Chapter 12

THE STATUS AND RIGHTS OF MINORITIES

INTRODUCTION

Governments exist to protect the rights of minorities. The loved and the rich need no protection — they have many friends and few enemies.

WENDELL PHILLIPS

When great changes occur in history, when great principles are involved, as a rule the majority are wrong. The minority are right.

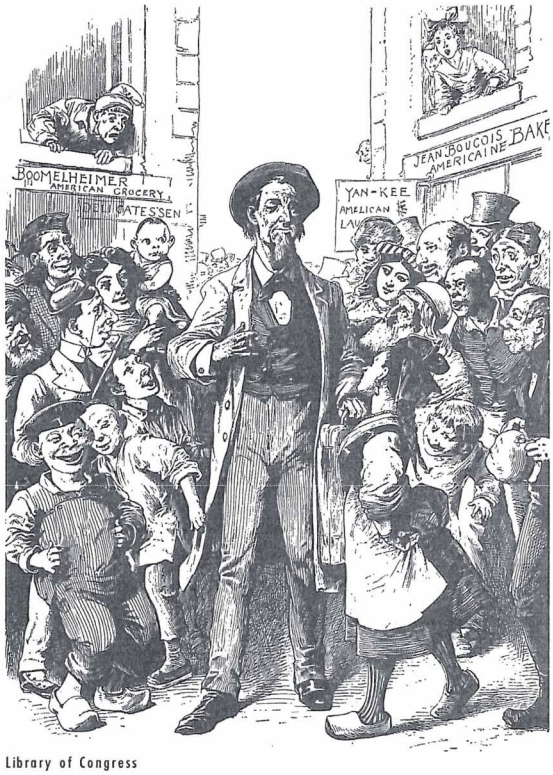
EUGENE V. DEBS

The thing we have to fear in this country, to my way of thinking, is the influence of the organized minorities, because somehow or other the great majority does not seem to organize. They seem to think that they are going to be effective because of their known strength, but they give no expression of it.

ALFRED E. SMITH

"MINORITY" SIMPLY MEANS the smaller part or number, but the problems of human minorities are more than mathematical. They arise out of poignant, complicated, disturbing, and even ugly human relationships. This "traumatic" quality is partly ascribable to the implication that being quantitatively smaller means being of inferior or subordinate status. However, what really makes human minorities problematic is not their numerical inferiority but their vulnerable social position.

Hence, the numerical diminution of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) majority from perhaps 80 percent in 1800 to a mere 35 percent or so by mid-twentieth century did not introduce a new minority problem in America. The WASP was not, by belonging to a particular ethnic-religious group, placed in a precarious social and psychological position. He was still at home and part of the dominant American tradition. He felt no need to change his name, to cloak his origins, to leave his ancestral faith, to change his nose or straighten his hair, to "pass" in one way or another. There was no social odium or stigma in being a WASP in America.



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"Unrestricted immigration and its results — the last Yankee"; drawing by Matt Morgan, 1888

of the new stocks on the standard Anglo-American model. According to George R. Stewart, this was the prevailing pattern of assimilation in the country's history, and it would be more apt to call it a "transmuting" than a "melting" pot.

However, all ethnic groups were not melted or transmuted out of existence. Many non-Anglo-Saxon minority groups maintained a vital subculture in the language and tradition of their forebears. Germans, Scandinavians, Irish Catholics, Italians, Jews, Poles, and other peoples successively established cultural enclaves and communities that have lasted down to the present.

This fact of "cultural pluralism" was later expressed as one of the major theories of Americanization, both by spokesmen for the ethnic groups and by intellectuals of older American stock. The United States, in their view, was a unique nation of nations, a people of peoples, rather than a European type of national state. If the United States was looked at as "a cooperation of cultural diversities, as a federation or commonwealth of national cultures," as Horace Kallen said in 1915, then the distinctive cultures, ways, and languages of the ethnic groups ought to be treasured and fostered — instead of wiped out in the melting or transmuting pots.

The melting-pot, Anglo-American conformism, and cultural pluralism represented potential positive solutions of the minority problem. They all implied some form of integration or harmonization of diverse strains. The negative solution of segregation — enforced or voluntary — was another matter. It entailed the physical or social exclusion of certain minority groups from the mainstream of American life.

The most notable examples of enforced segregation have been the Negro ghettos, (both in slave and free days), the Indian reservations, and the laws excluding Orientals from entry or citizenship. In addition, the Germans, Irish, and other groups have tried to live apart in separate ethnic territorial areas in order to preserve their special culture and way of life. Ethnic-religious groups, such as the Amish and the Hasidic Jews, have separated themselves completely or in essential respects from the larger society.

Examination of the two types of segregation — enforced and voluntary — indicates that either or both of two factors must operate in order for a minority group to persist in America over a long period. The first is some enduring ethnic, religious, or cultural characteristic, such as being Negro or Jewish, which makes the group stand out. The second is the willing identification of the individual members with the group. They must find vital value or social sustenance in being what they are and in retaining their special characteristics and identity. Otherwise, minorities such as Jews and

"Indeed the white Protestant American," Milton Gordon observed, speaking in 1964 of a somewhat larger class, "is rarely conscious of the fact that he inhabits a group at all. *He* inhabits America. The *others* live in groups. One is reminded of the wryly perceptive comment that the fish never discovers water."

All Americans may be said to be members of minorities in some sense. But their consciousness of belonging to a minority and the importance they place on it vary considerably with the particular minority. Some have been much more minor than others in social position and power; for example, the Indians and Negroes, as compared with the Scandinavians. Similarly, although all Americans originally were of immigrant stock, to be of Latin, Slavic, or Jewish descent made one more alien than being of British or northern European origin. And the members of the more minor breeds and strains have been far more conscious of their distinctness than have those of the standard brands.

This sense of special "peoplehood" — of belonging to a certain ethnic group and of being considered by others to belong to it — centers on the characteristics of "race," "religion," and "national origin." It is no accident that these three terms, which are used to proscribe discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and so forth, are the very ones that indicate the especially problematic minorities on the American scene.

The most obvious racial minorities have been the Indians, Negroes, and Orientals. The most obvious national minorities have been immigrants who were especially singled out as alien — Germans or Irish at one time, Italians or Slavs at another. The most obvious religious minorities have been the Roman Catholics and the Jews (who are also an ethnic group). In some cases race, national origin, and religion have coincided, as with the Irish and Italian Catholics, the Chinese and Japanese Buddhists, and the German and Russian Jews.

1. MINORITIES AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

FOUR BASIC CONCEPTS have dominated the American people's view of this wide variety of ethnic-religious groups: the melting pot, Anglo-American conformity, cultural pluralism, and segregation or exclusion.

The idea of "melting" the individuals of all immigrant stocks into a new American breed and culture goes back at least as far as St. John de Crèvecoeur. This American farmer of French birth and upbringing proclaimed in 1782: "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men." He included English, Scots, Irish, French, Dutch, German, and Swedes in the new "strange mixture of blood." By 1908 Israel Zangwill, who coined the term "melting pot," had added Jews and Russians, and was looking forward to God's emerging new creature, "the fusion of all the races, the coming superman." We may also add the Indian, Oriental, and Negro ingredients to the amalgam in Zangwill's pot.

The "melting-pot" metaphor expressed a favorite way of viewing the process whereby the diverse peoples of America would become one. Yet by the second half of the nineteenth century it was being seriously questioned whether all ethnic-religious groups were becoming, or could ever become, amalgamated in a new American race. As nativist, anti-alien sentiment mounted, it became clear that immigrants were being required to conform to an already established pattern instead of being invited to contribute to a new one. They were expected to become assimilated to the prevailing Anglo-Saxon-Protestant type of American.

Where such assimilation succeeded, the result was not a blending of various ethnic traits and cultural traditions but a recasting

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Whites shooting Negroes during a riot in Memphis, Tenn., May 1866

Catholics would have long since disappeared in the majority Anglo-American-Protestant culture — as did most of the descendants of the northern European immigrants. [For further discussion of many of the points touched on in this section and elsewhere in this chapter on minorities, see Ch. 10: PLURALISM.]

2. MINORITY RIGHTS

ASIDE FROM THE Bureau of Indian Affairs and the short-lived Freedmen's Bureau, there has never been any formal, legal recognition by the U.S. government of the existence of ethnic minorities, as has been common in many European, Middle Eastern, and Asiatic countries. When the equal rights of members of minority groups have in effect been affirmed, they have been considered as inhering in *individual persons or citizens* having the same natural and legal rights as anyone else. However, where equal rights have been denied to members of certain ethnic or religious groups by state or local governments, such persons have been considered *as a class;* and law, custom, and judicial decisions have been directed against them as a class. Hence, the struggle to attain minority rights in America has consisted in bringing about a change from class to individual considerations — ignoring completely the community life and culture of the minority involved. In this view, all that is required of the law and of government, if they are to be just, is that they be "color blind."

