

**SILENT REPLY: A SELECTION OF ANTEBELLUM AMERICAN
CATHOLIC OPINIONS DEALING WITH THE ISSUE OF
SLAVERY**

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ABSTRACT

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The impetus for this study came to the author while he was gathering data for his research paper for a graduate course entitled “U.S. Catholicism.” For that paper, the author had naively sought to uncover the “official” U.S. Catholic response to Pope Gregory XVI’s 1839 apostolic constitution condemning the slave trade in all its nefarious forms. The author soon discovered, however, that no definitive U.S. Catholic position regarding the issue of slavery as practiced in the southern states existed prior to the end of the American Civil War. What *did* exist was a mountain of letters, editorials, manuals, and pastorals written by both lay American Catholics and members of the American Hierarchy struggling to reconcile the continued existence of slavery long after Gregory’s constitution had been promulgated. Alas, a 20 paged research paper for a graduate course proved not to be an adequate medium for a discussion on the various opinions and arguments expressed within this material. Thus, the author decided to retain the vast amount of data collected for use in his graduate thesis.

Despite the increased space afforded by the graduate thesis format, the endeavor still proved to be quite immense, given the fact that the American populace in the antebellum era was far from homogeneous. In an effort to make this study intelligible, the scope was limited by choosing to focus only on the opinions expressed by Irish, German, and French Catholics living in the Archdioceses of New York, Cincinnati, and New Orleans respectively. Particular attention is paid to the ecclesiastical and lay leaders of each group, as well as the major newspapers each group chose to read. After providing a preliminary discussion on the theology of slavery as interpreted by the American Catholic ecclesiastical leaders of the era, the chapters deal with how each ethnic group attempted to incorporate that theology into their unique geographic, social, and economic situation. The results of each group suggests that prior to the end of the Civil War, the American Catholic Church remained purposely ambiguous in its response to the South's peculiar institution.

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Michael

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INTRODUCTION

For years, the government of Great Britain had been trying without success to end the slave trade. At the request of the British government, Pope Gregory XVI was persuaded to issue an apostolic letter emphatically condemning the traffic of slaves. This letter, issued in December 1839, was named *In Supremo Apostolatus*. It was alleged that a strongly worded apostolic letter such as *In Supremo Apostolatus* might convince Spain and Portugal to follow the existing laws against the slave trade. However, the letter had little influence on either country.¹ Instead, *In Supremo Apostolatus* launched a vigorous debate within the United States among both Catholics and Protestants seeking to either discredit or embrace its content depending upon one's already formulated opinions regarding slavery.²

In Supremo was but the latest of a series of papal documents addressing the issue of racial slavery. According to the papal historian Reverend Joel S. Panzer, while in the past the papacy regarded "just titles" of servitude as permissible, it strongly condemned

¹ According to Owen Chadwick, the Portuguese government paid no attention to Pope Gregory XVI. However the Pope issued the document anyway in an effort at moral suasion. See Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes, 1830-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 1-60; George Wiegel, "Papacy and Power," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* (February 2001): 18.

² John F. Quinn, "'Three Cheers for The Abolitionist Pope!': American Reaction to Gregory XVI's Condemnation of the Slave Trade, 1840-1860," *The Catholic Historical Review* 90 (January 2004): 67-93.

racial slavery “as soon as it was discovered.”³ Accordingly, on January 13, 1435, Pope Eugene IV promulgated *Sicut Dudum*, a papal bull that threatened European colonists of the Canary Islands with excommunication if they “deprived the [black] natives of their property or turned it to their own use, [or] have subjected some of the inhabitants...to perpetual slavery [and] sold them to other persons and committed other various illicit evil deeds against them.”⁴

On June 2, 1537, just over one hundred years after *Sicut Dudum*, Pope Paul III’s *Sublimis Deus* reinforced the words of Eugene IV by proclaiming that Satan had “thought up a way, unheard of before now, by which he might impede the saving word of God from being preached to the nations.” Satan’s method, Paul III declared, is to stir up “some of his allies who, desiring to satisfy their own avarice, are presuming to assert...that the Indians of the West and the South...be reduced to our service like brute animals....And they reduce them to slavery, treating them with afflictions they would scarcely use with brute animals.” Contrary to the attitude of their enslavers, Paul III asserted:

³ Joel S. Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*. New York: Alba House, 1996), 10; Panzer notes that during the Middle Ages, the Church as well as civil governments permitted perpetual servitude as a penalty to criminals and prisoners of war. Additionally, free citizens could freely choose indentured servitude to pay off debts. Nevertheless, the Church was always adamant about the obligation of masters to give fair and humane treatment to those held in servitude, and even encouraged their liberation. See Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*, 2.

⁴ Eugene IV, January 13, 1435, *Sicut Dudum*, available from Internet, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Eugene04/eugene04sicut.htm>, accessed August 3, 2006; Panzer emphasizes the significance of the date of *Sicut Dudum*: “Nearly sixty years before the Europeans were to find the New World, we already have the papal condemnation of slavery as soon as this crime was discovered in one of the first geographical discoveries.” See Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*, 8.

...that the Indians themselves indeed are true men and are not only capable of the Christian faith, and wishing to provide suitable remedies for them, by our Apostolic Authority decree and declare by these present letters that the same Indians and all other peoples—even though they are outside the faith—who shall hereafter come to the knowledge of Christians have not been deprived or should not be deprived of their liberty or their possessions. Rather they are to be able to use and enjoy this liberty and ownership of property freely and licitly, and are not to be reduced to slavery, and that whatever happens to the contrary is to be considered null and void. These same Indians and other peoples are to be invited to the said faith in Christ by preaching and the example of a good life.⁵

In his follow-up papal bull, *Pastorale Officium*, Paul III excommunicated all who “presume to reduce...Indians to slavery or despoil them of their goods.”⁶

After *Sublimis Deus* came a number of papal bulls that chose to substantiate the Church’s consistent condemnation of unjust enslavement of humans by citing the pronouncements of previous papal bulls.⁷ Thus, in 1639’s *Commissum Nobis*, Pope Urban VIII noted Paul III’s teachings contained in *Sicut Dudum* and *Pastorale Officium* and then, “following [in] the footsteps of Paul our Predecessor,” prohibited:

...anyone from reducing to slavery, selling, buying exchanging, giving away, separating from wives and children, despoiling of their property, taking away to other places, depriving of liberty in any way and keeping in servitude said Indians....This injunction applies to each and every person, both secular and ecclesiastic....Any of these contravening this decree incur, by that fact, the penalty of excommunication.⁸

In the winter of 1741, Pope Benedict XIV continued the trend in his *Immensa Pastorum* by providing a general summary of his predecessors’ stance on unjust slavery:

⁵ Paul III, June 2, 1537, *Sublimis Deus*, available from Internet, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul03/p3subli.htm>, accessed August 3, 2006.

⁶ Paul III, Brief *Pastorale Officium* to Cardinal Juan de Tavera of Toledo, May 29, 1537. Found in *Coleccion de Bulas*, 101-102, quoted and translated in Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*, 84.

⁷ Panzer, *The Pope’s and Slavery*, 32.

⁸ Urban VIII, *Commissum Nobis*, April 22, 1639. Found in *Coleccion de Bulas*, 109-110, quoted and translated in Panzer, *The Pope’s and Slavery*, 91.

We have received written notice, not without most grave sorrow to our fatherly soul, that, after so much advice of Apostolic providence given by our Predecessors the Roman Pontiffs, after the publication of Constitutions, says that help, aid, and protection should be given to those who lack faith, and that neither injuries, nor the scourge, nor chains, nor servitude, nor death should be inflicted on them, and all this under the gravest penalties and censures of the Church....there are still found...members of the True Faith who...presume to deal with the unfortunate Indians...by reducing them to slavery, or selling them to others as if they were property, or depriving them of their goods.

Benedict concluded by specifically citing Paul III's *Pastorale Officium* and Urban VIII's *Commissum Nobis* and declared that "we, by Apostolic authority, and holding to the same course, renew and confirm the Apostolic Letters...[of]...our Predecessor Pope Paul III...and...our Predecessor Urban VIII....that each and every person...who contravenes these edicts will incur...excommunication."⁹

As was the case with Urban VIII's *Commissum Nobis* and Pope Benedict XIV's *Immensa Pastorum*, Gregory XVI's *In Supremo Apostolatus* stressed the consistency of the Church's teaching on the subject of unjust slavery first by mentioning the efforts of the Apostles and other early Christians, then by citing the works of Paul III, Benedict XIV, and Urban VIII and finally by summarizing the efforts of Clement I, Pius II, and Pius VII. However, despite these endeavors, Gregory lamented that there were still...

⁹ Benedict XIV, *Immensa Pastorum*, December 20, 1741. Found in *Benedict XIV Bullarium*, Tome I (1749-1746), Rome, 1746, Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide, 99-102, quoted and translated in Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*, 93-94. In addition to the preceding list of papal documents, Panzer notes that on March 20, 1686, during the pontificate of Innocent XI. the Congregation of the Holy Office addressed a series of questions concerning the morality of enslaving the natives of Africa. It was decided by the Holy Office that one was not permitted to "capture by force or deceit Blacks or other natives who have harmed no one." Nor was it permitted "to buy, sell, or make other contracts in their respect Blacks or other natives who have harmed no one and been made captives by force or deceit." Nor was it permitted "to buy Blacks or other natives, unjustly captured and who are mixed among other salable goods." See *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide seu Decreta Instructiones Rescripta pro Apostolicis Missionibus*, vol. 1 (Rome: Polygot Press, 1907) 76-77, quoted and translated in Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*, 103-104.

...among the faithful some who, shamefully blinded by the desire of sordid gain, in lonely and distant countries did not hesitate to reduce to slavery Indians, Blacks, and other unfortunate peoples, or else, by instituting or expanding the trade in those who had been made slaves by others, aided the crime of others. Certainly many Roman Pontiffs of glorious memory, Our Predecessors, did not fail, according to the duties of their office, to blame severely this way of acting as dangerous for the spiritual welfare of those who did such things and a shame to the Christian name.

While progress had been made, Gregory acknowledged that much work remained to be done. Thus, Gregory chose to walk “in the footsteps” of the Popes that came before him, and pronounced “that no one in the future dare to bother unjustly, despoil their possessions, or reduce to slavery Indians, Blacks, or other such peoples.” Furthermore, Gregory warned all Christians not to assist individuals who participate in “that inhuman traffic by which the Blacks, as if they were not humans but rather mere animals, having been brought into slavery in no matter what way, are, without any distinction and contrary to the rights of justice and humanity, bought, sold, and sometimes given over to the hardest labor.” Gregory concluded the papal bull with a prohibition directed at “any Ecclesiastic or lay person,” forbidding them “from presuming to defend as permissible this trade in Blacks under no matter what pretext or excuse, or from publishing or teaching in any manner whatsoever, in public or privately, opinions contrary to what We have set forth in these Apostolic Letters.”¹⁰

Being an Apostolic letter, *In Supremo Apostolatus* was intended to send a powerful message to the faithful concerning the Holy Father’s sentiments regarding slavery and the slave trade. However, the papal bull’s very existence, in addition to the

¹⁰ Gregory XVI, December 3, 1839, *In Supremo Apostolatus*, available from Internet, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16sup.htm>, accessed August 3, 2006.

many previous papal condemnations of slavery, illustrated that Christians operating in Africa, Europe, and the Americas did not necessarily accept the teachings of the Popes.¹¹ Indeed, *In Supremo Apostolatus* could have faded into relative obscurity along with the other papal documents had it not been for the growing attention paid the peculiar institution by American politicians, ministers, moralists, and immigrants of the 1830s and the mounting divisiveness the issue caused throughout the United States.¹² Led by the likes of William Lloyd Garrison and his *Liberator*, the abolitionists claimed that slavery was intrinsically evil and called for the immediate emancipation of the South's slaves. The movement typically appealed to Christian principles to make its case and was quick to use any person, publication, or organization that could bolster its goal to abolish slavery. Given that the antebellum American Catholic Church was typically hesitant to take a definitive stand on any potentially polarizing issue, it was necessary for the American hierarchy to address the highly sensitive topics raised in *In Supremo*

¹¹ Panzer notes that such discrepancies between the teachings of the Church and the actions of the faithful are relatively common. For instance, despite the papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Centesimus Annus* avocation of the natural right for laborers to unionize, Panzer notes that "Catholic hospitals, schools and other institutions have been among the most hesitant to permit their establishment. We know that Christ guarantees that the Church will teach the truth, but whether her clerics and laity will give internal assent and obedience to that truth is a separate matter." See Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*, 10-11.

¹² Indeed, there is evidence that suggests that the average American Catholic was not acquainted with *In Supremo Apostolatus*. During the 1856 presidential campaign, the Republican editors of New York's *The Independent* produced 40,000 pamphlets containing the pope's Apostolic Letter. The pamphlets were distributed throughout the state's Roman Catholic population. The editors hoped that after Catholics read *In Supremo Apostolatus* for themselves, they would have no choice but to break their allegiance with the Democratic Party, which supported the extension of slavery into Kansas, and throw their support behind Republican candidate, John C. Frémont. See Quinn, "Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope." 88-89. However, one Catholic from Buffalo was not willing to trust the words he read in the Protestant-backed publication. Thus, he wrote to Orestes Brownson inquiring whether it was indeed true that Pope Gregory had "abolished the slave trade?" If it was true, he asked from Brownson where he could obtain a Catholic work containing the Apostolic Letter. See Daniel Magone, Jr. to Orestes Brownson, September 8, 1856, Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives. The pamphlet itself suggests the reason behind the perceived ignorance among American Catholics of *In Supremo Apostolatus*: "You won't find it in the Catholic books published in this country. They wish to keep it rather out of sight in this

Apostolatus, place upon the document their official interpretation, and thereby neutralize its content before it could be used by any group outside the Church.

Bishop John England of Charleston was probably the most influential Catholic prelate of this era. Living in a proslavery state, England was particularly concerned with how *In Supremo Apostolatus* might be interpreted by not only slaveholding Catholics but also nativist slaveholders already suspicious of the Catholic Church.¹³ As was the case throughout most of antebellum America, it did not take much for nativist sentiment to erupt into mob violence against Catholic immigrants. For instance, on August 11, 1834, a mob of native laborers, fearful of the growing numbers of Catholic immigrants arriving in their city, chose to take out their aggression upon the Ursuline Convent of Charleston, burning it to the ground.¹⁴ Aware of this threat, England hoped that he and his fellow immigrant Catholics would gain acceptance from the Protestant American majority by acclimating themselves with American customs.¹⁵

In antebellum Charleston, two of the more important customs were the maintenance of the slave labor system and the defense of the State's right to govern itself without outside interference. Charleston's citizens were particularly resentful toward the abolitionist movement and occasionally acted violently against perceived attacks upon

country. But it is the truth, and every good Catholic is bound to advocate it." See *The Pope's Bull and the Words of Daniel O'Connell: To Catholic Citizens: Read and Circulate* (New York: Joseph H. Ladd, 1856).

¹³ William Bean has convincingly argued that Southern politicians viewed Catholic immigrants as holding antislavery sentiments. See William G. Bean, "An Aspect of Know Nothingism—The Immigrant and Slavery," in *Political and Historical Researches* 23 (1924): 328-334.

¹⁴ Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 53-76; Wilfred Joseph Bisson, "Some Conditions for Collective Violence: The Charlestown Convent Riot of 1834" (Master's Thesis, Michigan State University, 1974); Nancy Lusignan Schultz, *Fire & Roses: The Burning of the Charleston Convent, 1834* (New York: Free Press, 2000).

¹⁵ Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston*, vol. 2 (New York: The America Press, 1927), 72.

their institutions. Thus, in 1836, when it was learned that thousands of pieces of antislavery literature were to be delivered to the city, an angry mob broke into the local Post Office and set ablaze the offensive documents.¹⁶ The most significant document among those burned was Charleston native Angelina E. Grimké's "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South." The purpose of the document was to influence Charleston's women to join the abolitionists.¹⁷ The Appeal caused such an outrage that Grimké received death threats while her sister, fellow abolitionist Mary Smith Grimké, was warned by local police never again to step foot in Charleston.¹⁸

It was within this atmosphere that Bishop England decided to open a school for free black children. While it was permissible to educate free blacks, the steadily increasing number of blacks enrolled in England's school alarmed many of Charleston's citizens. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, proslavery nativists were already suspicious of Charleston's Catholic population in general and Bishop England in particular.¹⁹ Many believed that the prelate's position as Papal Legate to Haiti demonstrated that the Holy See was in favor of abolition. Others noted that England had a close relationship with the Irish Repeal leader and outspoken antislavery advocate

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Angelina E. Grimké, 1836, "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South," available on Internet, <http://www.iath.virginia.edu/utc/abolitn/abesaegat.html>, accessed August 15, 2006. It should be noted that Angelina Grimké was a staunch anti-Catholic. In her appeal, she proclaims that "Catholics are universally condemned, for denying the Bible to the common people, but, *slaveholders must not* blame them, for *they* are doing the *very same thing*, and for the very same reason, neither of these systems can bear the light which bursts from the pages of that Holy Book."

¹⁸ Carol Berkin, "Angelina and Sarah Grimké: Abolitionist Sisters," available on Internet, http://www.historynow.org/09_2005/historian4.html, accessed August 15, 2006.

¹⁹ In fact, on the night of the Post Office riot, parishioners came to England's residence to inform the prelate that he might not be safe from the mobs. Guards were recruited for the Bishop in order to stem off any potential attack. See Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England*, vol. 2, 152.

Daniel O’Connell.²⁰ Rumors began to spread that England was himself an abolitionist. Evidently, the charge was serious enough to warrant a rebuttal by the prelate. Thus, on July 30, 1835, England published an open letter in the Charleston *Courier* stating that he knew of “no Carolinian who more sincerely deplores, more fully condemns, or more seriously reprobates the conduct of those men [the Abolitionists], who, by pouring them in upon us, are destroying our peace, and endangering our safety.”²¹ When a meeting was called to protest the perceived encroachment of the abolitionists upon the Southerners’ way of life, England made sure to attend to defend the “southern constitutional rights,” and “property against all attacks—be the consequence what they may.”²² As a final display of his loyalty to the South and antithesis to all things hinting of abolitionism, England closed his school for free black children in the summer of 1835.²³

Bishop England’s animosity toward the abolitionist movement was not unique for antebellum American Catholics.²⁴ In fact, the typical American Catholic—from both Northern and Southern States—regarded abolitionists as “enemies of religion, of public

²⁰ England was evidently aware that his relationship with O’Connell could be problematic. Thus, England wrote an open letter criticizing O’Connell’s meddling with American affairs. See Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England*, vol. 2, 153.

²¹ Charleston *Courier*, July 30, 1835, cited in Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England*, vol. 2, 153.

²² Joseph Delfmann Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery” (Master’s Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1955), 47.

²³ Joseph Kelly, “Charleston’s Bishop John England and American Slavery,” in *New Hibernia Review*, 5 (Winter 2001): 48-56; Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England*, vol. 2, 155-156.

²⁴ Madeline Hooke Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy* (Gloucester: P. Smith, 1964), 72; Cyprian Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1990), 58-59.

order, and the Union....”²⁵ The Catholic convert and prolific philosopher, Orestes

Brownson, summarized the American Catholic position towards abolitionism as follows:

There is no doubt that the majority of our Catholic population are strongly opposed to the abolitionists, and regard them very unjustly, however, as the real authors of the formidable rebellion now threatening our national life; but we should do them great injustice if we supposed them to be really in favor of negro slavery, or opposed on principle to emancipation. We think their hostility to the abolitionists, since the breaking out of the civil war, very unwise, impolitic, uncalled for, and calculated to give aid and comfort to the enemies of the nation; but we also think it grows more out of their attachment to the Union, than out of any sympathy with slavery or with the rebels.²⁶

The American Catholic rationale for its anti-abolitionism varied. First, most Catholics adhered to the Democratic Party because of its more liberal attitude toward foreigners and Catholics becoming naturalized citizens. The Federalist, Whig, and later Republican Parties typically adopted anti-immigrant/anti-Catholic platforms. When anti-abolitionism emerged as a Democratic Party platform, most Catholic voters followed suit.²⁷

Second, the various revolutions raging throughout Europe—whether in France, the German States, or Hungary—fought in the name of perceived liberalism, nationalism, and individualism—were contrary to the Catholic Church’s understanding of authentic

²⁵ Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 38. In his famous proslavery sermon delivered on the eve of the Civil War, Bishop Augustin Verot accused abolitionists as being “the same who heretofore assailed, calumniated, vilified our church, and have resorted to the vilest and most iniquitous devices... in order to destroy our holy religion.” Verot even went so far as to connect the abolitionist movement with “the burning of the Charleston Convent, which in the middle of the night drove innocent and defenceless females out of their homes into the fields, and the Philadelphia riots, where arson and murder against unoffending Catholics, became the order of the day; and so many other acts of crying injustice, cruelty and barbarity.” See Augustin Verot, *A Tract for the Times. Slavery & Abolitionism, being the Substance of a Sermon, Preached in the Church of St Augustine, Florida, on the 4th Day of January, 1861, Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer* (New Orleans; Catholic Propagator Office, 1861), 9.

²⁶ Orestes A. Brownson, “Slavery and the Church,” *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* (October 1862), 317.

²⁷ Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 39.

human freedom. Furthermore, these revolutionary movements were often distinguished by their anticlericalism, viewing the Catholic Church as a threat to their understanding of true autonomy. When some of the exiles of these revolutions made their way to America preaching abolitionism, American Catholics typically rejected them as depraved fanatics.²⁸

Third, Irish Catholics, by far the majority Catholic ethnicity in America, loathed the British government for its centuries-long oppression of the Emerald Isle. The American Irish Catholic community despised anything that smelled of British influence. It was well known that the British Anti-Slavery Society played an instrumental role in the American abolitionist movement. Thus, the American Irish Catholic community naturally opposed them.²⁹

Finally, many abolitionists themselves were, in principle, anti-Catholic.³⁰ In fact, by the late 1840s, antislavery activists regularly condemned slavery and Catholicism as

²⁸ John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 43-67; Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 39-40.

²⁹ Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 40. A good example of Irish American Catholic animosity toward anything even hinting of British influence is found in the group's reaction to a letter penned by members of the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society and signed by such notable Irish Catholic heroes as Daniel O'Connell and Father Theobald Matthew. The letter was intended to convince Irish American Catholics to "do honor to the name of Ireland" by embracing the abolitionist movement in America. However, Irish American Catholics categorically rejected the letter's content. One of the primary reasons cited by various Irish American papers was the appearance of Doctor Richard Robert Madden's name among signatures pledging their support. Although Madden was a devout Irish Catholic, he was also a paid employee of the British government. Irish American newspapers noted that Madden's signature appeared well above those of Daniel O'Connell and Theobald Matthew, leading some to speculate that the good doctor was the real author of the document. See the *Liberator*, March 25, 1842. See also Quinn, "Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope," 80-83.

³⁰ In his attempt to win Irish Americans to the abolitionist cause, William Lloyd Garrison attempted to dismiss claims that all abolitionists were intolerant against Catholicism. See McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 56. See also Quinn, "Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope," 85.

equivalent repressive institutions.³¹ In 1854, the prominent abolitionist Theodore Parker, proclaimed that:

The Catholic clergy are on the side of Slavery. They find it is the dominant power, and pay court thereto that they may rise by its help. They like Slavery itself; it is an institution thoroughly congenial to them, consistent with the first principles of their church. Their Jesuit leaders think it is “an ulcer which will eat up the Republic,” and so foster it for the ruin of Democracy, the deadliest foe of the Roman hierarchy....I am told there is not in all America a single Catholic newspaper hostile to Slavery; not one opposed to tyranny in general; not one that takes sides with the oppressed in Europe.³²

In the same year, the Know Nothing Party reached the zenith of its popularity. In addition to being staunchly anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant, northern Know Nothings adopted abolitionism as one of its principle platforms.³³ For these reasons, as well as for the general belief that many of the things endorsed by abolitionists were against the teachings of the Church and contrary to the Church’s interpretation of the natural law,

³¹ According to McGreevy, abolitionists typically argued that “Protestants who tolerated slavery betrayed their principles...while Catholics who tolerated slavery applied them.” See McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 57. McGreevy notes how many prominent abolitionists—such as Elijah Lovejoy, George Bourne, George Cheever, and the Beecher family (Lyman, Harriet, and Edward)—spent a great deal of their time trying to protect America from “the Catholic menace.” In fact, when Supreme Court Justice Roger Brooke Taney stated the *Dred Scott* decision in 1857, Cheever automatically surmised that Taney’s adherence to Catholicism made him sympathetic to slavery. See pages 57-59.

³² Theodore Parker, *A Sermon of the Dangers Which Threaten the Rights of Man in America; Preached at the Music Hall, on Sunday, July 2, 1854* (Boston: Benjamin B. Mussey & Co., 1854), 23. In Cincinnati, the spokesperson for the Free Presbyterian Synod, Reverend Joseph Gordon, declared that in the United States, “popery finds its appropriate ally in the institution of slavery. They are both kindred systems. One enslaves the mind, the other both mind and body. Both deny the Bible to those under their control—both discourage free inquiry.” See Joseph Gordon, *The Life and Writings of Rev. Joseph Gordon. Written and Compiled by a Committee of the Free Presbyterian Synod* (Cincinnati: Free Presbyterian Synod, 1860), 302.

³³ See Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

most American Catholics followed Bishop England in his rejection of the abolitionist movement.³⁴

When *In Supremo Apostolatus* was issued, Bishop England acted swiftly to ensure that no one interpreted the Apostolic Letter as being favorable to the doctrine preached by the abolitionists. On March 14, 1840, the prelate published both the Latin and the English translation in his newspaper, the *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, and made sure to include an editorial clearly stating for his audience that *In Supremo Apostolatus* was only a condemnation of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade —not domestic slavery as practiced in the South.³⁵

At the 1840 provincial council, England made sure *In Supremo Apostolatus* did not receive much attention. He preached long sermons on unrelated material throughout the week. Only in the middle of the week was the Pope's letter read. Available evidence suggests that the document was only read in Latin and that no discussion took place following its reading for the rest of the week. In England's mind, the document was effectively pushed aside never to surface again.³⁶

Much to Bishop England's chagrin, his efforts to limit the exposure of Gregory's *In Supremo Apostolatus* were thwarted during the presidential campaign of 1840. While campaigning for President Martin Van Buren, Secretary of State John Forsyth wrote a

³⁴Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy*, 72. Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 58-59; Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 38-41; David C. R. Heisser, "Bishop Lynch's Civil War Pamphlet on Slavery," *Catholic Historical Review* 84, 4 (1998): 686-687.

³⁵Quinn, "Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope," 74-75.

³⁶Peter Guilday, *A History of the Councils of Baltimore, 1791-1884* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 120-129; Quinn, "Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope," 75.

letter warning the citizens of Georgia not only of the encroachments of abolitionists from the Northern states, but also from overseas:

The Government of Great Britain...has lately been employing itself as the volunteer or selected agent of the Pope, in presenting an apostolic letter on slavery to some of the Spanish American States—a letter which it is not at all improbable was prepared under influences proceeding from the British Isles....The shadows of the troubles in store for us, at home and abroad, are darkening and stealing upon us....The gravest thought and most anxious deliberation are demanded, to meet the dangers which sooner or later will come.³⁷

Forsyth attached to his letter a copy of *In Supremo Apostolatus*.

After reading Forsyth's letter, an impassioned John England published an open letter in the *U.S. Catholic Miscellany* addressed to the Secretary of State contending that Gregory only meant to condemn the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, not, as Forsyth implied, domestic slavery as practiced in the southern states. According to England, since *In Supremo Apostolatus* only condemned those who "reduce to slavery," formerly free individuals, the pope could not have been speaking of American slaves since they had been born into slavery and thus could not be reduced to a state they already occupied. The prelate concluded by exclaiming that there was still much more he had to say, and thus would follow the present letter with a future installment.³⁸

England published his promised second installment in the next edition of the *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*. In this letter, England noted that at the last provincial council, *In Supremo Apostolatus* was "formally read and accepted" by all the bishops present. England noted that more than half of the bishops in attendance were from slaveholding

³⁷ *Georgia Globe*, September 19, 1840, quoted in Quinn, "Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope," 76-77.

³⁸ *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, September 29, 1840, cited in John England, *Letters of the Late Bishop England to the Hon. John Forsyth, on the Subject of Domestic Slavery: to which are Prefixed Copies, in Latin and*

states, and many of their parishioners were slaveholders themselves. If the prelates judged Gregory's letter as a condemnation of slavery as practiced in the South, they would be obligated to refuse the sacraments to Catholic slaveholders. However, the council declared that Gregory's *In Supremo Apostolatus* only condemned the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.³⁹ If Forsyth believed the interpretation of the council was incorrect, England made sure to inform the Secretary of State that during the prelate's audience with Gregory in 1836, the pope allegedly told him that although "the southern States have had domestic slavery as an heirloom, whether they would or not, they are not engaged in the *Negro traffic*."⁴⁰

Although England believed he had proven his point, the prelate chose to provide Forsyth—and anyone else who chose to read the *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*—with a complete history of the Church's teaching on slavery. England's decision was based upon his desire to eliminate any future confusion regarding the Church's position and because he saw the question of slavery "as one of great moment at the present time, and likely to become more troublesome before many years shall elapse."⁴¹ Thus, before concluding his second installment, England proposed the question whether slavery in principle was lawful from a natural and theological point of view.

According to England, the Fathers of the Church consistently upheld the belief that slavery, in principle, is not contrary to the natural law. Although humans in their "natural state [are] master[s] of [their] own liberty, [they] may dispose of it as [they] see

English, of the Pope's Apostolic Letter, Concerning the African Slave Trade, with some Introductory Remarks, etc (New York, Negro Universities Press, 1969), 13-19.

³⁹ See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 129.

