the New World, Maryland's population was, from the start, mixed. Cecil Calvert instructed the colony's

governors to live peaceably with the Protestants among the settlers and to make sure that Roman Catholics worshiped as privately as possible.

Such peace lasted little more than a decade. In 1645, Virginian soldiers invaded Maryland's capital, St. Mary's City, took possession, and plundered the colony, allegedly on behalf of Parliament. The uprising lasted two years and saw Catholic leaders and priests forcibly arrested and returned to England. After Leonard Calvert died, a Protestant, William Stone, was appointed governor and sworn not to harass the Catholics "for or in respect of his or her religion, nor in his or her free exercise thereof" (quoted in Ahlstrom, 1972, 334).

Toward that same end, on April 21, 1649, the Maryland Assembly passed the Act Concerning Religion, making it illegal to "trouble, molest, or discountenance" any professing Christian. (Jews and other non-Trinitarians were to be put to death.) Toleration this time again lasted only a decade. In 1654 the colony's Puritans took their social and economic complaints against the Catholics to battle and won. They promptly outlawed Catholicism, plundered the Jesuit plantations, exiled all priests and executed a number of Catholics.

According to Ahlstrom (1972, 335-36),

> The church history of Maryland during the entire colonial period is closely related to the conflicts and difficulties of the Roman Catholic church in the mother country. In England its constituency was a persecuted and highly suspect minority, prospering slightly when royal favor or a turn in foreign affairs so conduced, suffering severely when events led to a resurgence of overt hostility, and inhibited always by the paucity of clergy, the absence of a regular hierarchy, and many social or political seductions to apostasy.

Catholicism vs. democracy

The French Revolution, modeled on its American counterpart thirteen years prior, helped make possible the separation of church and state.

The Church initially opposed democracy in favor of the divine right of kings, the idea that monarchs derive their right to rule from God and are accountable only to Him. It was thought that democracy would overturn God's established order and lead to chaos. European nobility obviously benefited from the doctrine of the divine right.

The doctrines of the Enlightenment, a movement devoted to reason above all, opposed the Church, which equated democracy with anti-Catholicism. Catholics operated under a "monarch mentality" and were subject to the Pope, whereas the proponents of the Enlightenment thought it was "reasonable" for people to govern themselves and to determine their own destiny.

After much bloodshed, the Church eventually accommodated the ideas of democracy as established realities, and the uneasy relationship between church and state began. The state became a secularized institution, and the idea of Christendom faded into the background.

The French Revolution affected American Catholicism by diluting Catholic culture as the immigrants eventually tried to conform to American ways. The idea that the Church should also be democratic and pluralistic, rather than hierarchical and authoritarian, is uniquely American.

1830s

The "melting pot" concept of American society long has been a national myth. Distinct social classes have been visible nearly from the Pilgrims' landing — certainly from Revolutionary days — and class antipathy, along with economic conditions and religious misunderstanding, combined with the growing "No-Popery" sentiment in the 1830s to create a climate in which mindless violence such as occurred at the Charlestown convent was possible.

Native American distrust for the Ursuline convent on Mount Benedict, in sight of Bunker Hill, was heightened by the "high society" students it attracted in largely Congregationalist Boston. Upper-class Protestants continued to send their daughters to the convent school even after a rival Protestant school opened in 1831.

Convents were considered strange and secret places, and nativists turned their fear and misunderstanding into outright lies and propaganda. Ray Allen Billington (1974, 70-71) describes the tenor of the times:

> The turbulence...found expression all through the early 1830's. In 1829 a group of Americans, aroused by the exhortations of a revivalistic preacher, attacked the homes of Irish Catholics in Boston and stoned them for three days. Four years later a group of drunken Irishmen beat a native American citizen to death on the streets of Charlestown. The next night five hundred natives marched on the Irish section, and troops that were called out stood helplessly by while a number of houses were torn down and burned. Posters warning of popish plots began to appear mysteriously about the streets of Charlestown and Boston. Rumors flew in increasing numbers concerning the convent on Mount Benedict: stories of barbarities practiced on the nuns, of a dying man cruelly treated, of the immorality with which it was infested. Parents who considered enrolling their daughters in the Ursuline school were subjected to pressure and plied with dreadful tales of convent life. An anti-Catholic novel, *The Nun*, which was popular just at this time, seemed to confirm many of these fears.

Rebecca Reed, who set a precedent for the infamous Maria Monk (discussed below), published her fabricated tale of her life in and subsequent escape from the

Ursuline convent. Thus was the public primed to believe the worst of the sisters when an actual nun, Elizabeth Harrison, "escaped" for the evening of July 28, 1834. After a bit of rest from her hectic schedule Harrison realized what she had done and immediately returned to the convent. But in that short time the rumors already had begun to fly. Their "truth" was of course cemented in print in the Boston *Mercantile Journal*:

> We understand that a great excitement at present exists in Charlestown, in consequence of the mysterious disappearance of a young lady at the Nunnery in that place. The circumstances, as far as we can learn, are as follows: The young lady was sent to the place in question to complete her education, and became so pleased with the place and its *inmates*, that she was induced to seclude herself from the world and take the black veil. After some time spent in the Nunnery, she became dissatisfied, and made her escape from the institution — but was afterwards persuaded to return, being told that if she would continue but three weeks longer, she would be dismissed with honor. At the end of that time, a few days since, her friends called for her, but she was not to be found, and much alarm is excited in consequence. (quoted in Billington, 1974, 72; italics added)

Other papers copied the misinformation, Protestant preachers (notably Lyman Beecher) urged their coreligionists to action against "Popery," and on August 11, 1834, a mob desecrated the cemetery on the Ursuline convent grounds, and burned down the convent and all other buildings on the property.

The Catholic press quickly spoke out. The *Jesuit*, noted for its news coverage as well as its doctrinal explication, spoke of the then-under-construction Bunker Hill monument:

> Under its very brow are the dark, the gloomy proofs, that there are those among the descendants of the heroes of '76, who are craven enough to war upon women; and sufficiently bigoted and ignorant to think they do God service by sacrilege, arson, and desecration of the grave. (Billington, 1974, 54)

Foik's charming (if purple) prose elsewhere provides the story a fitting end:

> For one whole generation, the crumbling and blackened ruins of that once noble edifice were suffered to stand as a monument of intolerance, of desecration and disgrace, near a city that was regarded the home of freedom and the Athens of America. ... the monument of intolerance is levelled ... but the monument to Liberty still stands on the neighboring hill.

> Freemen, as you mount the pinnacle of that massive granite tower, turn your eyes toward the setting sun, and looking toward Mount Benedict, thank God that Puritanism is dead. It has left nothing behind it but its warnings. (1930, 108)

As Boston Catholic papers decried the convent burning, Protestant religious newspapers used Catholic editors' obvious bitterness as a reason to ignore them. The Protestants complained that aliens in this country were using the riot as an excuse to make the people of Boston ashamed of their Puritan ancestry (Billington, 1974, 180).