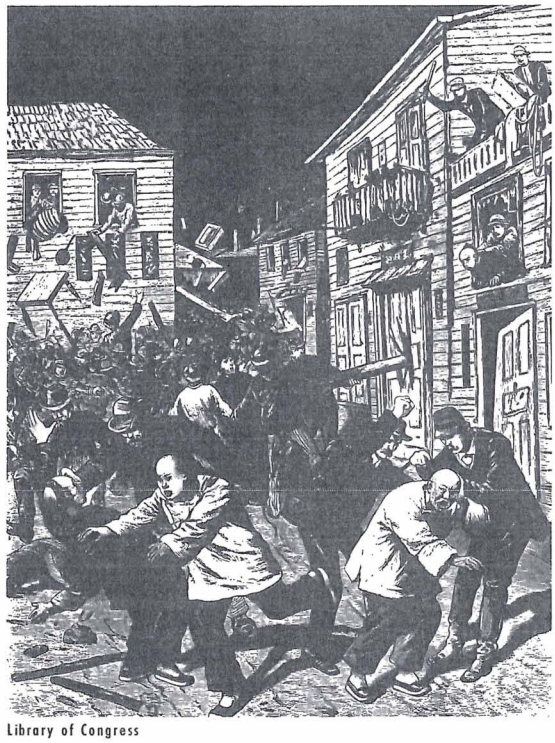
The discussion of minority rights before the Civil War — except for the special case of Negro slaves — centered on the rights of political, not ethnic, minorities. In the case of the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, foreigners were denied rights on political, not ethnic, grounds. The acts were directed against French Republican refugees who had joined the radical wing of the Jeffersonian Democrats, and who were considered

dangerous by the Adams administration. The Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions protested against these acts as tyrannical persecution by the ruling political majority, persecution that, as the resolutions pointed out, could just as well be directed against the citizen as against "the friendless alien."

After the Civil War, the discussion of minority rights centered mainly on questions of the rights of racial minorities, particularly the newly freed Negroes. The equal rights bestowed on Negroes by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments were largely nullified by legislation and other devices in the Southern states, and by Supreme Court rulings. The Court's basic position in these decisions was that the amendments guaranteed legal and political equality, but not social equality.

In the Civil Rights Cases of 1883, for example, the Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment gave Negroes the right to make contracts, undertake court actions, and the like, but not the right to be served in public places — not "the social rights of men and races in the community." Justice John M. Harlan, however, dissented, arguing that citizenship in this country imparts "at least equality of civil rights among citizens of every race in the same state," and that such equality rules out racial discrimination in access to public services. Such discrimination, he maintained, is a "badge and incident" of slave status, and a form of "class tyranny" whereby one class of human beings is subjected to the rule of another.

Harlan's warning that the Court's decision would foster discrimination against other races was soon justified. Between 1870 and 1900 the Chinese, mostly located on the West Coast, were subjected to discriminatory local, state, and federal laws and court decisions that barred them from living in certain areas and from attaining U.S. citizenship. Between 1900 and World War I, Japanese children were segregated in the public schools of San Francisco, and the Japanese were denied the right to own agricultural land in California.



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An anti-Chinese riot in Denver, Colo., 1880

The most notable case in American history of federal action against an entire ethnic group involved persons of Japanese ancestry during World War II. Under authority of congressional law and executive and military orders, all persons of Japanese ancestry, including native-born and naturalized citizens, were subject to removal from their homes and to transportation to assembly and relocation centers, where they might be held indefinitely. Lt. Gen. J. L. DeWitt, the military commander on the West Coast, ordered all Japanese evacuated from the area on the grounds that their presence produced a potential danger of sabotage and espionage. He portrayed them as "a large, unassimilated, tightly knit racial group, bound to an enemy by strong ties of race, culture, and religion," and hence constituting a potentially "subversive . . . enemy race."

The Supreme Court ruled in 1944 that "pressing public necessity" and "apprehension by the proper military authorities of the gravest imminent danger" made the temporary denial of equal rights to a whole ethnic group proper and constitutional; and that the orders involved no unreasonable impairment of "the civil rights of a single racial group," based merely on racial antagonism and prejudice. The dissenting justices, however, insisted that no evidence had been offered to show that the particular persons removed and detained were disloyal and potentially dangerous to the national security, and that no demonstration of "immediate, imminent," general danger had been made.

Justice Frank Murphy, dissenting, declared that the orders denied Japanese-Americans "their constitutional rights to live and work where they will, to establish a home where they choose, and to move about freely." The military measures, he said, "excommunicated" them without due process of law, and threw them into "concentration camps" on merely racial "blood" grounds, on the model of the Nazi racist regime that the United States was fighting. "All residents of this nation are kin in some way by blood or culture to a foreign land," Murphy concluded. "Yet they are primarily and necessarily a part of the new and distinct civilization of the United States. They must accordingly be treated at all times as the heirs of the American experiment and as entitled to all the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution."

That the "class" action against Japanese-Americans was an anomaly in federal law, a temporary wartime measure, became clear after World War II, when a flood of federal laws, orders, and court decisions asserted the equal rights of Americans of all backgrounds and races. The report of President Truman's Committee on Civil Rights in 1947, titled "To Secure These Rights," signaled the start of a dynamic new era, in which the federal government assumed "the lead in safeguarding the rights of all Americans," especially members of ethnic minorities.

3. THE INDIANS: FIRST COME, LAST SERVED

THE AMERICAN INDIANS — misnamed through Columbus' geographical error — are in many ways the most remarkable of all U.S. minority groups. The very first Americans (they were descendants of Asiatic immigrants who migrated to North America before 10,000 B.C.), they were the last ethnic group to receive full citizenship rights. Originally the majority race — numbering perhaps half a million people in the pre-Columbian era — they became a small, despised, and forgotten minority. However, the Indians are the one minority that has been treated officially as a separate nation — or nations — with a recognized bargaining status. "The Indian nations," Chief Justice John Marshall noted in 1832, "had always been considered as distinct, independent, political communities," with the power to make treaties and dispose of the lands they occupied. They retained this "national" status, in legal theory, until 1871.

The history of Indian-white relations up to that time is essentially the story of two opposing cultures and traditions that competed with one another for the possession of the land and the future. The stronger, newer, and more "progressive" culture won out in the inexorable conflict with the weaker, older, and more "backward" one. Good intentions, sincere friendliness, human concern, and even the most solemn treaty guarantees by the white Americans were unable to stem "the westward course of population" and the dispossession of the Indians. The people of the United States were unable to accommodate another

people and power in the land; hence, the Indians were pushed out of their territories and penned up in reservations, out of the way of the dynamic advance to the future.

The alleged justification for driving out the original people of the land was that they were uncivilized barbarians, barely above the animal state, with no real sense of property. Thus Hugh H. Brackenridge wrote in 1782 about the baseless claims of "the animals vulgarly called Indians" to a whole continent that they had never tilled, but only passed through — "not having made a better use of it for many hundred years, I conceive they have forfeited all pretense to claim, and ought to be driven from it." Later generations of pioneers and settlers had essentially the same view of the Indian claims.

The contrary was sometimes expressed. Jeremiah Dummer insisted in 1721 that America had not been "derelict lands," but had been "full of inhabitants, who undoubtedly had as good a title to their own country as the Europeans have to theirs." The New England colonists in particular were careful, as Dummer noted, to purchase the "titles" of "the native Lords of the Soil," and to see that they received just compensation. William Penn also was conscientious about making uncoerced purchases of the lands for his Pennsylvania colony, in order to obtain "good titles" from the native chiefs. The U.S. government during the early national period negotiated with the Indian tribes, and first used force against them when it expelled the Cherokees and Seminoles from their homelands in the 1830s.

The white men affirmed not only their right to expropriate the unused country but also their mission to civilize and Christianize the natives. The Indian must be civilized before he could be Christianized, according to missionaries such as John Eliot, and "civilization" meant an agricultural, as opposed to a hunting, economy. The Puritans and the early settlers generally were neither cultural nor religious pluralists. They regarded their civilization as the highest and most humane, and their religion as the only true one, which they were called on by Christ to bring to all mankind. They looked down upon the Indians as culturally, not racially, inferior.

William Byrd observed in the eighteenth century that the early Virginia settlers missed a golden opportunity to make peace with the Indians and convert them to Christianity at the same time, namely, by intermarriage. "A sprightly lover," he argued, "is the most prevailing missionary that can be sent amongst these, or any other, infidels," and it would also have solved the land-transfer problem. But for various reasons the settlers never adopted this genial method of evangelizing and civilizing the heathen.

In any case, most Indians did not adopt the white man's religion or his civilization. They felt, as the Seneca Chief Red Jacket said, that the Great Spirit had given them their own religion, teaching them to be thankful for the created world and to love one another — a religion fit for their own needs and understanding. They were unwilling to give up their traditional communal life and to become independent farmers and mechanics, as men like Thomas Jefferson and Carl Schurz hoped. Such well-intentioned whites were sincerely convinced that the tribal Indians could be transmuted into Anglo-American individualists without losing anything of value.