⁴⁰ *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, October 4, 1840, cited in John England, *Letters*, 21. *Emphasis* in original.

proper.” This includes exchanging one’s personal liberty for one’s services “to save [one’s] life, to provide for sustenance, to secure other enjoyments which [he or she] prefers to that freedom and to that right to [his or her] own labor, which [he or she] gives in exchange for life and protection.” Furthermore, while all “our theologians,” England claimed, “have from the earliest epoch sustained, that though in a state of pure nature all [humans] are equal, yet the natural law does not prohibit one...from having dominion over the useful action of another...provided this dominion be obtained by a just title.” Citing Thomas Aquinas, England concluded that the natural law did not establish slavery, nor does its introduction change natural law. However, “devised by human reason for the benefit of human life,” slavery was added to the natural law along with a series of just laws of nations (*jus gentium*).⁴²

From a theological standpoint, England explained that humanity’s condition prior to Original Sin was drastically different. However, with that “original transgression...[d]eath, sickness and a large train of what are now called natural evils,

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, October 4, 1840, cited in John England, *Letters*, 22. England references and quotes Aquinas’ reply to the third objection to the fifth article of the ninety-fourth question in the first part of the second part of the *Summa Theologica*:

A thing is said to belong to the natural law in two ways. First, because nature inclines thereto...that one should not do harm to another. Secondly, because nature did not bring in the contrary: thus we might say that for man to be naked is of the natural law, because nature did not give him clothes, but art invented them. In this sense, “the possessions of all things in common and universal freedom” are said to be of the natural law, because, to wit, the distinction of possessions and slavery were not brought in by nature, but devised by human reason for the benefit of human life. Accordingly the law of nature was not changed in this respect, except by addition.”

See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IntraText CT—Text, available from Internet, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG00023/_P72.HTM, accessed August 21, 2006. Aquinas’ teaching implies that nothing contrary to human reason and human life can be considered a justified addition to the natural law. Given various state laws that deprived slaves of much of their humanity, one may question whether England’s use of this particular passage supports the continuation of chattel slavery in the South.

are by Roman Catholics considered to be the consequences of sin.”⁴³ One of these evils introduced, continued England, was slavery. England supported this claim by quoting the works of Augustine of Hippo,⁴⁴ St. Ambrose of Milan,⁴⁵ John Chrysostom,⁴⁶ and Pope Gelasius I.⁴⁷ Although he claimed that many more sources could be referenced, England felt that continuing on would be superfluous. He believed that his list was evidence enough that “Catholic divines are agreed in principle that the origin of slavery, as of all

See Stephen F. Brett, *Slavery and the Catholic Tradition: Rights in the Balance* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994), 203.

⁴³ *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, October 4, 1840, cited in John England, *Letters*, 24.

⁴⁴ England references and quotes the fifteenth chapter in the nineteenth book of Augustine’s *City of God*. The title of the chapter sums up its thesis: “Of the Liberty Proper to Man’s Nature, and the Servitude Introduced by Sin,—A Servitude in Which the Man Whose Will is Wicked is the Slave of His Own Lust, Though He is Free So Far as Regards Other Men.” According to Augustine, God:

...did not intend that His rational creature, who was made in His image, should have dominion over anything but the irrational creation,—not man over man, but man over the beasts. And hence the righteous men in primitive times were made shepherds of cattle rather than kings of men, God intending thus to teach us what the relative position of the creature is, and what the desert of sin; for it is with justice, we believe, that the condition of slavery is the result of sin. And this is why we do not find the word “slave” in any part of Scripture until righteous Noah branded the sin of his son with this name. It is a name, therefore, introduced by sin and not by nature.

See Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, translated by Marcus Dods, available from Internet, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.XIX.15.html>, accessed August 24, 2006.

⁴⁵ England quotes Ambrose as saying that “There would be no slavery to-day, had there not been drunkenness.” The work that England references, “On Elias and Fasting,” could not be located. However, Aquinas quotes Ambrose as speaking these words in the third objection of the third article to the one hundred fiftieth question in the second part of the second part of the *Summa Theologica*. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IntraText CT—Text, available from Internet, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0023/_P96.HTM, accessed August 21, 2006.

⁴⁶ England quote’s Chrysostom’s Homily on the Twenty-Ninth Chapter of Genesis. The biblical passage in question deals with Jacob’s fourteen years of servitude to Laban for the right to marry Leah and Rachel. Commenting on this story, Chrysostom writes that it is sin that “makes one of them a servant, and taking away his liberty lays him under subjection.” See Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 18-45*, translated by Robert C. Hill (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1990). Further elaboration on Chrysostom’s attitude on slavery can be found in his homilies on the letters of Paul. In these homilies, Chrysostom writes that masters can use corporal punishment to punish slaves, that masters should provide religious instruction for their slaves, and that no one really needs to possess slaves. See Kenneth J. Zanca, *American Catholics and Slavery, 1789-1866: An Anthology of Primary Documents* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), 11-13.

⁴⁷ England does not quote but states that the pontiff “states slavery to have been a consequence of sin, and to have been established by human law.” See *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, October 4, 1840, cited in John England, *Letters*, 24. Interestingly, according to Cyprrian Davis, Pope Gelasius I was one of three popes of the early church said to be from Africa and possibly black. Of the three (the other two were Victor I and Miltiades I), Gelasius was the most significant, for he helped to lay the foundations for papal primacy by

our infirmities and afflictions, is to be found in sin.” If there remained any doubt concerning his and the previously mentioned theologians’ assertion, England suggested one “consider the full force” of Genesis 9: 25-27: “Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren....Blessed be...the God of Sem! Let Canaan be his servant. May God expand Japeth, so that he dwells among the tents of Sem; and let Canaan be his servant.”⁴⁸

Having established that slavery in principle was lawful from a natural and theological point of view, England nevertheless claimed he was “not in love with the existence of slavery” and “would never aid in establishing it where it did not exist.” However, England agreed with Aquinas’ assessment that mutual benefits could arise between the master-slave relationship:

The situation of a slave, under a humane master, insures to him, food, raiment, and dwelling, together with a variety of little comforts; it relieves him from the apprehensions of neglect in sickness, from all solicitude for the support of his family, and in return, all that is required is fidelity and moderate labor. I do not deny that slavery has its evils, but the above are no despicable benefits. Hence I have known many freemen who regretted their manumission.⁴⁹

Thus, given that the South allegedly participated only in the domestic trade of slaves who have been slaves since birth, England concluded that the South’s peculiar

writing a strongly worded letter to Emperor Anastasius I declaring the pope’s right to exercise jurisdiction in all parts of the church. See Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 13-14.

⁴⁸ *Catholic Miscellany*, October 4, 1840, cited in John England, *Letters*, 24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* England references and quotes Aquinas’ reply to the second objection to the third article of the fifty-seventh question in the second part of the second part of the *Summa Theologica*:

This man is a slave, absolutely speaking, rather a son, not by any natural cause, but by reason of the benefits which are produced, for it is more beneficial to this one to be governed by one who has more wisdom, and to the other to be helped by the labor of the former. Hence the state of slavery belongs principally to the law of nations, and to the natural law only in the second degree, not in the first.

See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IntraText CT—Text, available from Internet, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0023/_P96.HTM, accessed August 21, 2006.

institution was both naturally and theologically permissible and could actually be beneficial for both the master and slave. Since England believed that Gregory's *In Supremo Apostolatus* only specifically condemned the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, Forsyth was mistaken in suggesting Catholics in general or the Pope in particular favored the radical doctrine of abolitionism. However, just to be sure this was clear for all his readers, England proceeded to write an additional sixteen letters—each loaded with references to scripture, various Church councils, and the Church Fathers—attempting “to exhibit the perfect compatibility of the Domestic Slavery, as it now exists in our southern states, with the principles and practices of the Christian religion.”⁵⁰

Although England died before completing his intended project, his existing eighteen letters to Forsyth painted a powerful portrait of the Church's complacency toward slavery during the first millennium of the Common Era.⁵¹ While he made sure to note the Church's efforts to alleviate the institution's abuses, John England's letters to Forsyth amounted to an apology for the continuance of slavery in America and would serve as the unofficial American Catholic position for the next twenty years.⁵²

⁵⁰ *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, January 2, 1841, quoted in Quinn, “Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope,” 79. For examples of England's heavy use of scripture, see *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, October 13, 21, and 28, 1840, cited in John England, *Letters*, 25-46.

⁵¹ Guilday, Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England*, vol. 2, 530-540.

⁵² Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy*, 66-70; George W. Potter, *To the Golden Door: The Story of the Irish in Ireland and America*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1960), 382-384. See also Michael V. Gannon, *Rebel Bishop: The Life and Era of Augustin Verot* (Milwaukee: Bruce Pub. Co., 1964), 32-34. However, no matter how hard England tried, he could not keep *In Supremo Apostolatus* from being embraced by the abolitionist community. Thus, at a meeting of the Hibernian Anti-Slavery Society held in Dublin in January 1840, the Irish Catholic abolitionist Doctor Richard Robert Madden asserted that *In Supremo Apostolatus* explicitly condemned slavery. In fact, Pope Gregory was simply the latest Catholic leader to denounce the institution. See Quinn, “Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope,” 72. Two years later, a rally held at Faneuil Hall in Boston featured a speech from Wendell Phillips. The purpose of his speech was to win over Catholic Americans to the cause of abolitionism. He declared that “a long list of Popes, from Leo to Gregory, have denounced the sin of making merchandise of men.” Indeed, Pope Gregory's Apostolic Letter, Phillips believed, forbade “every true Catholic [from] touch[ing]

Indeed, a number of antebellum American Catholics were slaveholders. Some of them owned large numbers of slaves such as Charles Carroll of Carrollton and William Joseph Gaston of North Carolina.⁵³ In addition to the laity, Catholic ecclesiastics and religious orders also owned slaves. For instance, Charles Carroll's brother John, the first bishop of America, evidently possessed at least one slave until his dying day.⁵⁴ Bishop

the accursed thing. See the *Liberator*, February 4, 1842. At another Faneuil Hall rally, Phillips read sections of *In Supremo Apostolatus* to his audience. He praised the document as an unequivocal condemnation of both slavery and the slave trade, and challenged Protestant abolitionists to acknowledge "the sect among all the hundred of our country, which can point to such an explicit testimony...emanating from its head and leader in the present day." Asserting that only Roman Catholics could be so acknowledged, Phillips proposed "three cheers for the abolitionist Pope Gregory XVI—and may they ring out gloriously from these arches of Liberty's home!" See the *Liberator*, November 17, 1843. Blatant use of *In Supremo Apostolatus* by abolitionist proponents did not occur again until the mid-1850s, when the nation was in turmoil thanks in large part to the Kansas-Missouri Act of 1854. During the proceedings of a Massachusetts Anti-slavery Convention in 1855, a Catholic participant named Henry Kemp noted that many Popes, but especially Pope Gregory XVI, "condemned slavery and called upon the faithful everywhere in the name of the Almighty God, to put it entirely away from them." According to the official account of the proceedings, Kemp "considered Archbishop Hughes, and all the professed Catholics of America, who sympathize with, and aid the Slave power, as excommunicated heretics." Indeed, he "thought himself about the only representative of the true Catholic Church in this country." See the *Annual Statement of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, at the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting, January 1855* (Boston, 1855), 41, quoted in McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 60. In the election year of 1856, the fledgling Republican Party sought to win Catholic votes by claiming that their traditional Party—the Democratic Party—had "set up A DOCTRINE which is against the teachings of the Catholic Church, and which no sincere Catholic can approve." This doctrine was the extension of slavery "into Kansas and other territories of the United States." The Republican editors of the *Independent* warned that "[w]hoever votes for [the Democratic Party]...will help to establish Slavery, where it does not now exist." The editors asked if a true "member of the Catholic Church [could] vote to oppress the poor and to set up slavery?" The editors believed that Pope Gregory was "against it, and no conscientious Catholic will go against the Pope's [In Supremo Apostolatus] in such a case." Although it was "very likely [many Catholics] who are not conscientious in their religion may [vote for the Democratic Party],...those that are sincere in their religion, will have to vote for [the Republican Party]." See *The Pope's Bull and the Words of Daniel O'Connell*, 2-3. However, the pamphlets did not have the desired effect. Most Catholics remained loyal to the Democratic Party and James Buchanan took the presidency with 45.3% of the popular vote. The editor of the *Independent* feared this result. Prior to the election, the editor lamented that the American Catholic hierarchy "have generally adopted the policy of the late Bishop England...in limiting the application of [Gregory's letter] to the slavery and slave traffic of Africa...and have practically regarded American slavery as a thing which even the Pope must not venture to pass judgment upon." The August 28, 1856 issue of the *Independent* is quoted in Quinn, "Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope," 89.

⁵³ Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 37. For a recent biography on Carroll, see Scott McDermott, *Charles Carroll of Carrollton: Faithful Revolutionary* (New York: Scepter, 2002). For Gaston, see Charles H. Bowman, Jr., "William Joseph Gaston, 19 Sept. 1778-23 Jan. 1844," in *Documenting the American South*, available from Internet, http://docsouth.unc.edu/bios/pn0000574_bio.html, accessed August 26, 2006.

⁵⁴ Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 37.

England's successor, Bishop Patrick Neison Lynch, secured the aid of prominent Charleston Catholics in the acquirement and management of his ninety-five slaves.⁵⁵ The Jesuits often maintained slaves on their properties, as did the Capuchins and the Ursuline nuns.⁵⁶ Thus, as the historian Joseph Delfmann Brokhage put it, "slaves were held by [American] Catholics without remorse of conscience."⁵⁷

While Bishop England seemingly established the right for American Catholics to possess slaves in good conscience, the aging prelate, along with the rest of the American hierarchy, was well aware that abuses within the South's peculiar institution could take place, even at the hands of Catholic masters.⁵⁸ For example, Henri Necaïse, a former slave held by a Catholic master, reported that he was whipped even after officially being emancipated. Another former slave, simply referred to as "Edward," reported that his Catholic master was a "very bad woman" who "would go to church every Sunday, come home and go to fighting amongst the colored people; was never satisfied; she treated my mother very hard; would beat her with a walking stick."⁵⁹ Even religious orders like the Jesuits were guilty of inhumane treatment of the slaves under their dominium. A European Jesuit touring the southern states' Jesuit estates in 1829 was shocked by "the miserable and meager fare the slaves received, by the whipping of pregnant slave women,

⁵⁵ Heisser, "Bishop Lynch's Civil War Pamphlet on Slavery," 686.

⁵⁶ Thomas Murphy, *Jesuit Slaveholding in Maryland, 1717-1838*, (New York: Routledge, 2001); Roger Baudier, *The Catholic Church in Louisiana*, (New Orleans: A. W. Hyatt Stationery Mfg. Co. Ltd., 1939), 131-132, 164.

⁵⁷ Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 37. See also Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 68-69; Thomas Paul Thigpen, "Aristocracy of the Heart; Catholic Lay Leadership in Savannah, 1820-1870" (Ph.D. dissertation, Emory University, 1995), 619.

⁵⁸ Despite this admission, England maintained that the lot of the average Southern slave was better than that of the average Northern free laborer. See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 138. This was a common argument made by anti-abolitionists.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Zanca, *American Catholics and Slavery*, 164-166.

and by the almost complete disregard for the morality and religion of the slaves.”⁶⁰ Years later, Bishop Lynch attempted to dismiss the condemnation of slavery based on charges of sexual violence levied against slaves, stating that although such instances were heinous, they were the exception, not the norm. Slavery, Lynch argued, was not the problem but rather “[t]he passions of men” which would continue to “exist and...seek their gratification whether Slavery exists or not.”⁶¹ To guard against such abuses, the antebellum American hierarchy preached to its adherents a series of moral guidelines to be followed by both masters and slaves in order for the institution to be justified.

The most prolific Catholic moral theologian in antebellum America was the Reverend Francis Patrick Kenrick. Prior to his accession to the Archdiocese of Baltimore in 1851, Kenrick had served as the bishop of Philadelphia since 1830. During his episcopacy in Philadelphia, Kenrick encountered numerous trials, most noteworthy being his personal battle for control of the diocese with the incumbent Bishop Henry Conwell, the bloody anti-Catholic riots in the streets of brotherly love, and the influx of exiles from the slave revolts of Sainte-Domingue.⁶² Despite all the hardships, Kenrick remained a determined albeit conciliatory prelate and eventually won the respect of Philadelphia’s Catholic and much of the Protestant community. According to one biographer, when Kenrick was called upon to provide guidance for his flock on potentially divisive moral

⁶⁰ Quoted in Randall M. Miller, “Slaves and Southern Catholicism” in *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord*, ed. John B. Boles, (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), 129.

⁶¹ Heisser, “Bishop Lynch’s Civil War Pamphlet on Slavery,” 691-692. Heisser is directly quoting an English translation of Bishop Lynch’s Pamphlet.

⁶² For Kenrick’s battles with Conwell, see Richard Shaw, *Dagger John: The Unquiet Life and Times of Archbishop Hughes of New York* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 60-105. For an account of anti-Catholic riots in antebellum Philadelphia, see Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 12. For a history of the slave uprising in Saint-Domingue, see John E. Baur, “International Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution,”

issues such as slavery, he “gave no offense to either side,...acting as a minister of religion with charity to friend and foe alike.”⁶³

In 1841, Kenrick published a comprehensive treatment on Catholic morality entitled *Theologia Moralis*. In the spirit of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*, Kenrick’s opus attempted to provide the faithful with definitive Catholic teachings on prevalent social issues. Concerning the issue of slavery, Kenrick employed many of the same patristic, scholastic, and scriptural examples used previously by Bishop England to show how slavery in principle was lawful.⁶⁴ Following the classical interpretation of slavery as laid down by Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas, Kenrick defined slavery as “the state of perpetual subjection by which one is held to give his [or her] labors to another in return for his [or her] maintenance.”⁶⁵ Kenrick agreed with Bishop England that Pope Gregory did not intend to condemn all forms of slavery but just the absolute slavery characteristic of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.⁶⁶ Gregory’s letter,

The Americas 26, 4 (April 1970): 396 and Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁶³ Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 43. Kenrick himself bemoaned the involvement of other prelates. On May 10, 1863, Kenrick wrote a letter to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith lamenting Archbishop Hughes’ tendency of taking sides on potentially divisive political issues such as the Civil War, the Church’s attitude to slavery, and the right of the federal and state governments. See Finbar Kenneally, *United States Documents in the Propaganda Fide Archives; a Calendar*, vol. 3, no. 10 (Washington 1966): 15.

⁶⁴ Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 110-111.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 54-55. This definition implies that slavery is only compatible with the natural law as long as it respects the individual’s fundamental and unassailable rights. Kenrick adopted Aquinas’ understanding of a “right” being either a God-given or a human-given possession which one holds and which others must respect. While certain human-given rights can be removed, Kenrick stressed that Catholic masters must always honor their slaves’ God-given rights—life, sexuality, family, religion—in order for their dominion over the slave’s labor to be morally valid. In fact, certain God-given rights, referred to as “perfect rights,” cannot be surrendered even through the consent of the slave. Masters who took away all the human rights of slaves violated the natural law by becoming “the immediate end of the slave, hardly recognizing [the slave] as a person, who has God as his immediate end, and who has the rights necessary to attaining that end. See Brokhage, “Francis Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 105-106.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 102-104.

Kenrick argued, showed how the Catholic Church had always condemned such forms of slavery. However, like Bishop England, Kenrick maintained that a master's right to exercise dominion over a slave's services was not contrary to the natural law *per se*.

As cited above, Bishop England held that slavery was compatible with the natural law assuming it had been established through the attainment of a "just title."⁶⁷ According to a letter dated March 20, 1686, the Congregation of the Holy Office under Pope Innocent XI required any potential purchaser of or master over a descendant of those originally enslaved in Africa "to inquire about their title of servitude, whether they have been justly or unjustly enslaved, even when they know that very many of them have been unjustly enslaved." If one found that a slave he or she possessed was in fact held in slavery unjustifiably, the Congregation obligated the master to free such slaves and provide them with compensation.⁶⁸ In determining which titles for slavery were justified under the natural law, Kenrick was of the same mind of most moral theologians who had addressed the issue. Moral theologians generally recognized four just titles for slavery: capture in war, punishment for a crime, sale of oneself, and nativity.⁶⁹

At first glance, one might presume that one could justify the South's peculiar institution through appeal to the just title of nativity. Indeed, Kenrick accepted the title of nativity without any debate or elaboration as a justified title in which one could exercise dominium over another human being. He noted Aquinas' teaching on the issue, referred to an ancient Roman law, and concluded that children born of a slave mother are slaves

⁶⁷ *U.S. Catholic Miscellany*, October 4, 1840, cited in John England, *Letters*, 22

⁶⁸ *Collectanea S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide seu Decreta Instructiones Rescripta pro Apostolicis Missionibus*, vol. 1 (Rome: Polygot Press, 1907), 76-77, quoted and translated in Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*, 103-104

since the condition of the child follows the condition of the mother, not the father.⁷⁰

However, in order for the title of nativity to be justified, the title in which the mother was held in slavery must also be justified. Clearly, Kenrick did not believe he could make such a claim, for he does not even allude to the title of nativity in his attempt to justify the existence of the Southern State's system of chattel slavery.⁷¹

The papal documents discussed at the beginning of this introduction underscores the Vatican's consistent condemnation of those who reduced formerly free citizens into perpetual slavery for any reason other than the aforementioned "just titles." Far from being justified in their actions, such "shamefully blinded" individuals were described as "a shame to the Christian name," and subject to immediate excommunication for their participation in the African slave trade.⁷² Kenrick himself acknowledged that the slaves toiling away in the South were descendants of men and women unjustly taken from Africa.⁷³ Therefore, he could not justify the slave system practiced in the southern states through an appeal to the just title of nativity. Nor could he appropriately apply any of the other so-called just titles.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Kenrick believed that for the common good, nothing should be done contrary to the existing state laws relating to domestic slavery, lest one make the condition of the slaves worse.⁷⁵ In his discussion of domestic slavery

⁶⁹ Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 115-121.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁷² Gregory XVI, December 3, 1839, *In Supremo Apostolatus*, available from Internet, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Greg16/g16sup.htm>, accessed August 3, 2006.

⁷³ Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 135.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 120-122.

⁷⁵ Kenrick believed that the common good of society necessitated the continuance of slavery in the South. He felt that the immediate emancipation policy espoused by the abolitionist movement would create a dangerous instability within the nation. Thus, "Kenrick seemed to have been satisfied to let conditions

in his *Theologia Moralis*, Kenrick's principal desire was not to discuss the morality of slavery, but to provide the clergy and laity who lived in slaveholding states with practical moral principles for dealing with their slaves that honored their God-given human dignity and to provide slaves with instructions on how to fulfill their obligations to their masters.⁷⁶ In order to reconcile this sentiment with Catholic morality, Kenrick had to develop a justification for the continuation of slavery in the South that did not appeal to the typical just titles of dominium. Kenrick argued that such a justification could be established on the grounds of prescription.

Prescription is typically defined as a method created by the law of nations (*jus gentium*) for acquiring the title to property based upon uninterrupted possession for a specified period in order to secure peace and prevent litigation.⁷⁷ Since slavery *per se* is not contrary to the natural law, Kenrick argued that one could acquire ownership of the titles of dominium used to hold another in a state of perpetual servitude through prescription. Although none of the traditional titles used to reconcile the existence of perpetual servitude with the natural law could justifiably be applied to the southern states' system of domestic slavery, Kenrick believed the idea of prescription allowed for a *presumed title* of dominium to exist, based upon the possession of that dominium over a long period. Thus, Kenrick asserted that the southern states' system of domestic slavery

remain in *statu quo*." See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 239. See also McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 53.

⁷⁶ Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 41, 43-44.

⁷⁷ The idea of prescription is formally recognized as justified in the *Code of Canon Law*. See *Code of Canon Law*. See *Code of Canon Law*, available from Internet, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0017/_PQ.HTM, accessed August 28, 2006. See also the *Catholic Encyclopedia's* definition at "Prescription," available from Internet, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12395b.htm>, accessed August 28, 2006.

was justifiable on the grounds of prescription of a *presumed title*.⁷⁸ However, such a prescription must be peacefully and unquestionably possessed, capable of being subject to private dominium, and held by a person who faithfully believed that such a title is justifiable.

While Kenrick argued that all of these conditions are present concerning slavery *per se*, it remains questionable whether certain conditions, specifically those requiring capable dominium and the ability to possess that dominium peacefully and unquestionably, can justifiably apply to the realities of the system of chattel slavery practiced in the South.⁷⁹ If certain conditions were questionable, one might wonder if actual Catholic slaveholders were able to exercise their *presumed title* of dominium over their slaves in good faith. Indeed, the Catholic Church consistently stressed the importance of this requirement for valid prescription. At the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 C.E., the forty-first constitution decreed:

⁷⁸ According to Kenrick, prescription also allowed for so-called *colored titles*. Such a title, though not justified in itself, possesses the legal form sufficient to transfer dominium. Thus, it could be argued that someone who purchased a recently enslaved African from a slave-trader obtained a colored title. See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 145.

⁷⁹ One finds a major inconsistency in Kenrick's discussion on things that are capable of subjection to dominium. According to Kenrick, things taken by robbery or force cannot be subject to dominium, for their prescriptions were illegally obtained according to the law of nations. However, Kenrick himself clearly indicated that the slaves laboring in the southern states were descendants of men and woman robbed of their God-given liberty by force. If such is the case, then he contradicts himself. See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 130-133. Brokhage notes another flaw: "It seems that the constant fear felt by the people in slaveholding States as well as the recorded instances of insurrection, plus the many instances of runaway slaves indicate that the possession of slaves by their masters was not on the whole a peaceful possession." See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 144-145. Even Kenrick's appeal to prescription based upon the elapse of a very long time is flawed, for as Brokhage notes, Canon Law of the day unmistakably decreed that prescription could not be used against human liberty, even if the person in questions were held in slavery for a long time, even for more than forty years. See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 148. Brokhage concludes that Kenrick's attempt to "justify domestic slavery on the grounds of prescription" is "difficult to agree with...because of the accumulation of doubts raised as to the fulfillment of the conditions for prescription as taught by the theologians." See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 149.

Since whatever does not proceed from faith is sin, and since in general any constitution or custom which cannot be observed without mortal sin is to be disregarded, we therefore define by this synodal judgment that no prescription, whether canonical or civil, is valid without good faith. It is therefore necessary that the person who prescribes should at no stage be aware that the object belongs to someone else.⁸⁰

The Catholic Church's *Code of Canon Law* records essentially the same sentiment.⁸¹ The *Catholic Encyclopedia*'s definition of "prescription" summarizes the necessity of the requirement by noting that:

...[p]rescription, deriving its value from positive law, presupposes...[t]he beneficiary...act in good faith. The civil codes are not so explicit in demanding this, but in conscience it is essential. This simply means that a man must be honestly convinced that what he has in his possession really belongs to him.⁸²

While it seems that most southern Catholics held their slaves without any "remorse of conscience,"⁸³ this was not universally true.

As noted above, a number of antebellum American Catholics were slaveholders.

While isolated cases of slave abuse at the hands of Catholic masters undoubtedly took place, "as a general rule," Catholics allegedly "treated their slaves kindly and in a Christian manner."⁸⁴ However, even when slaves were treated humanely, there is evidence that some members of the Catholic laity struggled to reconcile the very

⁸⁰ *Fourth Lateran Council - 1215 A.D.*, available from Internet, <http://mb-soft.com/believe/txs/lateran.htm>, accessed August 28, 2006.

⁸¹ Book I, Title X, Canon 198, from the *Code of Canon Law* reads: "No prescription is valid unless it is based on good faith, not only in its beginning, but throughout the whole time required for the prescription." See *Code of Canon Law*, available from Internet, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0017/_PQ.HTM, accessed August 28, 2006.

⁸² *Catholic Encyclopedia*, "Prescription," available from Internet, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12395b.htm>, accessed August 28, 2006.

⁸³ Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 37.

existence of slavery with their conscience. A letter written in 1819 by a Dominican priest to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith reveals that “a great portion of the Catholics lament the existence of [Catholics who own slaves], which they consider injurious to the character of their religion, and consequently to its progress.”⁸⁵ This lament, however, was not limited only to non-slaveholding Catholics. One notable example was the aforementioned William Joseph Gaston. Himself a slaveholder, Gaston often struggled to rationalize his right to exercise dominion over his slaves. Eventually, he would publicly condemn the institution and call for its abolition.⁸⁶

Available evidence suggests that members of the American clergy also struggled to come to terms with the existence of slavery within their given realm of authority. In 1814, for example, Reverend John Thayer expressed to Archbishop Carroll his desire to be relieved from his service as a parish priest due to his inability to accept that many of his parishioners chose to own slaves.⁸⁷ In his response, Carroll made no effort to address Thayer’s principal concern—that slavery’s very existence was contradictory to Christianity. Instead, the archbishop, himself a slave owner, alluded only to the treatment of slaves:

⁸⁴ Brokhage cites two ecclesiastical examples as his proof. See Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 138.

⁸⁵ John Ryan to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, 1819, quoted in Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1735-1815* (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1922), 684. Additional examples of the laity’s opposition to the existence of slavery in the United States are shown in the stories of Orestes Brownson and Mary Louise Booth, found in Chapter Three of this study.

⁸⁶ Charles H. Bowman, Jr., “William Joseph Gaston, 19 Sept. 1778-23 Jan. 1844,” in *Documenting the American South*, available from Internet, http://docsouth.unc.edu/bios/pn0000574_bio.html, accessed August 26, 2006.

⁸⁷ Walker C. Gollar, “The Controversial and Contradictory Anti-slavery of Father John Thayer 1758-1815), *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 109 (Fall/Winter 1998): 133-146. See also Walker C. Gollar, “Father John Thayer: Catholic Antislavery Voice in the Kentucky Wilderness, *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 101 (Summer 2003): 275-296.

I am as far as you from being easy in my mind at many things I see and know, relating to the treatment and manner of Negroes. I do the best I can to correct the evils I see and then recur to those principles which I suppose influenced the many eminent and holy missionaries in South America and Asia where slavery equally exists.⁸⁸

Even Bishop England privately expressed his “disgust with the condition of the slaves” of his dioceses, which he acknowledged were “brought into my diocese under a system which perhaps is the greatest moral evil that can desolate part of the civilized world.”⁸⁹

Whatever the personal misgivings towards the morality of the South’s system of slavery may have been, the public stance of the American Church was clear. At no point does Kenrick challenge the prevailing system of slavery as practiced in the South beyond expressing a personal “regret” for the existence of “so many slave laws which have been passed which forbid the teaching of reading and which impede greatly the exercise of religion at any place so that one must take care from any undertakings.”⁹⁰ Indeed, the prelate proclaimed that since “such is the state of affairs, nothing against the law must be attempted, neither anything by which the slaves might be set free, nor must anything be done or said that would make them bear the yoke with difficulty.” As Bishop England had before him, Kenrick stressed the potential good that the slave system could foster if infused with Christian principles:

[S]laves, informed by Christian morals, might show service to their masters, venerating always God, the supreme Master of us all; so that in turn the masters

⁸⁸ Quoted in Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 138.