1880s-1890s

In May 1886, a bomb exploded amid Chicago police who were moving in on a meeting of anarchists in Haymarket Square (Ahlstrom, 853). In the ten years it took for the resultant legal battles to play out, a number of secret and "patriotic" fraternal organizations were formed. The most important of these was the American Protective Association (APA), founded in 1887 by Henry Bowers, a friend of the mayor of Clinton, Iowa, who had been defeated by the Irish labor vote. Members of its secret councils were sworn never to vote for a Catholic and if possible never to hire or strike with one. By 1890, when the APA held its first national council, it was flourishing from Detroit to Omaha, and though it achieved almost nothing in terms of actual political or legislative action, it served to revive grassroots anti-Catholicism in many areas.

The APA emphasized Catholics' subservience to a "foreign potentate." It was so anti-Catholic, as opposed to merely anti-immigrant, that it was able to rally support among even Protestant immigrants. Its leader, William J. Traynor, fabricated a "Popish plot" by publishing a fake encyclical.

Al Smith's Presidential campaign, 1928

Smith's blistering defeat at the hands of Herbert Hoover commonly is blamed on his religion. While the Klan indeed lit out after him, and while one of his campaign workers found it necessary to list the religious affiliations of Smith's gubernatorial Cabinet to squelch rumors that Smith appointed only coreligionists, Smith's problems more likely were that he was Irish, connected to Tammany Hall, and opposed Prohibition. According to Moore (1956, 39),

> Had Smith been an Episcopalian rather than a Catholic and a product of Hyde Park rather than of New York City, his nomination would have been less terrifying to millions, but he still would have remained vulnerable in the south and west. For Prohibition was in large measure the culmination of a moral and religious crusade, which was geared to a great commitment on the part of the majority of the evangelical Protestant churches.

The anti-Catholic campaign of 1928 was in place many months before Smith was nominated. Charges flew of a secret conspiracy to invade Mexico, to close public schools as well as Protestant churches, to burn Protestant Bibles, and to frighten the gullible with the bloody "oath" of the Knights of Columbus. There was a suspicion that Smith would not and could not resist moves by his Church to influence his decisions (Moore, 91).

The fight to prevent Smith's nomination boiled down to rural versus urban, native versus newcomer. If "one of them" achieved the highest office in the country, it would be seen as a victory for a new, untested way of life.

Smith's Catholicism also was a significant issue. Millions of Americans believed that a Catholic would be forced to obey the Pope and not the will of the people. Catholicism once more was equated with anti-democratic designs.

Chapter 3: 1830s-1850s Nativist Propaganda and the Catholic Press

The occurrences of the 1830s and 1840s paved the road for the peak nativist attacks in the 1850s.

Morse and the "Jesuit Takeover"

Samuel Morse is known to every American schoolchild as the inventor of the telegraph. His method of amassing the capital to perfect his invention is less well-known: He was a prolific author of anti-Catholic articles and books.

In one of his books, *Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States: The Numbers of Brutus*, Morse informed his fellow native Americans that the Austrian emperor was secretly in league with the Pope to subvert the United States and use it as a base for a Catholic world conquest. The instrument of this plot was the Leopoldine Society, a missionary organization founded in 1828 to raise funds for the support of priests serving Austrian immigrants in the Midwest. Morse claimed that the real purpose of the society was the infiltration of a Jesuit army into the Western states under the guise of Austrian peasants. These secret Jesuit agents would form the leadership cadre in a Catholic takeover, using the obedient Irish masses in the cities as their pawns. Their true objective was to subjugate the United States to popery and despotism, and thus extinguish Republican liberty throughout the world (Schwartz, 1983, 40-41). By linking Catholicism (which most Americans had always despised) to immigration (which

they had previously considered beneficial), Morse laid the foundation for decades of American nativism that would follow (Anbinder, 9).

Morse urged Protestants to bury their own differences; a united front would be necessary to stave off the heretics. He proposed formation of the "Anti-Popery Union to Save America," using the Bible and the common schools as means to shut down parochial schools, keep Catholics out of public office, and restrict immigration. He took up the latter theme in his book *Imminent Dangers to the Free Institutions of the United States Through Foreign Immigration* (1835):

> The *native citizen* is, *by his birth*, a member of the independent community. He was born under its laws, and in the enjoyment of the liberty left by those who won it as a legacy to their children. It is the peculiar birthright of Americans, to have a greater share in the management of their own government than any other people whatever possess in theirs. The *foreigner*, on the contrary *by his birth*, belongs to another country, to a separate, independent community. He never has belonged to this Republic in any way. The very question in debate is, how can he become a member of this Republic? He has never had the same rights bestowed upon him in any country, as he acquires in being a citizen in this. What right of admission can he claim? Is it by *natural right*? But natural right is in this country controlled by *social right*. No man here resists successfully the rights of the majority by his individual claim of natural right. And the social rights of the smaller communities are controlled by the superior rights of the larger, and these again by the paramount right of the great state which includes all the others. There is here no place for the claim of the foreigner to admission on any terms into the Republic. Thus we come at last, by the deduction of sound reason, to a conclusion coinciding with the uniform practice of the government from its foundation; the conclusion that the people by the voice of their government may grant permission to enter the country, or withhold permission, and may prescribe their own conditions as they may think *expedient*, and without violating the rights natural or acquired of any human being. [If the foreigner] comes at all, it is *by permission*; if he stays, it is *by permission*; if he has any privileges in this country, they are granted him *by permission* of the people speaking through their official organs; and this people *can* refuse him permission to come, in the first instance, can deny him leave to stay, can temporarily withhold, or entirely abolish all privileges granted him, and send him out of the country, can take away his liberty, yes, and even his life, if they shall judge any of these measures necessary *"to insure domestic tranquillity,"* to provide for the *common defence*, "to promote the *general welfare*," or TO SECURE THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY TO OURSELVES AND OUR POSTERITY (Morse, 1835, 22-23; italics and caps in original).

Concurrent with the sentiment which sparked the convent burning was the founding of two powerful American newspapers devoted entirely to exposing the horrors of Popery. Samuel B. Smith, who claimed to be "late a Popish priest," founded a weekly entitled *The Downfall of Babylon, or the Triumph of Truth over Popery*. Smith continued in the vein of Reed and Monk with great success.

The Reverend W.C. Brownlee founded what came to be a more influential anti-Catholic newspaper, *The American Protestant Vindicator and Defender of Civil and Religious Liberty against the Inroads of Popery*. In his first issue on August 20, 1834, Brownlee explained his paper's editorial position:

> With the deliberate conviction that Popery ought always to be loathed and execrated, not only by all Christians, but also by every patriot and philanthropist; we shall endeavor to unfold its detestable impieties, corruptions and mischiefs. But we engage in this momentous controversy with a deep conviction that there is an important dissonance between the heinous crime and the bewitched transgressors. We shall condemn the monstrous progeny of Babylon the Great without measure: but we shall not forget that the vast majority of the Papists are blind-folded sinners; and we shall ever draw a broad line of distinction between Roman Priests, the arch servant of the Dragon, and the Beast who from the most hateful and inordinately sensual motives are perversely deceitful leaders; and the misguided mortals, their wretchedly deluded votaries whom they hurry into the bottomless pit of everlasting perdition (quoted in Billington, 1974, p. 93).

Brownlee not only spawned countless imitators, but sent agents across the country to lecture against Popery and drum up subscriptions for his paper. The active No-Popery press helped give rise to national anti-Catholic secret societies, to be discussed later.