Schurz proposed in 1881 to do away with the "reservation system" and prepare the Indians to survive as separate individuals in the greater society. It would be easy to civilize them, he argued, by teaching them good work habits, giving them a good basic education, and cultivating in them the sense of individual property. Once the Indians be-

came individual property owners, holding titles the same as anyone else, they would sell what land they could not use and thus end the historic conflicts with would-be white settlers. Above all, "their tribal cohesion will necessarily relax and gradually disappear," said Schurz, and thus bring closer his proposed ideal goal — "the gradual absorption of the Indians in the great body of American citizenship."

Schurz's ideas were in part carried out in the General Allotment Act of 1887, which provided that Indian lands "advantageous for agricultural and grazing purposes" be divided into individual parcels and allotted to each member of the particular tribe — whether he wanted it or not. Each Indian would then become a citizen of the state or territory of his residence and of the United States, with the same duties and rights as any other citizen. The results, however, were not what Schurz and the authors of the bill intended.

Because the surplus lands left over after allotment had been sold to homesteaders, the next generation of Indians was left largely landless, with no way of making a living. By 1933 only 52 million acres of the original 138 million were left, and much of that was waste and desert. The new individual property owners did not become acculturated to white society, but merely lost their tribal cohesiveness and traditional culture, with nothing to put in their place. An Interior Department survey of 1926 reported that the Indians were a depressed group — economically, physically, and culturally — and unrelated to the surrounding society.

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 reversed the drive to break up the traditional tribal patterns, stopped the allotment of lands, returned surplus lands to the tribes, and provided for constitutional tribal self-government and a decrease of federal control. The aim of this new Indian policy, declared John Collier, the commissioner of Indian affairs, was to enable Indians to "lead self-respecting, organized lives in harmony with their own aims and ideals, as an integral part of American life." For perhaps the first time the government recognized the value of the Indians' own culture and abandoned the centuries-long attempt to make them live according to the white men's system of values. With Collier also came the official realization that for the Indian the land was not only a means of livelihood but also the source of his religious and social life and being.

Among the claimed results of the New Deal act were thriving self-governing Indian communities, more widespread education, better health, release from statutes virtually imprisoning Indians on reservations, and the full actualization of citizenship rights granted to all American Indians in 1924. The courts upheld Indian tribal property rights against the powerful railroads and against the U.S. government itself. In 1946 Congress created an Indian Claims Commission to enable Indians to bring claims against the United States without having to request separate acts of Congress.

In 1953 Congress reversed itself again, stating that U.S. policy toward the Indians was "to end their status as wards of the United States, and to grant them all the rights and prerogatives pertaining to American citizenship," and eventually to end all federal supervision and control of Indian affairs. Much criticism of this "termination policy" arose on the grounds that it would facilitate renewed exploitation of Indians by interested white men and corporations. In the 1960s the Kennedy and Johnson administrations once more discarded the goal of termination and aimed instead at making the Indians self-sufficient, fully participating, and equal citizens in the larger American community, while retaining their tribal identities and much of their culture. The chronic educational, vocational, housing,

The Smithsonian Institution

"Lo the poor Indian. Oh why does the white man follow my path!"; lithograph by Parsloe and Vance, 1875

and hygienic ills of the Indians made them one of the prime groups to be considered in the war against poverty declared by President Johnson in 1964.

The poignant fact about this oldest of U.S. minorities is that at mid-twentieth century most Americans remain ignorant of and unconcerned about their condition. Many persons, even those with a keen social conscience, seem surprised or embarrassed to learn that the "vanishing American" has not vanished after all — indeed his birthrate is twice the national average and his numbers have increased greatly. Apparently our minds and hearts are too concerned with the urgent problems of Negroes and Puerto Ricans to worry about the Red Man. Only a rare urban intellectual will find the time to write about a troubling new era of dishonor in white-Indian relations. [For a different view of the Indian, see Ch. 2: FRONTIER.]

4. THE IMMIGRANTS: HOSPITALITY AND ALIENATION

"ONCE I THOUGHT TO WRITE a history of the immigrants in America," said Oscar Handlin. "Then I discovered that the immigrants *were* American history."

The unique, monumental fact in this history is the migration of 41 million people to fill an almost empty continental domain. The story of America is largely the account of how these millions contributed to the making of a new people and a new nation out of many nations and many peoples.

Here the word "immigrants" refers to what Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., called the "voluntary Americans," those who came of their own free choice (including the people who migrated as indentured servants or under the "redemptioner" system). It excludes those who were brought against their will to serve as chattel slaves. (For a discussion of the latter, see Section 6 below.)

Attitudes of "old Americans" to the newcomers have varied from openhearted welcome to hostile exclusion. Even in the early era of the new country a completely "open," hospitable attitude was offset by the feeling that certain immigrants were outsiders who would never fit into the prevailing Anglo-American culture. For example, although Benjamin Franklin informed prospective new immigrants in the 1780s that "strangers are welcome, because there is room enough for them all, and therefore the old inhabitants are not jealous of them," he was irate at the German immigrants who stubbornly retained their Old-Country language and ways, so "'tis almost impossible to remove any prejudices they may entertain."

In addition to this resentment against foreign manners and culture, quite early there arose a suspicion as to the political assimilability and loyalty of immigrants from continental Europe. Both conservative Federalists

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"Welcome to all!"; drawing by Joseph Keppler for "Puck," 1880

and liberal Democrats shared this attitude, but for different reasons. The Adams administration, as we have seen, feared that French radical refugees would subvert the American political system and would aid their native land in the cold war then going on between France and the United States. But long before this, in 1781, Jefferson had viewed with abhorrence the prospect of thousands of immigrants imbued with "the maxims of absolute monarchies." People so raised, he argued, could not become devoted to the American system, based "on the freest principles of the English constitution," but would transmit their monarchical principles to their children and warp America's republican legislation.

Despite these discordant notes, the predominant mood in the early era was one of hospitality. Both Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton avidly looked forward to "the importation of useful artificers" from Europe's rich store of skilled laborers. In general, the attitude was one, like Crèvecoeur's, of welcoming the addition of non-English stocks to make a unique, new American mixture. It was even proposed, by Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams, that the national seal of the United States include the emblems of England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, and Holland, to indicate "the countries from which these states have been peopled." And Jefferson established the traditional American attitude when in 1801 he called on the United States to become the "asylum" for "oppressed humanity."

Aside from the temporary repressions of the Adams administration, immigrants during this early period had the same basic rights and freedoms as other Americans. They could become citizens after a short period of residence — originally two, then five, years — and in some states they could vote even before they attained U.S. citizen-

ship. They were permitted, if they so desired, to retain their Old World culture and language — in press, pulpit, and school. And they felt free to express criticisms of the U.S. system of government and society without fear of reprisal.

For the first fifty years or so of the republic, the older Americans seem not to have felt tense about the presence of the newer Americans and to have been confident about their capacity to absorb the new strains and fit them into American life. But the first waves of the great Irish and German immigration, beginning in 1830, were soon followed by an antagonistic reaction from some older groups. By 1835 Native American parties were being formed in New York and other large cities, culminating in the 1850s in the American, or Know-Nothing, Party.