⁸⁹ Original in the Irish College. Rome, quoted in Guilday, *The Life and Times of John England*, vol. 1, 531.

⁹⁰ Francis Patrick Kenrick, *Theologia Moralis* (Mechlin: H. Dessain, 1861), 1:166, Tractatus V, “De Jure Gentium,” Caput VI, “De Servitute,” no 38, quoted and translated in Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 49.

might show themselves gentle and even-handed and might lighten the condition of their slaves with humanity and with zeal for their salvation.”⁹¹

Sadly, if one of Kenrick’s principal aims in his *Theologia Moralis* was to protect the God-given human dignity of the millions held in bondage in the South, it seems he failed by allowing such a “state of affairs” to continue. Indeed, by acknowledging the existence of civil laws hindering slaves from exercising their God-given “perfect rights,” and then insisting that such laws must be upheld, Kenrick was guilty of upholding an institution his *Theologia Moralis* emphatically condemned. By attempting to highlight the potential good within the slave system, Kenrick essentially glossed over the concrete evil that was chattel slavery.

Alas, any Catholic slaveholder who questioned the morality of retaining his or her slaves could find consolation in the words of either Bishop Kenrick or Bishop England. As one historian has put it, the two prelates “set forth the outlines of what would thereafter be the common American Catholic viewpoint of slavery in pulpit and press, and the Catholic southerner’s basic defense of it.”⁹² Indeed, prior to the Civil War, while various Protestant denominations across America divided into proslavery and antislavery factions, the American Catholic hierarchy and the American Catholic press expressed near unanimity on the issue, and thus remained unified throughout the irrepressible

⁹¹ Francis Patrick Kenrick, *Theologia Moralis* (Mechlin: H. Dessain, 1861), 1:166, Tractatus V, “De Jure Gentium,” Caput VI, “De Servitute,” no 38, quoted and translated in Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 49.

⁹² Gannon, *Rebel Bishop*, 34.

conflict.⁹³ One week after the Battle of Fort Sumter, the Baltimore *Catholic Mirror* proclaimed American Catholics blameless in the proceedings:

Our clergy and press have been true to their mission. Our priests in the North, whatever their private opinions about slavery have not desecrated their pulpits by slavery harangues. Our clergy in the South, who have a true appreciation of the facts, preach to the slaves' obedience, and to the masters' clemency.⁹⁴

Thus, the Catholic Church in America chose to deal with the South's system of chattel slavery by not dealing with it. In their effort to defend slavery according to the perceived "just titles" of southern slaveholders, both Bishop England and Bishop Kenrick passively allowed for the continuation of slavery based upon race, which, as noted above, the Vatican emphatically and consistently condemned. The prelates were largely successful in convincing non-Catholic observers that the Catholic Church in America was against immediate emancipation as advocated by the abolitionists, while at the same time reassuring slaveholding Catholics that slavery *per se* was compatible with their Catholic faith. As long as Catholic slaveholders followed the guidelines set forth in manuals like Kenrick's *Theologia Moralis* obligating masters to respect their slaves' God-given rights (life, sexuality, family, religion), there was no need to have any crisis of conscience as to whether holding dominium over another human being was fundamentally wrong.

⁹³ In fact, as the proslavery and antislavery rhetoric between the various Protestant denominations became more pronounced, several Catholic newspapers charged Protestant ministers as being the major cause for the outbreak of hostilities. See Cuthbert Edward Allen, "The Slavery Question in the Catholic Newspapers," in *Historical Records and Studies* 26 (1936): 99-169. Bishop Augustin Verot adamantly connects the sectional strife to a "conspiracy" hatched by Protestant "fanatical preachers...who desecrate and pollute the Divine word." See Verot, *A Tract for the Times*, 8.

⁹⁴ *Catholic Mirror*, April 20, 1861.

However, the financial circumstances that favored slavery and made it a lucrative trade necessitated a system that deprived slaves of all their rights.⁹⁵ Indeed, state laws of the day viewed slaves as personal property that could be bought, sold, and otherwise disposed of according to the master's will. Masters were in large part free to work their slaves in any manner they chose, which could be in excess to fifteen hours a day. If a slave committed any offense that compromised the authority of the master, he or she could be punished in any method the master saw fit.⁹⁶ Slaves were forbidden to marry without the consent of their masters, and even if consent were given, it was no guarantee that families would not one day be broken up due to sale.⁹⁷ Moreover, as the demand for slave labor increased, it was not unheard of for masters to breed their slaves.⁹⁸ Surplus slaves were sold like beasts of burden in the marketplace. Potential buyers would strip slaves for inspection and, having determined their worth, purchase them, bind them in

⁹⁵ According to Catholic historian Cyprian Davis, the South's system of slavery demanded "psychological control and psychological submission. It demanded that someone be broken and stay broken. Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 55-56.

⁹⁶ The most common type of chastisement came in the form of a cat-o'-nine-tails repeatedly lashed against a disobedient slave's back. More severe punishments included bodily mutilation. Slaves could not take legal action against his or her master, no matter how vicious a beating he or she received. See George M. Stroud, *A Sketch of the Laws Relating to Slavery in the Several States of the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Henry Longstreth, 1856), 31-83.

⁹⁷ Only Louisiana had laws preventing the separation of parents from their children. See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 75.

⁹⁸ In fact, many slaveholders kept choice male slaves exclusively for breeding on their own plantation or to be rented out to others for the same purpose. Such a practice would have been emphatically condemned by Aquinas, who insisted that slaves are "not bound to obey another man in matters touching the nature of the body, for instance in those relating to the support of his body or the begetting of children." The quote comes from Aquinas' answer to the fifth article of the one-hundred and fourth question in the second part of the second part of the *Summa Theologica*. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IntraText CT—Text, available from Internet, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0023/_PAH.HTM, accessed August 21, 2006. See also Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 61; Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States: In the Years 1853-1854* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1904) 60-62.

coffles for their journey to places unknown, and brand them with hot irons.⁹⁹ Whether slaves received moral or religious instruction was also the will of the master according to law.¹⁰⁰ If a slave wished to be baptized but his or her master refused, the slave would have to secure his or her baptism in secret. Religious education in such a circumstance would be next to impossible.¹⁰¹ Thus, the gap between the theoretical type of slavery found permissible within the natural law and defended by Bishop England and Bishop Kenrick and the actual type of slavery functioning in the southern states was so vast that the two shared no common ground. In fact, they were two different things entirely.¹⁰²

As the nation moved closer to the brink of war and the abolitionist movement became more pronounced, it became increasingly difficult for American Catholic leaders to reconcile their theoretical teachings on slavery with the reality of the institution in the South. In no place is this impasse better exhibited than in the case of Bishop Augustin Verot, Vicar Apostolic of Florida. Donned by historian Richard Gannon the “rebel

⁹⁹ Frederick Law Olmsted, *Journey Through Texas; or, a Saddle-Trip on the Southwestern Frontier with a Statistical Appendix* (New York, Dix, Edwards & Co., 1857), 55-56. Branding and scarring were done for identification purposes. See Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 89.

¹⁰⁰ Stroud, *A Sketch of the Laws Relating to Slavery*, 133-144.

¹⁰¹ Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 183. It should be noted that there were successful Catholic missions to slaves, but success ultimately depended on the cooperation of the slaves’ masters. See Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 172-185.

¹⁰² Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 150. Stephen F. Brett has postulated whether Aquinas, whose theology was so often used to justify African slavery in America, would have approved of such a system if he were alive to experience it. According to Brett, many authors employing Aquinas’ writings as proof for the legitimacy of slavery failed to distinguish between the scholastic’s understanding of slavery (writing in the 13th century) and slavery as it existed since the 15th century. This failure has led several to naively conclude that Thomas justified slavery as it existed in the New World. This, of course, is an anachronism. See Stephen F. Brett, *Slavery and the Catholic Tradition: Rights in the Balance*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1994). John Tracy Ellis notes that “Kenrick failed to make clear that” the slavery he described “was not the institution as it then existed in the United States.” What Kenrick described “was the classical concept of slavery—which was preferable to the destruction of society—gained from the experience of the human race as defined by him and other theologians.” Thus, Ellis argued, “the Bishop of Philadelphia made no contribution to the solution of the problem that so troubled his own generation. See John Tracy *American Catholicism* (Garden City: Image Books, 1965), 90.

bishop,” Verot was an outspoken defender of state rights, an advocate of secession, and a protector of the property rights of those who owned slaves.

On the eve of the Civil War, Verot delivered an impassioned proslavery sermon to his parishioners. Following the logic as set forth by Bishop England and Bishop Kenrick, he declared that slavery was justified due to “long possession in good faith [of] an apparent title”¹⁰³ and had “received the sanction of God, of the church, and of Society at all times, and in all governments.”¹⁰⁴ However, if slavery was to “become a permanent institution of the South” Verot insisted that it “must be made to conform to the laws of God,” for “a Southern Confederacy will never thrive, unless it rests upon morality and order.”¹⁰⁵

Verot lamented that the current state laws regarding slavery allowed for numerous violations against the humanity of the slaves. Verot acknowledged the inherent equality of black slaves to their white masters, recognizing that each slave possessed a soul “made to the image and likeness of God.”¹⁰⁶ The basis for slavery, explained the prelate, was “not in the color of the skin, but the titles which make one the legitimate servant of another.”¹⁰⁷ The prelate wondered if the impending conflict between the North and the

¹⁰³ Verot, *A Tract for the Times*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 10. This sentiment of Verot, while consistent with the Vatican’s condemnation of slavery based upon race, was at odds with the American law, which was infamously recited by fellow Catholic and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Roger Brooke Taney: “Can a Negro, whose ancestors were imported into this country, and sold as slaves, become a member of the political community founded and brought into existence by the Constitution of the United States, and as such become entitled to all of the rights, and privileges...granted to the citizen?...We think that they are not included, and were never meant to be included, in the word, ‘citizens,’ in the Constitution.” It was the opinion of Taney that African American slaves and free men and women of color were “an inferior class of beings, who have been subjugated by the dominant race, and whether emancipated or not, yet remained subject to their authority.” See *Dred*

South was God's way of eliminating the "frequent occasions of immorality, which the subservient and degraded position of the slave offers to the lewd."¹⁰⁸ Verot concluded with an appeal to "the wise and the virtuous" to "unite and combine their prudence, their patriotism, their humanity, and their religious integrity to divest Slavery of the features which would make it odious to God and man" so that God would bless the establishment of the Confederate States of America.¹⁰⁹

In essence, Bishop Verot was arguing for the establishment of the abstract form of slavery deemed permissible by Thomas Aquinas, Canon Law, and moral theology. While Bishops England and Kenrick had already attempted to apply this version of slavery upon the southern states' peculiar institution, by Verot's own admission, such slavery did not yet exist. Indeed, the South's slave laws had to undergo a complete overhaul, for they violated reason and inhibited the slaves' God-given human dignity.¹¹⁰ However, such an overhaul might jeopardize profits and thus never came. Sadly, out of their desire to promote the common good of their Church, their nation, and the vast

Scott v. Sanford (1857), available from Internet, <http://www.pinzler.com/ushistory/dredsupp.html>, accessed August 29, 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Verot, *A Tract for the Times*, 11.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 13. Verot had in mind those civil laws that allowed masters to forbid slaves from marrying and raising a family, break families apart through sale, and breed their slaves as if they were cattle. Such "frightful abuses," though sanctioned by law, were "shocking, hideous, and abominable," for they stripped slaves of their God-given human dignity and condemned them to "live in concubinage and adultery." See Verot, *A Tract for the Times*, 11. Verot also demanded that masters do a better job at ensuring their slaves receive a proper religious education. Although not required and often discouraged by civil law, the catechesis of slaves was vital if God were to bless the Confederacy. Indeed, to deny slaves the opportunity to receive the Word of God was viewed by Verot to be a "flagrant injustice against the souls of slaves, [that] would be the sure way to render slavery an untenable and ruinous institution, deserving the contempt of men, and the malediction of God." See Verot, *A Tract for the Times*, 13

¹¹⁰ According to Aquinas, civil laws that are "contrary to human good" and "in respect of [God]...are acts of violence rather than laws." The quote comes from Aquinas' answer to the fourth article of the ninety-sixth question in the first part of the second part of the *Summa Theologica*. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IntraText CT—Text, available from Internet, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0023/_P74.HTM#287, accessed August 29, 2006.

majority of their flock, Bishops Verot, Kenrick, England, and the majority of the antebellum American episcopacy found themselves defending an abstraction that did not exist in reality.¹¹¹

While one may argue that the American hierarchy's hesitancy to take a firm stand on the issue of domestic slavery prior to the Civil War was justified, it nevertheless created a great deal of moral ambiguity. Whereas one trained in the art of theology may have noted the distinction between the type of slavery defended by Bishops England and Kenrick with the concrete reality of the domestic slavery, the average Catholic interpreted the words of these prelates as a sanction of the South's peculiar institution. The failure of the Vatican to issue a refutation to Bishop John England's interpretation of *In Supremo Apostolatus* suggested that the Irish prelate correctly surmised Pope Gregory XVI's opinions regarding domestic slavery as opposed to the slave trade. Indeed, the lack of consensus among modern historians regarding what Gregory's Apostolic Constitution meant to condemn underscores the ambiguity that existed in the opinions of antebellum American Catholics addressing the issue of domestic slavery.¹¹²

¹¹¹ According to Aquinas, even if a civil law was enacted to protect the common good, it is unjustified if the law "goes beyond the power committed to" the master or "when burdens are imposed unequally." The quote comes from Aquinas' answer to the fourth article of the ninety-sixth question in the first part of the second part of the *Summa Theologica*. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, IntraText CT—Text, available from Internet, http://www.intratext.com/IXT/ENG0023/_P74.HTM#287, accessed August 29, 2006.

¹¹² Panzer believes that the "text of the Papal Constitution itself is clearly condemning both the slave trade and slavery. See Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*, 44. Claudia Carlen describes *In Supremo Apostolatus* as having a strong abolitionist tone. See Claudia Carlen, *Papal Pronouncements: A Guide, 1740-1978* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1990), 27. Robert Emmett Curran believes Gregory "explicitly condemned the slave trade and seemed to condemn by implication...slavery itself." See Robert Emmett Curran, "Rome, the American Church and Slavery," in *Building the Church in America: Studies in Honor of Monsignor Robert R. Trisco on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, eds. Joseph C. Linck and Raymond J. Kupke (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1999), 30. Cyprian Davis, observes that "Pope Gregory XVI was seemingly an unlikely person to issue such a condemnation of the slave trade and, by inference, of slavery itself." See Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 40. On the other hand, John

Alas, an ambiguous stance towards the hot-button issue of slavery may have been precisely what the American Catholic hierarchy wished to maintain. As indicated above, the antebellum Church, in its effort to establish itself within an American society often hostile to its presence, did not want to jeopardize its tenuous position by taking a definitive stance on such a divisive issue. Thus, by using either Bishop England or Bishop Kenrick's rationale, Catholics could agree with the abolitionists that slavery was an evil created because of sin while at the same time agree with Southern slaveholders in claiming that their peculiar institution was not necessarily contrary to God's law. If threatened by anti-Catholic Know Nothings in the North, Catholics could quote Bishop England and say that they were not "friendly to the existence or continuation of slavery."¹¹³ If challenged by South Carolinian slaveholders, Catholics could draw upon the same quote in order to assert "the impossibility of now abolishing it here."¹¹⁴ While a number of Protestant denominations were torn apart by discussing the morality of

Tracy Ellis argues that the "Church's condemnation of the slave trade was definite, something that had been reiterated more than once" such as "in the apostolic letter of Pope Gregory XVI." However Ellis did not believe Gregory also meant to condemn slavery itself, since "Catholic doctrine held that slavery was not necessarily evil." See Ellis, *American Catholicism*, 89. James Hennesey claims "[o]pponents of slavery found slight support in the official church teaching. Pope Gregory XVI...condemned the slave trade, but not slavery itself....Traditional moral theology gave them no warrant to do otherwise." See Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 145. McGreevy stated that "Pope Gregory XVI published an apostolic letter banning Catholic participation in the slave trade, although he did not prohibit Catholics from owning slaves." This was because, says McGreevy, such an action by the pope would imply an "association with a European liberalism that papal advisers considered anti-Catholic and anti-revolutionary." See McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 50, 52. John Francis Maxwell, claims that Gregory was only "condemning unjust enslavement and unjust slave-trading." See John Francis Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church* (Chichester and London: Barry Rose Publishers, in Association with the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights, 1975), 73. John T. Noonan asserts that Gregory did not even intend to ban the slave trade completely: "In 1839 Gregory XVI condemned the slave trade, but not so explicitly that the condemnation covered occasional sales by owners of surplus stock." See John T. Noonan, "Development in Moral Doctrine," *Theological Studies*, 54 (1993), 666.

¹¹³ John England, *Works of the Rt. Rev. John England, First Bishop of Charleston*, ed. Ignatius Aloysius Reynolds (Baltimore: J. Murphy, 1849), 190-191.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

slavery in black and white language, the American Catholic Church's language remained quite gray, allowing for the typical Catholic to completely dismiss the issue as being "a question for the legislature and not for me."¹¹⁵ Consequently, when the conflict finally ended in 1865, American Catholicism emerged intact and on strong footing.

Even the Vatican, which over the centuries had produced so much literature seemingly hostile to the continuation of slavery, adopted a much more reserved position in reference to the issue after the death of Gregory XVI. This mindset, however, did not represent a change of opinion regarding slavery. Rather, the reserved tone was due in large part to the numerous tumultuous political upheavals that erupted throughout Europe that directly affected the ability of the Vatican to exercise its secular or spiritual authority. This turbulent reality weighed heavily upon the mind of the new Pope, Pius IX. Although initially viewed as being a moderate liberal,¹¹⁶ Pius increasingly developed into a staunch conservative as he witnessed the excesses of revolutionary movements in Europe in general and Italy in particular.

The new Pope marked the beginning of his reign with a series of moderately liberal enactments that would have mortified his predecessor. These actions effectively won for Pius the hearts of the people throughout Italy.¹¹⁷ However, many Italians viewed

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ According to Chadwick, "Pius IX was not a liberal, he knew nothing about politics, and knew that he knew nothing; but he had faith in God, and anything that happened that was not sinful was likely to be in the providence of God." 68) Instead, he "was a genuine moderate; a lover of Italy; a man with a readiness to trust good men about him....He was not an intellectual. He had small experience of the world. He was not fitted for secular monarchy whether it were absolute or constitutional." Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 68, 77.

¹¹⁷ For example Pius' very first act as pope was the announcement of a general amnesty for political prisoners, from which 400 individuals were released from prisons, and another 200 returned from exile. A number of these prisoners and exiles had suffered under the papacy of Gregory XVI. In addition, the new

these actions as concessions finally won for the people after centuries of papal oppression. Rather than being satisfied, extreme liberals lobbied for more, often more than the pope was able or willing to give.¹¹⁸ When the cities of northern Italy revolted against their Austrian rulers, Pius' decision not to send the revolutionaries military assistance was widely criticized throughout the Papal States.¹¹⁹ Those who had once hailed the pope as being liberal now condemned him as a treasonous autocrat who stood opposed to Italy's struggle for freedom. The affair marked the beginning of a series of events culminating in the pope's exile and the establishment of a republican government

pope commissioned plans for the building of a railway running through the Papal States, something which Gregory had emphatically condemned, calling them "*chemins d'enfer*" ("ways of hell"). Pius also welcomed scholars into the Holy See. Gregory had attempted to ban them from all the Papal States. Indeed, he demanded a strict control over all publications circulating within his domain. Pius, however, reformed the censorship laws, making it the most liberal in all of Western Europe outside of Great Britain. Thanks to these measures, Pius was perceived by his contemporaries as a liberal, especially when contrasted with the late Gregory XVI, who was regarded as a repressive despot. See Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 62-67.

¹¹⁸ For example, the citizens of the Papal States yearned for a more democratic form of government. However, the Pope knew that such a government was incompatible with the temporal sovereignty that came with his title. As a compromise, in April 1847, plans were announced for the development of a new representative system of government for the Papal States. Known as the Consulta, it was clear that elected representatives would still be subject to the Pope in all decisions. When the first session of the Consulta commenced on October 14, 1847, it quickly regressed into a debate over the actual powers of the representatives, the vast majority arguing that the organization needed to be more than simply a board of advisors. Further concessions were made, until finally in 1848 Pius sanctioned a Parliament consisting of three chambers—a lower house consisting of laymen elected by the people, an upper house of laymen appointed by the pope, and the College of Cardinals. Anything that the first two houses passed could be vetoed by the third house. Moreover, the pope remained the sole judge over all matters deemed to be ecclesiastical in nature. Thus, despite the elaborate parliamentary system, the actual power granted to the laity serving within the government remained illusionary. See Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 69-70, 72-73.

¹¹⁹ Although Pius may have believed the actions transpiring in northern Italy was the will of God, he nevertheless had moral reservations about issuing a command for a papal army to attack another nation. For Pius, the papal army was designed to protect the Papal States from an aggressor, not to be the aggressor. The Austrians themselves had actually protected the papacy during the tumultuous reign of Gregory XVI. Indeed, the Austria was a Catholic nation that had caused no harm to the Papal States. Thus, despite having his newly formed Parliament as well as his cabinet advisors all supporting papal military intervention, the pope refused to send soldiers to fight against another Catholic nation. See Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 73-76.

in Rome.¹²⁰ The draft constitution of the new government declared that the Pope was no longer a temporal power, Catholicism was no longer the state religion, all citizens had equal rights, and all men had the right to vote for elected officials.¹²¹ Although French and Austrian forces put down the revolutionary republic and reinstalled Pius as the leader of the Papal States, he returned a resolute conservative, forevermore suspicious of republican ideals. Further calamities during the 1850s and early 1860s only strengthened his hardening opinions.

When Civil War erupted in the United States in 1861, many high-ranking officials within the Vatican felt the conflict was yet another example of a nation whose “movement toward greater democracy for all citizens led inevitably to a serious breakdown in national unity.”¹²² Although Pius IX officially declared the Vatican neutral and offered to serve as a mediator between the warring factions, the Holy See’s quasi-official press clearly implied that the United States was to blame for its current predicament for adopting policies similar to those the Church’s enemies were attempting to impose upon Italy.¹²³ Indeed, as the war dragged on, Pius himself became increasingly frustrated with the North for what he believed was a failure to compromise for the sake of

¹²⁰ This was but one of several revolutions that erupted throughout Europe in 1848. In the Roman revolution, the Pope’s prime minister was assassinated, most of his allies abandoned him, and his palace was besieged. Prior to his surrender, Pius had witnessed one of his few remaining aides shot to death. After several hours of captivity, the Pope managed to escape by donning a disguise. See Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 78-83.

¹²¹ Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 84-86.

¹²² Anthony B. Lalli and Thomas H. O’Connor, “Roman Views on the American Civil War,” *Catholic Historical Review* (April 1971): 28.

¹²³ Two Roman newspapers in particular, the *Civiltà Cattolica* and *L’Osservatore Romano*, consistently expressed their dissatisfaction with democratic governments. The latter, Lalli and O’Connor explain, “can be regarded as reflecting the views of those churchmen high in papal circles, but from which the pontiff

peace.¹²⁴ This frustration is clearly seen in the Roman press, especially after Lincoln promulgated his Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1862.

It must be stated that the Vatican's dissatisfaction with Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was not due to any sort of preference for the southern states' system of slavery. In fact, in the years leading up to 1863, the Roman press expressed a desire for the North and the South to develop a solution for "a gradual and compensated form of emancipation."¹²⁵ The pope himself seemed to endorse this vision, for in 1862 Pius bestowed an honorary knighthood upon the French liberal Catholic Augustin Cochin for his pro-emancipation publication, *L'Abolition de l'Esclavage*.¹²⁶ One may wonder what the Vatican's role may have been in helping to realize this vision. Alas, the events leading up to the culmination of the American Civil War effectively eliminated such a scenario. As the warring factions grew more rigid, the Vatican's stance as how to help resolve the conflict became more ambiguous. Thus, even when the South continued to insist upon maintaining chattel slavery in their territories, most high-ranking Vatican officials believed that the best course of action was for the two sides to come to peaceful

could easily dissociate himself in those matters which might create embarrassment in official relations and diplomatic affairs." See Lalli and O'Conner, "Roman Views on the American Civil War, 25-28.

¹²⁴ While acting as an unofficial representative of the United Kingdom to the Vatican, Odo William Leopold Russell, 1st Baron Amptill, commented in 1864 that the Pius "could not conceal from me that all his sympathies were for the Southern confederacy...." See Odo William Leopold Russell, *The Roman Question: Extracts from the Despatches of Odo Russell from Rome, 1858-1870*, edited by Noel Blakiston (London : Chapman and Hall, 1962), 288.

¹²⁵ Lalli and O'Conner, "Roman Views on the American Civil War, 31.

¹²⁶ *Atlantic Monthly*, 11 (March 1863): 397. In this publication, Cochin argued that every European nation that had abolished slavery was not only more stable politically and economically, but also produced much more socially conscience citizens, strong in both moral and religious character. From these conclusions, Cochin held that the United States would not be any different if it were to abolish slavery. For Cochin, slavery was a moral evil exacerbating the civil disunion within the United States. If it were allowed to continue, it would lead to the collapse of the last great republican nation. See Chapter Three of this study.

terms as quickly as possible, even if it meant the division of the United States.¹²⁷ As far as Rome was concerned, the slavery issue was secondary to ending the war. It could be resolved *after* the war. As far as how to accomplish this, however, the Vatican did not seem to have an answer. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation ensured that they did not have to.¹²⁸

With the unquestionable end of slavery, the American Catholic Church was quick to align itself with the victors, even going as far as suggesting that Catholicism played a critical role in the peculiar institution's demise. Such was the case when in 1863—after the issuing of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and after it was clear that a Union victory was inevitable—the Reverend James Fitton of Massachusetts published a short history on the relationship between Roman Catholicism and slavery. In this work, entitled, *Influence of Catholic Christian Doctrines on the Emancipation of Slaves*, Fitton argued that Catholicism itself slowly eradicated the institution of slavery throughout the world by acknowledging slaves' God-given dignity and stressing their equality as humans with those who enslaved them. Remarkably, the majority of the sources cited by Fitton were previously used by Bishop John England in the latter's letters to Forsyth.

¹²⁷ In the period between Lincoln's public pronouncement of the Emancipation Proclamation (September 22, 1862) and its official enactment (January 1, 1863), Pope Pius IX wrote letters to Archbishop Hughes and Archbishop Odin exhorting them to use their influence to bring about peace. A similar letter was written to Archbishop Purcell in January 1864. See McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 87; Hennesey, *American Catholics* 156, Gannon, *Rebel Bishop*, 83.

¹²⁸ The Roman press despised Lincoln's promulgation, for they believed it was tailored to ensure the war would continue to the bloody end. Indeed, it did not appear to Rome to benefit American slaves at all. In fact, many believed it was an elaborate ploy created only to aid in the total annihilation of the Confederacy. Furthermore, many within the Vatican noted its supposed hypocrisy, for it only abolished slavery in the Confederate States. It did not abolish the system in the Border States in which the Union still exercised authority. Thus, the Roman press felt the only rationale for Lincoln to enact such a legislation was to incite slaves in the southern states to rise up against their masters. Since many of their masters were off fighting

The stance from Rome also became much more concrete in the wake of the Emancipation Proclamation. In fact, according to the historian Maria Genoino Caravaglios, when the Vatican issued its condemnation of the proslavery views of Natchitoches' Bishop Auguste Marie Martin, the Holy See engaged a "small revolution" of its own, proving that "the liberal spirit still breathed in the Vatican—and this in the very year of *Quanta Cura* and the *Syllabus of Errors*."¹²⁹ In this condemnation, the Vatican went beyond previous papal condemnations in that it seemingly clarified *In Supremo Apostolatus* to be not only an indictment of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, but of slavery itself. If this is the case, then the condemnation amounted to a "new stance" that, says Caravaglios, "completely undercut the...arguments of Bishops England, Verot, Elder, and indeed of the whole hierarchy in the southern states....When [Martin's] theories were condemned, so were theirs. In effect, Rome said that they had all been wrong for half a century!"¹³⁰ Unfortunately, this "new stance" was not disseminated until December 1864—three years after Bishop Martin's pastoral was preached, nearly two years after the Emancipation Proclamation went into affect, and just months before the final victory for the Union.¹³¹ As was the case with the majority of its adherents in the

the war, any uprising of southern slaves would undoubtedly be directed against helpless families. See Lalli and O'Conner, "Roman Views on the American Civil War, 31-32.

¹²⁹ Maria Genoino Caravaglios, "A Roman Critique of the Pro-Slavery Views of Bishop Martin of Natchitoches, Louisiana," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 83 (June, 1972): 69.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 69-70. See also Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 51-57.

¹³¹ Bishop Martin's pastoral was originally preached on August 21, 1861, just over four months after the Civil War commenced. Preaching to an audience that was thoroughly Confederate, Martin primarily wished to defend the Confederacy's right to concede. However, he also discussed the southern states' peculiar institution. On this topic, Martin, like Verot had before him, argued for its continuation. However, Martin went beyond Verot when he referred specifically to the African race as "the children of the race of Canaan" and claimed that it was the "manifest will of God" that the freedom of this race had been deprived so that white Europeans and Americans could convert them. See Auguste Marie Martin,

United States, the Roman Catholic Church's official position on the system of slavery that existed in the Southern States remained ambiguous until that system of slavery ceased to exist in the Southern States.