Maria Monk and the "Awful Disclosures"

Protestant newspapers were not the only means of disinformation about Catholics. Book publishers also got into the act. Maria Monk personalized the "Catholic menace" with a number of outrageous claims about life in the Hôtel Dieu convent. She claimed to

have stumbled across a tunnel between the seminary and the convent, used to expedite priest-nun assignations. When the inevitable occurred, of course, the newborn children were baptized and immediately strangled. Free both from original sin and the capacity to commit any more, the babies would go immediately to heaven. One poor young nun who refused to participate in such activity was smothered and trampled to death by a number of priests and fellow nuns.

The only truth Maria Monk ever spoke was that she had been impregnated by a religious leader. Her paramour seems likely to have been the Reverend William K. Hoyt, founder of the Canadian Benevolent Association and a rabid anti-Catholic. The rest of what Monk had to say was discredited even by her own mother. Nevertheless, *The Awful Disclosures of the Hôtel Dieu Nunnery of Montreal* sold over 300,000 copies prior to the Civil War (Leonard and Parmet, 58), and was responsible for much of the wave of nativism that followed. It remained in print for a century.

The "Common School" controversy

The 1840s common (public) school movement was another heated issue for the nativists. The use of tax funds to support public schools was an issue throughout the nineteenth century, but especially after 1841, when Bishop John Hughes of New York asked public school officials to divert funds to Catholic parochial schools. The New York legislature debated for weeks before specifically prohibiting the use of any public funds in private schools.

The *Protestant Vindicator* demonstrated anti-Catholic opinion regarding the school controversy in their January 20, 1841 edition with this piece of doggerel:

> Our public schools have vexed the Pope;
> They seemed like ruin to his hope,
> To fix in time in our free home,
> The throne and golden calf of Rome!
> Because in them the Papist youth,
> Learned to distinguish lies from truth;
> Learned to become a thinking thing!
> Which Rome hates more than scorpion's sting!
> And hence the bull came thundering o'er
> We heaved so late with savage roar;
> His warrant, all the schools to crush;
> Or failing there — (blush, Papists, blush)
> To expell the Romish youth, which heed
> Lest they, alas! should learn to read
> Christ's promises to sinners made,
> Without the Pope's paternal aid!
> That bull still roars — but all in vain;
> Columbia spurns the Papal chain;
> And hence, 'twill shortly come to pass,
> That bull shall find himself an ass.

In November 1849 New York State asked its citizens to vote on a proposal to establish a state-wide "free school" system, state-controlled and supported by a compulsory tax. New York Catholics, again led by Bishop John Hughes, undertook a campaign to thwart the process.

Hughes' strategy was twofold: step up the building of parish schools and leave the politics to someone else. In this case the "someone else" was James McMaster, editor of the diocesan paper, the *Freeman's Journal*. McMaster argued that religion was essential to education. Since state schools could not constitutionally allow the practice of religion, denominational schools were the only answer. His and Hughes' impact on the electorate was negligible, and the free school bill passed.

McMaster's *Freeman's Journal* was alone among New York newspapers in its attitude toward the school system. Secular papers such as the *Tribune* and the *Sun* supported the law. The *Commercial Advertiser* called the *Freeman's Journal* "anti-Republican." McMaster retreated for a couple of years, and picked up the crusade again in 1852. He called upon Catholics to organize against this "odious, anti-American, Jacobinical system of impiety" (*Freeman's Journal*, August 14, 1852).

By the time of McMaster's renewed interest in the issue, the public school system and its intolerant WASP ideology had been fairly well established. Many bishops considered the public schools to be "both heretical and infidel" (Dolan, 267). Thus the First Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1852 undertook to define the concept of "parochial schools" and urged their establishment — although they did not go as far as their brethren at Cincinnati six years later, who passed a decree requiring every pastor to build a parochial school under pain of mortal sin. A committee at Baltimore defined parochial schools as "institutions, in which none but Catholic children are admitted, and which are conducted by teachers having the approbation of the pastor, exercising their office under his direction and superintendence, and making the catechism the frequent subject of their instructions to those under their charge" (Dolan, 268).

While the school controversy in New York was the most visible, it was far from the only one. Diocesan papers in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and Baltimore took up the fight in those dioceses, with similar success, or lack thereof (Dolan, 270). Catholic agitation on the issue, by appearing to be widespread and coordinated, inadvertently touched off another tidal wave of nativism. The uniformity of the Catholic argument, rooted in the

natural right of parents to control education and the priority of religion over secular knowledge, gave substance to the belief that Catholics were a distinct and alien cult in American society. According to Hueston (179), "[T]heir hostility to common schools intensified suspicions that they threatened the American traditions of civil and religious liberty which those institutions presumably inculcated." The sharp criticism Catholics received on the issue deepened their conviction of the necessity of separatism in education, and thus Catholic-Protestant polarization intensified.

Origins of the Know-Nothings

According to Hansen (1964, 111), "economic jealousy, religious bigotry and social disapproval" were responsible for the rise of the secret societies that eventually became the American, or "Know Nothing," Party. The Know Nothing creed was one of immigration restriction and rabid anti-Catholicism.

In 1835 the Native American Party was founded to give political expression to nativist passions. Two nativist secret societies, The Order of Native Americans (1844) and The Order of the Star-Spangled Banner (OSSB) (1849) formed the base of the American Party, dubbed by Horace Greeley as "Know Nothings" for their standard response to questions regarding their operations.

The OSSB's constitution established a three-rank membership system. All members, provided they were of native birth and had no Catholic affiliations, could achieve the lowest rank, but promotion was reserved for those who fulfilled certain "degree" obligations set by

the second- and third-degree members. Nomination to public office was reserved to third-degree members.

Although Know Nothings blamed some of the nation's problems on the overall increase in immigration, they concentrated their attacks on Catholic immigrants. "We are not now contending against foreigners, but against the principles of Roman Catholicism and its devotees," announced the Cleveland Know Nothing organ. As the Cincinnati *Times* explained it, "Romanism is the head and font" of Know Nothingism, while the proscription of all immigrants, known as "Native Americanism," was "secondary and contingent." Nativists justified this double standard on the grounds that "Protestant foreigners ... appear to be open to reason, and act in accordance with their convictions," while Catholic immigrants were thought to be hostile to American values (quoted in Anbinder, 110).

Vowing to reduce the political influence of immigrants and Catholics, the Know Nothings burst onto the American political scene in 1854 (Schwartz, 57). In the elections that year, they gained 43 Representatives on the American Party ticket, 27 congressmen from Know-Nothing lodges, and five Senate seats. By the end of the following year they had elected eight governors, more than one hundred congressmen, the mayors of Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago, and thousands of other local officials (Anbinder, 1992, ix). They also picked up where their forebears had left off in terms of destroying Catholic property, as shown by a series of articles in the July, 1854 issues of the Boston *Pilot*:

Catholic Church Blown Up

We learn by Mellen's Express, that the stone Catholic Church at Dorchester Lower Mills, not yet quite finished, was blown up by some explosive substance which was placed in the rafters of the roof on Monday night at about midnight. The noise of the explosion was heard, and is represented not to have been very loud. By the explosion one-half of the roof was blown off, the rest shattered, and the walls cracked so badly that they will have to come down. There was no smell of gunpowder and the opinion is expressed that something else than gunpowder was used. – *Traveller.*

Will some one give us the particulars of this outrage? We suspect it was another Know Nothing demonstration (July 8).