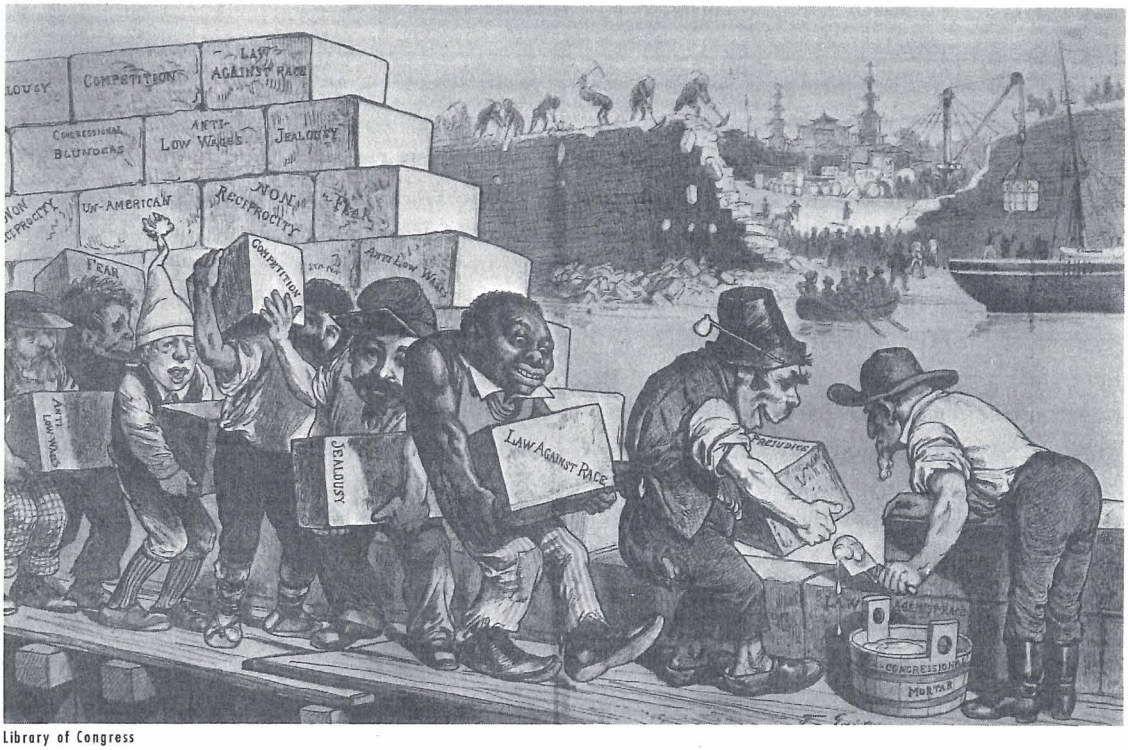
This movement, called "nativism" by contemporary critics and later historians, proclaimed that it was defending "Americanism" against the "un-American" tendencies or plots of certain foreign minorities. The alleged conspiracies usually were attributed to the new Irish Roman Catholic immigrants, who, according to Native American spokesmen, were directed by European absolutist regimes in league with the pope. The nativists, who called for national unity and homogeneity at a time of intense sectional conflict, took over the government of seven states in 1854-1855 and elected seventy-five of their candidates to Congress.

The nativist apologists argued that new conditions and a new type of immigrant demanded a reversal of the traditional "open door" policy, especially in regard to naturalization. The readily assimilable immigrants of former times, they claimed, were now being supplanted by vast hordes of the "dregs" of Europe, who came to "work a revolution from 'republican freedom' to monarchical absolutism." Like Jefferson in 1781, the nativists feared that a man brought up under one system of government was incapable of transferring his "natural fealty" to another. Hence, if the American system was to be preserved, declared the Native American platform of 1845, "the election franchise . . . can only be entirely secure when held exclusively in the hands of natives of the soil." The party proposed, however, "as a boon," to extend the residence requirement for naturalization to twenty-one years and to limit all nominations to public office to native-born citizens. The Know-Nothing platform of 1854 also called for the exclusion of Catholics from political office.

The nativist appeal for restrictions and exclusion did not go unanswered by the protagonists of the open, egalitarian, cosmopolitan ideal. "I am not a Know-Nothing," Abraham Lincoln declared in 1855. "How can anyone who abhors the oppression of Negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people? . . . When the Know-Nothings get control, it [the Declaration of Independence] will read 'all men are created equal, except Negroes, *and foreigners, and Catholics.*' "

Similarly, Schurz, a German refugee of 1848 and a leader of the new Republican Party, appealed to America in 1859 to keep on being "the republic of equal rights, where the title of manhood is the title to citizenship," the land of freedom, equality, and opportunity *for all.* Under the American system, he argued — against a typical Know-Nothing proposal to deny voting rights to newly naturalized citizens for two years — there cannot be "different rights between different classes of people." There can and must be no restriction on suffrage, based on discriminations of creed, race, or national origin.

The nativistic nationalism of the Know-Nothings succumbed to the sectional conflict between North and South, and in the post-Civil War era the views of Lincoln and Schurz at first prevailed. The newly reunited nation welcomed and even invited a



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"The Anti-Chinese wall — the American wall goes up as the Chinese original goes down"; cartoon pertaining to the 1882 law which restricted Chinese immigration

vast horde of new immigrants to provide the labor for its farms, mines, and factories. The old ideal of the cosmopolitan nationality — "that wonderful mixture," in Schurz's words, of "all the social and national elements of the civilized world" — reasserted itself. Lowell, Holmes, Emerson, Whitman, and Melville sang paeans to the assimilative power of the great mixed American nationality.

Germans and Scandinavians colonized the Middle West, while the Irish continued to flock to the Northeastern states. French-Canadians inundated New England in its "second colonization," and a new wave of Britishers became the second largest element (after the Germans) in the new post-war immigration. All of them had the same problems of adjustment to a new milieu and culture that previous generations of uprooted strangers had had, and they tended to huddle in enclaves at first. And all of them, with the exception of the easily assimilable British elements, encountered some resentment at their strange ways and speech.

There was a recurrence of the old anti-Irish, anti-Catholic suspicions, the beginnings of a socially discriminative anti-Semitism, the arising of a fear of radical European socialism, and a reassertion of the Anglo-Saxon ideal of Americanism. But the prewar nativist animus against foreigners as such was lacking in the 1865-1880 era. It was felt that all the strange and irritating qualities of the newcomers would disappear in the great assimilation process.

Then, after 1880, came the deluge — the arrival of millions of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. These Slavs, Italians, and eastern European Jews were much stranger and more upsetting than the older generations of immigrants. They came at a time of industrial conflict, economic depression, unemployment, and vast social upheavals. The cry went up to stem the tide and close the gates to unrestricted immigration in order to support the living standards

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"Looking Backward. They would close to the newcomer the bridge that carried their fathers over"; 1893

of American labor, to retain the unity and integrity of the American people, and to save America's institutions and its culture.

For the first time a distinctly racial or ethnic criterion (among white men) became central in determining who could or could not be an American. The distinction now was not merely between native- and foreign-born Americans but among people of different ethnic backgrounds, whether they were native or not, whether they spoke and looked American or not. Moreover, these ethnocentric pronouncements did not come merely from the mouths of irresponsible extremists and hatemongers but from highly moral, socially concerned, and intelligent men, such as Josiah Strong, Edward A. Ross, and John R. Commons. Those who most eloquently espoused the cause of the common man and envisioned a decent and just society were among the loudest in calling for ethnic restriction and selection in immigration.

The first main assumption of this line of argument was that certain ethnic stocks are morally and intellectually superior to others, and that only closely similar stocks should be mixed with the original American stock. Henry Cabot Lodge, who spelled out this conception of "race" in 1896, widened the admissible ethnic strains to include Germans and Scandinavians, as well as peoples from the British Isles. If unlimited numbers of "people of alien or lower races of less social efficiency and less moral force" were allowed to pour in, Lodge concluded, the consequence would be the absorption and destruction of the superior by the inferior race, and the end of America's Anglo-Saxon-Nordic civilization.

The second main assumption was that only immigrants who could fit some uniform mold of culture and manners were desirable. The new type of immigrants, it was charged, did not follow Crèvecoeur's admonition to slough off their Old World "prejudices and manners" and take on "new ones from the new mode of life." On the

"What Happened To The One We Used To Have?"

contrary, they huddled in ethnic enclaves or ghettos and kept to their old habits and native languages. Moreover, to the middle-class, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant reformers and social workers, the personal and social habits, manners, and morals of the new immigrants were quite shocking. And the newcomers were the main supporters of the corrupt political bosses whom the reformers were fighting in the big cities.

Those who opposed the calls for exclusion espoused the old ideas of Anglo-American conformity and the melting pot or the new ideas of cultural pluralism. Theodore Roosevelt, in 1888, contended that "instead of the old American stock being 'swamped' by immigration, it has absorbed the immigrants and remained nearly unchanged." William Jennings Bryan declared in 1900 that "Anglo-Saxon civilization" was not the last word in world history, and that the American race was a new emerging compound of all past peoples and civilizations.

A growing note of affirmation of the value of the cultures to which the immigrants clung began to be heard. John Dewey emphasized in 1916 the "composite make-up" of the still emerging American people and urged that schoolchildren be taught to respect all the strains that contributed to it. At the same time Jane Addams and like-minded settlement-house workers were helping immigrants to feel proud, instead of ashamed, of their native cultures. And in 1915 Horace M. Kallen held up the ideal of "a federation or commonwealth of national cultures."

On the plane of history and national legislation, however, the question was settled in favor of those who argued that the stocks from northern and western Europe were superior to those from southern and eastern Europe and Asia. Legislation in the period from 1917 to 1924 encouraged immigration from the former areas and shut it off from the latter. Literacy tests, quota systems, and other measures were admittedly devices to secure this end.

"The idea behind this discriminatory policy," said President Harry S. Truman in his veto of similar legislation in 1952, "was, to put it baldly, that Americans with English or Irish names were better people and better citizens than Americans with Italian or Greek or Polish names." This view not only ran counter to basic American political and religious traditions in its attitude toward foreign peoples, he declared, but it also cast "a slur on the patriotism, the capacity, and the decency of a large part of our citizenry."