In the chapters that follow, attention will be paid to the ambiguity that reigned upon the minds of Roman Catholics living in the United States and wrestling with the reality of slavery's prevalence within their midst. Due to the vast array of ethnicities espousing the Roman Catholic religion in antebellum America, as well as the diverse geographical locations in which these ethnicities were located, this study will limit its scope by choosing only to investigate the history of Irish Catholics living in the Archdiocese of New York, German Catholics living in the Archdiocese Cincinnati, and French Catholics living in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Particular attention will be paid to the ecclesiastical and lay leaders of each group, as well as the major newspapers each group chose to read. As the pages of this study unfold, it will be shown how the muddled theology on slavery as set forth by prelates like John England and Francis Patrick Kenrick was incorporated into each group's unique social and economic situation, the result being a thoroughly ambiguous response to the South's peculiar institution.

Lettre Pastorale de Mgr. l'évêque de Natchitoches à l'occasion de la guerre du Sud pour son Indépendance, cited and translated in Caravaglios, "A Roman Critique of the Pro-Slavery Views of Bishop Martin of Natchitoches, Louisiana," 71.

CHAPTER I

IRISH-AMERICAN AMBIVALENCE TO THE AFRICAN AMERICAN

In the years between 1845 and 1847, roughly thirty-thousand impoverished Irish immigrants poured into Saint John, New Brunswick. This massive influx of people more than doubled the population of this small port city of British North America (present-day Canada).¹³² In 1847, another sixteen-thousand destitute and diseased Irish men, women, and children made their way across the Atlantic Ocean aboard maritime vessels and into St. John's Harbor. Over the course of the year, these emigration vessels would earn the dubious nickname "coffin ships" because they were often overcrowded, poorly provisioned, and disease ridden. Historians have estimated that roughly one-third of the "coffin ship" passengers bound for British North America in the year 1847 died due to starvation, typhus, dysentery, or other famine-related ailment.¹³³

As the numbers of famine-stricken emigrants arriving upon the shores of St. John and other New Brunswick ports grew larger with each passing year, the perceived quality of the emigrant passengers progressively declined. The native Protestant population,

¹³² St. John, New Brunswick, "The Irish Story," available from Internet, http://new-brunswick.net/Saint_John/irish/irish.html, accessed April 14, 2006. Irish landlords chose British North America in part because passage there was a bit cheaper at that point than a ticket to the United States, but primarily because they did not want to be accused of depopulating the British Empire.

already wary of the steady increase of Catholic emigrants, became increasingly alarmed when the majority of the emigrants were not only Catholic but also mainly “widows and orphans, and large helpless families depending on one man’s exertions.”¹³⁴ Many were too sick to obtain work. In fact, a large number of emigrants, once permitted to disembark from their maritime vessel, went immediately to the almshouse to obtain aid.¹³⁵

When the *Lady Sale* landed in St. John on September 9, 1847, health inspectors refused to allow the passengers to disembark. Due to an outbreak of typhus onboard, passengers were forced to remain in quarantine for eight days.¹³⁶ On September 16, Moses H. Perley, the head immigration official of New Brunswick boarded the vessel and determined that most of the passengers were healthy enough to lift the quarantine. However, the next day Perley found it necessary to write to another governmental official describing the scene. After noting that this was his fifth year inspecting the condition of vessels carrying emigrants from trans-Atlantic ports, he exclaimed that he had “never yet seen such abject misery, destitution and helplessness as was exhibited yesterday on the decks of the ‘Lady Sale.’”¹³⁷ According to the doctor charged with caring for the sick

¹³³ Edward Laxton, *The Famine Ships: The Irish Exodus to America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1997), 36, 38. Laxton states that these are conservative estimates since there were undoubtedly many unreported deaths at sea.

¹³⁴ Dr. W. S. Harding to [the Lieutenant-Governor?], September 13, 1847, quoted in Tyler Abinder, “Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration,” *The Historical Journal*, 44 (2001), 460.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 459.

¹³⁷ M. H. Perley to John S. Saunders, September 18, 1847, quoted in Abinder, “Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration,” 460.

aboard *Lady Sale*, the appalling condition of the *Lady Sale* emigrants revealed “the heartless character of the person sending them.”¹³⁸

One of the “heartless” individuals responsible for the *Lady Sale* and numerous other emigration vessels bound for British North America was the Irish landlord Sir Robert Gore Booth. Being one of the few landlords to actually live on his Irish estate, Gore Booth was fully aware of the calamitous situation the famine had produced for most of the country’s population. Far from heartless, Gore Booth diligently labored to assist his starving Irish tenants. He purchased large amounts of corn and bread, which he sold to his tenants for far less than what they were worth. He also established kitchens that distributed free soup and attempted to employ as many able-bodied tenants as possible. As the expenses for these noble causes mounted, Gore Booth was forced to mortgage part of his estate. Unfortunately, these admirable efforts minimized but could not eradicate starvation on Gore Booth’s estate. According to famine relief officials reporting in March 1847, dozens of Gore Booth tenants were daily succumbing to starvation.¹³⁹

The other landlord responsible for the funding of the *Lady Sale* was none other than Henry John Temple, the third Viscount Palmerston, incumbent Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Foreign Secretary), and future Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. As Foreign Secretary, Palmerston would earn an international reputation as a passionate opponent to the international slave trade.¹⁴⁰ While the political

¹³⁸ Dr. W. S. Harding to [the Lieutenant-Governor?], September 13, 1847, quoted in Abinder, “Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration,” 460.

¹³⁹ Captain O’Brien to Lieut.-Colonel Jones, March 2, 1847, quoted in Abinder, “Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration,” 451.

¹⁴⁰ For Palmerston’s role in the suppression of the slave trade, see David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

career of Palmerston has been the subject of numerous studies,¹⁴¹ it is only recently that historians have begun to pay attention to Palmerston's status as an absentee landlord of an Irish estate and his particular role in financing the emigration of starving tenants.¹⁴²

Compared to Gore Booth's valiant efforts, Palmerston's response to the suffering of his tenants could be viewed at best as being half-hearted. Unlike Gore Booth, Palmerston was an absentee landlord. As such, it took considerable time for news concerning his estate to reach him at his home in London. If he had any specific instructions on how to handle an issue, more time was needed for his message to make it back to his estate in Ahamlish. Nevertheless, there were numerous letters dated between late 1846 and early 1847 that were sent from his estate begging Palmerston to take action. Amazingly, many of these letters went unanswered. The action sought by the many who suffered did not immediately come. Instead, Palmerston chose to wait to receive governmental loans before enacting the types of programs Gore Booth had established

¹⁴¹ Charles K. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Palmerston, 1830-1841; Britain, The Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Question* (London, G. Bell, 1951); Muriel Chamberlain, *Lord Palmerston* (Washington, D.C. : Catholic University of America Press, 1987); Michael S. Partridge, *Lord Palmerston, 1784-1865: A Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994); Jasper Ridley, *Lord Palmerston* (London: Constable, 1970); Herbert C. F. Bell, *Lord Palmerston* (London: Longmans, Green 1936); Marquis of Lorne, *Viscount Palmerston* (New York, 1892); Kenneth Bourne, *Palmerston: The Early Years, 1784-1841* (New York, 1982).

¹⁴² Of the referenced biographies, only Kenneth Bourne's *Palmerston: The Early Years* provides considerable attention to Palmerston's Irish estate, though it does not focus its attention on its management. A subsequent volume had promised to address the management of both Palmerston's English and Irish estates but was never completed. Edward Laxton's, *The Famine Ships*, provides a more thorough, albeit somewhat negatively biased, account of Palmerston's emigration program. To date, the most impartial and informative study concerning this issue is found in Tyler Anbinder, "Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration," in *The Historical Journal*, 44 (2001), 441-469. For a detailed study of Palmerston's emigration program in comparison to other landlords of Irish estates, see Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood that Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World's Most Notorious Slum* (New York: Free Press, 2001), 42-66.

more than six months before. Sadly, hundreds of Palmerston's tenants died in the interim.¹⁴³

In the end, in spite of doing all in his power to assuage the suffering of his tenants, Gore Booth's tenants did not fare that much better than those living on Palmerston's estate. When all other possible avenues had been explored, Gore Booth eventually came to the realization that the only way to save the Irish peasantry from the famine that had swept throughout the country, was to remove a large proportion of them from the country. That is, Gore Booth decided upon funding mass emigration. Rather than launching the venture on his own, Gore Booth decided to inquire if Palmerston would also consider the idea. Palmerston responded in the affirmative by chartering two small vessels to carry impoverished tenants from the two landlords' Sligo estates.¹⁴⁴

While there can be little doubt that both Gore Booth and Palmerston were motivated to some degree by humanitarian principles, it cannot be denied that there were financial motivations as well. Since July of 1838, Irish landlords were required by law to pay taxes on the rent collected from the tenants living upon their individual estates. This tax money would be used to finance the construction and maintenance of local "workhouses."¹⁴⁵ Those deemed too poor to support themselves and in need of governmentally provided monetary relief were required to apply for admission at their local workhouse where, if able-bodied, they would be compensated in exchange for

¹⁴³ Anbinder, "Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration," 451-452.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 454.

¹⁴⁵ The law, which passed on July 31, 1838, was known as "For the More Effectual Relief of the Destitute Poor in Ireland." It was nearly identical to the "Poor Law Amendment Act" of 1834. See John O'Connor, *The Workhouses of Ireland: The Fate of Ireland's Poor* (Dublin : Anvil Books ; Minneapolis : Irish Books & Media, 1995).

physical labor for the good of the community.¹⁴⁶ In the years immediately preceding the Great Famine, the Irish workhouse system only housed 0.6% of the country's population, most of the inmates being women, children and the elderly. However, when the potato crop failed for the second straight season in the autumn of 1846, Irish workhouse population doubled. By the end of the year, 60% of Irish workhouses contained more inmates than they had accommodations. In many cases, would-be inmates were turned away by directors of overpopulated workhouses.¹⁴⁷ For landlords like Gore Booth and Palmerston, every time one of their tenants entered the local workhouse, they could expect rent from one less person and one more person they would have to indirectly support through the Poor Relief tax. According to Palmerston's estate agent, Joseph Kincaid, if these taxes were to remain in effect for a sustained period of time, "the landowners will in the end be as well qualified as the cottiers to demand admission to the [workhouses]."¹⁴⁸

The financial burden of landlords increased to an even greater extent when in early 1847 the government decided to phase out the Irish workhouse system in favor of a system based on "outdoor relief." In an effort to provide for those not able to obtain

¹⁴⁶ In order to deter the able-bodied individual from falling into poverty, existence within the workhouse was set up to be as disconcerting as possible. In fact, if an able-bodied man was forced into one of these facilities, his entire family had to go in along with him. Once inside, inmates were housed separately according to gender, age, and ability. All were required to wear coarse workhouse uniforms and sleep in public dormitories. Those determined to be able-bodied—both male and female—toiled their way through long days of difficult manual labor while the elderly and infirm spent their hours in cramped day-rooms or sick-wards with few chances to visit with loved ones. Although three meals were provided on a daily basis, their quality was suspect. After a long week of labor, inmates were given supervised baths. If one entered a workhouse with children, the parents were only afforded restricted contact with them—usually only a couple of hours a week on Sunday afternoon. See "The Workhouse," available from Internet, <http://www.workhouses.org.uk>, accessed April 21, 2006.

¹⁴⁷ Cormac Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy and Memory*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 50-52.

residence within a workhouse and to encourage those within workhouses to return to their farms, the government established soup kitchens throughout the countryside where famished peasants could obtain food without being required to provide labor. In order to finance this, Irish property owners would now be required to fund the entire expenditure through increased taxation. Furthermore, affluent proprietors such as Palmerston and Gore Booth would now be required to pay the rates of all the tenants renting land valued at £4 or less.¹⁴⁹ Kincaid estimated that within seven months of the new tax policy, Palmerston would have to pay over £10,000. Rather than continue to pay these exorbitant prices and still be left with non-rent-paying impoverished tenants, Kincaid, making a “recommendation on the principle of profit and economy,” advised Palmerston to send out all of his tenants willing to give up their plots of land in exchange for the passage to America.¹⁵⁰ By following this course of action, Kincaid estimated that the value of Palmerston’s estate would increase because he would no longer be required to pay the taxes to support those who decided to emigrate. Furthermore, he could now either add the land vacated by emigration to the holdings of tenants who chose stay thereby creating holdings valued at more than £4, or he could convert the land into larger plots in an effort to attract more financially stable tenants. In Kincaid’s opinion, everyone—the landlord and the tenant—would benefit from landlord-assisted emigration. Kincaid’s argument must have proved persuasive, for in early April 1847, the first of

¹⁴⁸ Kincaid to Palmerston, December 9, 1846, quoted in Anbinder, “Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration,” 453.

¹⁴⁹ Laxton, *The Famine Ships*, 43.

¹⁵⁰ Kincaid to Palmerston, March 23, 1847, quoted in Tyler Anbinder, *Five Points: The 19th-Century New York City Neighborhood that Invented Tap Dance, Stole Elections, and Became the World’s Most Notorious Slum* (New York: Plume, 2001), 59.

many vessels carrying Palmerston-assisted emigrants sailed out of Sligo harbor bound for British North America.¹⁵¹

Although originally well financed, increased demand for passage and mounting costs resulted in numerous corners being cut. Consequently, the emigrants suffered tremendously. By the time the last Palmerston emigrant vessel docked in the frigid port of St. John's on November 2, 1847, many of its passengers were near death. Most of the passengers barely had enough clothing to cover their bodies let alone protect them from the harsh winter wind. In fact, several passengers were completely nude. The appearance of these newly arrived immigrants so shocked local onlookers that a member of the Legislative Council of Canada criticized Palmerston for creating for his passengers conditions as bad as the slave trade."¹⁵² For someone who devoted a great deal of his political career to suppressing the vile traffic, the comparison for Palmerston was truly humiliating.

Indeed, one can draw many parallels between the plight of the 19th century Irish immigrants and that of the people of African descent living in America. A large percentage of the Irish who made their way from their homeland to American and Canadian ports traveled on vessels previously utilized by slavers at the height of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. Unfortunately, for the new passengers, the conditions on board had not been improved upon over the years. According to one historian, "the Irish

¹⁵¹ Tyler Anbinder, "Lord Palmerston and the Irish Famine Emigration," 456. Most English emigration vessels sailed for British Colonies, mainly because it was cheaper than American Voyages. See Laxton, *The Famine Ships*, 35-48.

¹⁵² Adam Ferrie, *Letter to the Rt. Hon Earl Grey...Embracing a Statement of Facts in Relation to Emigration to Canada* (Montreal, 1847), 7-11.

would travel in no greater comfort than the slaves before them.”¹⁵³ Another similarity between African Americans and the Irish—particularly Irish Catholics—was the sense that they had been involuntarily removed from their native land and forced to toil in exile.¹⁵⁴ Finally, in Northeastern port cities, where most Irish immigrants of the 1840s and 1850s would learn to call home, Irish and African Americans would often live in the same squalid tenements and work in the same unskilled professions.¹⁵⁵

There were even comparisons made between the chattel slave system of the South that enslaved countless descendants from Africa and the “wage slave” system that many Irish immigrants living in the North found themselves subjected. A Massachusetts journal, for instance, recorded that the

...cause of the poor African has found many eloquent advocates at the north. Much has been written and spoken in his behalf, and the horrors of his situation have been depicted in a most glowing and heart-stirring manner. But where are the advocates of the oppressed among us—here at the north? In our eagerness to cast out the mote which is in our brother’s eye, have we not overlooked the beam which is in our own? Or have we not slavery in the north? Yes reader, we have oppression in our very midst—a slavery even worse than that enduring by the poor negro, in that it bears the semblance of freedom.¹⁵⁶

Even the abolitionist Horace Greeley reflected that he was “less troubled concerning the Slavery prevalent in Charleston or New-Orleans...because I see so much Slavery in New-York, which appears to claim my first efforts.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Edward Laxton, *The Famine Ships*, 7, 8.

¹⁵⁴ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3-8.

¹⁵⁵ Graham Hodges, “Desirable Companions and Lovers: Irish and African in the Sixth Ward, 1830-1870,” in *The New York Irish*, eds. Ronald H. Bayor and Timothy J. Meagher (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 107-124; Anbinder, *Five Points*, 67-140.

¹⁵⁶ *The Awl*, September 4, 1844, quoted in Philip S. Foner and Herbert Shapirpo, eds., *Northern Labor and Antislavery: A Documentary History* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 17-18.

¹⁵⁷ *New York Tribune* August 23, 1845.

However, one should exercise caution when discussing the similarities between the African slave and the Irish immigrant, lest one think that their predicaments were identical. While Irish laborer in the Northern states experienced poor wages for long hours of backbreaking work, he or she was essentially free. When discussing the relationship between the two races, Frederick Douglass stated:

Far be it from me to underrate the sufferings of the Irish people. They have been long oppressed; and the same heart that prompts me to plead the cause of the American bondman, makes it impossible for me not to sympathize with the oppressed of all lands. Yet I must say that there is no analogy between the two cases. The Irishman is poor, but he is not a slave. He may be in rags, but he is not a slave. He is still the master of his own body....The world is all before him...and...I cannot believe that [the government] will ever sink to such a depth of infamy as to pass a law for the recapture of fugitive Irishmen!...The Irishman has not only the liberty to emigrate from his country, but he has liberty at home. He can write, and speak, and coöperate for the attainment of his rights and the redress of his wrongs.¹⁵⁸

Still, the plight of the Irish immigrant was nonetheless difficult. Cast off from their native land, they came to the Americas in search of better life. However, many of them were unskilled and uneducated paupers and often unable to secure adequate employment. Consequently, they could only afford the most rudimentary housing. In New York's notorious sixth ward, Irish immigrants often lodged in rooms that were "as thickly covered with bodies as a field of battle could be with the slain."¹⁵⁹ These tenements were some of "the most repulsive holes that ever a human being was forced to sleep in. There is not a farmer's hog-pen in the country that is not immeasurably ahead of them in point of health—often in point of cleanliness."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York and Aburn: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 433.

¹⁵⁹ Samuel Prime, *Life in New York* (New York: R. Carter, 1847), 179-180.

¹⁶⁰ *New York Tribune*, June 13, 1850.

What made life particularly difficult for Irish immigrants was the racist nativism that sought to exclude them from partaking in American institutions. By 1847, there were roughly two-hundred-thousand immigrants in the United States. Just three years later there were more than three-hundred-thousand.¹⁶¹ By far the principal ethnicity of these immigrants was Irish. In New York City alone, there disembarked 117,038 Irish immigrants in 1850. By 1851, another 163,306 arrived.¹⁶² At the beginning of the decade, the Irish made up 42.8% of the foreign-born populace in the United States and by 1860, they accounted for approximately 5.1% of the population.¹⁶³ The native population looked on with dread as poor, unskilled, and predominately Catholic immigrants were overrunning their Protestant country. In addition to their predisposition to anti-Catholicism, natives saw immigrants in general as being a threat to the country's economic, political, and social fabric and thus attempted to take measures to control the foreign influence.¹⁶⁴

Economically, the natives feared loss of employment to foreign labor and a decline in wages due to excess supply of workers. Politically, the increasing numbers of foreign Catholics permitted to vote struck fear into the hearts of many American Protestants. Socially, natives believed a large proportion of the immigrants were unruly, riotous and drunkards that were undermining the stability of the country. Natives took measures to address these fears, such as an increased timeframe for naturalization,

¹⁶¹ Robert Francis Hueston, "The Catholic Press and Nativism, 1840-1860" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1972), 138.

¹⁶² Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City, 1825-1863* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949), 188.

¹⁶³ Hueston, "The Catholic Press and Nativism," 138.

temperance laws, and labor restrictions.¹⁶⁵ However, when legal means proved ineffectual, natives occasionally resorted to violence. Indeed, during the 1830s and 1840s, the nation was the battleground for several riots based on ethnicity and religious related issues.¹⁶⁶

Anti-Catholic violence was one of the more popular ways natives showed their hostility to the Irish immigrant. On August 11, 1834, for example, widespread rumors about the immoralities practiced behind cloistered walls led a mob of Protestant men to burn down the Ursuline Convent of Charleston.¹⁶⁷ In 1836, the anti-Catholic publication *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* captured the imagination of Protestant readers eager to read the exposé of an alleged escaped nun from a Montreal covenant.¹⁶⁸ Though later proved simply a sensationalist work of fabrication, *Awful Disclosures* would remain the bestselling book in America until Harriett Beecher Stowe published *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852.

A request in 1844 by Bishop Francis Kenrick of Philadelphia for the right for Catholic children to read from Catholic bibles while attending public schools, led to widespread nativistic activity in the city. However, the nativists were violently rebuffed in the heavily Irish neighborhood of Kensington, leading to the outbreak of a bloody

¹⁶⁴ Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 193. For a history of the origins of American anti-Catholicism, see *Ibid.*, 1-25.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 194, 196, 199.

¹⁶⁶ Paul A. Gije, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763-1834* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 125-142; Norman Cohen, *Civil Strife in America; A Historical Approach to the Study of Riots in America* (Hinsdale: Dryden Press, 1972).

¹⁶⁷ Billington, *The Protestant Crusade*, 53-76; Bisson, "Some Conditions for Collective Violence;" Schultz, *Fire & Roses: The Burning of the Charleston Convent, 1834* (New York: Free Press, 2000).

¹⁶⁸ Maria Monk, *Awful disclosures of Maria Monk: As Exhibited in a Narrative of her Sufferings during a Residence of Five Years as a Novice, and Two Years as a Black Nun, in the Hotel Dieu Nunnery* (New York : Howe & Bates, 1836).

three-day riot during which Catholic homes were attacked, a convent was destroyed, and two Catholic churches were burned to the ground.¹⁶⁹ While it seemed as if anti-Catholic violence was sweeping across the nation, the diocese of New York, under the militant leadership of Archbishop Hughes, remained relatively secure.¹⁷⁰

Irish American immigrants desperately wanted to be a part of the dominant American system and did their best to defend themselves against anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic bigotry while working to better their socio-economic status. Their use of violence was looked down upon by mainstream America, but due to limited legal recourse, it often appeared to them to be the only way to assert themselves in the face of racial and religious bigotry. However, the bigotry that they faced and the limited skills that they possessed meant that most Irish immigrants could only attain employment as canal diggers, railroad tracklayers, dock laborers, or some other menial form of labor. This meant that they had to compete with other ethnic groups equally disenfranchised, such as free African Americans or slave labor in the south.¹⁷¹ Evidently, the Irish did not enjoy having to compete with African Americans for jobs and this at times led to racial violence. The traditional explanation for this animosity is simply that job competition caused hostilities. However, it appears that the Irish had little difficulty edging out

¹⁶⁹ Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 12.

¹⁷⁰ After the Philadelphia Riots, Hughes confronted the mayor of New York to demand protection from possible copycat nativist attacks. The mayor asked the prelate if he was afraid that some of his churches would be burned, Hughes replied, "No sir, but I am afraid that some of *yours* will be burned. We can protect our own. I come to warn you for your own good." Hughes made good on his promise and armed his churches with men. Consequently, no anti-Catholic violence took place. See Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes, D.D., First Archbishop of New York. With Extracts from his Private Correspondence* (New York: D. Appleton and company, 1866), 478.

¹⁷¹ Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 318.

African Americans for unskilled labor. For example, according to a British visitor to the United States,

...the most menial employments, such as scavengers, porters, dock-labourers, waiters at hotels...were all, or nearly all, black men, and nearly all the maid servants...were black women, and they used to obtain very good wages for these employments; but so great had been the influx of unskilled labourers, emigrants from Ireland...within the last few years, into New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other large towns in the eastern States, who press into these menial employments...offering to labour for any wages they can obtain; that it has reduced the wages of the blacks, and deprived great numbers of them of employment....¹⁷²

Another study indicates that by 1850, there were roughly twenty-five times more Irish American women employed in New York City than African American women were.

Furthermore, in most cities, the Irish had far more German American competitors for jobs than African American ones. However, rarely did the Irish and German element engage in bloody conflict over jobs. Moreover, it does not appear that many German Americans and African Americans violently attacked one another either.¹⁷³

Perhaps a case in Philadelphia in 1862 will help uncover the reason behind racial unrest between Irish immigrants and African Americans. After a business owner replaced an Irish worker with an African American hired at a lower wage,

...his garden was trespassed on, plants and shrubbery destroyed and a paper stuck on one of the trees, threatening further injury if he did not send away the Negro. The Irish hate the Negroes, not merely because they compete with them in labor, but because they are near to them in social rank. Therefore, the Irish favor slavery in the South, and for the same reason the laboring class of whites support it—it gratifies their pride by the existence of a class below them. The Democrats have industriously represented that the Republicans intend to emancipate the

¹⁷² John Finch, "Notes on Travel in the United States" *New Moral World* (London), June 29, 1844, reprinted in John R. Commons and others, eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, vol. 7 (Cleveland: The A.H. Clark Company, 1910), 60-61.

¹⁷³ David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1999), 147-148.

Negroes and make them the equals of the whites; also, that when the slaves are free, there will be a great emigration of them to the North to the injury of the white workingmen. The Irish are all Democrats and implicitly believe and obey their leaders.¹⁷⁴

While the passage indicates that job competition remained a factor, it is interesting to note that the author of the quotation above makes a clear distinction between the “Irish” and the “laboring class of whites.” This possibly suggests that the author did not consider the Irish truly white. The fact that Irish immigrants were often referred to as “Irish niggers” gives credibility to this claim.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, given that on one of the few exceptions of job competition violence between Irish Americans and German Americans, the reason behind it was due to the Irish Americans’ desire to work in an “all-white” environment, it appears that the former had a preoccupation with being classified as part of white America.¹⁷⁶ By attaining their “whiteness,” the Irish American became truly

¹⁷⁴ Sidney George Fisher, *A Philadelphia Perspective: The Diary of Sidney George Fisher, 1834-1871*, ed. Nicholas B. Wainwright (Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1967), 439.

¹⁷⁵ Further evidence of this claim is available on a section of George Mason University’s website referred to as the “Center for History and New Media.” On this resource, there are a wedding photo between an Irish American man named Patrick O’Malley and an Irish American woman named Hester Holland. Accompanying the wedding photo is their certificate of marriage. Dated December 23, 1884, one can clearly read that according to the state of Virginia, the race of these two individuals was “colored.” To view the couple’s wedding photo, see George Mason University, Center for History and New Media, available on Internet, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/omalley/120/alien/malley.jpg>, accessed September 1, 2006. To view the couple’s marriage certificate, see George Mason University, Center for History and New Media, available on Internet, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/omalley/120/alien/marriage.jpg>.

¹⁷⁶ David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 147-148. See also Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995). This preoccupation underscores the common 19th century American conception that those who were deemed “colored” were less human than those who were deemed “white.” In their effort to uncover the demarcation line between humans and animals, many scientific works of the 19th century placed the African and the Irish races as being closer to anthropoid apes than the “white” European race were. For example, in his comparison of a European woman and an Irish woman, Samuel R. Wells noted that based upon his observations of their “temperaments” and his conclusions about the “parts of body and brain [that] predominate...The two are as wide apart as are the wild-crab apple and the imperial pippin.” According to Wells:

[T]he one is bright, intellectual, and spiritual; the other opaque, dull, and sensual. [The European]...is developed in the “upper story,” while the [Irish]...lives in the basement mentally as well as bodily. The former would be governed by high moral principles, the latter by the lower or animal passions; the one is a natural friend and philanthropist; the other is at war with everybody;

American and now can revel in having “a class below them,” whether it be the Black African or the German immigrant.

This desire on the part of Irish immigrants helps to explain the Irish American Catholic response to the antislavery sentiments espoused by the Irish hero Daniel O’Connell and other Irish abolitionists such as Doctor Richard Robert Madden. Madden had just completed a tour of America and lamented that Irish Americans were “not only indifferent and apathetic on the subject of emancipation of the slaves, but they are even strenuously opposed to the efforts of those who labour in behalf of this cause of justice and humanity.”¹⁷⁷ O’Connell, who announced that 1843 would be the Repeal Year,¹⁷⁸ believed to accept money from a Repeal organization that was favorable to American slavery was the epitome of hypocrisy.¹⁷⁹ Thus, many Repeal organizations in the South closed down. In an effort to explain their anti-abolitionist stance to O’Connell, the Cincinnati Repealers enclosed a brief letter along with their charitable donation to the

the one is forgiving, the other is vindictive; the one is...attracted toward the heavenly and the good; the other is of the earth, earthy, seeking her chief pleasure from things physical and animal; the one has reasoning intellect to comprehend causes and relations; the other, with simple instinct, knows what she sees and feels, but can have no clear conceptions beyond the reach of the senses; the one is esthetical and refined; the other is gross in taste, and sees no beauty in that which can not be eaten or used for the gratification of the bodily appetites or passions.

Wells concludes that the only way that the Irish can better their “rude, rough, unpolished, ignorant, and brutish” disposition is through submitting themselves to the “influence of long and persistent social, intellectual, and Christian culture.” Ironically, this line of thought was often employed as a justification for the continuation of African slavery. See Samuel Robert Wells, *New Physiognomy, or, Signs of Character as Manifested through Temperament and External Forms, and Especially in “the Human Face Divine”* (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1866), 537-538.

¹⁷⁷ *Dublin Weekly Register*, February 1, 1840, quoted in Quinn, ““Three Cheers for The Abolitionist Pope,”” 73.

¹⁷⁸ The Repeal movement wanted to abolish England’s Act of Union of 1801, thus separating Ireland from Great Britain. For more information see Lawrence John McCaffrey, *Daniel O’Connell and the Repeal Year* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1966).

¹⁷⁹ Maurice O’Connell, *Daniel O’Connell: The Man and his Politics* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990). 122.

Repeal movement. While acknowledging slavery as an evil, the Cincinnati Repealers nevertheless claimed that slavery could not be eradicated due to the degraded state of the African slave. A policy of immediate abolition, they claimed, would have disastrous effects. The Repealers stated that the “Roman Catholic Church has no bitterer enemies” than the American abolitionists, and then concluded by stressing that slavery is endorsed by nearly all Christian ministers.¹⁸⁰

On October 10, 1843, O’Connell angrily replied that it “was not in Ireland you learned this cruelty...How can your souls have become so stained with a darkness blacker than the negro’s skin?”¹⁸¹ He claimed that slaves were not an utterly degraded but only lacking the opportunity to obtain an education. If such an opportunity were provided, O’Connell argued that their educational level would be equal to whites. While it was true many abolitionists were anti-Catholic, O’Connell believed that the best way to alleviate animosities would be through supporting the abolitionist movement. Finally, concerning Christian ministers endorsing slavery, O’Connell appealed to...