• • •

As we look into the organs of the Know Nothings, from the (Boston) *Bee* on down, it is not to be wondered at that the property of Catholics should be destroyed. There is nothing too foul for these papers to utter. The greater the lie, the more readily will it be swallowed by their dupes. We strongly urge upon our people to practice the greatest forbearance under the trying ordeal through which we are passing. This storm, we hope, will soon be over. ... (July 15).

• • •

Another Know-Nothing Demonstration

We learn that an attack was made upon the Catholic Church in Southbridge, Mass., on Friday night, the 14th, by some lawless person or persons, who was evidently inspired with the spirit of mobocracy so prevalent in many parts of the country at the present time. Windows were broken in, and considerable damage was done. The selectmen have taken the matter into consideration, and offered a suitable reward for the detection and conviction of those who committed the depredation. The probability is that they will never be caught. And if caught, will escape unpunished. Such are the laws under which we live (July 29).

Violence erupted as well on election day in St. Louis. The stabbing of an American by an Irish immigrant led to an all-out attack on Irish homes and businesses. A large number of rioters also gathered around Saint Louis University, a Jesuit institution, though ultimately it sustained no damage. Eight companies of militia were put on alert in an attempt to quash the brawling, which lasted for forty-eight hours.

Know Nothing Strongholds and Ideologies

According to Anbinder (1992), the heart of Know-Nothing ideology can be explained thus:

- Protestantism defined American society.
- Catholicism was incompatible with basic American values.
- Catholics had attained political power disproportionate to their numbers.
- There was antipathy for political parties and professional politicians.
- There were legal limitations on the extension of slavery and on liquor consumption.

The Know-Nothings were strongest in the Northeast, where a majority of immigrants had chosen to settle. They also had offices in several Southern states, making them just as geographically fractured as were the major parties. Campaign pamphlets issued in the north and south read like those of entirely different parties. Southern Know-Nothings wanted territorial expansion into regions where cotton culture could spread and a low tariff; they were anti-homestead-law and were opposed to government aid for internal improvements. The Northern branch of the party advocated entirely the opposite of all those items. When party leaders attempted to appease Southerners by twice adopting platforms that preached acquiescence to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, most Northerners left the party. Those remaining in the Know-Nothing ranks tried to attract new members by promising that their party would promote sectional harmony, but their 1856 presidential candidate, Millard Fillmore, carried only Maryland.

The only thing holding party members together was their blind hatred of Catholicism (Billington, 1974). Their hysteria reached such a pitch that in 1854, when Pope Pius IX donated a block of marble for the under-construction Washington Monument, nativists smashed it to bits rather than have a patriotic building touched by anything "popish."

The *Pilot*, Boston's Irish Catholic newspaper, commented before reprinting an article from the *Truth Teller* regarding this event:

> Touching the know nothing outrage upon the Washington monument we need not add a word to the remarks of the *Truth Teller*. We may be permitted to observe, in passing, that the know nothings and the foreign anarchists hate the memory of Washington, and that, if he were alive, they would pursue him with a rancor even greater than that with which he was pursued by the prince of native radicals, – Thomas Jefferson.
>
> **The Vandals in our Midst.**
>
> The recent outrage at Washington in wantonly breaking to fragments the block of marble contributed by the Pope to the Washington testimonial is pregnant with much warning, and is mistakeable (sic) evidence that swarming all over the Union are a set of men regardless alike of the ordinance of God and the duty they owe their fellow men: a party, the existence and dissemination of whose principles which tolerated and suffered to bear fruit in our midst is fraught with much that is antagonistic to the true interests of the Republic, at a future day.
>
> The shattering to fragments of a piece of marble, though dishonorable and disgraceful in the extreme under the circumstances, is not after all the chief thing to be taken into account, but it is the malignity which dictated and the unbridled licentiousness which urged the perpetrators to its commission, a spirit which shows but too plainly the real state of things.
>
> Whether the deed was perpetrated by "Universal" Republicans from Central Europe or bigoted "*nativists*" at home, followers of Gavazzi and believers in every absurd and ridiculous story circulated by the contemptible mountebanks and knaves scattered so plentifully throughout the land is of little importance; they would have a monument but no "popish" contribution would be allowed to add to its proportions. . . . (April 1, 1854)

The *Pilot*'s Reaction to Know Nothing Campaigns

"Where have you been?" asked Mrs. Snob,
As Mr. Snob reel'd in the door;
"A pretty time to see your home;
I'm sure it's twelve o'clock – and more;
These midnight revels will not do,
Shame on you Snob, for acting so!
Where have you been? – I ask again;"
Says he, "dear wife, I do not know."

"A pretty plight your hat is in;
And see! Your coat is muddied o'er;
Your nose is like a to-ma-to,
And you can scarcely reach the door;
How came you so, you naughty man?
Say, Mr. Snob, how came you so?"
"My dearest wife, don't bother me, –
You've heard me say that I don't know."

"I don't know how I met the boys,
And how I made my maiden speech;
I don't know what 'twas all about,
Or whether 'twas a howl or screech.
I don't know if 'twas pop we drank.
Or whiskey, lager beer or rum;
I don't know how I broke my nose,
Or how I navigated *hum*."

"I see it all – you cruel man!"
Cried Mrs. Snob, excited, quite;
"You've joined the men who 'nothing know'
And you've been meeting them to-night.
Well, I'll forgive you, if you'll tell
Why they do meet in secret so!
Say, Mr. Snob, what do they do?"
"Why, Mrs. Snob, I do not know." (August 12, 1854)

While the Know Nothings had made great strides at the local and state level in 1854, it was to the 1856 Presidential campaign that the *Pilot* looked with trepidation:

> . . . The election of 1856 will be a strange election. There will be issues of which the public never heard before, – we mean the whole American people, – and of which they will only hear at the moment of election, for the know nothings profess to be as silent as death. Happily, all are not thus silent, and the whole organization is not thus sure. Their papers betray them in talking a little too loudly about what is to come, and, when you forewarn a man, you forearm him. These know nothings then, have intimated their intention of making a grand combined movement in 1856. It is possible that they may be alive and well to accomplish their purpose. Their organization will not last long, – not two years longer than the hour of victory, – but it may do something while it last. At present, the chances are in favor of a national coalition between the whigs, the freesoilers, and the know nothings. The gentlemen last mentioned, like the ostrich, hide only their heads, and think that the whole body is covered. They think that, because they know nothing, other people know nothing. Prominent whigs, – men like Everett, will protest against the coalition, but, unless the House reject the Nebraska Bill, we think that they will protest vainly. If this coalition be forged, it is likely to succeed. True, its success will be ephemeral, but then, transient success contents these people.