It was certainly clear to the "voluntary Americans" of the denigrated nationalities, and to their children and grandchildren, that the rejection of their Old World relatives also implied a condemnation of them. The federal government had taken the trouble to prepare a report, in forty-two fat volumes, describing their alleged "undesirable" qualities, and avowedly was basing national immigration policy on this report. What wonder that second- and even third-generation Americans from these "lesser breeds without the law" should have felt the insecurity

and sense of nonbelonging described by Louis Adamic and other writers in the second quarter of the twentieth century. [For further discussion of some matters considered here, see Chs. 9: EQUALITY and 19: RURAL AND URBAN.]

5. RELIGIOUS MINORITIES: FROM ALIENATION TO ACCEPTANCE

THE EPIC CONTRIBUTION of the United States to religious liberty has been balanced by bigotry and even cruelty toward deviant religious groups from colonial times down to the twentieth century. The intolerance toward sects such as the Mormons, observed by Philip Schaff in 1855, was still being directed, as Charles Glock and Rodney Stark wrote in 1966, toward "all of those religious groups which are publicly regarded as being too far removed from the religious mainstream to qualify as members of the legitimate American religious genus." However, there are two great examples of religious minorities that have emerged from deviant status to become accepted as inseparable parts of American society and culture: the Roman Catholics and the Jews.

The original problem for Roman Catholics in America lay in their being a minority in a predominantly Protestant country. The reasons for this go far back into European, and especially English, religious and political history. As a consequence, they were deprived of civil rights in most colonies and subject to persecution (four Catholics were executed after the Puritans took power in Maryland). Even after the proclamation of religious liberty and church-state separation in the Constitution, they remained a small and suspect group in the eyes of the majority. They represented less than 1 percent of the population in 1790 and had equal rights in only five of the thirteen states.

As the French and then the Irish began to come to America in the early nineteenth century, Catholics became even more of a "foreign" group — both religiously and ethnically. This double foreignness of the 2 million Irish immigrants who came here between 1820 and 1865 intensified the hostility of some of the nativist elements. The burning of churches and convents, anti-Catholic riots, lynchings, and "No Irish Need Apply" signs marked the American Catholic experience from the 1830s to the Civil War.

Catholics, according to Native American, Know-Nothing spokesmen in this era, constituted not only a separate ethnic and religious group but a "foreign political conspiracy" that threatened American institutions. "Popery is opposed in its very nature to Democratic Republicanism," thundered Samuel F. B. Morse in 1835. "The priest-ridden troops of the Holy Alliance," he warned, were coming in to subvert the American republic. Tocqueville, however — who may not have been an entirely impartial observer — declared in 1835 that the Catholics then formed "the most democratic and most republican class" and were staunchly devoted to the principle of equality of condition and rights.

During this early period and throughout the first century of the republic, Catholics had inner as well as outer problems of adjustment. First was the problem of "erosion" of membership in a predominantly Protestant society — the question of survival. An estimated 250,000 immigrants were lost to the church by 1790, and the projected potential loss ran into millions by 1836, according to Archbishop John Ireland. Schurz claimed in 1859 that a careful check of the numbers of Catholic immigrants since the colonial period would indicate that millions were now missing, "silently absorbed" by the peaceful workings of the free American system.

However, by that time the questionable future of the original tiny Catholic remnant had been solidly assured by the dynamic in-

crease of devout Irish Catholics who had poured into the United States. The 35,000 Catholics of 1790 had increased to 1.6 million by 1850, and they numbered 10 million by 1900. Despite some apostasy or indifference, the church was able to hold its people in America.

Still another threat was that of "nationalism," the movement of Catholics of various ethnic groups to establish their own national Catholic churches, a movement often associated with lay trusteeism. Many strains — French, Irish, and German, and later Italian and Slav — comprised the waves of Catholic immigrants, and each preferred to have its churches patterned on the "Old Country" ways, with its favorite saints' days and its own vernacular and priests. The Vatican's ruling in 1890 against a proposal to set up separate ethnic dioceses and hierarchies helped to decide that American Catholicism would not comprise a federation of independent national churches.

"The Catholic church was, during this period, one of the most effective of all agencies for democracy and Americanization," wrote historian Henry Steele Commager in *The American Mind.* Church leaders such as Archbishops Ireland, James Gibbons, and J. J. Keane were as a matter of fact accused of "Americanism" for espousing the American system of church-state relations, with its activist spirit and its fraternal attitude toward Protestant compatriots and even adherents of non-Christian faiths. A fierce struggle ensued between these liberals and a more conservative group, led by Archbishop Michael Corrigan, that resulted finally in a papal condemnation of "Americanism" as a departure from traditional Catholic doctrines. American Catholic thought, thereafter, tended toward a circumspect, conservative era, when the views of the liberals on church and state won out in Rome itself.

The Americanism controversy brought out another long-standing problem of

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Anti-Catholic drawing in Ballou's "Pictorial," 1855

American Catholicism — "cultural ghettoization." Isaac Hecker and Orestes Brownson emphasized at mid-nineteenth century the need for Catholics to emerge from their ethnic-religious enclaves. Brownson contended that American Catholics constituted a foreign body with a foreign, inferior civilization, and that true American Catholicism (universality) called for an orientation to the culture that was alive here and now.

The Catholic educational system, particularly at the elementary and secondary levels, was one of the main causes of anti-Catholic sentiment in the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the liberal "Americanizers" would have preferred to rely on the public school system, the ultimate decision was for a church-directed school system, to give Catholic children a wholesome, integrated, aca-

demic-and-religious education, free from secular and Protestant influences. The espousal by most non-Catholics of the public school system as the common educational medium for the making of good Americans, and as the bulwark of democracy, led to resentment and suspicion of Catholics for setting up a competing system. Attempts by Catholics to obtain a share of public funds for parochial school activities and of non-Catholics to restrict or abolish parochial schools increased tensions. Basic questions of church-state relations and of distributive justice were involved.

Sporadic waves of anti-Catholic sentiment and action occurred in the century between 1865 and 1965. In the 1880s anti-Catholicism was part of the general hostility among nativist groups toward foreigners and radicals, including the pope of Rome and his assumed loyal legions in the United States. Members of the important American Protective Association, formed in 1887, took an oath, according to historian John Higham, "never to vote for a Catholic, never to employ one when a Protestant was available, and never to go out on strike with Catholics." The APA succeeded in getting many non-Catholics to believe that the depression of 1893 was the result of a diabolical papist plot and they succeeded in arousing fear of an imminent military takeover by hundreds of thousands of secret papal troops in the large cities.

In the early twentieth century anti-Catholicism became rife among reform leaders, agrarian radicals, and rural fundamentalists. Some Progressive leaders accused Catholics of being social reactionaries and tools of the big city bosses. Populist Tom Watson called for a war against "the voracious Trusts, the Roman Catholic priesthoods . . . the Knights of Columbus." The Ku Klux Klan, the most important nativist organization of the twentieth century, originated in a rural Southern setting and commissioned fundamentalist preachers to spread the doctrine of the supremacy of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant "true Americans," as against Negroes, Catholics, and Jews. It was instrumental in defeating an anti-Klan platform plank at the Democratic National Convention of 1924 and in preventing the Catholic Alfred E. Smith's nomination for the presidency in that year.

When Smith obtained the nomination in 1928, a good deal of anti-Catholic sentiment was expressed against his candidacy. However, many later commentators were convinced that his defeat was caused primarily by economic prosperity and other factors. The important thing, they said, was that an Irish Catholic of recent immigrant stock had gained 41 percent of the vote in an era of Republican domination — Klan or no Klan. By 1960 another offspring of Irish-Catholic immigrant stock, John F. Kennedy, raised in the heartland of American Protestant culture, did gain the presidency and finally refuted the hoariest and most widely accepted pronouncement in American political life — that a Catholic could never be elected President of the United States.

By Kennedy's time the once tiny Catholic remnant comprised one-fifth of the population and one-third of the church-affiliated persons in the nation. It had become one of the accepted forms of American religion along with Protestantism and Judaism. It had developed its own middle class — the hallmark of full Americanization — and moved up into the higher ranks of industry and out into the suburban areas. Its hierarchy's pronouncements on social and economic affairs were taken with great seriousness by non-Catholics and secularists, and its major declarations and preachings in religious matters won an increasingly respectful hearing among non-Catholics. At the Second Vatican (Ecumenical) Council in Rome, it played an influential role in moving the church toward a creative adjustment to the realities of the modern age.

The Jews provide perhaps the best example of how ethnic origin and religion determine minority status and identity in America, since they are both a people and a religion. The term "Jewish" — unlike the terms "Irish" or "Italian," or the terms "Catholic" or "Protestant" — refers both to a folk and a faith. Many secular Jews without religious belief consider themselves part of the Jewish people, and some Jews consider themselves to be Jewish in religion but reject the idea of Jewish peoplehood.

Like all other oppressed minorities in the United States, the Jews faced problems of adjustment, discrimination, and retention of group identity. But they were always a tiny segment of the American people, even at their most numerous comprising only about 3 percent of the population. And they were even more different than the European Catholic minorities, since they were not Christian, and in early times they often suffered discrimination even where tolerance for all Christians prevailed.