...[t]hat most eminent man, His Holiness the present Pope, has by an Allocution, published throughout the world, condemned all dealing and traffic in slaves. Nothing can be more distinct nor more powerful than the Pope’s denunciation of that most abominable crime. Yet, it subsists in a more abominable form than his Holiness could possibly describe, in the traffic which still exists in the sale of slaves from one State of America to another. What, then, are we to think of you, Irish Catholics, who send us an elaborate vindication of slavery without the slightest censure of that hateful crime? A crime which the Pope has so completely condemned—namely, the diabolical raising of slaves for sale, and selling them to other states. If you be Catholics, you should devote your time and best exertions to working out the pious intentions of his Holiness.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ *Freeman’s Journal*, August 31, 1843.

¹⁸¹ O’Connell’s speech was printed twenty years later in the *Catholic Telegraph*. See the issue dated August 5, 1863.

O'Connell made sure to include a copy of *In Supremo Apostolatus* with his reply. Unfortunately, Cincinnati Repealers' position remained firm. By 1845, the Repeal movement in America ceased to exist.¹⁸³ After years of unsuccessful pandering to the Irish American concerning the welfare of the African slave, Frederick Douglass simply concluded that the "Irish, who at home, readily sympathize with the oppressed everywhere, are instantly taught when they step upon our soil to hate and despise the Negro."¹⁸⁴

O'Connell's failure to sway the Cincinnati Repealers based upon religious principles underscores the complexity the slavery issue posed to the typical Irish American. First, although it remains a popular Protestant misconception, one cannot assume that just because the Pope tells Catholics not to do something does not mean that Catholics throughout the world are going to listen.¹⁸⁵ Indeed, although many of the Irish immigrants that poured into America's ports during the 19th century were Catholic, there exists considerable evidence suggesting that the majority of these immigrants were

¹⁸² *Catholic Telegraph*, August 5, 1863.

¹⁸³ O'Connell, *Daniel O'Connell: The Man and His Politics* (Dublin, 1990), 127-130.

¹⁸⁴ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford: Park Publishing, 1881), 303.

According to Daniel O'Connell, the chief secretary to Ireland and the champion behind pro-Irish legislature such as the Irish Tithe Bill, the Irish Municipal Reform Bill, and the Irish Poor Law Bill expressed a similar sentiment: "Lord Morpeth... who, in the House of Commons, boldly asserted the superior social morality of the poorer classes of the Irish... mournfully... denounced the Irish in America as being amongst the worst enemy of the negro slaves and other men of color." See the *Catholic Telegraph*, August 5, 1863.

¹⁸⁵ For example, in the wake of Pope John Paul II's death in 2005, the *Pittsburg Post-Gazette* ran an article entitled "Many Catholics who Loved the Pope Ignored his Ban on Birth Control." The article notes that a recent Gallup Poll showed that nearly three-quarters of individuals in the United States claiming to be Catholic believe that the Church should allow the use of artificial birth control. See the *Pittsburg Post-Gazette*, April 17, 2005. If such was the obedience Catholics bestowed upon one of the most beloved Popes of all time, one should not expect that somehow 19th century Catholics chose to obey Gregory XVI—a pope whom Owen Chadwick described as "the most hated pope for two centuries"—regarding such a hotly debated subject as slavery. See Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 57.

indifferent to the practice of their religion.¹⁸⁶ Second, as noted in the Introduction, one of the most prolific Catholic minds in antebellum America went to great lengths showing that the apostolic letter did not condemn the southern states' system of slavery. Although the Irish in America may not have been particularly religious, they still paid their ecclesiastics, especially Irish ones like Bishop John England who supported their point of view, with a large measure of respect. Seeing that Bishop England's letters to Secretary of State Forsyth were widely publicized in American Catholic newspapers and predated O'Connell's angry reply to the Cincinnati Repealers by three years, there is little wonder his appeal fell on deaf ears. Alas, Irish Americans saw slavery as primarily a political issue, and a hotly contested one at that.

Perhaps the best examples of the antipathy held by a large percentage of Irish immigrants toward the African American in general and slavery in particular were the numerous racial riots pitting Irish Americans against African Americans in the years leading up to the Civil War. It also helps to explain why Archbishop John Hughes was so insistent upon not promoting the cause of emancipation of Southern slaves as a goal of the Civil War, for if such a claim became common knowledge,

...it would make the business of recruiting slack indeed. The Catholics so far as I know, whether of native or foreign birth are willing to fight to the death for the support of the constitution, the Government, and the laws of the country. But if it should be understood that, with or without knowing it, they are to fight for the abolition of slavery, then, indeed, they will turn away in disgust from the discharge of what would otherwise be a patriotic duty.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Jay Dolan has estimated that in New York City, at best 65% of the Catholic community attended Mass on a regular basis. See Jay P. Dolan, "Immigrants in the City: New York's Irish and German Catholics," *Church History*, 41 (September 1972), 354-368.

¹⁸⁷ Hughes to Simon Cameron, October 2, 1861, quoted in Shaw, *Dagger John*, 334.

Indeed, after Republican president Abraham Lincoln enacted the Emancipation Proclamation and instituted the Draft, Irish Americans, most of who pledged their allegiance to the Democratic Party, were not too pleased. More despicable than the draft itself was that it permitted for the exemption of any man drafted who could purchase his way out with three-hundred dollars. This was an astronomical figure for the typical Irish immigrant. Essentially, this meant that the nativist abolitionist could exempt himself from the war he helped to provoke while the Irish immigrant went to fight for the cause of emancipation. Add to this the commonly held Irish American belief that slaves, once emancipated, would immediately come North and take jobs away from the Irish, one can understand though not justify their decision to revolt during four days in July 1863 in the streets of New York City.¹⁸⁸

During the New York City Draft Riots, a mob consisting largely of Irish Americans, stormed the streets initially attacking only institutions associated with the draft.¹⁸⁹ However, it did not take long for some of the rioters to take out their aggression on individuals of African descent and their institutions.¹⁹⁰ Over the course of

¹⁸⁸ According to Albon P. Man, Jr., after Archbishop Hughes delivered a passionate appeal to the Irish rioters, an Irishman from the crowd shouted, "Let the nigger stay in the South!" Seeing that the riot was originally waged in protest to forced conscription, such a remark betrays the underlining fear that most of the rioters shared. See Albon P. Man, Jr., "The Church and the New York Draft Riots of 1863," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 42, 1 (March 1951): 47.

¹⁸⁹ According to Orestes Brownson, claimed that the "immediate actors in the...Riots in this city...were almost exclusively Irishmen and Catholics." See Brownson, "Catholics and the Anti-Draft Riots," *Brownson's Quarterly Review* (October 1863): 385.

¹⁹⁰ Not all Irish Americans in New York City participated in the draft riots of 1863. In fact, the neighborhood most noted for its gangs of Irish thugs, the Five Points, was relatively quiet during the riots. According to Leslie M. Harris' *In the Shadow of Slavery*, there were even instances of Irish assistance to the persecuted blacks: "When a mob threatened black drugstore owner Philip White..., his Irish neighbors drove the mob away....[W]hen rioters invaded Hart's Alley and became trapped at its dead end, the black and white residents of the alley together leaned out of their windows and poured hot starch on them, driving them from the neighborhood." See Leslie M. Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 285.

the week, several business owned by African Americans were destroyed. Charities that aided African Americans, such as Colored Orphan Asylum on Fifth Avenue, were burned to the ground.¹⁹¹ African Americans themselves were beaten and some were subjected to gruesome deaths. In all, eleven African American men were killed between July 13, and July 16, 1863 in New York City. Hundreds of African American families fled the city. Many of the businesses destroyed never reopened. Race relations throughout the America took an even more drastic turn for the worse.¹⁹²

Orestes Brownson lamented that the rioters “only acted out the opinions they had received from men of higher religious and social positions than themselves....”¹⁹³ Such a comment suggests, at least peripherally, that the opinions on race and slavery expressed by Irish Catholic ecclesiastics like Bishop John England, Archbishop Francis Kenrick, and Archbishop John Hughes provided average Irish American Catholics with a perceived theological justification for their actions. However, Brownson was more specifically referring to the Catholic newspapers—none of which had the ecclesiastical backing of the Archdiocese of New York—for fanning the flames of racial hatred that led to the rioting.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 280.

¹⁹² Ibid., 285.

¹⁹³ Brownson, “Catholics and the Anti-Draft Riots,” *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* (October 1863): 386.

¹⁹⁴ The *Metropolitan Record* and the *Freeman’s Journal* were both guilty of this charge. Both papers were previously the official mouthpiece of the Archdiocese of New York, but both papers eventually lost their ecclesiastical favor due to their insistence upon expressing opinions that diverged from those of Archbishop John Hughes. In fact, the *Metropolitan Record* officially lost its ecclesiastical backing one week after encouraging armed resistance to any form of military draft. See Man, “The Church and the New York Draft Riots of 1863,” 42. That same week, the *Freeman’s Journal* warned its readers that any conscription act was designed to place the burden of fighting a rich man’s war upon the backs of poor Irish Americans. See *Freeman’s Journal*, March 21, 1863. Even during the riots, the *Metropolitan Record* did its best to incite the mob. Specifically addressing those among the rioters fearful of conscription, the paper exclaimed that “[they] are about to be torn from [their] families to carry out at the sacrifice of [their] lives the most

Indeed, Archbishop Hughes actually supported the institution of a draft in order “to bring this unnatural strife to a close.”¹⁹⁵ In the July 16 issue of the *New York Herald*, Hughes beseeched the rioters to respect his authority as their bishop and cease fighting.¹⁹⁶ The next day, Hughes made his final public appearance in which he urged rioters to respect the tenants of their religion, promote the cause of peace, and return to their homes. Due to his overwhelming influence upon his flock, most in attendance complied. If Hughes had used his perceived influence in the years leading up to 1863 to foster better race relations within his archdiocese, perhaps the New York City Draft Riots could have been averted. Alas, Hughes was a product of his time; his ambivalence towards the African American Catholics living in New York set a poor example for the Irish under his jurisdiction. This issue will be further discussed in the next chapter.

iniquitous measures ever devised by any Government. [Their] wives and [their] little ones are to be deprived of their only protectors, and left dependent upon the cold charity of the world.” The editor then challenged his readers by exclaiming, “What will you do under the circumstances?” See the *Metropolitan Record*, July 14, 1863, quoted in Man, “The Church and the New York Draft Riots of 1863,” 44. After the riots, both papers expressed their approval. See Man, “The Church and the New York Draft Riots of 1863,” 44-45.

¹⁹⁵ *Harper's Weekly*, August 30, 1862.

¹⁹⁶ *New York Herald*, July 16, 1863.

CHAPTER II

JAGGED DAGGER: ARCHBISHOP JOHN HUGHES' EVOLVING
POSITION ON THE ISSUE OF SLAVERY

Years after Archbishop John Hughes' death, his old co-religious opponent Orestes Brownson commented that if one were to study the life of the late archbishop, one would find "a very complete history of the Church in New York, we might almost say in the United States, from 1838 to 1864."¹⁹⁷ Indeed, Archbishop John Hughes of New York was arguably the most important and influential figure within American Catholicism during the antebellum period.¹⁹⁸ When, in 1846, President James K. Polk wished to have a discussion with the leading bishop of the United States concerning the religious delicacies at play during the Mexican War, Secretary of State James Buchanan did not bring him the Archbishop of Baltimore, but rather Bishop Hughes of New York.¹⁹⁹ Authoritarian by nature, Hughes demanded doctrinal conformity among those within his

¹⁹⁷ Brownson, "The Most Rev. John Hughes, D.D.," *Brownson's Quarterly Review* (January 1874): 78.

¹⁹⁸ Commenting on the different episcopal styles of Francis Kenrick of Philadelphia and John Hughes of New York, Richard Shaw argues that whereas Kenrick's conciliatory style "had more influence on his fellow bishops and the internal affairs of the Church," it was the authoritarian style of Hughes that made him "the bishop whom the public of the United States acknowledged as the leader of Catholics in America." Richard Shaw, *Dagger John*, pp. 201-202.

¹⁹⁹ James Polk, *Polk: The Diary of a President, 1845-1849, Covering the Mexican War, the Acquisition of Oregon, and the Conquest of California and the Southwest*, ed. Nevins, Allan (London: Longmans, Green, 1929), 97-98; John Seigenthaler, *James K. Polk* (New York : Times Books, 2004), 15-16; James Dunkerley, *Americana: The Americas in the World around 1850, or "Seeing the Elephant" as the Theme for an Imaginary Western* (London ; New York : Verso, 2000), 505.

archdiocese who professed the Catholic faith. In fact, his desire for conformity sometimes pushed the line between what was essential Church teaching and what was merely personal opinion.²⁰⁰ Hughes' perceived influence over his flock was so great that future Bishop John Lancaster Spalding expressed disappointment that Hughes did not support his western colonization program for Irish immigrants, since "[n]o other man has ever had such influence over the Irish Catholics of the United States, and no other man could have done so much to make them realize that their interests for time and eternity required that they should make homes for themselves on the land."²⁰¹ Hughes himself acknowledged his authority when he stated, "a single word from their Bishop was sufficient to guide the sentiments in conduct of the Catholics of New York."²⁰² This chapter, therefore, will attempt to determine whether Hughes' influence was as persuasive as generally perceived. It will also seek to determine whether Hughes' sentiments regarding the institution of slavery had any real effect upon the thinking the Catholics within his sphere of jurisdiction.

Hughes' life and opinions are particularly noteworthy given that unlike many of the other American Catholic bishops of the period, Hughes was very much a man of the people. Although he had desired from an early age to become a priest, financial

²⁰⁰ Orestes Brownson experienced this firsthand. After he gave the commencement address for St. John's College graduating class of 1856, Hughes whispered to him that while his address was entirely in harmony with Catholic teaching, it contained sentiments with which he was not wholly in sympathy. After the commencement exercises were over, Hughes took the opportunity to personally address the graduates during which he made sure to make known his distaste for Brownson's personal opinions.

²⁰¹ Quoted in John Tracy Ellis, *Documents of American Catholic History* (Milwaukee; Bruce Pub. Co, 1956), 317.

²⁰² John Hughes to Cardinal Barnabo, March 23, 1858, in John Hughes Papers (St. Joseph's Seminary, Yonkers, New York). Hughes once wrote a letter concerning the state of affairs in New York only to cross out the phrase "in this diocese" and replace it with what was in his mind more apropos: "in my diocese."

limitations did not afford him the opportunity to obtain the education necessary to achieve this goal during his formative years.²⁰³ Like many poor Irish immigrants to America, Hughes would struggle to make ends meet by taking on menial employment, first as a migrant farm worker in Baltimore and then as a day laborer in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.²⁰⁴ This sort of hapless existence was the path that many other Irish immigrants were resigned to follow for the rest of their lives. However, Hughes was, if nothing else, a man of unflinching determination. Despite spending nearly two years performing backbreaking manual labor, he never gave up the hope that his present situation was only temporary. Upon hearing of a theological seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland that occasionally admitted poor students free of charge if the student could present some other value to the school, Hughes was off to pursue his vocation.²⁰⁵

Although initially and repeatedly turned away from Mount Saint Mary's by its schoolmaster Reverend John Dubois, Hughes refused to let go of his dream. After obtaining employment as a gardener at a convent a short distance from the seminary, Hughes was able to impress upon its founder, Elizabeth Ann Seton, to write to Dubois on his behalf.²⁰⁶ Seton's letter proved to be Hughes' admission ticket into Mount Saint Mary's.

According to Richard Shaw, it "was a gesture that pretty much summed up how things were run in New York for a quarter of a century." See Richard Shaw, *Dagger John*, 212.

²⁰³ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 15-16, 20. While still in Ireland, Hughes' family was forced to remove him from school so that he could help support the family farm during a particularly difficult financial crisis. Once in America, Hughes dreamed of being able to return to his studies if he could simply save up enough money. Unfortunately, a lack of steady employment made it impossible to accumulate the funds necessary.

²⁰⁴ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 16, 20.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 20-21.

²⁰⁶ Sr. Mary Agnes McGann, *The History of Mother Seton's Daughters*, vol. I (New York: Longmans Green & Co., 1917), 134.

Although not accepted as a full time student, Hughes would receive private tutoring in exchange for service as the seminary's gardener and as supervisor of its slaves. Since this was a means for Hughes to pursue his childhood dream, he accepted the terms. However, he secretly harbored distaste for the institution of slavery though he chose to keep his views to himself until he had attained stability within the seminary.²⁰⁷

Determined to make the best of the situation, Hughes spent all of his free time studying. As one historian has put it, "[Hughes] was a determined man with no time to waste."²⁰⁸ For nine long months, this was to be Hughes' routine. Then, one afternoon in the late summer of 1820, Dubois happened to come upon Hughes in his garden. It was dinnertime and while most of the other workers were taking advantage of their time off to eat, Dubois found Hughes' head buried in one of his books. Impressed with the dedication of the young gardener, Dubois decided to give Hughes an impromptu oral quiz. Satisfied with the answers he received, Dubois saw fit to relieve Hughes from most of his obligations as a day laborer and enroll him as a full time seminarian student for the fall term of 1820.²⁰⁹

The only obligation that Hughes was required to continue after being admitted as a full time student was to remain the supervisor of the seminary's slaves. On several occasions, he would be required to leave class early so he could go out and oversee their progress.²¹⁰ With a growing resentment for the institution he was required to sustain,

²⁰⁷ Richard Shaw, *Dagger John*, 22.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁰⁹ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 20-23.

²¹⁰ Richard Shaw, *Dagger John*, 23-24; Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 24-25.

Hughes eventually decided to write a rather extensive antislavery poem that a local newspaper saw fit for publication:

Hard is the lot of him who's doomed to toil,
Without one slender hope to soothe his pain,
Whose sweat and labor are a master's spoil,
Whose sad reward a master's proud disdain.
Wipe from thy code, Columbia, wipe the stain'
Be free as air, but yet be kind as free,
And chase foul bondage from thy Southern plain;
If such the right of man, by heaven's decree,
Oh then let Afric's sons feel what it is—to be.

In hot meridian day of late, I hied
To court the covert of a spreading oak;
I sat beneath—and thence in pity eyed
The negro moiling at his daily yoke.
And still he pined the dull, desponding stroke,
Beneath the scorching of the noon-tide sun,
Sullen and silent or if words he spoke,
I could not hear; but ever and anon
I heard the lash—which even brutes are fain to shun.

The ruthless driver soon was forced to yield;
Though strong of sinew, still he could not bear
The tyrant labors of the parching field,
But sought the shade to breathe a cooler air;
Whilst, less inhuman, but alas! less fair,
The drudging slave began to pour his song
Upon the heedless wind, and breathe despair.
He sung the negroes' foul, unpitied wrong,
Sad and ironical he felt the thong.

“Hail Columbia, happy land!
Where freedom waves her golden wand,
Where equal justice reigns.
But ah! Columbia great and free
Has not a boon for mine and me,
But slavery and chains.
Oh! once I had a soothing joy,
The hope of other years,
That Columbia would destroy
The source of these my tears.

But pining, declining,
I still drag to the grave,
Doomed to sigh till I die,
Free Columbia's slave.

“Hail Columbia, happy land!
Whose sons, a free, a heaven-born band,
Will free us soon with blows.
If freedman's freest blood were shed,
Could it be purer or more red
Than this of mine that flows?
'Twas freeman's whip that brought this gore
That trickles down my breast;
But soon my bleeding will be o'er,
My grave will yield me rest.
I will, then, until then
Abide my hard and hopeless lot;
But there's room in the tomb
For freedom too to rot.

“Hail Columbia, happy land!
Where those who show a fairer hand
Enjoy sweet liberty.
But from the moment of my birth,
I slave along Columbia's earth,
Nor freedom smiles on me.
Long have I pined through years of woe
Adown life's bleeding track,
And still my tears, my blood must flow,
Because my hand is black.
Still boiling, still toiling,
Beneath the burning heats of noon,
I, poor slave, court the grave;
O Columbia, grant the boon!

“Hail Columbia, hap—”

He ceased the song, and heaved another sigh
In silent, cheerless mood—for ah! the while
The driver's hated steps were drawing nigh;
Nor song of woe, nor words dare ten beguile
The goaded sorrows of a thing so vile.
Yet such the plaintive song that caught my ear,
That cold humanity may blush to smile,

When dove-eyed mercy softly leans to hear,
And pity turns aside to shed another tear.²¹¹

One could argue that Hughes' poetic expression concerning the institution of slavery reflects the sentiments of a youthful idealist, who, having experienced oppression and persecution of his own as an Irish immigrant, was overcome by a sense of empathy for the enslaved African American. While it is certainly true to say that Hughes' views on slavery underwent certain revisions throughout his life, he always acknowledged that it was a problematic issue. Like the cholera epidemic of 1831 and 1832 that swept through the Northeast states during his days as priest in Philadelphia, Hughes—even in the twilight of life—held that slavery was a sickness that must eventually be eradicated if the United States hoped to attain prosperity.²¹² It was *how* he thought the sickness of slavery should be eradicated that would change. For the time being, however, he would spend his years as a seminarian and the first several years after his ordination holding sentiments that were fundamentally antislavery in nature.

In 1829, the Irish Catholic leader Daniel O'Connell was permitted to take his seat in the United Kingdom House of Commons in spite of being a Catholic and despite refusing to swear an oath of acknowledgment to the King as the head of the Church of England. The right for Irish Catholics to sit in Parliament was one of several relief measures taken within the United Kingdom to alleviate a number of the legislative restrictions levied against Catholics living in British-controlled Ireland. Irish men and

²¹¹ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 42-44. According to Hassard, during Hughes' days as a seminarian he would contribute several poems to the local *Adams Centinel* for publication.

²¹² Walter G. Sharrow, "John Hughes and a Catholic Response to Slavery in Antebellum America," *The Journal of Negro History* 57, 3 (July 1972), 259.

women throughout the world celebrated O’Connell’s victory as the first major victory for Catholic Emancipation—the campaign headed by O’Connell himself to repeal anti-Catholic legislation. In Philadelphia on May 31, Irish Catholic immigrants packed inside St. Augustine’s Catholic Parish to celebrate a Mass in Daniel O’Connell’s honor. The priest tapped to give the sermon for this jubilant ceremony was Hughes. Although he had only been a priest for less than three years, he was already gaining a reputation as a strong preacher. His sermon painted a romantic picture of the history of Ireland prior to English dominance and then described in detail the British occupation, which for centuries had been “the cause of so much oppression, injustice, and bloodshed” in the “Island of Saints.”²¹³ Interestingly, in his effort to elaborate his case against the British, Hughes chose to compare the plight of the oppressed of Ireland with another group of people. Like the British, Hughes alluded to other nations being driven by an “irresponsible power.” He encouraged his congregation to “pursue [this infatuation with power] across the ocean to the shores of Africa, and there you will detect it, putting manacles by the same right, on hands that were free.”²¹⁴ By comparing the hardships suffered by the Irish with African slavery, Hughes was actually following the same train of thought as O’Connell himself. Unlike the members of the Young Ireland movement who were only concerned with the plight of Ireland, O’Connell, in the words of one biographer, was “in many ways a product of the Enlightenment.”²¹⁵ He was not only concerned with the emancipation of Irish Catholics living under British rule, but also the

²¹³ John Hughes, *Complete Works of Most Reverend John Hughes, D. D.*, vol. 1, edited by Lawrence Kehoe, Lawrence (New York, 1866) I, 31. Hereafter the source will be cited as Hughes, *Complete Works*.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

liberation of all human peoples, including Africans living under the scourge of American slavery.²¹⁶ Hughes seems to echo this sentiment in the conclusion of his sermon when he asks his congregation to “breathe the prayer of hope, that henceforth the inhabitants of Ireland, and...every country on the globe, may live as brethren, if not in religion, at least in social kindness, in the bond of holy peace, in the practice of virtue, and of piety and fidelity....”²¹⁷

Three years later, while embroiled in a highly publicized religious debate with the renowned Presbyterian minister John Breckinridge, Hughes would again compare the Irish Catholic immigrant’s struggles with those faced by the African American slave. Responding to Breckinridge’s claim that Irish Catholic immigrants were not entitled to the privileges set forth in the Declaration of Independence given that they belonged to a church that advocated reducing heretics to slavery, Hughes references a phrase used in his antislavery poem—most likely borrowed from the poet Joseph Hopkinson:

When you wish to pay a compliment to our memorable Declaration of Independence were you not rather unfortunate in coupling it with an allusion to the question of slavery?...It reminds me of the negro slave, who, on his way back to Georgia, shook his manacled hands at the capital and began to sing “Hail Columbia, Happy Land.”²¹⁸

Hughes’ years as a diocesan priest in Philadelphia coincided with a series of tumultuous national events relating to the issue of slavery. On January 1, 1831, William

²¹⁵ Maurice R. O’Connell, *Daniel O’Connell: The Man and his Politics* (Blackrock, Co. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1990), 122.

²¹⁶ In a speech delivered in 1829 at the Annual Meeting of the Cork Anti-Slavery Society, O’Connell referred to American slaveholders as “the most despicable” humans alive.” *The Irish Patriot: Daniel O’Connell’s Legacy to Irish Americans* (Philadelphia: Printed for Gratuitous Distribution, 1963), 5.

²¹⁷ Hughes, *Complete Works*, vol. 1, 40.

²¹⁸ John Hughes, *Controversy: Between Rev. Messrs. Hughes and Breckenridge on the Subject “Is the Protestant Religion the Religion of Christ?”* (Philadelphia: E. Cumiskey, 1862), 214.

Lloyd Garrison, a onetime proponent of “gradual abolition” and supporter of the African American Colonization Society, launched the influential abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator* calling for the immediate emancipation of African American slaves.²¹⁹ While the paper was grounded firmly on humanitarian principles, it also reflected a growing fear held by men like Garrison of the possibility of slave revolt.²²⁰ Garrison’s fear materialized when on August 22, 1831, a slave preacher named Nat Turner led a band of slaves in a revolt against the citizens of Jerusalem, Virginia, killing fifty-five white men, women, and children.²²¹ The event shocked the nation, and did much to foment the already existent tension between the races. As the number of free African Americans increased in major northern cities like Philadelphia, Hughes’ current city of residence, this tension found expression through mob violence. Between the years of 1833 and 1838 there were no less than thirty-five incidents of mob violence motivated by race that erupted throughout the nation.²²² In Philadelphia alone, there were seven major mob attacks against African Americans between the years of 1834 and 1838. However, as one historian acknowledges, there were most likely more minor race-related incidents “too small to make the newspapers.”²²³ When appointed coadjutor bishop of New York on January 7, 1838, Hughes would continue to keep touch with his former diocese of

²¹⁹ Garrison’s relationship with O’Connell.

²²⁰ Robert H. Abzug, “The Influence of Garrisonian Abolitionists’ Fears of Slave Violence on the Antislavery Argument, 1829-1840,” in *The Journal of Negro History* 55, 1 (January 1970): 15-16.

²²¹ Stephen B. Oates, *The Fires of Jubilee: Nat Turner’s Fierce Rebellion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) 59-126.

²²² Leonard Richards, *Gentlemen of Property and Standing: Anti-Abolition Mobs in Jacksonian America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1970), 14.

²²³ Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 125.

Philadelphia enough to be aware of major incidents like the one documented by his former superior, Bishop Francis Kenrick:

A Negro man escaped from the lunatic asylum a few days since and murdered a watchman; and on Saturday night, one or two negroes deliberately murdered an Irishman, whom they accused of having assisted in arresting the lunatic. Last night there were serious indications of a riot to avenge this death, and we are still in dread that some dreadful act of vengeance will fall on the unhappy people of color.²²⁴

These experiences undoubtedly shaped Kenrick's opinion when writing in his *Theologia Moralis* that slavery in principle was permissible and that nothing ought to be done to disrupt the institution's existence within America. If racial violence was already at such an elevated state, Kenrick feared that immediate emancipation could lead to the destruction of the Union. There is little doubt that Kenrick imparted these fears to the priests under his jurisdiction. It is highly likely that the views of an idealist may have been tempered when faced with the gruesome realities of racial warfare. Indeed, as Hughes began to make his ascent up the Church's hierarchical ladder and he gained a firmer grasp upon the various issues confronting the worldwide Church, his views concerning the nature of slavery and what ought to be done about it began to evolve. Due to events such as those described above, by the end of the decade, Hughes would find himself adopting opinions on slavery that diverged greatly from those he once shared with the "Great Emancipator Daniel O'Connell," instead adopting the more traditional view as espoused by his former superior, Francis Kenrick.

²²⁴ Most Rev. F. P. Kenrick to Most Rev. Paul Cullen, June 13, 1838, Propaganda Fide Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

Another possible explanation for Hughes' shift in his position on slavery can be found in the close relationship he developed with the Rodrigue family while still serving as a priest in Philadelphia. Appointed in 1831 by Bishop Kenrick to oversee the construction of a church, Hughes hired an aspiring young Catholic architect named William Rodrigue to design the building. Rodrigue's father, André-Jacques, was a prominent citizen who, prior to the birth of William, was one of the numerous exiles who had fled from the island of Hispaniola to the city of Philadelphia in order to escape the chaos caused by the slave uprising of August 1791 in the French colony of Saint-Domingue.²²⁵ During this uprising, slaves from plantations throughout the colony rose up against their masters in what seemed to be a well-organized surprise attack. The slaves then made their way throughout the colony indiscriminately killing white colonists, burning houses, and torching sugar and coffee fields.²²⁶ Caught off-guard, the French colonists were unable to neutralize effectively the initial assault. This resulted in several years of bloody warfare between the two sides. A Philadelphia newspaper documented the carnage when it wrote, "The country is filled with dead bodies, which lie unburied. The negroes have left whites, with stakes...driven through them into the ground; and the white troops, who now take not prisoners, but kill everything black or yellow, leave the negroes dead upon the field."²²⁷ Many French colonists believed that the mayhem was due in large part to the spreading of the principles of the French Revolution as set forth in *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* (1789)

²²⁵ Baur, "International Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution," 396.