> Unexpected moves may disturb the condition of the chess board, but we have described its present state. The Pilot will be true to its name should any change take place in the predicament of the channel.
> (March 18, 1854)

The *Pilot* took great interest in the unrest inherent in the Know Nothing Party as it attempted to nominate presidential and vice presidential candidates in 1856. It dispassionately detailed the travails of the nominating convention in February 1856, split, as was the country, between north and south on the slavery issue. Ultimately two Know Nothing conventions were held. The one in Philadelphia eventually nominated Millard Fillmore. The other, in New York, nominated Colonel John Fremont. The *Pilot*'s New York correspondent pointed out the interesting contradiction:

> Our know-nothing bolters who cannot swallow Fillmore are here in session. They want to nominate a president, but are waiting for the black republicans to take the lead. Both seem inclined to nominate Fremont and Banks, instead of Fillmore and Donelson. If this is done we shall see the strange sight of this Anti-Catholic, dark-lantern, oath-bound party nominating a Catholic and the son of a foreigner, for the highest office in the gift of the people! For a Catholic to be put into the Presidential chair by the party whose only creed is a hatred and persecution of Catholicity, will be in the world's history like England restoring Pope Pius VII (sic) to Rome, a proof that governments and parties are unwilling instruments in God's hands to use as he will (June 21, 1856).

The principal objection to Fillmore was that, in the *Pilot*'s words, he could not be

> . . . relied on questions dear to the anti-slavery party. He had, while accidental president, signed the fugitive slave bill, and on the poor pretence that the fact that he had been elected as an anti-veto man compelled him to do so, has not reconciled the party to the deed (June 28, 1856).

A more minor objection seemed to be that he had been more or less informally initiated into the Know Nothings, having taken the oaths in a hotel room rather than a Know Nothing lodge.

While the New York convention recommended Speaker of the House Nathaniel Banks' nomination, without going so far as actually to nominate him, he withdrew himself from consideration and endorsed Fremont, who had been his primary competitor. A delegation from the New York convention then traveled to Philadelphia and declared Fremont their nominee. William R. Dayton of New Jersey, a committed nativist, was given the vice presidential slot. The *Pilot* noted part of Ohio governor Ford's congratulatory speech following the nominations: "It is our mission to spread Americanism and oppose slavery. The Papacy and the slaveholder are alike enemies to liberty, and alike seek to oppress."

In the end, of course, James Buchanan took the victory, prompting the *Pilot* to declare Know Nothingism more or less dead:

> The election just terminated is of vast importance, as expressive of the judgment of a majority of the States upon a vital question of constitutional right. We believe that in no State did Know-Nothingism stand alone as an issue. The Fremonters stood upon Know Nothingism, the authority of Congress to impress upon the territories the character of their internal institutions, and the non-admission, hereafter, of Slave States. The Fillmore party stood upon Know-Nothingism and non-exclusion of new Slave States. They have carried one State – Maryland. . . . The old line abolitionists, who have for years frankly advocated disunion, saw this plainly, and, contrary to their usual practice of not voting for any presidential candidate, they have used all their influence in support of Fremont, openly avowing that their reason for doing so was that his election would surely pave the way for a speedy dissolution of the slavery-sanctioning Union. We acquit the majority of the Fremont party of any such purpose. The worst that can be said of them in connection with the slave question is that they are victims to a superficial philanthropy. We also acquit the Fremont managers of any such design. – They only aimed at getting into power, but they would have found it difficult to restrain their party from forcing through their measures with disunion in the train. But the question is settled now for four years at least. The party that stood pledged to carry out the idea of governing the South, will not have the control of any branch of the government. – The South will not be excluded from its proper representation in the cabinet. The Know-Nothings, trampling alike on the letter and the spirit of the Constitution, will have no voice in the cabinet, and their present force in the House will be reduced by about forty votes (November 15, 1856).

Chapter 4: 1920s Nativism and the Catholic Press

According to Higham (1992, 179),

> . . . the new religious xenophobia in the years after 1910, while building on the historic identification of popery with tyranny, went significantly further. It frequently displayed a subdued but unmistakably progressive response to social problems; its principal spokesmen hinted that the Pope stood in the way of all social improvement; and there is reason to suspect that much of the energy behind the movement came from a displacement or distortion of anti-monopolistic sentiment.

In the wake of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, a "monopolist" was one of the worst things a person could be called in the 1920s. Monopolies were viewed as anti-democratic, and propagandists viewed the Catholic church the same way: as an impediment to progress and democracy.

Prior to World War I, the philosophy which prevailed with respect to the various ethnic elements in the population was symbolized by the phrase "the melting pot." The term was introduced by Irving Zangwill in his play of the same name:

> America is God's Crucible, the great Melting Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming! – Here you stand good folk, think I, when I see you at Ellis Island, here you stand, in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages and histories, and your fifty blood hatreds and rivalries. But you won't be long like that brothers, for these are the fires of God you come to – these are the fires of God. A fig for your feuds and your vendettas! German and Frenchmen, Irishman and English, Jews and Russians, into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American! . . . The real American has not yet arrived. . . . He will be the fusion of all races, perhaps the coming superman . . . . Ah, what is the glory of Rome and Jerusalem, where all races and nations come to worship and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all nations come to labour and look forward! (quoted in Berry, 1965, 248).

World War I proved Berry's assertion that assimilation is not automatic. Millions in the country could not read, speak, or write the English language. Not even half of the voting-age foreign-born white males were citizens. A multitude of newspapers and periodicals were being published in foreign languages. Immigrants banded together in

"colonies" in the cities (see Kelly, 1939); and foreign governments encouraged their nationals, with a good deal of success, to retain their initial allegiance.

The "Americanization Movement" came into being as a result. It was a well-organized effort to reverse the immigrants' natural tendencies described above. Many agencies participated in the movement – public schools, patriotic societies, chambers of commerce, women's clubs, public libraries, social settlements, and even industrial plants where foreigners were employed (Berry, 248). Catholic bishops, however, had earlier adopted a strategy of "ethnic parishes" to serve immigrants, thereby encouraging them to stay in neighborhood enclaves and worship in their native language.

Americanization

World War I prompted a rise in nationalistic sentiment which demanded total loyalty and conformity. According to Dumenil (1988, 4),

> The war also served to highlight dramatically an issue that had been plaguing native Americans for decades: the presence of unassimilated immigrants who increasingly served as scapegoats for the host of problems associated with the processes of urbanization and industrialization. ... The Red Scare, the immediate legacy of war-born hysteria, lasted a relatively short time, but the insistence on 100% Americanism on the part of threatened old-stock Americans persisted throughout the decade with Catholics constituting one of many "out groups" to bear the brunt of the animosity and discrimination.

Wartime nativism was the essence of the "100 per cent American" movement. The one hundred per centers demanded, as Higham (1992, 205) says, "universal conformity organized through total national loyalty." Hallmarks of the movement included a spirit of duty to the nation – the idea that service to one's country equalled "patriotism."

The essential duty, however – as it would be several decades later in the McCarthy era – was right-thinking.

Immigration Restriction

The number of immigrants continued to grow throughout the Progressive era, and so did the immigration restriction movement. Whereas nineteenth-century nativism had been concentrated in urban areas, its twentieth-century counterpart took hold in the rural South and the far West. Its twentieth-century proponents still included the "native American" working class, but also received the support of intellectuals (Higham, 1992).