Despite all the temptations of complete assimilation and the surrendering of a separate identity, the Jews have provided a unique example of a self-conscious, white, ethnic minority enduring through three or four generations that have sufficed to erase the sense of special identity among other groups. They somehow have been able to become a fully Americanized group that is at the same time distinctly Jewish — both a part and apart.

In colonial times and in the early decades of the republic, there were too few Jews and they adapted too easily to the American scene to create a serious problem. Two new tides of immigration changed the composition of American Jewry and determined its religious and cultural development. The first was the emigration of German Jews in the period 1820-1880. The predominance and prestige of the Sephardic type, from Spain and Portugal, was replaced by that of the Ashkenazic type, from central and eastern Europe. As peddlers, businessmen, and bankers, the German Jews spread out all over the United States, and by 1880 Jews comprised more of the population of the West than of the Northeast. This group was highly successful economically and socially, and it became an accepted and adjusted minority in the greater society, with many special societies and organizations of its own.

Adjustment indeed was so successful that fears were expressed by Jews themselves lest the Jewish community disappear through intermarriage and falling away from the faith. A "reform" of religious liturgy and practices was made to keep second- and third-generation Jews within the fold. More orderly, shorter services were instituted, with sermons, choirs, and mixed seating of the sexes — on the model of Protestant congregations — and modification of the traditional dietary restrictions was advocated. The first move toward this change came in 1824 from an old-line American-Jewish group in Charleston, S.C., but American Reform was mainly modeled on German Reform, which was imported by immigrants in the 1840s and '50s.

These more-or-less "reformed" Jews experienced on the whole a comfortable adjustment to American life. But the second wave of immigration, the tremendous tide of eastern European Jews that poured in from 1870 to 1914 — 2 million persons, added to a previous Jewish population of 250,000 — upset the favorable balance and produced a wholly new type of American Jew.

These were poor, deprived, persecuted folk from the Russian Pale — needy, unskilled, and exotic-looking people. They crowded into slum areas in the big Eastern cities, contributed to the "ghetto" squalor and misery described by Jacob Riis and other observers, and worked long hours in

sweatshops for starvation wages. German-descended Jews were just as appalled as Anglo-Protestant Americans at the sights and sounds of the new emigrés — and probably felt endangered in their own safety and comfort — but they identified with them as coreligionists and helped to ease their misery.

This unskilled proletariat was able to lift itself from the slums and sweatshops more quickly than any other emigrant group. Running counter to the trend among other immigrant slum dwellers, Jewish crime, delinquency, child mortality, welfare support, and other significant rates were much lower than the general average in a community such as New York City. These immigrants were eager night school students and insisted that their children receive more education and find better jobs. Despite labor historian John R. Commons' doubts, they proved devoted trade-union members and leaders and provided dynamic impetus to the unionization of the garment and other sweatshop industries.

The Eastern Jews were also different from the German Jews in bringing over a distinct Jewish subculture, couched in the Yiddish tongue and expressed in secular as well as religious forms. Eastern Jewishness was as much a matter of a particular folk culture as of traditional religious Judaism — indeed, an important sector of eastern European Jewry was nonreligious, socialist, and secular. In any case, the new Jews did not see themselves merely as Americans of the Jewish faith, as the old German-type Jews had done, but as part of a distinctly separate folk who were both Americans and Jews, speaking both English and Yiddish.

American-born children of these immigrants wanted to be full-scale Americans in ways, speech, and values, and hence tended to reject their parents' "foreign" culture, especially their language. Moreover, owing to the unique conjunction of a people and a faith, they tended to reject Judaism itself. A crisis arose far more severe than that of the early, more assimilable German immigrants, where such extreme estrangement between the generations rarely occurred. The religion of eastern European Jews was a traditional Orthodox type of Rabbinical Judaism, as remote as possible from the American scene in most young American-Jewish eyes. Hence a good many defected, giving up all religious practices and beliefs, along with Yiddish and eastern European folkways, though often retaining a taste for the Old-Country dishes.

The more prescient Jewish leaders foresaw that Yiddish culture, like other Old World cultures, would disappear in the course of very few generations, and that if the Jews themselves were not to disappear as a people they must renew their bond with their ancient religion — in modified forms. The eastern European Jews had been repelled by the radically new and seemingly gentile-Christian form of Reform Judaism in the United States, but their second- and especially their third-generation descendants were more receptive and constituted the major portion of Reform congregations at mid-twentieth century. Moreover, Reform Judaism had itself become a good deal more traditional in practice and more specifically Jewish in tone, and it reasserted its role as the spokesman of "prophetic Judaism" in a revolutionary age.

The third and later generations were able to fulfill their renewed desire for Jewish identity in American versions of traditional Judaism. Jews, along with Protestants and Catholics, found socially accepted modes of religious belonging and a socially assured place on the American scene. At the same time, Jews, like Irish Catholics before them, became bourgeois and suburban, only more intensively and at a faster rate. By the 1950s the grandchildren of the former peddlers and exploited proletarians were pre-

ponderantly middle-class businessmen and professional people — unique in this respect among immigrant and minority groups. Politically, the descendants of those who had had no civil rights at all had attained significant voting power and had secured seats in the U.S. Senate, Supreme Court, and Cabinet; and in 1968 there was talk of a Jewish vice-presidential, though not yet presidential, candidate.

Yet the period of the remarkable rise of eastern European Jewry to a secure place in American life was marked by the constant threat of a vigorous and sometimes vicious anti-Semitism. Social anti-Semitism, as distinguished from traditional religious prejudice, began about 1880, when there was a growing emphasis on Anglo-Saxon antecedents and gentility among "society" people and other groups anxious to occupy an exclusive upper social rank. Jews, including German Jews, were among those deemed justifiably excluded from fashionable resorts, hotels, and clubs. Restrictive policies were also adopted in the better neighborhoods and suburbs and sealed by quasi-legal covenants. The rapid rise of Jews to upper-middle-class and even wealthy status made mingling with them more of an immediate threat to "good society" than did encounters with the Irish, Negroes, or other minorities.

The next steps in discrimination were exclusion from certain types of employment and restrictive quotas in colleges and universities. Jews were excluded from 90 percent of the white-collar jobs in New York City in 1929, according to one estimate. They were restricted from entering professions such as medicine through rigidly limited quotas in professional schools. Few Jews had places in colleges and university teaching up to 1930 because of deliberately restrictive policies. In the years after World War I there were quotas on the number of Jewish students even in the liberal arts colleges at Columbia, Harvard, and New York universities.

Anti-Semitism also arose among lower-income groups, such as the Populist farmers, who suffered severely from economic depressions in the 1890s and blamed it on Jewish international bankers. The lynching of the "Yankee" Jewish factory manager Leo Frank in 1915 is ascribed to the Southern Populist leader Tom Watson's fiery preaching of hate against the Jewish "Big Money," "Invisible Power," and "Parasite Race," and it helped to spark the formation of the Ku Klux Klan exactly two months later.

To the poor, uneducated, economically hurt farmers, the Jew was a vague, mythical menace, hardly ever known at first hand. But the racist angle in nativist anti-foreign and anti-Semitic sentiment was given support by the smoothly written tones of eminent professors from the 1890s to World War I, proclaiming that the Jews and other lesser breeds could not be assimilated to the American people because of their "race." And it was the eminent inventor and industrialist Henry Ford, a leading presidential possibility, who in the early 1920s published the bogus "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" disclosing an alleged conspiracy of the Jews to take over the world.

The consensus among most students of the problem after World War II was that anti-Semitism had ceased to exist in America on any significant scale. Scientific studies had dispelled the "race" myths of pretentious scholars of a former era, it was agreed, and the war against Naziism had made anti-Semitism suspect and unfashionable. However, Charles Glock and Rodney Stark reported, on the basis of their studies of anti-Semitism in the 1960s, that people — and especially Jews — who believed this were living in a fool's paradise. They found that American Christians had a strong bias against Jews, that this attitude was engen-

dered by their religious upbringing, and that the more orthodox and dogmatic the denomination, the more intense was the anti-Semitism.

As a young minister in 1926, Reinhold Niebuhr felt sure that anti-Semitism rested on ethnic-racial, rather than on religious, prejudices. "All ignorant people hate or fear those who deviate from their type," he said, and cultural and racial differences are more important than religious ones. However, Father Edward H. Flannery, an American Catholic scholar writing in 1964, was convinced that the roots of anti-Semitism were religious and theological and that Christian teachings must be radically changed to abolish "the anguish of the Jews." The Second Vatican Council in Rome gave long-delayed and qualified, but definite, support to this view in 1965.