²²⁶ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 92-114.

²²⁷ *Philadelphia General Advertiser*, October 10, 1791, quoted in Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 116.

“by uncomprehending and overenthusiastic whites.”²²⁸ Having experienced this gruesome episode, many of the white exiles such as Rodrigue that settled in Philadelphia and elsewhere such as New Orleans, were highly suspect of anyone who argued for the immediate abolition of slaves in America’s southern states.

Hughes was undoubtedly affected by the horror stories told by countless Catholic exiles of Hispaniola. Indeed, years later, Hughes would recall to Secretary of State William Seward that he was well “acquainted with white and colored inhabitants of Haiti and Santo Domingo. They told me much of the horrors connected with what history has settled down to call the Massacre of St. Domingo.”²²⁹ Furthermore, after William Rodrigue completed his building contract with Hughes, the two would maintain a very close relationship. In fact, by 1836, William would be married to Hughes’ younger sister Margaret. When Hughes was named coadjutor Bishop of New York in 1838, he “had all but been adopted by the...Rodrigue family.”²³⁰ William and Margaret would follow Hughes to the new metropolis with the former contributing his architectural skills to a number of the new bishop’s building projects, including Saint John’s College (renamed Fordham University in 1907) and the iconic Saint Patrick’s Cathedral. When sick, Hughes chose to take up residence with the Rodrigues rather than stay in his private rectory.²³¹ Of the few people he allowed to get to know him on a personal level, there was arguably no one closer to the first archbishop of New York than William Rodrigue. It is logical to conclude, therefore, that the traumatic experience suffered by William’s

²²⁸ Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 103.

²²⁹ Hughes to Seward, undated, 1862. (N.Y.)

²³⁰ Robert Shaw, *Dagger John*, 110.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 357.

father during the slave rebellion of 1791 had some hand in shaping Hughes' developing position on slavery.

Just two years into his episcopacy, Hughes' position on the slavery issue clearly underwent significant modification. In October of 1839, Hughes embarked on a nine-month tour of Europe in order to raise money and recruit personnel for St. John's College during which time he met with many important European dignitaries. According to his biographer, Hughes was given several audiences with Pope Gregory XVI at the start of 1840, during which time Hughes was able to freely express the needs of his diocese.²³² It is interesting to note that Hughes' audience with the Pope came literally weeks after Gregory issued *In Supremo Apostolatus*. Unfortunately, there is no mention by his biographer of whether the issue of slavery was raised by either the Pope or Hughes during any of these meetings. However, the issue was evidently on Hughes' mind. While in London during the spring of 1840, Hughes had the opportunity to meet none other than Daniel O'Connell himself. Displaying just how far his views had drifted from those of the Irish patriot, Hughes chose to engage O'Connell in a debate on the issue of American slavery. He politely informed O'Connell "that while you have many friends in America, you have some who are much displeased with...your public remarks [concerning slavery]."²³³ After listening to Hughes' remarks, O'Connell replied, "It would be strange, indeed, if I should not be the friend of the slave throughout the world—

²³² Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 210.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 215-216.

I, who was born a slave myself.”²³⁴ Rather than pressing O’Connell, Hughes drops the issue, though he remained unconvinced by O’Connell’s rationale.

It would be interesting to speculate whether the topic of Gregory XVI’s *In Supremo Apostolatus* was raised during Hughes’ debate with O’Connell. O’Connell by this point was familiar enough with the document. Just three months earlier, he had taken the time to copy it word for word.²³⁵ Furthermore, in a little less than one month’s time, O’Connell would take part in the World Anti-Slavery Convention held in London, during which O’Connell made sure to praise Pope Gregory’s apostolic letter when discussing the evils of slavery.²³⁶ Unfortunately, Hassard’s depiction does not choose to record their meeting in any substantial detail.

Upon Hughes’ return to New York, he found that Catholics in his diocese had become embroiled in a hostile battle about education with the Public School Society of New York.²³⁷ Although still only the titular bishop, Hughes was the unquestioned leader of the diocese and his direction was needed throughout the school controversy. The powerful role that he was to play in resolving the issue underscores the influence that he had upon the hearts and minds of New York’s Catholic population. Hughes himself commented, “When I returned to this city, “I found the Catholics broken and divided.” However, under his guidance, he joyfully acknowledged, “they’re united.”²³⁸

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ John F. Quinn, ““Three Cheers for the Abolitionist Pope,”” 72.

²³⁶ *Liberator*, Aug. 14, 1840.

²³⁷ The Public School Society was actually a private organization of men previously known as the Free School Society. Although the schools the Society exercised their control over were referred to as “public” schools, the term is not synonymous with the present day public school system. See Shaw, *Dagger John*, 140-141.

²³⁸ Hughes, *Complete Works*, vol. 1, 79.

Although New York's public schools in the 1840s were not meant to be religious institutions, a general Protestantism permeated their halls. In the classroom, students read from the King James Bible and said Protestant prayers. As the children of Catholic immigrants began to pour into New York's public school system, Catholic parents quickly realized that their children were being educated in an environment hostile to their religion. Even most of the nonreligious textbooks seethed with anti-Catholic biases. As their numbers grew more numerous, Catholics became increasingly outspoken against the biased education their children were receiving. However, members from both political parties had members for and against school reform. If New York's Catholic population, which was overwhelmingly for the Democratic Party, continued to vote for traditional candidates, school reform would be next to impossible. According to Hughes, on this one issue Catholics needed to forget party loyalties and speak with one voice. As one historian has put it, the voice in question "would be that of John Hughes."²³⁹

The Catholic campaign sought to obtain from the governmental body in charge of allocating public funds a portion of those funds to finance their own schools. They argued that the public schools as they currently existed were essentially Protestant schools. All the Catholics wished for, according to Hughes, was equality. "We are a portion of this people," he argued, "and we merely ask to be placed on an equality with the rest of our fellow citizens."²⁴⁰ However, the school issue would drag on for months. As the state elections for 1841 approached, it became evident to Hughes that while there

²³⁹ Vincent Lannie, *Public Money and Parochial Education: Bishop Hughes, Governor Seward, and the New York School Controversy* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1968), 28-30; Shaw, *Dagger John*, 143.

²⁴⁰ *New York Herald*, November 2, 1840.

were individual candidates open to school reform, the general platform for both parties was opposed to the Catholic grievances.²⁴¹ Increasingly aggravated by the tendency of his Catholic flock to vote strictly along partisan lines, Hughes decided to take matters into his own hands.

On October 29, 1841, Hughes convened a meeting at Carroll Hall for all Catholic citizens concerned with the school issue. Knowing how to please a crowd, Hughes soon had his audience completely in the palm of his hand. Claiming to be an advocate of no political party, Hughes proclaimed only to be an advocate of “the *freedom of education* and the men who stand up for it.”²⁴² A slate of Hughes-approved candidates was then read to the audience. Each of these men, Hughes assured, “are all known as favorable to your cause.”²⁴³ Of the thirteen Democratic regulars running for State Assembly, the “Carroll Hall Ticket” endorsed only ten. The three remaining endorsements went to independent candidates. Neither of the two regular senatorial candidates was endorsed. The audience greeted the reading of the names with thunderous applause. Hughes then made one more appeal to the crowd:

You have now, gentlemen, heard the names of men who are willing to risk themselves in support of your cause.... What, then, is your course?... You now, for the first time, find yourselves in a position to vote at least for yourselves. You have often voted for others, [said Hughes] and they did not vote for you, but now you are determined to uphold with your own votes, your own rights. Will you then stand by the rights of your offspring who have for so long a period, and from generation to generation, suffered under the operation of this injurious system? [Renewed cheering.] Will you adhere to the nomination made? [Loud cries of “we will,” and vociferous applause.] Will you be united? [Tremendous cheering—the whole immense assembly rising *en masse*, waving hats, handkerchiefs and every possible demonstration of applause.]... Very well, then,

²⁴¹ Lannie, *Public Money and Parochial Education*, 170.

²⁴² Hughes, *Complete Works*, vol. 1, 280. *Emphasis* in text.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 281.

the tickets will be prepared and distributed amongst you, and on the day of election go like freemen, with dignity and calmness, entertaining due respect for your fellow-citizens and their opinions, and deposit your votes.²⁴⁴

On Election Day, the Democratic Party overwhelmingly carried the state. The Party seized control of both houses of the Legislature away from the Whigs. However, in New York City, only those Democratic candidates nominated by the “Carroll Hall Ticket” were elected to the State Assembly. The three independent candidates, although losing handedly, polled over two-thousand votes. Had those votes gone to the other three Democratic regulars, they would have easily defeated their Whig competitors. The city vote plainly demonstrated that Catholics held the balance of power in the Democratic Party.²⁴⁵ Politicians from that point forward would better cater to the wants of the Catholic community.

The vote also showed the considerable influence Hughes was able to have upon the Catholics of the city. Indeed, his authority became the stuff of legend in popular anti-Catholic literature prevalent during the era.²⁴⁶ However, lest one think the titular bishop had complete control over the will of New York’s Catholic community, there are several

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 283.

²⁴⁵ Lannie, *Public Money and Parochial Education*, 188-189.

²⁴⁶ For example, in one such book, the author describes the events surrounding the suspicious death of an Irish woman. The police suspected foul play to be involved, and thus went to the location of the body to investigate. However, those present at the scene refused to hand the body over to authorities. Evidently, the body had already been prepared for burial and those in attendance were determined that it not be tampered with again. Consequently, two police officers were sent to Bishop Hughes’ residence, “knowing that one word from him would reverse the scene.” However, Hughes “refused to do anything about it, even to approve of the investigation of the alleged crime!!” See C. Sparry, ed., *The Mysteries of Romanism: Exhibiting the Demoralizing Influence of Popery and the Character of the Priesthood* (New York: C. Sparry, 1847), 81-85.

instances where, despite his sincere endeavors, Hughes was unable to convince his flock to listen to him.²⁴⁷ As one historian has described Hughes, he was...

... autocratic, no doubt, but no one ever moved the great mass of Catholics any place they did not want to go. The only actual power John Hughes possessed was over his subordinate clergy. He was listened to by American Catholics, probably more so than any man of the age. When he took a popular position—as with the school issue—they rallied vocally to his banner. When he preached moral strictures, Catholics—then as ever—limited his effectiveness to the public celebration of the sacraments and rules for fasting. With anything beyond that Catholics nodded assent to his exhortations and continued fashioning their own mores as they pleased. His power at its strongest involved no more than moral suasion.²⁴⁸

With this image in mind, if Hughes chose to take a definitive position on the slave issue, it would be interesting to speculate whether the New York Catholic community would follow suit. Unfortunately, Hughes' position on slavery was anything but definitive.²⁴⁹ Thus, his Irish Catholic community was free to judge for themselves what stance they would take on the issue. As will be shown in what follows, Hughes' main concern was for the plight of his Irish Catholic constituency. All other ethnic groups received diminutive attention.

When Bishop Dubois of New York died in the winter of 1842, Hughes assumed the proper title for the authority he had exercised since he arrived in New York in 1838. His accession corresponded with the arrival of unprecedented numbers of Irish immigrants to America's northeastern port cities. Being a poor Irish immigrant himself,

²⁴⁷ For example, in his effort to make sure 1845's St. Patrick's Day festivities would be less rowdy, Hughes announced that its observance was to be postponed until April 7. According to newspaper reports, however, it appears that the vast majority of celebrants disregarded Hughes' order and celebrated the feast day in typical fashion on March 17. See *New York Herald*, March 18, 1848.

²⁴⁸ Shaw, *Dagger John*, 226.

Hughes particularly identified with the plight of the destitute fleeing the famine in their native land. On the eve of the Ireland's potato blight, Hughes, who happened to be touring Europe at the time, witnessed firsthand the abject destitution of the Irish people.²⁵⁰ While of the three million European immigrants who arrived in New York City between 1840 and 1860 moved on, over half a million of the most destitute stayed to fill the slums of the metropolis.²⁵¹ Most of these impoverished numbers were from the Emerald Isle of Hughes' birth.²⁵² According to the prelate, those with sufficient means "pushed onwards." However, "the destitute, the disabled, the broken down, the very aged and the very young, and I had almost added the depraved, of all nations, having reached New York, usually settle down here,—for want of means, or through want of inclination to go farther."²⁵³

Empathetic to their plight, Hughes immediately went to work on the behalf of the "scattered debris of the Irish nation."²⁵⁴ He assigned diocesan priests to minister to the poor in almshouses and the sick in hospitals. He eventually started his own hospital and staffed it with the Sisters of Charity. He made sure that the orphanages and asylums were well provided for. He directed Jesuits from St. John's College to the correctional and

²⁴⁹ See Walter G. Sharrow, "John Hughes and a Catholic Response to Slavery in Antebellum America," *The Journal of Negro History* 57 (July 1972): 254-269.

²⁵⁰ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 282-283.

²⁵¹ Shaw, *Dagger John*, 221-222.

²⁵² Jay Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 33; Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City* (New York: King's Crown Press, 1949), 201.

²⁵³ Bishop John Hughes to Society for the Propagation of the Faith, March 23, 1858, *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi: America Centrale* 18, letter 1417, fols. 514, Congregation of the Propaganda Archives, University of Notre Dame Archives, microfilm.

²⁵⁴ Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, 33.

charity institutes on Wards Island in the East River.²⁵⁵ He supplied diocesan funds to relief agencies and arranged to have the money of families living in New York sent to loved ones in Ireland.²⁵⁶ Anything Hughes could do to alleviate the sufferings of his Irish flock, the prelate was sure to do it.

Hughes even pledged his financial support to the “Young Ireland” movement in their effort to lead a revolution against British forces in 1848.²⁵⁷ On August 14, 1848, Hughes addressed a rally calling for the immediate independence of Ireland. Rising to the podium Hughes exhorted his audience:

By the last news, it appears that the oppressor and his victim stand face to face....Liberty, Ireland, and humanity have friends on this side of the ocean, now is the time for them to stand forward. I come among you, gentlemen, not as an advocate of war. It would illy [sic] accord with my profession....My office is properly to be a peace-maker, when it is possible; but I come in the name...of sacred humanity; not, if you will, to put arms into the hands of men by which they may destroy the lives of others; but to give my voice and my mite [sic] to shield the unprotected bosoms of the sons of Ireland. It is not for me to say any thing calculated to excite your feelings...when I can scarcely express my own....I present myself here not as a bishop of the Catholic Church; I present myself here not as an Irishman, for I am a citizen of the United States, and I would do nothing contrary to the laws of the country which protects me; but...[I]et Ireland once go into housekeeping for herself, and then answer me if the American people will not come up to the work as though they had all been born within a gunshot of Tara Hall.²⁵⁸

Before leaving the stage, he placed five hundred dollars on a table, “to purchase a shield to interpose between the oppressor and his victims.”²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ Shaw, *Dagger John*, 223-224.

²⁵⁶ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 303; *Freeman's Journal*, January 2, 1847.

²⁵⁷ Seán Mcconville, *Irish Political Offenders, 1848-1922: Theatres of War* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 12-24; John Belchem, “Nationalism, Republicanism and Exile: Irish Emigrants and the Revolutions of 1848,” *Past and Present*, 146 (February 1995), 103-135.

²⁵⁸ Hughes, *Complete Works*, vol. 2, 790-791, 793.

²⁵⁹ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 306-307.

Although Hughes' hopes were high, the actual rebellion was a complete disaster. Only fifty insurrectionists took up arms and were easily suppressed by the Royal Irish Constabulary. The largest battle was fought on a small piece of farmland owned by an old woman. Consequently, the entire revolution was mockingly referred to as "The Battle of Widow McCormack's cabbage patch."²⁶⁰ Humiliated, Hughes wrote to "Directory of the Friends of Ireland" requesting the five hundred dollars he had contributed for a shield be returned, since circumstances "had already proven that the *men* of Ireland, on their own soil, had rendered the protection of a shield unnecessary." Therefore, Hughes wished to transfer the money to where it could actually do some good for the Irish—to the Sisters of Mercy for their care of immigrant Irish girls.²⁶¹

Not long after the failed Young Ireland insurrection, yet another group of supposedly oppressed Europeans, seething with discontent and desiring universal suffrage, rose up in rebellion against the established monarchical government, and, having succeeded, set up a government based upon the principles of republicanism. This time, it was the Italian masses revolting against the papal government and forcing Pope Pius IX into exile.²⁶² Hughes, who had just recently advocated the right of the Irish to rebel against the despotic England, now came to the defense of a deposed ruler that many considered a despot.²⁶³ The American Press was quick to point out the contradiction:

²⁶⁰ Mcconville, *Irish Political Offenders*, 37-41.

²⁶¹ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, , 308-309. *Emphasis* in text.

²⁶² Owen Chadwick, *A History of the Popes*, 82-91.

²⁶³ During his Sunday sermon for January 7, 1849, Hughes expressed his opinion on the matter: "I do not say that it is necessary for the Pope that he should be a Sovereign...but it is necessary for Christendom that he should be free, and if there be no middle state between a subject and a secular sovereign, then I say that for him to be a sovereign is necessary. See Hughes, *Complete Works*, vol. 2, 19.

At all events the Bishop should be consistent in his opinions for one year, at least, or if he could not hold out for a whole year, he might try to do so for six months. Has he forgotten the speech he made...last July in favor of the Irish insurrection!...On that occasion Bishop Hughes was one of the most ardent democrats of this or any other country. He invoked the spirit of liberty and the spirit of religion in the same breath. He made the crowd of listeners...almost leap out of their breeches by his stirring appeals to their patriotism.²⁶⁴

The reason for the contradiction was simple: Hughes had a personal investment in both the plight of his native land and the plight of the head of his Church. In the case of Hughes, personal allegiances often trumped consistency in policy. In the case of New York's Irish, he was willing to do all he could for his fellow Irish immigrant and for his native country.²⁶⁵ Indeed, his primary interest was to ensure that the Irish immigrant community and their Church received the full benefits that a free American society had to offer them. However, while Hughes believed himself to be the leader of all the Catholic faithful regardless of ethnicity, his obvious Irish bias ensured that the needs of non-Irish Catholics would always possess a subordinate place among the prelate's list of priorities.²⁶⁶ In the case of New York's German Catholics, Hughes generally adopted a laissez-faire approach. He rarely interfered in their religious affairs, choosing instead to appoint a German vicar general to care for them.²⁶⁷ In the case of New York's Black Catholic population, Hughes seems to have adopted no policy of caring for them at all.

²⁶⁴ *New York Herald*, January 12, 1849.

²⁶⁵ In his justification for aiding Young Ireland's 1848 insurrection, Hughes wrote, "I took sides for the first time in my life, publicly, and I may add, against my own convictions, with that side in whose judgment I had but little trust, but in whose devotion, chivalry, and courage I had unbounded confidence. See Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 308.

²⁶⁶ Hughes believed that his "people were composed of representatives from almost all nations" and that his job as their leader was to knead them up into one dough, to be leavened by the spirit of Catholic faith and of Catholic union." See Bishop John Hughes to Society for the Propagation of the Faith, March 23, 1858, *Scrittura Riferite nei Congressi: America Centrale*, vol. 18, letter 1417, fols. 514, Congregation of the Propaganda Archives, University of Notre Dame Archives, microfilm.

His attitude of indifference towards them is illuminating in that it conveys how perhaps the most important Irishman in the city of New York felt about the African race. Furthermore, it may also shed light on the reasons behind Hughes' later opinions concerning the issue of slavery.

The first place one should look when attempting to uncover Hughes' attitude concerning free persons of color is to the words and actions of the prelate himself. If that avenue fails to yield information, then one might turn to the opinions expressed by free persons of color concerning the Archbishop. Unfortunately, the first avenue does not provide much information. Hughes never publicly addressed the concerns of the Black community living in New York. His actions for that community also appear to be lacking. Although a Catholic school for black children opened in 1846 in the basement of St. Vincent de Paul Church, by 1853, it had closed. When a proposal for a new Catholic school for black children was presented to the Archbishop, Hughes rejected it. Furthermore, when Hughes' vicar general inquired as to whether black children could attend the school operated by the Sisters of Charity, he was informed that the majority of Irish students would not attend if blacks were permitted.²⁶⁸ Hughes, who had previously exercised his authority over the Sisters of Charity and their operation of their schools, could have forced the issue, but he chose not to.²⁶⁹ Thus, the majority of Black Catholics in New York were forced into the public school system that Hughes personally believed was an anti-Catholic institution. While the antebellum black Catholic community was

²⁶⁷ Dolan, *Immigrant Church*, 72.

²⁶⁸ Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 95-96.

²⁶⁹ For Hughes' relationship with the Sisters of Charity, see Shaw, *Dagger John*, 203-212.

relatively small, it does not excuse the apparent apathy exhibited on behalf of their prelate.²⁷⁰

The most telling evidence of Hughes's lack of care for his black Catholic population comes in the form of a letter written by a black Catholic woman, signed by twenty-six other members of New York's black Catholic population, and addressed to Pope Pius IX. According to Vatican records, the Holy Father received the letter. However, there is no evidence of a reply.²⁷¹ The letter expressed the frustration apparently felt by the vast majority of black Catholics. The author warned the Pontiff "the salvation of the black race in the United States" was "going astray from neglect on the part of those who have the care of souls." The reason for this, wrote the author, was due to the fact "that most of the Bishops and priests in this country is either Irish or descended from Irish and not being accustomed to the black race in Ireland they can't think enough of them to take charge of our souls." In particular, the author stated that Archbishop Hughes "does not consider the black race to be a part of his flock." In fact, it was "well known by both white and black that the Most Rev. Archbishop do hate the black race so much that he cannot bear to come near him."²⁷²

²⁷⁰ In 1850, the year in which New York became an archdiocese, the city numbered only 13,815 African Americans. By 1855, that number had shrunk to 11,840. Although no firm numbers exist, the Black Catholic population would have been a considerably small number. See Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City*, 36.

²⁷¹ *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi: America Centrale* 16, letter 715, fols. 777, Congregation of the Propaganda Archives, University of Notre Dame Archives, microfilm.

²⁷² Harriet Thompson to Pope Pius IX, October 29, 1853, *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi: America Centrale* 16, letter 715, fols. 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, Congregation of the Propaganda Archives, University of Notre Dame Archives, microfilm; Jay Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York's Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 24-25; Davis, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States*, 94-97.

Whether Hughes supported the day's prevalent xenophobic ideology, or if he simply felt constrained to act on behalf of black Catholics living in his jurisdiction is the subject for another study.²⁷³ Suffice to say, Hughes accepted the status quo that systematically disenfranchised New York's people of color. As the American Civil War approached, the tensions between the races were running exceptionally high. In recording his objection to the idea of immediate emancipation, Hughes pointed out that free African Americans in the North suffered extreme instances of violence and languished in abject poverty due to racial strife and limited job opportunities. Angrily, he wondered, "Are these the benefits which you [the abolitionists] intend to bestow on the liberation of the negro population of the South?"²⁷⁴ Concerning the institution of slavery itself, Hughes held that the lot of the Southern slave was infinitely better than the lot of the free African American living in the North or the "savage" still dwelling in Africa.²⁷⁵ As indicated above, Hughes had been opposed to the idea of immediate emancipation since he arrived in New York as titular bishop in 1839. Though claiming to be "no friend to slavery," he was nevertheless fundamentally opposed to the abolitionist movement.²⁷⁶ Since its inception, the American anti-slavery movement had always been associated with anti-Catholicism.²⁷⁷ In addition, Hughes believed the abolitionism movement to be tied

²⁷³ There is evidence that supports the former. When discussing the issue of slavery, Hughes claimed that Africa was "a country of savages, without the slightest gleam of hope as to prospective civilization." See *The Metropolitan Record in The Catholic Mirror*, October 12, 1861.

²⁷⁴ *The Metropolitan Record in The Catholic Mirror*, October 12, 1861.

²⁷⁵ Sparrow, "John Hughes and the Catholic Response to Slavery," 256; Rena Mazyck Andrews, "Slavery Views of a Northern Prelate," *Church History* 3 (March 1934), 60-78.

²⁷⁶ Quoted in *Liberator*, March 25, 1842.

²⁷⁷ For example, former U.S. President and outspoken abolitionist John Quincy Adams had attacked the Roman Catholic faith since at least 1793. In a speech given in Boston, he condemned both the "sceptered tyrant" and the "canonized fanatic, of whom nothing now remains but the name, in the calendar of antiquated superstition." See John Quincy Adams, *An Oration Pronounced July 4, 1793 at the Request of*

inextricably to the hated British government,²⁷⁸ radical misguided Protestant ministers,²⁷⁹ and numerous anticlerical revolutionary exiles from Europe such as Louis Kossuth.²⁸⁰ For Hughes, the thought of being associated with abolitionist “quacks” was akin to apostasy and thus he repeatedly advised Catholics to avoid any association with the movement.²⁸¹ Beyond the religious overtones, however, Hughes came to see the abolitionist movement as *the* major threat to America’s stability by causing sectional divisions and encouraging slave revolt.²⁸² Even when the call for racial equality emanated from friendly shores, Hughes remained steadfast in his opposition. For example, when a petition signed by sixty-thousand Irishmen including such notables as Daniel O’Connell and Theobald Matthew, made its way to United States urging Irish immigrants to “CLING BY THE ABOLITIONISTS,” Hughes was the leading voice opposing its support. Hughes claimed the document was likely a forgery. However,

the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston (Boston: Benjamin Edes and Son, 1793), 5-6. Adams’ anti-Catholic streak would continue well into his political career. Other anti-Catholic abolitionists include Lyman Beecher, Lewis and Arthur Tappan, and Samuel H. Cox. See Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* (Cincinnati: Truman & Smith, 1835); Lewis Tappan, *The Life of Arthur Tappan* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870); Archibald Bower, *The History of the Popes: From the Foundation of the See of Rome to A.D. 1758* (Philadelphia : Griffith & Simon, 1844-1845).

²⁷⁸ Hughes, *Works*, vol. 2, 136-137, 158-159.

²⁷⁹ Ironically, Hughes believed the introduction of modern slavery aided by the Protestant Reformation, which ignored Christian charity and promoted materialism above everything else. See *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 368-369, 382-383.

²⁸⁰ Kossuth was Magyar Hungarian revolutionary. He sought Hungary’s independence from Austria but supported the British hegemony over Ireland. For this inconsistency, along with his anticlerical tendencies, he incurred Hughes’ wrath. See Hughes, *Complete Works*, vol. 2, 468. For Kossuth’s role in the American antislavery movement, see, Steven Bela Vardy, Louis Kossuth and the Slavery Question in America,” *East European Quarterly* 39, 4 (2005): 449. For a classical biography see P. C. Headley, *The Life of Louis Kossuth, Governor of Hungary: Including Notices of the Men and Scenes of the Hungarian Revolution; to Which Is Added an Appendix Containing His Principal Speeches, &C*, 10th ed. (Auburn, NY: Derby and Miller, 1852).

²⁸¹ John Hughes, *The Catholic Chapter in the History of the United States. A Lecture: Delivered in Metropolitan Hall, before the Catholic Institute, on Monday Evening, March 8, 1852, for the Benefit of the House of Protection, under the Charge of the Sisters of Mercy* (New York: E. Dunigan & Bro., 1852), 11-12; Sharrow, 261-262.

²⁸² Andrews, “Slavery Views of a Northern Prelate,” 72, 75.

even if it were real, Hughes argued that it would be “the duty of every naturalized Irishman to resist and repudiate the address with indignation...because...[it]...emanated from a foreign source.”²⁸³

Given that the issue of slavery was not at the forefront of his mind, Hughes never organized his thoughts on the matter into a comprehensive study as had Bishop England and Archbishop Kenrick. Only when the issue began to dominate the American consciousness in the 1850s did Hughes seriously attempt to address the issue. However, his views were no more than a repackaged and underdeveloped version of Kenrick’s *Theologia Moralis*. According to Kenrick, for slavery to be acceptable according to the natural law, both the master and the slave must fulfill certain obligations for the other. Whereas the slave is obliged to give his or her labor and obedience to his or her master, the master is obliged to provide the slave with sufficient food, clothing and shelter, as well as provide for the slave’s religious instruction and access to the sacraments.²⁸⁴ Having spent much of the winter of 1854 sojourning in Florida and Cuba, Hughes was pleased to report the fulfillment of these obligations on the Catholic plantations he visited. When the end of his sabbatical was approaching in April 1854, Hughes wrote to Archbishop Blanc of New Orleans describing Florida’s Hutchinson Island. He told Blanc that the island belonged to a Catholic woman from New York who had built a chapel, has a priest sent by Bishop Ignatius of Charleston, and much to Hughes’ delight, was doing

²⁸³ *Liberator*, March 25, 1842; John F. Quinn, “The Rise and Fall of Repeal: Slavery and Irish Nationalism in Antebellum Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 130 (January 2006), 24.

²⁸⁴ Brokhage, “Francis Patrick Kenrick’s Opinion on Slavery,” 54-55, 240-241.

all she could to make her slaves Catholic.²⁸⁵ For Hughes, the good done for the slaves on this isolated plantation far outweighed the evil of forced servitude. However, the “good” that Hughes observed was not evident across the great majority of plantations of the South. Thus, it seems unfortunate that Hughes’ developing opinion on slavery failed to differentiate between the theoretical ideal expressed by moral theologians such as Kenrick and the horrific realities prevalent throughout much of the South.