The United States Immigration Commission, formed in 1907, greatly influenced the course of immigration policy. The commission, composed of three senators, three representatives, and three presidential appointees, undertook a far-reaching survey of immigration's impact on American life, and published it in forty-two volumes in 1911.

The report delineated an interesting contrast between the old and the new immigrants. According to Barkan (1996, 4-5), "the old immigrants were portrayed as hardy pioneers who had helped develop the United States and had become an integral part of the nation, while the new immigrants were viewed as latecomers who had migrated to cash in on American prosperity and had failed to assimilate with the older generation."

By an 8-1 vote, the commission concluded that immigration restriction was "demanded by economic, moral, and social considerations" and recommended the enactment of a literacy test, whereby admittance to the United States would be denied anyone who could not read or write *any* language, not merely English. Again this was a

jab at the Germans – whether Lutheran or Catholic – arriving or already living here, many of whom clung to old traditions and loyalties and refused to be assimilated.

The commission's recommendation again brought the issue to the forefront, and six years later Congress finally passed a literacy test bill, quickly vetoed by President Taft. In 1915 and again in 1917 President Wilson vetoed similar measures, on the premise that literacy was a result of opportunity rather than character. By 1917, however, the Congressional restrictionists had gained strength and passed the test over Wilson's veto.

The Immigration Act of 1917 nevertheless failed to deny entry to hundreds of thousands of immigrants between 1918 and 1921. Many Americans were convinced that the volume of immigrants had exceeded the nation's ability to absorb them, and that the Americanization movement had failed, rendering these newcomers unassimilable.

According to Barkan (10-11), however,

> . . . the moves almost to shut the nation's doors were more than the consequence of the widespread postwar disillusionment, fears of unrest by foreign-born agitators, and growing isolationism. The increasing numbers of immigrants from Canada, Mexico, and the West Indies lessened the business community's need for European workers. Immigrant communities thus lost that important political voice on their behalf, one that might have counterbalanced the alarmists and nativists and reassured mainstream Americans. It was an influential voice they could not replace because so large a percentage of foreigners were not yet citizens and could not vote; they lacked political clout. No other powerful interest group arose to thwart the restrictionists, or to counter such remarks as those by Congressional leader Albert Johnson, in December 1920: "The welfare of the United States demands that the door should be closed to immigrants for a time. We are being made a dumping-ground for the human wreckage of the [world] war. And worst of all, they are coming in such numbers at a time when we are unable adequately to take care of them."

President Harding signed the Emergency Quota Act in May 1921. According to Barkan (11), "[I]t imposed a ceiling of 357,800 immigrants annually from outside the Western Hemisphere, with more than half set aside for northern and western Europeans (based upon 3 percent of the foreign-born population in 1910)." The Dillingham law, as it

was known, did more than declare unwelcome certain types of individuals, such as anarchists and prostitutes. It now claimed specific nationalities to be less desirable than others (Barkan, 11).

Representative Albert Johnson and Senator David Reed took the next legislative step after Dillingham. The Johnson-Reed Act, enacted on May 26, 1924, broke a good deal of new ground. Congress agreed to base permanent quotas for each nationality on the total of each one's number in the population as a whole, according to an assessment of the 1920 census (Barkan, 14). The National Origins program, scheduled to be developed over a period of three years, eventually began in 1929. The act used a formula of 2 percent of the foreign born in 1890, with a maximum of less than 165,000. Over two-thirds of the total were designated for Germany, Great Britain, and Ireland (Barkan, 13), in another attempt to stem the tide of mostly Catholic immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. Congress again exempted immigrants from the Americas, while almost entirely excluding Asians, a category of persons which the courts had recently reaffirmed as "aliens ineligible for citizenship."

According to Barkan (14-15),

> In calculating the nation's national origins, almost ninety-five million white persons in the 1920 census were separated by whether their roots were in the colonial period or later, a procedure that very much weighted the results in favor of the English. (Sixty percent of white persons in 1790 were determined to have been of English extraction.) The revised guidelines set a limit of about 153,700, with 43 percent for Great Britain, 17 percent for Germany, and 12 percent for Ireland. The National Origins formula hurt many others: for example, Italians had averaged nearly 158,000 per year prior to 1920 but were given an annual quota of 5,802. An average of 17,600 Greeks had been admitted previously, while their quota was now merely 307.

The Immigration Act of 1924 guided American policies until the nineteen sixties. There was little debate in Congress over the major restrictive features. It passed the

House 326-71 and the Senate 62-9 with only a handful of legislators from urban centers opposed (Shrover, 119).

The Rebirth of the Klan

The "second" Klan, as it is known to distinguish it from its Reconstruction-era forebear, was founded in Atlanta, Georgia on October 16, 1915, by William J. Simmons, whose father had been an officer in the original group. Simmons' group differed from the original Klan in two important ways: it was designed partly as a fraternal order, in the hopes that Simmons' pockets would be lined by selling insurance to members; and it accepted as members only native-born white Protestant males.

The new Klan's first five years were mostly unsuccessful ones. Anti-Catholic newspapers such as the notorious *Menace* – printed in a Missouri Ozarks town typical of the new nativism's stronghold – had their last gasp from about 1915-1920; the *Menace* had a circulation of 1,507,923 by April 1915. As such papers met their demise in the postwar period, however, the Klan was there to pick up where the papers had left off.

The "new" Klan was four to five million strong at its peak of influence, and strongest primarily in southern, midwestern, and middle Atlantic states. Their enemies list was long this time, but Catholics, along with blacks and Jews, were at the top of it. By the end of 1921, the Klan claimed to be operating in 45 states and enrolling a thousand members a day, and it had moved north of the Mason-Dixon Line and begun to attract national attention.

The *Catholic Register*'s Klan Coverage

The Kansas City *Catholic Register*, like its nineteenth century counterpart the *Pilot*, frequently printed articles from other papers, such as the following from the Little Rock *Guardian*:

Arkansas Klan Members Pick Klan Kustomers

—

Catholics, Negroes, and Jews Blunder Into Stores Bearing "100 Per Cent American" Signs."

—

The only way for some of us otherwise try-to-be-decent fellows, but not as yet Klansmen, can be politely served in some few Little Rock stores and restaurants is to wear our "nighties" and a mask. Then we know that we are wanted and our good money is acceptable to the Kompany's Kashier.

Some of the business men, glutted with profiteer wealth for the past few years are now in a financial condition to pick their "kustomers."

Several of these opulent proprietors do not want the shadow of Jew, Catholic, Negro or Foreigner to cross their door-posts, nor their 100 per cent coin contaminated with the legal tender of these several classes of our citizens.

Here and there throughout the city are establishments branded as Klan centers by the signs on windows and walls, which read, "100 PER CENT AMERICAN" and "STRICTLY AMERICAN." These much-abused slogans of honor and patriotism have reached their final disgrace, let us hope, in their present insulting affront to American citizenship in general.

We would not mind it so much if these bigoted trafficers displayed their patronage choice by displaying their white nighties and their masks, then we would know them for what they are. As it is some very decent citizens, not aware of the bann, may drop in where they are not wanted, but it will not be long before the general public will condemn this un-American plan of Klan, Klan advertising.