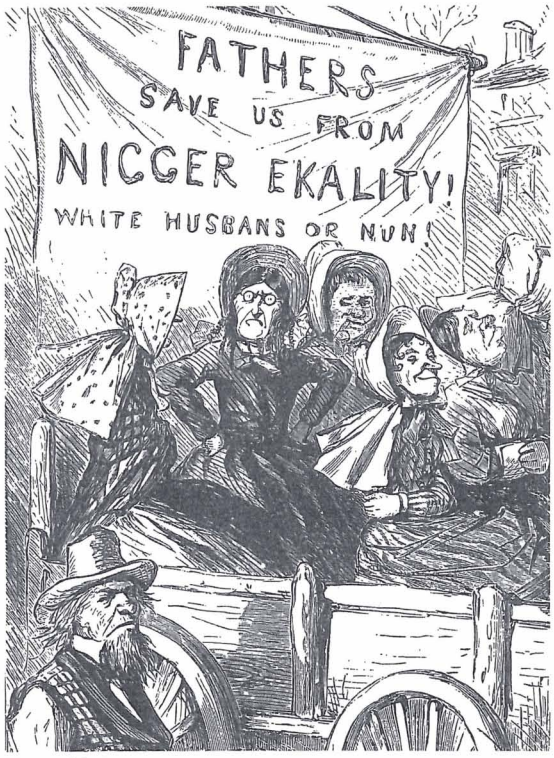
Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein, an American-Jewish scholar, viewed anti-Semitism in 1965 as an expression of a WASP caste attitude toward an ethnic-religious minority of lower status. This caste attitude had been institutionalized in what Digby Baltzell called "The Protestant Establishment," in society and its clubs, in the highest levels of industry, and even in the administrative sectors of supposedly "liberal" universities. Rabbi Rubenstein saw the 1964 presidential campaign as an attempt of the WASPs to regain their *political* dominance and wrest it from the generation-long control of forces labeled "minority groups" by their candidate.

The candidate himself, Barry M. Goldwater, was the grandson of one of those immigrant Jewish peddlers who thronged westward at mid-nineteenth century. However, his acceptance as a WASP leader was made possible, Rubenstein contended, only by the dilution of his Jewish identity through intermarriage and conversion in the second generation. This was quite in the traditional assimilative model of "Anglo-conformity," and thus no analogue of the 1960 candidacy of John F. Kennedy, who was still quite identifiably Irish and Roman Catholic. Rubenstein's conclusion was that those Jews who wished to live as Jews in some specific, identifiable sense would continue to suffer from the caste anti-Semitism of the Protestant elite, while only those who cut their roots completely and became "dejudaized" might possibly find acceptance. [For further discussion of many of the matters treated here, see Ch. 22: RELIGION.]

6. RACIAL MINORITIES: FROM SLAVERY TO EQUAL RIGHTS

RACE, IDENTIFIABLE BY SKIN COLOR, is a mark of minority status that, unlike religion or national origin, is not easily removed, even in two or three generations. By the 1960s the ideas of race and minority had become so intimately connected that the term "minority group" was commonly understood as a euphemism for "Negro." A few other nonwhite groups were intended by the phrase, but the fortunes of Oriental and other racial minorities were directly affected by the stigma attached to "color" in a society with a large Negro minority. The aggressively hostile and bigoted attitude of white Americans toward Chinese, Japanese, Hindus, and other Asiatics during the period between the Civil War and World War I was no doubt inspired by the renewed contempt for Negroes in the early decades of "emancipation." Even the native Indians became suspected and scorned as colored people.

Of all the racial minorities, the Negroes were the most exposed, completely cut off from their ancestral traditions and memories, a pariah caste in a society that held out the promise of opportunity, freedom, and equal rights for "all." They were the great



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Cartoon by Thomas Nast on the Ohio election, 1868

exception in American life from the beginning. "Separated from their neighbors by color and the stigma of perpetual bondage," A. M. Schlesinger, Sr., remarked, "they composed the one element in the population which saw no hope of bettering its lot." One-fifth of the people of the new republic in 1790 belonged to this pariah class of permanent "outsiders," without hope and without prospects.

While it is true that there was antislavery sentiment among white Americans from early times — in the South as well as the North — many of those who were staunchest in advocating emancipation regarded equality, or even mere propinquity, between the two races as impossible or undesirable. Jefferson, for example, declared that "the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. Nature, habit, opinion, have drawn indelible lines of distinction between them." Even the Great Emancipator himself, Abraham Lincoln, said in 1854 that he shared the general white feeling against social equality for Negroes and concluded: "We cannot make them equals."

The remedy for this dilemma, according to such well-intentioned antislavery people, was "deportation" or "colonization" — to return the Africans to their homelands or ship them elsewhere and avoid the embarrassing social problems that their presence entailed. Lincoln, like many other "moderate" opponents of slavery, foresaw this as a consummation devoutly to be wished for — like the Exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt — and praised the work of the American Colonization Society devoted to this end. The main purpose of this movement — as of the restrictive laws in both Northern and Southern states regarding "freed persons of color" — was to get rid of the freed Negroes.

The latter did not have equal rights in the North, as ironic Southern spokesmen were quick to point out. Segregation and discrimination were the rule in Northern schools, theaters, hospitals, churches, cemeteries, and all walks of life. "Slavery recedes," Tocqueville observed of the North in the 1830s, "but the prejudice to which it has given birth is immovable," and the freed Negroes "have in nowise drawn nearer to the whites," but met even stronger racial prejudice than in the slave states.

The freed Negroes, through their clubs and other organizations, fought against these discriminatory laws and practices, and found staunch white allies in the "radical" wing of the antislavery movement. Men like Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner acted in the courts for equality under the law for the Negroes, and Sumner pleaded the first important school segregation case in 1849 — in Boston. Negro leaders like Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth joined the radical Abolitionists, such as William Lloyd Garrison, and freed Negroes as well as whites staffed the Underground Railroad. Negroes were never completely supine under oppression, even in slave states, as the revolts led by Gabriel Prosser,

Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner demonstrated.

But abolition when it finally came was an agonizing disappointment, and the conditions of Negroes in the post-Civil War South were worse than those of the freed Negroes in the pre-War North. The "Black Codes" of states like Mississippi and South Carolina made it clear that "persons of color" were a special class without rights equal to those of other people, and reduced them to a state of peonage. Horace Greeley indignantly characterized the codes as "a system more degrading than slavery — in this, that it gives the master power over the Negro, and at the same time releases him from any pecuniary or personal responsibility." Secret, terrorist night-rider groups, such as the original Ku Klux Klan, added extralegal enforcement to the "white supremacy" laws and customs of the postbellum South.

During the twelve-year period from 1865-1877, the Federal government joined with Negro leaders in an attempt to advance the welfare and secure the rights of the former slaves. But the professed aims of Reconstruction were frustrated by the unpreparedness of the largely illiterate freedmen and the opposition of their former masters. The forcible imposition of equal rights by a conquering army and party upon the vanquished proved unfeasible, and after the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was declared unconstitutional.

Congress passed no further civil rights legislation for over eighty years. Moreover, as the poor white farmers, the potential allies of the Negroes, gained increasing political power in the South, anti-Negro laws and actions intensified — in the form of a host of Jim Crow laws and lynchings. The segregation laws and customs of the post-Reconstruction period were upheld by the Supreme Court, and Congress refused to interfere with the lynchings.

At this terrible time in the Negro's history, Booker T. Washington proposed his policy of accommodation and amelioration. In his so-called Atlanta Compromise speech of 1895, addressed to a Southern white audience, he appealed to Negroes to forgo the fight for political and social equality and to strive instead for economic betterment for the time being. "In all things that are purely social," he counseled, "we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." His "moderate" plan was to provide a solid economic base of Negro mechanics, farmers, and businessmen, accepting racial segregation and leaving the struggle for the ultimate goal of full equality to a later, more propitious time. Tuskegee Institute, with its technical and practical education, symbolized what Washington envisaged as the immediate future of the Southern Negro.

W. E. B. Du Bois, organizer of the Niagara Movement of Negro intellectuals in 1905 and a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1910, led the opposition to Washington's policy. Du Bois called it a return to "the old attitude of adjustment and submission" at a time when the Negroes' desperate situation called for the assertion of "manly self-respect." During the time that Washington's policy held sway, the Negro had been reduced to a condition of political, social, and cultural inferiority, said Du Bois, which prevented the economic advancement at which Washington aimed. The economic roles, virtues, and training envisaged required that *first* the Negro must have the right to vote, equal social status, and a cultural education. Negro advancement depended as much or more on the higher education of the "Talented Tenth," Du Bois argued, as on vocational training for the masses. Able Negro boys and girls needed a liberal education too; not all of them should be trained to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water."

Washington's program assumed that the Negro problem would be solved within a

Southern rural setting. But by 1915, the end of "the Era of Booker T.," the trek of millions of Negroes to the Northern cities had begun, and the problem became a national and largely urban one. By 1960 half the nation's Negroes were living in the North, concentrated in the twelve largest metropolitan areas, where they constituted a large ethnic minority and a majority in one case (Washington, D.C.). This massive internal migration created tensions and conflicts that had not been foreseen by the Southern Negro leaders or by the white ethnic theorists who had excluded the old immigrants, and thus created the need for new ones.