When Hughes arrived back in New York at the end of the month, he decided to discuss his developing views on slavery in a sermon preached at the cathedral. As he spoke, it was clear that his position on the matter, though consistent with traditional Catholic theology, remained quite ambiguous:

I have been delighted to perceive and find...that the owner [of slaves] felt the responsibility of his position;—that he had procured the services of a clergyman; that instruction from day to day was going on among those who were as dark in their spirit as in their complexion, and incapable almost of understanding, rendering their instruction a tedious task. Nevertheless, God knows their position, and does not hold them responsible for the neglect of opportunities they never had. Seized in their own country, where they lived in ignorance of God—and transported from it, how glorious is the privilege of the master who, in that position, might introduce them to a knowledge of their real dignity, as the redeemed creatures of our common heavenly Father! While we all know that this condition of slavery is evil, yet it is not an absolute and unmitigated evil; and even if it were anything more than what it is—a comparative evil—there is one thing, that it is infinitely better than the condition in which this people would have been, had they not been seized to gratify the avarice and cupidity of the white man.²⁸⁶

Hughes’ sermon suggests that the prelate, like many Catholic thinkers of his day who struggled to reconcile their religious principles with the South’s peculiar institution, professed an equivocal theological viewpoint. On the one hand, Hughes could denounce

²⁸⁵ Archbishop John Hughes to Archbishop Anthony Blanc, April 10, 1854, Archdiocese of New York Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

²⁸⁶ Hughes, *Complete Works*, vol. 2, 222.

slavery as an unfortunate evil; on the other hand, he could avoid the charge of abolitionism by affirming that slavery, in principle, was not contrary to the natural law. In fact, Hughes seemed to suggest that the master-slave relationship, when governed by the principles of Catholic moral teachings, was in essence a benevolent relationship that produced benefits for both parties. However, as stated in the introduction of this study, classical Catholic moral theology holds that while slavery in theory is in keeping with the precepts of the natural law, slavery as generally practiced in the South violated a number of the natural rights guaranteed to slaves and thus was in violation of the natural law. Sadly, Hughes failed to make a clear distinction between the type of slavery permissible by nature and the chattel system employed in the South, and thus allowed both proponents and opponents of the institution to find support for their views in the prelate's argument. Indeed, just two days after his sermon, the *New York Times* ran an article in which the editor expressed his fear that Hughes' sermon "may very possibly be used at some future day as an argument for the restoration of the Slave trade, as it was once used against its abolition."²⁸⁷ It would not be the last time Hughes would be accused of being an advocate of slavery.

Clearly, Hughes was not an advocate of slavery. In Hughes' April letter to Archbishop Blanc, he described his gradual approach to eliminating slavery. He advocated an extremely slow process in which the slave would work his or her way up from chattel slavery, to serfdom, then finally liberation. Through this process, the Catholic Church would provide its strong moral guidance to both the master and the

²⁸⁷ *New York Times*, May 2, 1854.

slave. Furthermore, he respected the master's property rights to the slave, and thus advocated that the former be compensated when the gradual emancipation process had been achieved. In this endeavor reminiscent of the one expressed in Kenrick's *Theologia Moralis*, the hope was to sustain peace.²⁸⁸ However, Hughes never took any concrete steps to bring about his proposed strategy. In fact, like Kenrick, his actions seemed to be directed at maintaining the status quo. In addition to his rejection of O'Connell's antislavery appeal, Hughes also made sure to control any Catholic within his diocese who might think about adopting an antislavery position. For instance, when in the early 1850s Father Jeremiah Cummings gave a strongly worded antislavery lecture, Hughes privately informed the popular preacher that his views were opposed to his own.²⁸⁹ When the Irish abolitionist priest, Father Theobald Mathew, arrived in New York to speak on the issue of temperance, Hughes was determined to keep him from making any bold statements advocating abolitionism. "I shall speak to him frankly," he told Archbishop Eccleston of Baltimore, "almost harshly if necessary."²⁹⁰ Hughes insisted that Mathew stay with him while in New York, and acted as his personal escort around town. Hughes' harsh talk appeared to have worked, for during his stay Mathew refused William Lloyd Garrison's requests that he speak out in favor of abolitionism. The priest claimed that temperance was his primary mission, and did not want to compromise his message by discussing a potentially divisive issue.²⁹¹

²⁸⁸ Archbishop John Hughes to Archbishop Anthony Blanc, April 10, 1854, Archdiocese of New York Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

²⁸⁹ Shaw, *Dagger John*, 335.

²⁹⁰ Hughes to Eccleston, April 16, 1849, quoted in Shaw, *Dagger John*, 236.

²⁹¹ John Francis Maguire, *Father Mathew a Biography* (New York: D. & J. Sadler & co., 1864), 460-477.

According to Hughes, the abolitionists advocated just the opposite approach. They supported immediate emancipation but failed to consider what the repercussions would be for both the master and the slave. By disregarding the property rights of Southern masters, Hughes believed the radicals were essentially arguing for the financial ruin of the Southern states. Through their fiery antislavery sermons, the abolitionists were doing nothing but fanning the flames of civil unrest. When sectional hostilities finally erupted into Civil War, Hughes blamed the abolitionists' "unbridled license of the tongue" as the cause.²⁹²

Perhaps the most telling example of Hughes' views on slavery comes from his conflict with Orestes Brownson. In October 1861, Brownson published in his *Review* an article entitled "Slavery and the War," in which he argued for immediate emancipation as a war measure.²⁹³ No sooner did the review hit the presses did a column in the *New York Herald* purportedly written by Hughes criticizing Brownson's antislavery stance appear. In a letter Brownson received from a friend in Saint Louis, the writer indicates that the *Herald* article:

...falsely states the issue, by accusing you of advocating the war as a *means* of abolishing slavery, whereas you advocate the abolition of slavery as a means of conquering the rebels *and thus* ending the war....In short, it is a miserable article, and a disgrace to its author. If the Archbishop wrote it, "how the mighty are fallen!"²⁹⁴

In addition to the *Herald* article, another article supposedly written by Hughes appeared in the *Metropolitan Record*, the official organ of the archdiocese since 1859.

²⁹² Hughes to Bishop Lynch, August 23, 1861 in Hughes, *Complete Works*, vol. 2, 513-520.

²⁹³ Brownson, "Slavery and the War." *Brownson's Quarterly Review* (October 1861).

The title of the document “The Abolition Views of Brownson Overthrown,” adequately describes its contents. In what sounded dangerously close to an apology not only of slavery but also of the slave trade itself, Hughes wrote, “Under the circumstances, it is difficult to discover in the purchasers [of slaves] any moral transgression of the law of God, or of the law of man where that traffic is authorized.”²⁹⁵

The sentiment expressed by Hughes gave Brownson all the ammunition he needed, for it appeared as if the prelate was doing exactly what was condemned in Pope Gregory XVI’s *In Supremo Apostolatus*. Brownson, aware of the apostolic letter, went on the attack by stating in his replay that Hughes

“...has unquestionably incurred the interdict pronounced by the Church, for she not only excommunicates all who are actually engaged in the traffic, as he alleges, but ‘absolutely prohibits and interdicts all ecclesiastics and laymen from maintaining that this traffic in black is permitted, on any pretext or color whatsoever; or to preach or teach in public or private, in any way whatsoever’ in its favor or extenuation.”²⁹⁶

Brownson’s response must have clearly hit home, for after its publication, Hughes allegedly told the scholar that he would not write anything against him again. However, Hughes believed that his article was effective in neutralizing the abolition as a war measure proposal. Writing to Secretary of State William Seward, Hughes wondered if his old friend had seen the article in the *Record* for it contained his “sincere convictions on the subject [abolition as a war measure].”²⁹⁷

²⁹⁴ M.L. Linton to Orestes Brownson, October 16, 1861, Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

²⁹⁵ *Metropolitan Record in The Catholic Mirror*, October 12, 1861.

²⁹⁶ Brownson, “Archbishop Hughes on Slavery,” *Brownson’s Quarterly Review* (January 1862): 59.

²⁹⁷ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 436-431.

Having supposedly squashed what he had considered a threat, Hughes offered his services fully to the Union cause. To discourage the potential of foreign nations recognizing the legitimacy of the Confederacy, Hughes went to Europe as part of a governmental delegation. His particular duty was to impress upon France's Napoleon III the Union's case.²⁹⁸ Upon his arrival, however, Hughes was very much surprised to find that his *Metropolitan Record* article dealing with Brownson had been translated and published for the predominately antislavery French community to read.

One of the more notable French names to question Hughes on the article was Augustin Cochin, author of the famed antislavery *L'Abolition de l'Esclavage*. When pressured, Hughes evidently denied he physically wrote "The Abolition Views of Brownson Overthrown," stating it was the work of the editor of the *Record*.²⁹⁹ He then went on to comment that although he remained opposed to abolitionism, "he was not, and never had been, never could be an advocate of slavery."³⁰⁰ Apparently pleased with Hughes' explanation, Cochin reported his conversation to Brownson.³⁰¹ However, after Hughes' death, Cochin would inquire as to whether the prelate officially declared himself antislavery prior to expiring.³⁰²

Brownson however, was not pleased with Hughes' response. Writing Montalembert, he expressed his frustration with his former prelate:

²⁹⁸ Rena Mazyck Andrews, *Archbishop Hughes and the Civil War* (Chicago: 1935).

²⁹⁹ Hughes makes his statement ambiguous. He does not deny authorship, yet he claimed not to have signed it.

³⁰⁰ Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 437.

³⁰¹ Augustin Cochin to Orestes Brownson, January 25, 1862, Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³⁰² Mary Booth to Orestes Brownson, April 2, 1864, Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

I find by a letter from your friend, M. Augustin Cochin, that he has had interview with the Archbishop of New York, and that the Archbishop has left on his mind the impression that he was not the author of the article against me...and that he is a decided anti-slavery man. The Archbishop wrote, that is, dictated the article in question. Of that there is no doubt, and it was written for the purpose of checking the anti-slavery sentiment of the country, and to bring the pro-slavery sentiment prejudices almost universal among Irish Catholics of this country to bear in crushing me and my *Review*. The Archbishop is a man whose word cannot be relied on, and he remembers to speak the truth only when the truth best serves his purpose. I know him well. But he is old, broken in body, and enfeebled in mind, and though he is determined to ruin me, I pray God to keep me harboring any uncharitable or vindictive thoughts towards him. It will take half-a-century to repair the evils he has done and is doing the cause of Catholicity in this country.³⁰³

Hughes' body may have been old and broken, but his mind remained sharp and his influence intact. Although his health steadily declined over the course of the next year, he still maintained his authority over his Catholic flock, particularly during the tumultuous draft riots in the summer of 1863. After days of rioting, it was Hughes who addressed the rioters and ordered them to go home, which they allegedly did. According to one biographer, the rioters began to disband "like school children."³⁰⁴

³⁰³ Orestes Brownson to Montalembert, April 11, 1862, Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³⁰⁴ Shaw, *Dagger John*, 369.

Sadly, Hughes' address to the draft rioters would be his last public appearance. His health steadily declined during the winter months and he died peacefully on January 3, 1864. Unfortunately for Cochin and the historian, Hughes never declared his definitive position on the issue of slavery. Like the American Catholic position in general, his sentiments and pronouncements allowed the institution to exist, though he remained "no friend of slavery. His support for the Young Ireland movement and advocacy of the use of force against the oppressive government of Great Britain did not allow him to draw the same conclusions with the rebels in Rome, the rebels in the Confederacy, or rebels favoring abolitionism in his native Ireland. In sum, Hughes' opinion on slavery can be defined as a determined ambiguity. He made sure not to say anything too drastic lest he antagonize the status quo. For Hughes, his priorities lay with establishing a strong, united Church in America, not in adopting divisive opinions. Such an endeavor is best left to the idealist seminarian.

CHAPTER III
FRENCH CATHOLIC INFLUENCE UPON AMERICAN OPINIONS ON
SLAVERY

No study dealing with the opinions of Catholics living in antebellum America would be complete without considering the influence of foreign figures and events upon American Catholic thought. This influence is at least partially due to the fact that the American Catholic Church of the 19th century was very much an immigrant church composed of adherents from many different nationalities. As previously referenced, the Irish national Daniel O’Connell had a considerable impact on the opinions of Irish-American Catholics. However, other foreign movements in addition to Irish nationalism had an influence upon American Catholic thought. The most notable foreign influence in relation to this study includes the principles of egalitarianism that came forth from the French Revolution. Driven by the beliefs set forth in documents such as the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, the revolutionaries fought for the equality of all citizens, and sought to replace *L’Ancien Régime* with the ideals of republicanism. By the end of the French Revolution of 1848, France had abolished slavery throughout its empire.³⁰⁵ Within French Catholicism, the revolutions of 1793 and 1848 produced a

³⁰⁵ George M. Blackburn, *French Newspaper Opinion on the American Civil War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 25.

series of French Catholic liberals who saw the principle of universal equality as a religious imperative. Thus, Catholics like the French bishop of Orléans, Félix Antoine Philibert Dupanloup, felt obligated to speak out about the sinfulness of slavery.³⁰⁶ Writing in 1862, Dupanloup admonished those within France who viewed the American Civil War solely from a political or economic perspective. Dupanloup did not care about politics or economics. He only cared that there were “still four million slaves in the United States...eighteen centuries after the Cross.”³⁰⁷

However, since the 1840s, religious leaders like Bishop John England, Archbishop Francis Kenrick, and Archbishop John Hughes had taught American Catholics that slavery was not in conflict with the practice of their religion. Thus, as O’Connell had before him, Dupanloup failed to convince the many Catholics living in America that slavery was religiously immoral. Moreover, while political and economic issues may not be important to a Catholic prelate living nearly five thousand miles from the line of battle, those issues were of great importance to Catholics living in war-torn dioceses such as New Orleans.³⁰⁸ Indeed, years before the war, Etienne Rousselon, vicar general of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, beseeched the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyon, France, to abstain from discussing the notion of emancipation without first knowing the concrete realities of the American institution.

³⁰⁶ While a student at the ecclesiastical seminary of Issay, near Paris, Dupanloup was classmates with none other than Augustin Verot, future “rebel bishop” of the Confederacy. See Gannon, *Rebel Bishop*, 6.

³⁰⁷ *Lettre de Monseigneur l’Eveque d’Orleans au clerge de son diocèse sur l’esclavage* (Librairie Catholique de Peresse, 1862), 7, cited in Charles Poinssatte and Anne Marie Poinssatte, “Augustin Cochin’s ‘L’Abolition de l’esclavage’ and the Emancipation Proclamation,” *The Review of Politics* 46 (July 1984): 423.

³⁰⁸ Additionally, a significant proportion of the French Catholic population in cities like New Orleans recalled the tumultuous upheavals of French Revolution. Many were suspicious of liberal appeals for

“With this question [of the abolition of slavery]...we do not judge exactly as one may in France. This is for the Catholic religion in our area a matter of life and death.”³⁰⁹ By November 1861, seven months after the outbreak of hostilities, the proslavery sermon delivered by Bishop Augustin Verot had circulated throughout the Confederate states and was well-received by Louisiana Catholics and Jean Mary Odin, Archbishop of New Orleans. According to one historian, it is highly likely that Odin’s views closely paralleled those of Verot.³¹⁰ Therefore, it is of no surprise that the archbishop immediately saw to it that both an English and a French version of the Verot’s sermon were published in *Le Propagateur Catholique*, the official newspaper of the archdiocese.³¹¹ Father Napoléon Perché, editor of *Le Propagateur* and future archbishop of New Orleans, made sure to praise Verot’s opinion in his editorial.³¹² As the war progressed and the city fell to Union troops, Archbishop Odin, while visiting France in the summer of 1862, received numerous letters from Rousselon, written in an effort to keep the absent prelate abreast of the events unfolding within his archdiocese. One of these letters noted that many slaves, encouraged by the presence of Federal troops, were marching around the city armed with pitchforks and knives. Others were forming into military regiments. Based upon these events, Rousselon feared that a “new San

universal equality wither in government, religion, or races. See Jay Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 120.

³⁰⁹ Etienne Rousselon to the editor, publication of the Propagation of the Faith, Lyon, July 16, 1840, no. 2799 in Lyon Society Collection, Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, cited in Stephen J. Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest: André Cailloux and Claude Paschal Maistre in Civil War New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 100.

³¹⁰ Willard E. Wight, ed, “A Letter From the Archbishop of New Orleans, 1862,” *Louisiana History*, 3, (1962): 130; Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 109.

³¹¹ The English edition was published in *Le Propagateur Catholique* on December 8, 1861. The French edition was published the following day. See Gannon, *Rebel Bishop*, 51.

³¹² Gannon, *Rebel Bishop*, 50-51.

Domingo” was developing. Having read what Dupanloup and other French Catholics have been saying about American slavery, the vicar general lamented that they “are blind men...even Bishop Dupanloup.” Rousselon pleaded with Odin to do all he could to “open their eyes.”³¹³

Rousselon’s reference to the slave uprising of 1791 of Saint-Domingue betrays a very real fear prevalent among French Catholics living in the Confederate states during 1860s. He had expressed this fear to his archbishop in no less than three letters sent during Federal occupation of New Orleans.³¹⁴ Three years previously, in the suffragan diocese of Natchitoches, Bishop Auguste Marie Martin expressed the same fear when he wrote to his former superiors in France.³¹⁵ Indeed, many French-American Catholics living in antebellum America had some connection to the events that played out on the island of Hispaniola in the last decade of the 18th century.³¹⁶ Those living in slaveholding states were undoubtedly aware that a similar event could occur in the South and thus most looked upon abolitionists with disdain.

Just as in New Orleans, Catholics living in the diocese of Natchitoches were quick to side with the Confederacy. A month after the war began, Bishop Martin wrote to Rousselon stating that his vicar general had become a chaplain for the Confederate army

³¹³ Rousselon to Archbishop Odin, August 23, 1862, Archdiocese of New Orleans Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³¹⁴ Rousselon to Archbishop Odin, August 23, September, 18, October 15, 1862, Archdiocese of New Orleans Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³¹⁵ Elizabeth Joan Doyle, “Bishop Auguste Marie Martin of Natchitoches and the Civil War,” in *Cross, Crozier, and Crucible: A Volume Celebrating the Bicentennial of a Catholic Diocese in Louisiana*, eds. Glenn R. Conrad and others (New Orleans : Published by the Archdiocese of New Orleans in cooperation with the Center for Louisiana Studies, 1993), 138.

³¹⁶ Baur, “International Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution,” 396.

to the delight of all the townspeople.³¹⁷ Martin himself, following the lead of Bishop Verot, issued a pastoral letter on August 21, 1861 that passionately defended the legitimacy of the Confederate cause and even offered a religious justification for the institution of slavery. In this letter, Martin claimed that it was God who “for centuries has been snatching from the barbarity of their ferocious customs” Africans and reducing them into slavery. Furthermore, it was God who handed over the “children of the race of Canaan...to the care of the privileged ones [white slaveholders].”³¹⁸ Without being stripped of their freedom, Martin believed that the African race would die out, and thus it was the will of God that slavery was created. Far from being a despicable evil, Martin concludes that slavery is “an eminently Christian work.”³¹⁹ The letter was reprinted in *Le Propagateur Catholique* a little over two weeks later for all white parishioners of New Orleans to approvingly digest.³²⁰ As referenced in the Introduction, Martin’s letter eventually found its way to Rome where it fell under the scrutiny of the Vatican, not its support of slavery *per se*, but for its suggestion that the slave trade in general and racial slavery in particular was part of God’s divine plan. Thus, three years later, when the Civil War in America was drawing to a conclusion, Pius IX upheld Gregory XVI’s *In Supremo Apostolatus* and condemned the proslavery views of the bishop of Natchitoches.³²¹

³¹⁷ Elizabeth Joan Doyle, “Bishop Auguste Marie Martin of Natchitoches and the Civil War,” 139.

³¹⁸ Auguste Marie Martin, *Lettre Pastorale de Mgr. l’évêque de Natchitoches à l’occasion de la guerre du Sud pour son Indépendance*, cited and translated in Caravaglios, “A Roman Critique of the Pro-Slavery Views of Bishop Martin of Natchitoches, Louisiana,” 71.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ *Le Propagateur Catholique*, September 7, 1861.

³²¹ Caravaglios, “A Roman Critique,” 69-70. See also the Introduction to this study.

Due to the racist values held by the majority of its adherents and leaders like Bishop Martin, the archdiocese of New Orleans failed to create an environment advantageous to the humane treatment let alone manumissions of slaves.³²² Indeed, the Church in the Deep South functioned as a passive participant in the continuance of the peculiar institution. While there were individual clergyman who spoke out against slavery, “their numbers were few and their power illusionary.”³²³ For example, when referencing the life of the first native Louisianan priest and famed literary poet Adrien-Emmanuel Rouquette, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* notes that after being assigned to “the Cathedral of Saint Louis, at New Orleans, his eloquence crowded the building, and his holy life commanded the love and respect of all denominations.”³²⁴ What the biographer fails to mention, however, are the several alleged sermons Rouquette began to give in the late 1850s containing antislavery sentiments. These sermons reportedly greatly upset the congregation of St. Louis Cathedral. Shortly thereafter, he left the cathedral to become a missionary to the Choctaw Indians.³²⁵

Perhaps the most significant clergyman to speak out against slavery in antebellum New Orleans was the French-born Claude Pascal Maistre. Having fled his native country for the United States, Maistre was a product of the French liberalism that emerged after

³²² However, within the archdiocese, French-American Catholics were progressive in that they were the only diocese not to segregate its congregation according to race. See Robert C. Reinders, “The Churches and the Negro in New Orleans, 1850-1860,” *Pylon* 22, 3. (1961): 242.

³²³ Randall Miller, “The Failed Mission: The Catholic Church and Black Catholics in the Old South,” in *Catholics in the Old South: Essays on Church and Culture*, eds. Randall M. Miller and Jon L. Wakelyn (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1983), 157.

³²⁴ *Catholic Encyclopedia*, “Adrien Roquette,” available from Internet, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13212a.htm>, accessed June 24, 2006.

³²⁵ Geraldine Mary McTigue, “Forms of Racial Interaction in Louisiana 1860-1880” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1975), 31; Dagmar Renshaw Le Breton, *Chahta-Ima; The Life of Adrien-Emmanuel Rouquette* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1947).

the French Revolution of 1848. He temporarily found employment within the diocese of Detroit, but he was dismissed following accusations of sexual immorality.³²⁶ From there Maistre temporarily found accommodations with Archbishop Purcell's brother Edward in Cincinnati and expressed his desire to be assigned to a French parish within the diocese. Having no vacancies that matched Maistre's request, the archbishop's brother sent a letter by the archbishop's brother highly recommending Maistre to Archbishop Anoine Blanc of New Orleans.³²⁷ However, Maistre would instead offer his services to the diocese of Chicago before finally obtaining employment in the archdiocese of New Orleans in 1855.³²⁸

Maistre's French liberalism failed to win him many friends among his fellow clergy. After only two months in the archdiocese, the pastor he was assigned under wrote to Archbishop Blanc declaring that he had no use for Maistre. The pastor also complained that Maistre was "an abolitionist in his ideas and language."³²⁹ After bouncing from one rural Louisiana parish to the next, Archbishop Blanc decided in 1857 to make Maistre the pastor of St. Rose of Lima, a newly built parish in a poor, racially mixed section within the city of New Orleans.³³⁰ In this position, Maistre developed a special connection with the city's large Catholic population of free persons of color,

³²⁶ Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 96.

³²⁷ Edward Purcell to Archbishop Blanc, August 25, 1851, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³²⁸ Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 99-100. Ochs notes that there were further charges of impropriety levied against Maistre by the Bishop of Chicago, Anthony O'Regan which led to his dismissal from that diocese as well. Ochs suggests that conflict between the two men were possibly exacerbated by the French-Irish tension existent within the American Church at this time (*Ibid.*, 97).

³²⁹ Father Enn Dupuy to Archbishop Blanc, January 3, 1856, Archdiocese of New Orleans Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

encouraging them to develop religious mutual aid societies that allowed them to obtain positions of leadership denied them in secular society. In 1862, he began publicly to call for an end of slavery, much to the chagrin of the newly installed Archbishop of New Orleans, Jean-Marie Odin.³³¹

On January 1, 1863, Maistre marked the release of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation by ignoring archdiocesan regulations and declaring that from that point forward there would be only one parish register used for slaves, persons of color, and whites in his parish.³³² On April 13, 1863, Maistre gave a sermon in which he thanked God for Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and declared that all persons of color "are men, men like us [whites]...."³³³ He then prayed for slavery to be completely abolished and replaced by an economic system governed by free labor. The sermon infuriated white parishioners who left the parish in droves. Despite this, Maistre remained steadfast. Less than a month later, he defiantly read from the pulpit Lincoln's proclamation calling for a day of fasting and prayer. The pronouncement left many of the remaining white parishioners of St. Mary of Lima calling for Maistre's blood. In fact, a fellow priest suggested hanging the Frenchmen with his own priestly stole.³³⁴ When Archbishop Odin heard allegations against Maistre from both the clergy and laity, Odin wrote a letter

³³⁰ Ochs suggests that Maistre's abolitionist leanings were due to the influence of the French Catholic liberalism that developed in France during the 1848 Revolution. Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 95-97.

³³¹ Although no friend of slavery, Odin accepted the institution as a social and political reality. During the Civil War, he was a firm supporter of the Confederacy and encouraged priests within his jurisdiction to volunteer as chaplains for the Confederate army. Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 96.

³³² *Baptismal Registers for Negroes and Mulattoes of St. Rose of Lima Parish*, January 1, 1863, cited in Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 99.

³³³ *L'Union: Journal Tri-Hebdomadaire: Politique, littéraire et progressiste*, April 14, 1863, quoted in Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 115.

³³⁴ Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 115.

to the cardinal prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, Alessandro Barnabò charging that Maistre had offended white Catholics by preaching “the love of liberty and independence” to slaves and by exciting them “to insurrection against their masters.”³³⁵

Despite mounting pressure from Odin for Maistre to vacate St. Rose, the French priest flatly refused and continued to speak out on behalf of the African slave and free persons of color. Not only did he advocate emancipation, but racial equality. For his defiance, Odin formally deprived Maistre of his canonical faculties and placed the priest and his parish under interdict, making Catholics subject to the penalty of mortal sin if they chose to attend services officiated by Maistre or if they had any other spiritual dealings with him. Maistre, however, brazenly continued to hold services at St. Rose and thus committed sacrilege according to Canon Law and outraging not only Odin, but also Cardinal Barnabò.³³⁶ On July 29, 1863, he even presided over the funeral for Captain André Cailloux, a Catholic person of color who had enlisted in the Federal army and was killed while valiantly leading the attack of the 1st Louisiana Native Guards at the Battle of Port Hudson.³³⁷ In his eulogy, Maistre honored Cailloux as a martyr to the cause of freedom. Unprecedented numbers of black Catholics—both slave and free—openly defied Odin’s interdict by choosing to attend funeral.³³⁸

Having been forcibly evicted from St. Rose of Lima in January of 1864, Maistre had taken it upon himself to build his own church. The church was considered

³³⁵ Quoted in Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 132.

³³⁶ Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 135, 191.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 155-156.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 1-4.

schismatic, but this did not stop multitudes of black and white individuals from attending its services. For the remainder of the war, Maistre would remain defiant to Odin. He would eventually be reconciled with the Church, but only after the death of Odin in 1870.³³⁹

While the story of Claude Pascal Maistre makes for good drama, its effects had limited impact on the opinions of Catholics on the issue of slavery. When Cardinal Barnabò expressed his support of Archbishop's Odin's interdict, Maistre found himself officially at odds with the Roman Catholic Church.³⁴⁰ Consequently, American Catholics striving to remain orthodox had to look elsewhere for Catholic guidance regarding slavery. Most Catholics looked to their bishops like Odin, Hughes, Kenrick, or England. Nevertheless, 19th century French Catholic liberalism still had a role to play within the American slavery controversy. Rather than coming from an immigrant French liberal priest, it came from a multivolume study written by a French liberal layperson. With the publication of French Catholic Augustin Cochin's *L'Abolition de l'esclavage*, a ripple effect commenced that would make its way across the Atlantic and into the leading minds of both American Catholic and Protestant thinkers.

Augustin Cochin was a wealthy Parisian Catholic who was well associated with the French Catholic liberal movement of Charles Forbes René de Montalembert. Along

³³⁹ Ibid., 254.

³⁴⁰ Barnabò praised Odin for all he had done to "prevent evil." He also wished to know if Maistre persisted in his defiance or if he had submitted to Odin's obedience. See Ochs, *A Black Patriot and a White Priest*, 191. Barnabò's reaction may have been due in part to the growing dissatisfaction among Roman ecclesiastics concerning the course of the War. According to Anthony Lalli and Thomas H. O'Conner many high-ranking Church officials in Rome viewed Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation as an act of desperation made in order to keep the war going at all costs. Many felt that the Proclamation would incite slaves to revolt against defenseless families of Confederate Soldiers off fighting the war. This is

with Montalembert, Cochin was close friends with other leading French Catholic liberals such as Father Henri-Dominique Lacordaire and Monsignor Félix Dupanloup.³⁴¹ Known for his journalistic flair, he contributed to the liberal newspaper *Le Journal des Débats* and was the editor of the *Le Correspondant*.³⁴²

During the 1850s, the *Le Correspondant* became the principal mouthpiece for Catholic liberal opposition to the government of Napoleon III. Cochin, along with his contributors, found Napoleon's reign to be inconsistent with the principles of liberty and equality espoused in the revolutions of 1793 and 1848. Thus, using the example of American democracy, *Le Correspondant* launched an attack upon the Second Empire for its failure to guarantee the French people with true freedom.³⁴³ However, as a liberal, Cochin believed that slavery was a major inconsistency within the American democracy and observed that it was pushing the last major republic to the brink of civil destruction. As a Catholic, Cochin believed that slavery was a fundamental evil that must be eradicated. Thus, in 1857, Cochin initiated contact with the American Catholic intellectual Orestes Brownson and informed him of his intent to write a major opus dealing with the issue of slavery. He asked Brownson to inform him of all the places in *Brownson's Quarterly Review* where the issue of slavery was discussed, and inquired whether American Catholics differed from Protestants on the issue, for he wished to

specifically what Odin accused Maistre of doing. See Anthony B. Lalli and Thomas H. O'Conner, "Roman Views on the American Civil War," *Catholic Historical Review* (April 1971): 21-41.

³⁴¹ For information on the contributions of these figures to French liberalism, see J. Mayer P., *Political Thought in France from the Revolution to the Fourth Republic*, Revised ed. (London: Routledge & Paul, 1949, 2006).

³⁴² Poinssatte, "Augustin Cochin's," 410.