Already in the case of a few hitherto popular cafes the "Let's Eat" sign accompanied by the Klan star and its 100 per cent attachment, for the most of us spell out "Let's Pass" and we go with our appetites and American money to warm-hearted, truly American public caterers, boycotting, if you will, our K.K. Katerers. And so shall we pass along and note the place where the bigoted bann is advertised on walls and windows. We may need their goods – they do not want our money – but we do not feel like forcing ourselves upon them – so it is just LET'S PASS (reprinted in May 11, 1922 *Catholic Register*).

Whereas the Know Nothings had taken on institutions (burning churches and convents, for example), the Klan tended to go after individuals, as demonstrated by the following dispatch printed in the *Catholic Register* (March 23, 1922):

PRIEST THREATENED BY KU KLUX KLAN IN TEXAS

—

Father La Plante of Beaumont Warned To Cease Teaching Negro Persons

—

Beaumont, Tex., March 22. – Evidence that a showdown between the law and gangs that have been terrorizing the countryside through attacks on citizens of both races and varying age developed at a meeting of the Beaumont city commission last night when a reward of $500 in each of the two recent cases was posted by the city, under an act passed under suspension of rules.

The most recent development is the receipt of two notes received at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament, a Catholic Church for Negroes, one note stating the church building is to be bombed and the other ordered the pastor, Father Alexander A. La Plante, to leave the community within the next few days.

Catholic citizens have called upon officials to see neither of these outrages is perpetrated, and it is not unlikely a system of guarding the church will be devised.

Priest Will Stay.

Father La Plante does not intend to leave the community but will disregard the warning.

The notes received at the Catholic Church said:

"To the pastor:

"We disapprove of a white priest to teach Colored persons. So we warn you to levae the town within a week. If you are caught here after that time we will tar and feather you.

(Signed) "K. K. K."

Another note said:

"To the congregation:

"We forbid you to come to listen to this white priest. Keep away. We will dynamite the place.

(Signed) "K. K. K."

The Klan invaded Kansas City in the fall of 1922, and the *Catholic Register* soon had the opportunity to see Klan activities and propaganda up close. The following stories are typical of their coverage.

Thousands Swarm To the Klan Meeting At Convention Hall

—

Sixty Per Cent of the Audience Composed of Women, Many With Babes in Arms

—

Imported Spellbinders Spend the Entire Evening Venting Hate Upon Clergy, Nuns, and Laity.

—

The big three-ring circus opened with blare of trumphets (sic) and the help of hundreds of police at Convention Hall Tuesday afternoon, featuring an all-star aggregation in the ancient drama entitled, "Anti-Catholic to the Core." The festivities lasted far into the evening.

The hall was sadly inadequate for the multitude that arrived.

A small class was given the treasonous oath of allegiance to the Klan during the afternoon. But several hundred members were in attendance although Klan officials had expected many more. Police patrolled the outside of the building but many other police entered and left the hall at will, although the meeting was a "closed" one – none being allowed entry without the pass word.

Klan officials claim a large percentage of the police as members. They proved it to our entire satisfaction at this meeting.

But if the afternoon meeting was a "bloomer," the night "open" meeting was a "whiz-bang." The thousands of tickets distributed through the mail, on street cars, through members and with circular letter invitations, found a willing reception into anyone's hands the little orange card boards fell into. All were consumed with curiosity – especially the women, for this was the first meeting held by the Klan in this district in which the entire family was invited. Heretofore a Klan member was forbidden to disclose his identity to not only the regularly constituted law authorities when under oath but even unto his beloved spouse. He could tell her he had joined an organization, but he could not tell her it was the Klan.

So curiosity and the free ticket was the impelling power that drew the thirty thousand like a huge magnet to the doors of Convention Hall.

The circular letters said to arrive early so as to get a good seat. This suggestion was taken by the majority as the crowds began arriving as early as half past six o'clock and within the hour the hall was so jammed that doors were closed and the announcement was made that no more would be admitted.

The East and West doors of the South entrance were used and lines were formed for entry that reached up Central clear to Twelfth street and as far down as Wyandotte, where it met the other line that had formed from the East door and down Thirteenth to Wyandotte and then up to Twelfth street. These lines were not diminished when the doors were closed and the people were still arriving in a steady stream.

Many came on foot, a few on horseback, but most of them arrived in automobiles. The country contingent formed a steady stream coming in from the Eastern country district and coming in the Fifteenth street road straight to Baltimore avenue. The south country boys came in by way of Broadway and they formed a line, more broken however than that from the East. ...

The curiosity that brought many normal minded people to the hall to find out just what the Klan represents, was soon turned into a seething mass of irresponsible people when the song of hate of the Klan was unloosed by the imported professional spell-binders. From a tiny spark of curiosity, speaker after speaker fanned that spark into an ever-widening gulf

of flame and poison. Seeds were sown that immediately sprang up and blossomed into the most poisonous of flowers. Even the poor old yarn of the Good Shepherd Convent was dusted off and brought out and given to the multitude as a local example of the rotteness of the Church. And all by imported commercial bigotry peddlers.

Only one of the many speakers was a Kansas Cityan. That one was Glen Bruner, whose father was a member of the A.P.A in the olden days but sold them out and became a stool-pigeon for several of our Catholic leaders. The rest of them were interlopers, although two of them were pastors of local churches. ...

(N.B. : At the time, Bruner was a candidate for circuit court judge.)

Five speakers were on the platform. They were John R. Jones, kleagle of the klan; the Rev. E. L. Thompson, pastor of the Jackson Avenue Christian church, Seventeenth street and Jackson avenue; the Rev. John W. Darby, pastor of the Central Christian church, Twenty-seventh street and Wabash avenue; William Parker, editor and publisher of the Menace of Aurora, Mo., and Glen L. Bruner...

The Rev. Thompson followed the kleagle. Thompson immediately tried to turn it into a political meeting ... when he announced that he was a Texas Democrat but wouldn't vote the ticket as long as there were any Catholics holding office under that regime. . . like all of his ilk he immediately switched the burden onto the Catholics. The Catholic Register was particularly to blame, he said.

"Last week (October 5, 1922) there appeared in the Catholic Register, the official publication of the Catholic Church in Kansas City, a list of Kansas City businessmen who belong to the Klan. All Catholics were asked to boycott these merchants. I believe the Klan is justified in boycotting all Catholic merchants and business men in the face of the order given to Kansas City Catholics," he said.

The Rev. Thompson did not, however, say that the list that was printed had been circulated as monthly publication by the local Klan long before the Register ever heard of it and that this means of boycotting the Catholics was also proving profitable as a commercial proposition as each name listed was charged for at the rate of $1.50 per month – a total of about $600 a month for a book that cost less than fifty dollars to produce. ...

Although there has been only one Catholic mayor in the history of Kansas City, and that one nearly fifty years ago, Bruner charged that the Catholic Church and her clergy had always been active in politics in Kansas City. Then he shot one of Kleagle Jones's broadsides at the audience when he said:

" ...It is a matter of common knowledge that the Democratic political machine of Kansas City is one of the best organized and perhaps the most powerful political machines in the entire United States." ...

Bruner meant to convey that because he was not a Catholic he could not get a place on the Democratic ticket. ...