Northern whites, who had long considered the Negroes a peculiarly Southern problem, responded with the techniques of withdrawal, discrimination, and rejection that Tocqueville had noted a century before. They showed an even greater prejudice and repugnance than the more experienced and assured Southerners, and among the results were the worst race riots in the country's history, including that at Chicago in 1919, which resulted in 38 deaths and over 500 injuries. The Urban League, formed in 1911, helped the new immigrants to deal with the problems of jobs, housing, and social welfare. But the main problem underlying all the obviously urgent ones was the problem of racial prejudice and hostility against a people who could not shed the mark of race. And with it went the twin problem of how a people bowed down by a centuries-long sense of inferiority and worthlessness could attain confidence, pride, and ambition. The Negro problem, it became clear, involved a vicious circle, and getting out of it might mean the making or breaking of America in the twentieth century.

Despite continuing bias and social discrimination, the Negroes made great political and economic gains in the generation between 1930 and 1965. They had the right to vote in the North and constituted an influential and often decisive voting bloc. They were also an important segment of the unemployed and underprivileged who were benefited by the New Deal relief and economic policies. The military and economic emergency presented by World War II and the Korean War fostered executive orders against discrimination in employment and against segregation in the armed forces. The postwar situation of the United States as the leader of the "free world," and international opinion, including that of the emerging new nations of Africa and Asia, helped to encourage further federal action to assure equal rights to the Negroes.

The new push for equality in the post-World War II era was a demand, not merely for the civil rights of voting and holding office but as much and even more — in the North — for equal opportunities in employment, housing, education, public accommodations, and other matters that affect the everyday life of human beings in society. The two key events in this period were the unanimous 1954 Supreme Court decision against segregation in public education — reversing the "separate but equal" doctrine enunciated by the Court in 1896 — and the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955-1956.

The "Negro Revolution" of the 1950s and 1960s started with the Montgomery boycott led by Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. His technique of passive resistance and nonviolent action, which he derived from Mahatma Gandhi, proved exceptionally effective in the conditions of Southern society, and King became the most influential leader of the American Negroes since Booker T. Washington. His organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, joined the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and its Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC or "Snick") in the nonviolent Negro protest movements of the 1950s and early sixties. (The nonviolent

technique was first used by CORE, led by James L. Farmer, at a Chicago restaurant in 1942.)

The nonviolent revolution moved forward against the attachment of white Southerns to a treasured way of life, as well as against race and caste prejudices. Federal force — troops and marshals — were sometimes employed, and violence often ensued. Little Rock, Oxford, Birmingham, and Selma became the names of battlefields — sometimes literally — in this war. President Kennedy echoed the militant new Negro leadership in rejecting "counsels of patience and delay"; and President Johnson, a white Southerner himself, identified with the call for "Freedom Now." For the first time since Reconstruction days, federal civil rights legislation was proposed and passed to ensure to Negroes basic human and political rights in the Southern states. The Christian churches, perhaps the most segregated institutions in American life, now provided white leaders, cadres, and even martyrs to the Negro fight for equality.

Yet, if in principle and law justice had been achieved, there was no peace. For one thing, the rights movement and the new laws dealt essentially with the Southern, not the Northern, aspect of the Negro problem. For another, not all Negroes had the nonviolent disposition and training of the CORE and SNCC volunteers, and many Northern urban Negroes had deep feelings of resentment at the condition of their lives. James Baldwin's warning in 1963 that the racial troubles in the South would spread to the Northern cities soon proved true. In a seven-week period in the summer of 1964, highly destructive, unprecedented race riots spread through seven Northern cities, from New York's Harlem to north central Philadelphia. A similar riot, on an "insurrectionary" scale, occurred in the Los Angeles Watts area one year later, further grim riots occurred in Chicago and San Francisco in 1966, and the summer of 1967 saw the worst riots of all in Detroit, Newark, and other large cities of the North.

The riots were unusual in that the most active participants were Negroes instead of whites, and in that they were directed more against property than persons. Apparently such destruction and violence was the only way in which large segments of the Northern Negro communities were able to communicate their frustration and despair at the condition of their lives to a previously deaf and blind white community. "But to whom can I be responsible, and why should I be," says the protagonist of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man,* "when you refuse to see me?"

Moreover, the riots were not only a mass explosion of suppressed, long-festering feelings against the outside world, wrote the eminent Negro psychologist Kenneth Clark, but they were also suicidal and self-destructive, "reflecting the ultimate in self-negation, self-rejection, and hopelessness." It was the Negro ghettos that were looted, burned, and partly destroyed, and mostly Negro lives that were lost in the riots, Clark observed, for the simple reason that Negroes hated their neighborhoods and their lives and saw no prospect of changing them.

In this new situation, the established leaders of the Negro rights revolution seemed "tame" rather than "militant," and they lost some degree of prestige and control over the movement. Many Negro intellectuals and leaders expressed dissent with the steadfast adherence to nonviolent methods and the attitude of forgiving love and brotherhood counseled by leaders like King. Writers such as Baldwin and Le Roi Jones gave eloquent vent to negative, ugly feelings of Negroes against whites, including murderous hate. And many voices were even raised against the long-heralded Negro goal of "integration" in favor of more separatist, "nationalist" solutions. Even the militantly antisegregationist SNCC and CORE groups disowned integration for more independent

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and people-centered goals in 1966 and joined in the new movement for "Black Power."

The most important expression of Negro nationalism in the 1950s and early 1960s was the Black Muslim movement, led by Elijah Muhammed and Malcolm X. Many Negro and white commentators considered it merely an inverted form of "white supremacy," a Negro form of racism. Others, however, saw in it a vigorous, if perhaps misguided, attempt to deal with the basic question of the Negro's identity, self-image, and initiative — of how the Negro sees himself and how he is to remake himself. Furthermore, it dealt with the basic problem of the ultimate role of the Negro minority in American life.

Observers since Tocqueville had dwelt on the Negro's agonizing problem of identity. Unconscious of his African past, not part of the American present, scorning whatever is Negro and imitating whatever is white, "the Negro wants to be everything but himself," said Elijah Muhammed. "He wants to be a white man. . . . He wants to integrate with the white man, but he cannot integrate with himself or his own kind. The Negro wants to lose his identity because he does not know his own identity." The standard Negro-image, produced by reflection from scornful whites and from his own experience as a member of a pariah class, could only lead him to see being Negro as low and vile, and to feel self-scorn and self-hatred. "The worst crime the white man has committed," said Malcolm X, "was to teach us to hate ourselves."

To cure this condition the Black Muslim movement offered a program of acquiring pride in being Negro, moral reformation, and rejection of the old "slave mentality" and image. This program was set within the framework of a black racist version of Islam — a religion with its source not in Africa but in the Arabian Peninsula. The Muslims had considerable success with a portion of the Negro masses, and they inculcated respectable white middle-class virtues among people who were supposed to be incapable of possessing them. The change of behavior and demeanor that was a key plank in the Muslim platform — "wake up, clean up, and stand up" — took place astonishingly even among dope addicts, alcoholics, and criminals. The Muslims agreed with some white observers that the solution of the Negro problem would depend ultimately on change in and by the Negro himself, and that this in turn depended on an inner sense of pride and worth.

A Nigerian political scientist, E. U. Essien-Udom, saw "black nationalism" in 1962 as a "search for identity in America," rather than an expression of aggressive chauvinism and inverted segregationism. It represented, he said, a potentially wholesome attempt to find meaning and value, not only in the forgotten African roots and culture but in the four centuries of common experience on the American scene. "The tragedy of the Negro in America," he declared, "is that he has rejected his origins — the essentially human meaning implicit in the heritage of slavery, prolonged suffering, and social rejection. By rejecting this unique group experience and favoring assimilation and even biological amalgamation, he thus

denies himself the creative possibilities inherent in it and in his folk culture," and the chance "to evolve a new identity or a meaningful synthesis, capable of endowing his life with meaning and purpose."

Yet the great mass of Negro Americans at mid-twentieth century aimed at assimilation, at least culturally, with the larger white majority-society. The average Negro felt no close bonds with Africa and its culture. Negro organization leaders interviewed by Milton Gordon in the 1960s showed a remarkable indifference or even antagonism to the aim of ethnic communality. "The logic of our position is obviously anti-insularity, anti-communal," was one response, "[however] we assume there will be a definite Negro group in the foreseeable future." This was basically the position of moderate, mainstream Negro leaders even after the "Black Power" movement erupted.

Just what the nature and degree of assimilation, and the type and characteristics of the Negro minority, would be in the final third of the twentieth century were not obvious. The question fitted into the larger question of the role and even the existence of minorities in American life in the future: assimilation, separation, or pluralism? [For another treatment of many of the matters discussed here, see Ch. 11: INDIVIDUALISM.]