(Catholic Register, October 12, 1922)

KlEagle Jones Publicly States
That Klan Is Organized To
Destroy the Catholic Church

—

And Then the Soaring KlEagle Bewailed The
Register's Attack on "Poor Harvey"
Hoffman.

—

The Catholic Register represents an "Invisible Empire," expressing the will, and carrying out the orders of a foreign "potentate."

Some confession, eh?

We haven't confessed, but our reporter learned it all at a meeting of the Klan in the Grand Avenue Temple Tuesday night. The Register is an alien publication, so says Kleagle Jones of the Ku Klux Klan.

Kleagle Jones, who by the way is the local salesmanager for the Klan, was making an appeal for members at the Grand Avenue Temple. The suckers with their ten dollars were not so numerous as in the period preceding the exposure of the Klan. The Goblin wanted business; the ten dollars, provided enough joined, would swell his bank account.

Waxing eloquent in an appeal, after it was apparent that the throng would not rush forward with ten dollars as readily as he had anticipated, Goblin Jones issued a warning coupled with a rehearsal of what had appeared in the recent issues of The Catholic Register.

"There are two invisible empires in this country of ours," he went on. There was a pause while the Goblin rubbed his hands and then paced up and down the platform. A great secret was to be unfolded and Jones was working his audience to the point of expectancy. There was silence, the sound of a pin could have been heard. Then the great mystery was revealed.

"One invisible empire," the Goblin continued, "is the Ku Klux Klan, an organization formed to protect womanhood, the public schools and to free America from the encroachment of Rome." There was applause and the Goblin continued:

"On the other hand we have the invisible empire represented in the Catholic Church and whose will is expressed through The Catholic Register. This publication carries out the policies and expresses the will of a foreign potentate." More applause.

"In the last issue," the speaker proceeded, "it was said that R. D. Bise was the Grand Goblin, Mr. Jones chief clerk and that poor Harvey Hoffman had made twenty thousand dollars out of the Klan.

"When it was called to my attention, and I read the article, I asked poor Harvey to lend me ten dollars. He replied that if he had ten dollars that he would expend it in furthering the cause of the Klan which represents true Americanism.

In the meantime Harvey Hoffman was soliciting subscriptions for the Kansas City Freemason and smiled a grin of satisfaction as he heard the Goblin tell how poverty stricken Harvey is. Of course Harvey wouldn't want to compare his bank account of today with that before he joined the Klan and became chief promoter.

Jones wasn't through with The Register though. He had some more to say. It was a warning for his hearers not to believe any of the charges that men were enriching themselves through the Klan.

"Watch the next issue," the Goblin said, "and you will find it going to greater extremes in misrepresenting this great, national patriotic organization. Beware of what you read in its columns. Remember that it is the representative of the evil empire which the Klan is out to destroy."

"Poor Harvey Hoffman," the Kleagle said.

Harvey was a telephone lineman a few years back and came here as a strikebreaker. Today he rides around in a high-powered motor car, has a fine farm and a juicy bank account.

"Poor Harvey Hoffman," bewailed the Kleagle, despite the fact that it is said that Harvey has made already close to twenty thousand dollars out of the manipulations of the Klan.

"Poor Harvey," moaned the Kleagle. He didn't say anything about the poor suckers who pay ten dollars (Catholic Register, September 28, 1922).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

It is clear, both from the *Catholic Register*'s Klan coverage and from a fuller read of the paper, that it has much in common with its nineteenth-century counterpart, the Boston *Pilot*. Although they were founded more than 60 years apart and folded more than 80 years apart (1836-1857 for the *Pilot*, 1899-1939 for the *Catholic Register*), their content was remarkably similar: birth, marriage, and death announcements; advertising; catechesis; humor; fiction; a "question box" to aid in knowledge of the faith; news from the immediate vicinity; and reprinted articles from other papers. Similar too were the important issues of their respective days, as discussed in these pages.

It is difficult to consider items such as content topic and tone, as noted in the Methodology, from anything other than the late-twentieth-century journalistic standards to which I am heir. Yet that is precisely what cannot be done. Applying Dicken-Garcia's criteria, however, I find that neither the *Pilot* nor the *Catholic Register* fits neatly into her categories. At best – as with all newspapers – they are an amalgam. Birth, marriage and death announcements certainly are local, social, personal items. Reprints of news stories from other cities' papers – something of a primitive forebear of a wire service, perhaps – clearly are national, impersonal, and event-centered.

Tone and form were the most difficult issues to decide in both papers. News stories often "editorialized," at least by twentieth-century standards. It was not uncommon to insert a jab at a political opponent into what we today would consider and write as a straight news story. Editors frequently used story space to speak directly to their readers,

as shown in the *Pilot* stories reprinted on page 28. The *Catholic Register*, 60 years later, appears to be no different – inserting opinions into headlines and unabashedly belittling foes in print.

The primary difference between the *Pilot* and the *Catholic Register* seems to be one of audience. 1850s Boston still was full of recently arrived Irish immigrants, and indeed, the *Pilot* printed columns of goings-on in the motherland biweekly. Irish clubs and businesses were frequent advertisers. It had one foot squarely in the "old country" while trying to adjust to the new.

The *Catholic Register*'s audience likely consisted of immigrants' Americanized or American-born children. Kansas City was not nearly the hotbed of immigration that Boston had been, nor was it nearly as urbanized. The primary threat to Kansas Citians came from the rural areas of the state, particularly the section of central Missouri known as "Little Dixie." It was there that the Klan and its sympathizers gained strongholds, fighting more with words and ideas than with their predecessors' fires and guns. The Kansas City audience had little reason to fear that their parishes would be torched, but every reason to believe that anti-Catholic prejudice still could and would make itself known.

One of my professors at Marquette taught me the single most important question to be asked about any research before its undertaking and after its results are in: "So what?" While I hope that the preceding pages have engaged rather than bored the reader, the answer to that question is perhaps a useful one.

I undertook this particularly narrow study, as noted in the Preface, simply because nobody else had. There are studies of ethnic newspapers (Park, 1922; Miller, 1987), and there are studies of Catholic ethnic newspapers (Hueston, 1976), and there certainly are plenty of studies on immigration. But there are not any studies of the way local Catholic newspapers, ethnic and otherwise, covered historical events important to their readers. Nor has there been a side-by-side treatment of nineteenth- and twentieth-century newspapers and the differences between their methods of reportage.

The results show that there was not a significant amount of difference. The years were different, but the issues – hostility toward Catholics and foreigners – were the same. Coverage, despite the changes in journalistic practices over the years studied, still did not vary dramatically, and in fact the next significant change in those practices would not occur until the 1930s.

A great deal remains to be done in this area. A monograph easily could be done on the similarities and differences in the school controversies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It may yet be beneficial to do what I initially intended, the same coverage as provided here but using national newspapers such as the *United States Catholic Miscellany* and *Our Sunday Visitor*. (Lack of access to the *Miscellany* helped prompt me to go local.) In a revision of the current work, I would expand the historical background. Some quotes assume knowledge that everyone may not possess, and a look at the Boston and Kansas City of the papers' times would be a useful contextual aid.

The University of Notre Dame's Catholic Americana collection is, in any case, the first and likely the last place to start any of the suggested undertakings.

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