³⁴³ Serge Gavronsky, *The French Liberal Opposition and the American Civil War* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968).

refute all Christians, regardless of denomination, who “abuse the Holy Scriptures to maintain [the] horrendous institution.”³⁴⁴ The letter was the first of many between the two Catholic thinkers and provided the groundwork for Cochin’s monumental *L’Abolition*.

Less than three years later, Cochin had sent a letter to Brownson saying that he would soon receive his completed study which had just been published in France. Cochin asked if Brownson would take the time to read the two volumes and offer his criticism, particularly on the sections dealing specifically with America. Cochin also requested Brownson to “acknowledge” *L’Abolition* in his *Quarterly* and, if Brownson thought it to be prudent, to aid in the production of an English translation.³⁴⁵ Brownson responded positively to both requests.

In the same month Brownson received Cochin’s letter, the summer edition of his *Quarterly Review* hit the newsstands featuring Brownson’s first major statement concerning the Civil War, titled “The Great Rebellion.” “The Great Rebellion” also demonstrated Brownson’s thought process as he began to consider whether to advocate the emancipation of slaves living in the South as a war measure. Brownson began the article by noting that the war was not prosecuted by the North for the purpose of emancipation, but solely for the purpose of upholding the Constitution and sustaining the Union. However, Brownson reasoned that if the war were to drag on, “slavery must go,

³⁴⁴ Augustin Cochin to Orestes Brownson, September 23, 1857. Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³⁴⁵ Augustin Cochin to Brownson, July 30, 1861, Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

and the war will be in effect a war of liberation.”³⁴⁶ After drawing this conclusion, Brownson questioned what the results such an action would have on the Union but was unable to provide a satisfactory answer. Brownson’s answer would only come after he had received Cochin’s *L’Abolition*.

Between the publication of spring and fall issues of *Brownson’s Quarterly Review*, Brownson had digested most of the first volume of Cochin’s *L’Abolition*. Within its pages, Brownson read Cochin’s exhaustive historical and statistical study of several European nations that had recently abolished slavery. After providing an in-depth account for each country as it existed while holding slaves, Cochin proceeded to describe how each country came to abolish the institution. He then provided a detailed analysis of each nation’s economic and political position after abolition while keeping in mind the social, moral and religious health of its citizens. He concluded that all of the nations, after allowing for an initial transitional period, were far better off as free nations than they were as slave nations. Thus, Cochin argued, there was no reason to believe that the United States would be any different if it were to abolish slavery. For Brownson and others who held that slavery was an evil, Cochin’s study provided more than enough empirical evidence to justify the moral inclinations to abolish the institution.³⁴⁷

In the fall edition of *Brownson’s Quarterly Review*, Brownson introduced his article “Slavery and the War” by praising Cochin’s *L’Abolition* as being “just, philanthropic, liberal, and truly Christian. Two abler or more intensely interesting volumes on the subject of the abolition it has not been our good fortune to meet, and they

³⁴⁶ Brownson, “The Great Rebellion,” *Brownson Quarterly Review* (July 1861): 401.

are creditable in the highest degree to the ability, industry, and noble sentiments of their distinguished author.”³⁴⁸ Moving on to the subject of slavery, Brownson stated that he had always denounced slavery, but also opposed abolitionism, for fear the movement would one day destroy the Union while failing to destroy slavery. However, given that it was the Confederate states that were intent to prosecute the war for the extension of slavery, Brownson concluded that the Union must now fight to destroy slavery to preserve the Union. Indeed, the irony of it all was the fact that the need for the immediate abolition of slavery was “necessitated by the Rebellion, and the Rebels will have only themselves to thank for the destruction or abolition they force us to adopt in defence of liberty, the Union, and the authority of the government.”³⁴⁹

In his conclusion, Brownson, like Cochin had before him, noted that Catholicity and slavery were fundamentally incompatible and that only “those nations in Europe, which have emancipated their slaves, freed, or are freeing their serfs, show any signs of longevity.” Brownson warned that anyone who, after reading his or Cochin’s views, still held firm to their proslavery convictions that “‘the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;’ and every slaveholding nation, whatever its spasmodic piety, or its hypocritical professions, does forget God, who never refuses to heal and ultimately to avenge the slave.”³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Poinssatte, “Augustin Cochin’s,” 417.

³⁴⁸ Brownson, “Slavery and the War.” *Brownson's Quarterly Review* (October 1861):510.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 520.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 524.

Brownson's assessment of Cochin's *L'Abolition* and his own passionate arguments for an abrupt adjustment in the government's prosecution of the war policy sparked both praise and denigration for the two men.³⁵¹ The "Radical Republican" senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts—the first senator to declare outwardly that slavery must be abolished not only as a war measure but also for the sake of justice—seized upon Brownson's article and the two began exchanging letters discussing how to go about convincing Lincoln's administration of the necessity of emancipation.³⁵² Brownson eventually met Lincoln on August 24, 1862, at which time Brownson claimed he told Lincoln that unless he acted immediately to emancipate the slaves he could not "remain President for three months longer."³⁵³ Less than one month later, Lincoln issued the first edition of the *Emancipation Proclamation*.³⁵⁴ Whether Brownson's appeal to Lincoln had any real influence on the president's decision remains a matter of scholarly speculation.

Through their correspondence, both Brownson and Sumner concluded that it would greatly help their cause to translate Cochin's *L'Abolition* into English so the American public could read his sound arguments.³⁵⁵ Thus, shortly after the publication

³⁵¹ For another Catholic negative reaction, see *Freeman's Journal*, October 4, 1862. On the positive side, abolitionist Horace Greeley saw it fit to print Brownson's entire article in the *New York Daily Tribune* on October 9, 1861. William Lloyd Garrison also wrote approvingly of Brownson's study. See *The Liberator*, October 11, 1861.

³⁵² Charles Sumner to Orestes A. Brownson, February 2, May 25, July 20, September 1, October 12, 1862; December 27, 1863; Brownson to Sumner, October 23, December 2, 1861; April 11, May 11, May 12, May 21, May 27, September [n.d.], December 26, 1862; December 20, 1863. Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³⁵³ Brownson to Charles Forbes, comte de Montalembert, June 25, 1865. Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³⁵⁴ Lincoln issued the first edition on September 22, 1862. A copy of its contents can be found in *Harper's Weekly*, October 4, 1862.

³⁵⁵ Poinsatte, "Augustin Cochin's," 414.

of “Slavery and the War” Brownson sent the French volumes to Mary Louise Booth.³⁵⁶ Booth, a Catholic translator of French descent, was acquainted with Brownson through her friendship with his daughter, Sarah. She was also thoroughly for abolishing slavery. After translating the first volume, she wrote Brownson to thank him for her “interest in the enterprise.”³⁵⁷

Booth published her translation of Cochin’s first volume under the title, *The Results of Emancipation* in January 1863. For the next several months, the title circulated throughout the Union receiving positive reviews and recommendations from several Northern journalists. Praised for not only its content but also for its timeliness, *The Results of Emancipation* was declared a must-read for all responsible Americans. In case Lincoln’s advisors did not read these reviews, Sumner saw to it that they each had access to a copy. Lincoln himself praised Booth for her accomplishment and credited her with rousing the spirit of equality throughout the Union.³⁵⁸

By the summer of 1863, it appeared that the Union had the upper hand in the war. Diplomatically, Lincoln’s administration also fared well. The national and international community no longer viewed Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation simply as a wartime measure. Rather, Lincoln became a champion of freedom who had liberated the slaves for the sake of morality.³⁵⁹ This shift in popular viewpoint regarding Lincoln’s motives clearly bothered Brownson, who after Lincoln’s assassination would write that Lincoln

³⁵⁶ Booth was in possession of Cochin’s *L’Abolition* no later than January, 1862. See Mary L. Booth to Orestes Brownson, January 5, 1862. Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³⁵⁷ Mary L. Booth to Orestes Brownson, October 2, 1862. Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³⁵⁸ Poinatte, “Augustin Cochin’s,” 415-417.

was unworthy of the credit he received in Europe as being the liberator of the slaves. As for Lincoln's death, Brownson suggested that his legacy would no doubt benefit as a result.³⁶⁰ However, Cochin viewed Lincoln's impact more sympathetically. Cochin believed that Lincoln, bound by the Constitution of the United States, began with a call for gradual emancipation. Because he did not have the support of majority of the citizens of the United States, he could not act beyond how he initially acted. However, as the tide of popular opinion began to grow in his favor—aided by publications from people like Cochin and Brownson—Lincoln was able to press forward with what was his goal from the beginning: the abolishment of slavery for moral reasons. By supporting Lincoln's course of action, Cochin was affirming that the president's view on the matter was nearly identical as the one advocated in Cochin's *L'Abolition*.³⁶¹

In addition to its political importance, Cochin's *L'Abolition* also received acclaim for its Catholicity. Along with Brownson and Booth, Cochin won praise from Monsignor Dupanloup and Montalembert. Cochin even earned the respect of leading American Protestants such as the Unitarian abolitionist James T. Fields. Fields, the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, noted that it was “worthwhile to note that the most logical and effective assailants of slavery that these last years have produced have been devout Catholics,—Cochin in France and Orestes A. Brownson in America.”³⁶² However, conceivably the biggest affirmation for Cochin came when in 1862 Pius IX conferred

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 422-423.

³⁶⁰ Brownson to Charles Forbes, comte de Montalembert, June 25, 1865. Orestes Augustus Brownson Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³⁶¹ Poinssatte, “Augustin Cochin's,” 422-423.

³⁶² *Atlantic Monthly*, 11 (March 1863): 397.

upon him an honorary knighthood for his writings.³⁶³ This honorary knighthood, in essence, gave *L'Abolition* the official approval of the Roman Catholic Church. It is particularly interesting in this case, given the ambivalent stance often taken by the Vatican concerning the issue of American slavery and the American Civil War during this period.

In summation, the French Revolution and the smaller revolutions in 19th century France produced a multitude of consequences for the modern world. Several French citizens, having fled chaos, the Reign of Terror era, or escaped the savagery of the slave uprisings of Saint-Domingue were suspicious of anything that hinted of liberalism, choosing instead to adopt old world values in their new location. However, the spirit of egalitarianism and the idea that all individuals are essentially created free survived within many. The liberal movement within the French Catholic Church following the 1848 revolution produced a number of influential figures who had a major impact on the development of not only American Catholic thoughts concerning slavery, but also in shaping American politics. Some figures, such as Maistre and Dupanloup, had little immediate impact, but there is reason evidence suggesting that the latter played some role in shaping the antislavery opinion of Archbishop John Purcell of Cincinnati. Other figures, such as Cochin, had a much more lasting effect, helping not only to shape the opinion of the influential American Catholic writer Orestes Brownson, but also for garnering support for Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

³⁶³ Ibid.

CHAPTER IV
CINCINNATI'S GERMAN CATHOLIC PRESS AND ITS POSITION ON
SLAVERY

Like the Irish, most Germans left their native land for economic reasons. The birth of the industrial age in the thirty-nine nation-states of the German Confederation brought with it machines capable of doing the work unskilled laborers were accustomed to doing. The growth of industry also affected the class of artisans and tradesmen unable to compete with the prices of mass-produced goods. Agriculturally, the same fungus that devastated the Irish potato crops in the 1840s also affected crops in central Europe, though not to the same extent. However, the effect was crippling enough to raise potato prices to astronomical levels throughout the region in the mid-1840s. This had a direct impact upon not only the poor German-speaking laborer who depended on the potato for sustenance, but also the German-speaking farmer who used it to feed livestock. Scarcity of food, escalating prices and large-scale unemployment was enough to convince many German-speaking people to consider emigration. Those who chose to remain continued to languish in misery until their discontent boiled over into revolution against the Austrian Empire in 1848. The failure of this revolution forced many of its leaders into exile. Many eventually found their way to the United States. However, it was also the

final straw for many common German-speaking people who had hoped the revolution might alleviate their economic hardships. Thus, beginning in 1849, massive amounts of discontents from German nation-states fled Europe for the United States.³⁶⁴

As the Irish had before them, citizens from the German nation-states began to flood United States ports in ever-increasing numbers during the decades immediately preceding the American Civil War. Similar to the Irish, many of these German-speaking emigrants chose to establish residence in the port city in which they landed. In New York City, for example, new arrivals from the German nation-states concentrated themselves in the tenements of the Lower East Side. This section of town came to be known as “Deutschlandle” (Little Germany).³⁶⁵ However, given that immigrants from Ireland already dominated most of these cities, the majority of German-speaking immigrants chose to settle in locations far removed from where they originally arrived. Most German-speaking immigrants typically looked down upon Irish-Americans and resented being grouped along with them by a native population that saw all immigrants as one in the same.³⁶⁶ In particular, the German Catholics—the largest religious body among the German-speaking immigrants—typically despised the Irish-dominated clergy selected to govern over them.³⁶⁷ In general, all German-speaking immigrants chose to

³⁶⁴ Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952), 25. See also Bruce C. Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflicts and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 15-50.

³⁶⁵ Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 43-44.

³⁶⁶ See Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution*, 15.

³⁶⁷ Archbishop Hughes had numerous difficulties with the German element of his flock. The most famous occurred in 1843 when the German trustees of St. Louis church in Buffalo refused to accept Hughes' increased episcopal control. Hughes responded by removing their German priest. See Hassard, *Life of the Most Reverend John Hughes*, 261-263. For more on Hughes' difficulties with German Catholics, see Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, 90. For an overall analysis of the struggles between German and Irish

live in isolated communities apart from American society. They chose to resist assimilation by holding tightly to the customs, religious practices, and language of their native land. Cities such as New York, which had a particularly dense, ethnically diverse population, made the isolation sought by many Germans-speaking immigrants next to impossible. Thus, once they had procured sufficient means, most German-speaking immigrants—both Catholic and Protestant—left the port cities for the rich farmlands of the Midwest.³⁶⁸ As the antebellum period progressed, the flow of German-speaking immigration to previously sparse Midwestern cities also steadily increased. Indeed, by 1860, the dominant ethnicity of the cities of Milwaukee, Chicago, and Cincinnati was German.³⁶⁹

This chapter is concerned with examining how one section of the of the 19th century German-speaking community—specifically German-speaking Catholics—reacted to the issue of slavery and race. Given its large population of German-speaking Catholics and African Americans (both free citizens and runaway slaves), its geographic location, and its economic dealings with states both North and South of the Mason Dixon line, the city of Cincinnati will be the focus of this investigation.³⁷⁰ Due to the scarcity of

Catholics living in New York, see Jay P. Dolan, "Immigrants in the City: "New York's Irish and German Catholics," *Church History*, 4 (September 1972): 354-368.

³⁶⁸ Stanely Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion and Class in New York City* (Urbana, ILL., 1990), 64.

³⁶⁹ For statistics on German immigration to Milwaukee, see Kathleen N. Conzen, "The German Athens: Milwaukee and the Accommodations of Its Immigrants, 1830-1860" Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972. For statistics on German immigration to Chicago, see Hartmut Keil and John B. Jentz, eds. *German Workers in Industrial Chicago, 1850-1910: A Comparative Perspective* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1983). For statistics on German immigration to Cincinnati, see Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

³⁷⁰ It has been suggested that Cincinnati had the largest concentration of German-speaking Catholics than any other diocese in the United States. See Anthony H. Deye, "Purcell, Pre-Civil War," 268, For a

individual testimony, attention will be focused on the German Catholic newspaper, *Der Wahrheitsfreund*. Of all the German newspapers that circulated in antebellum Cincinnati, *Der Wahrheitsfreund* was the only one clearly identified as a Catholic print. However, this chapter will also focus on the political newspaper, the *Volksfreund* because of the high readership the paper maintained among the German Catholic community throughout the 1850s and 1860s. The *Volksfreund* is also noteworthy because of its editor, Joseph Hemann. Hemann, himself a German Catholic immigrant, was also the publisher of *Der Wahrheitsfreund* from 1850 to 1865. The subtle differences expressed concerning slavery and race within these two prints illuminate the dichotomy within one German Catholic struggling to reconcile his religion to his political allegiance. This chapter will serve as a contrast for the subsequent chapter that deals with the slavery opinions of Cincinnati's Irish archbishop, John Purcell, and the official newspaper of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, *The Catholic Telegraph*.

Like many cities during the era, Cincinnati experienced tremendous population growth in the decades leading up to the Civil War. According to Census reports, in 1820, the total population of the city was only 9,642.³⁷¹ By 1830, however, the population had more than doubled to 24,831, and it nearly doubled again by 1840.³⁷² In 1850, the population had ballooned to 115,435, and by the eve of the Civil War, the population of

discussion of antebellum Cincinnati's status as a border city, see Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. and Vicky Dula, eds., *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. (Urbana, 1993), xi-xxiii.

³⁷¹ "Population of the 61 Urban Places: 1820," available from Internet, <http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab05>, accessed June 23, 2006

³⁷² "Population of the 90 Urban Places: 1830," available from Internet, <http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab06.txt>, accessed June 23, 2006; "Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1840," available from Internet, <http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab07.txt>, assessed June 23, 2006.

Cincinnati was 161,044.³⁷³ During this timeframe, the city had gone from being the fourteenth most populous city in the Union to seventh. The main factor behind this tremendous growth was, of course, the massive influx of immigrants moving into the city. The percentage of foreign-born residents climbed from 12.3% in 1840 to 47.2% in 1850.³⁷⁴ Within the foreign-born populace, the highest percentage went to the German-born population. In 1850, Germans-born citizens made up 28.9% of the total population. The Irish only made up 12.5%.³⁷⁵

The German-speaking community can be further divided according to religious affiliation. By 1850, there were thirteen German Protestant churches, seven Catholic Churches, and three German Jewish synagogues. While the Protestant churches were more numerous, their congregations were typically small compared to the German Catholic churches. One historian has estimated that there were roughly 30,000 German Catholics living in Cincinnati in 1850.³⁷⁶ This figure would suggest that nearly 90% of the Germans-speaking immigrants living in Cincinnati were Catholic.

As the preceding paragraph suggests, Cincinnati's German-speaking population was not a homogenous community. On the contrary, they were highly diversified within their own ethnicity based on regional, religious, and political affiliations. The thirty-nine nation states had only recently been reorganized from the three hundred city-states that

³⁷³ "Population of 100 Largest Urban Places: 1850," available from Internet, <http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab08.txt>, accessed June 23, 2006; "Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1860," available from Internet, <http://www.census.gov/population/documentation/twps0027/tab09.txt>, assessed June 23, 2006.

³⁷⁴ Steven J. Ross, *Workers on the Edge: Work, Leisure, and Politics in Industrializing Cincinnati, 1788-1890* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 74.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Joseph White, "Religion and Community: Cincinnati Germans, 1814-1870" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1980), 50-51.

existed prior to the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation in 1806. The citizens of these regions typically were interested in the welfare of their own principality. This tendency continued among the German-speaking immigrants of America. Indeed, by 1850, the city of Cincinnati had German-speaking immigrants from nine separate German nation-states. Immigrants from these nation-states carried with them diverse dialects and regional enmities toward one another.³⁷⁷

Although Roman Catholicism was the dominant religion practiced by German-speaking immigrants in Cincinnati, the anti-Catholic sentiments expressed by the German Protestant minority created perhaps the most divisiveness within the German-speaking population. Since the start of the Protestant Reformation, religious diversity was a reality of life for German cities. While the Peace of Augsburg in 1555 alleviated a number of the tensions owed to the plurality of belief, deep-seeded animosities and unresolved issues between Catholics and Protestant Germanic peoples persisted, as is evident by the Thirty Years' War.³⁷⁸ These old animosities—as well as new ones brought on by the Enlightenment and the spirit of the revolution—survived relatively intact within the community of German-speaking immigrants in Cincinnati. Thus, despite being of similar ethnicity, Catholic and Protestant German immigrants were often at odds with one another, the latter even occasionally expressing blatant anti-Catholic sentiments.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Alexander Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race in Cincinnati's Antebellum German-language Press and Emil Klauprecht's German-American Novel" (Master's Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1999), 20-21.

³⁷⁸ Hans Baron, "Religion and Politics in the German Imperial Cities during the Reformation," *The English Historical Review* 52 (July 1937): 405-427.

³⁷⁹ Alexander Richter notes that a number of German newspapers were overtly anti-Catholic. Some even called for the removal of Catholic bishops and Jesuits from the country. See Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 26.

During the city elections of 1853, for example, German Catholics bitterly fought against German Protestants over the issue of public funds for Catholic schools. In fact, the school question even resulted in an unofficial coalition between Protestant Germans and nativists during the election.³⁸⁰

The best example of the animosity between Catholic German immigrants and Protestant German immigrants to Cincinnati occurred during the December 1853 visit of Archbishop Gaetano Bedini to the archdiocese. Many of the German exiles of the failed 1848 revolution were strongly anticlerical, for they believed that the Church was fundamentally opposed to the spirit of republicanism and had a hand in crushing their revolt. The revolutionists particularly hated Bedini for his role in the suppression of the Italian Revolution of 1848 and in the execution of Italian revolutionary Ugo Bassi.³⁸¹ The *Hochwaechter*, the principle organ of the exiled revolutionaries, appealed to all citizens who were opposed to European autocrats like Bedini to avenge Bassi's death. The paper warned all Americans that a gracious reception of Bedini was equivalent to sanctioning the despotism of Rome within the United States.³⁸² Thus, on Christmas day, while Bedini was staying with Archbishop Purcell, members of the Freeman Society, a heavily German organization led by exiled revolutionaries, planned a protest demonstration to show their distaste with Bedini's presence in the city. That night, over

³⁸⁰ Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 28. According to Tyler Anbinder, as the Know Nothing Party swept across the United States and encountered large numbers of Protestant immigrants such as in Cincinnati, it chose to emphasize its anti-Catholic platform while deemphasizing its stance on immigration in general in order to gain their support. See Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850's* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 110.

³⁸¹ Bedini's detractors nicknamed him the "Butcher of Bologna." According to an infamous rumor, Bedini allegedly personally peeled off the skin from Bassi's forehead and palms before flaying him alive. See *Freeman's Journal*, January 1, 1854.

one thousand men marched through the streets of Cincinnati carrying weapons, an effigy of Bedini complete with a miter and a gallows, and signs reading “Down with Bedini,” “No Priests, No Kings, No Popery,” and “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.” As they approached the episcopal residence, a large force of police officers intercepted the Freeman Society demonstrators. The police evidently assumed the demonstrators were up to no good and thus took aggressive measures to break up the crowd. In the end, the police killed one protester and seriously wounded another fourteen. Sixty-five marchers were arrested, most of whom were of German descent.³⁸² In a letter describing the events to the prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, Purcell denounced the demonstrators, calling them “German atheists” who, having been expelled from Europe, now committed crimes in America in the name of liberty.³⁸⁴

Despite police reports claiming the confiscation of various weapons from some of the demonstrators, charges of unlawful rioting against those arrested were eventually dropped due to lack of evidence.³⁸⁵ Public opinion was decidedly in the favor of the demonstrators. The Freeman Society claimed they were just exercising their civic duty to peacefully demonstrate. They claimed they did not intend to actually harm the papal-nuncio. The police were heavily criticized in the press for using excessive force. In fact,

³⁸² *Hochwaechter*, December 21, 1853, cited in Alfred G. Stritch, “Political Nativism in Cincinnati, 1830-1860,” *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, 48 (September 1937): 268.

³⁸³ Archbishop John Purcell to Archbishop Blanc, December 30, 1853. Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives; Henry A. Ford and Kate B. Ford, *History of Hamilton County, Ohio, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches* (Cleveland: L.A. Williams, 1881), 366-367; Richter, “Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race,” 26-27; Shaw, *Dagger John*, 284.

³⁸⁴ Purcell to Cardinal James Philip Fransoni, January 12, 1854, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

³⁸⁵ The Cincinnati correspondent to New York’s *Freeman’s Journal* reported that the police confiscated “two swords, three pistols, one poniard, three canes or bludgeons, one sword-can, a sheathed butcher knife and a few other weapons.” See *Freeman’s Journal*, January 1, 1854.

rumors began to circulate that the police's involvement was due to the political influence the Catholic Church allegedly had upon the city's Democratic mayor, David Snelbaker. In an effort to dismiss allegations, Snelbaker fired the city's chief of police.³⁸⁶

Less than a month later, another anti-Bedini demonstration was organized. This time, the radical revolutionaries were joined by moderate German Protestants and nativists enraged by the city's involvement in putting down the Christmas demonstration. With numbers exceeding five-thousand, the protestors marched upon the episcopal residence with anti-Catholic signs and another effigy of Bedini. Having reached their destination, the effigy was strung up and burned. According to the *Catholic Telegraph*, as the flames ascended, shouts from the crowd threatened to do the same to all the Catholic churches of the city, their priests, and Archbishop Purcell. The cathedral and episcopal residence were threatened verbally with cannonball fire.³⁸⁷

A final notable difference within the German-speaking population of antebellum Cincinnati was political affiliation. The Whig Party had traditionally been anti-immigrant and were openly anti-Catholic. Whig politicians such as Lewis D. Campbell and John Scott Harrison were elected in part due to their anti-immigration platforms. After the collapse of the Whig Party, both men would pledge their allegiance to the Know Nothing Party.³⁸⁸ The Whig-affiliated *Cincinnati Chronicle* asserted that although the most lurid claims made by the anti-Catholic novel *Six Months in a Convent* (1835) were

³⁸⁶ Stritch, "Political Nativism in Cincinnati, 1830-1860," 269; Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 27; Shaw, *Dagger John*, 284.

³⁸⁷ Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 28; Stritch, "Political Nativism in Cincinnati, 1830-1860," 268-269; *Catholic Telegraph*, January 21, 1854.

³⁸⁸ Eugene H. Roseboom, "Salmon P. Chase and the Know Nothings," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 25 (December 1938): 338.

proven to be lies, it did not guarantee such actions did not indeed happen in other convents.³⁸⁹ After the election of democratic presidential candidate James K. Polk, another Whig newspaper, the *Cincinnati Gazette*, lamented that Polk's election was a victory not for "Americans," but rather for the "Irishmen and Germans over Americans." In response to their defeat, the article encouraged Americans to take action against the foreign element invading American shores before it was too late. "We are compelled to use bullets, if need be, in defense of our country, before we can use the ballot, as partakers of its welfare. We are soldiers before we are free men, while an alien is a freeman before he is a soldier."³⁹⁰ Clearly, the policies espoused by Whig politicians and the sentiments expressed by Whig newspapers did not win many German-speaking adherents. However, there were exceptions. For example, the *Westliche Staatszeitung*, formerly a Democratic weekly, changed its party affiliation to Whig in 1836.³⁹¹ In 1842, the *Deutsche Republikaner* was established as a Whig daily. The paper enjoyed a wide readership by non-Germans, but the great majority of German-speaking immigrants despised the print because of its nativist inclinations. In 1849, the German immigrant Emil Klauprecht became the editor of the *Republikaner* and adamantly proclaimed his allegiance to the Whig Party. His outspokenness occasionally sparked conflict within the German-speaking community. Such was the case when in 1852, the *Republikaner* became involved in a heated debate with another German paper, the Democratic *Alte Hickory*. The debate turned personal when the editor of the *Alte Hickory*, Wilhelm Albers, personally attacked Klauprecht and accused his wife of being a prostitute.

³⁸⁹ Stritch, "Political Nativism in Cincinnati, 1830-1860," 241.

Klauprecht responded to these accusations by going to Albers house and shooting him in the chest.³⁹²

When the Whig Party collapsed in 1854, Klauprecht's *Deutsche Republikaner* pledged its support to the fledgling Republican Party. In 1856, Klauprecht left the *Republikaner* to become the editor of the *Volksblatt*. Although traditionally a Democratic German print, the *Volksblatt* had been increasingly distancing itself from Democratic policies. With Klauprecht at the helm, the paper promptly switched its allegiance to the Republican Party. Klauprecht's former paper was eventually sold in 1858 and renamed the *Cincinnati Republikaner*. Under its new editor, an exiled revolutionary named August Willich, the paper became increasingly radical and even openly advocated an aggressive abolitionist platform. However, the paper's new direction proved to be too extreme for its previous readers. Due to lack of readership, the *Cincinnati Republikaner* ceased publication in 1860.³⁹³

Given its favorable legislation regarding naturalization, its broadminded view concerning the possession of land, and its outspoken condemnation of the majority of the actions taken by anti-Catholic nativists, most German-speaking immigrants in Cincinnati voted for the Democratic Party. The Party's platform appealed to not only most German-speaking Catholics, but also wealthy German-speaking immigrants and conservative German-speaking Lutherans.³⁹⁴ Despite losing the *Westliche Staatszeitung* and the *Cincinnati Volksblatt* to the Whig and Republican Parties respectively, German-speaking

³⁹⁰ *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, November 16, 1844.

³⁹¹ Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 13.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14, 34-35, 74.

Democrats in Cincinnati still could read the *Demokratisches Tageblatt*.³⁹⁵ However, when the *Tageblatt* ceased publication in 1856 for unknown reasons, the city was left without a major Democratic paper written with the German-speaking population in mind. It is conceivably for this reason that in the same year, the *Volksfreund*, a formerly nonpartisan German newspaper written for Cincinnati's German Catholics, openly declared itself a Democratic paper.³⁹⁶

As was the case for most people of the day, the issue of slavery weighed heavily upon the minds of Cincinnati's German-speaking population. In contrast to Frederick Douglass' negative summation of the Irish immigrants' stance on slavery, the abolitionist claimed that a "German has only to be a German to be utterly opposed to slavery."³⁹⁷ It is clear, however, that after reading the entire article, Douglass was primarily referring to the radical exiles of the 1848 revolution. The fact that many German-speaking exiles of the revolution of 1848 were antislavery and many obtained positions of leadership in the United States, there is a danger in assuming that the opinions expressed by such individuals represented the opinions expressed by *all* German-speaking immigrants. Indeed, this was a common misconception held by many antebellum Americans.³⁹⁸ However, as has been stated above, there were many divisions within the German-speaking immigrant community. Although they tended to be the most outspoken, the

³⁹⁴ Bruce Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of Civil War* (New York, 1992), 207-208.

³⁹⁵ There was also the Democratic *Alte Hickory*. However, this daily only ran for three weeks in the late summer of 1852. It was published by the editor of the *Demokratisches Tageblatt* and aimed at unifying the German-speaking community behind the Democratic Party in the It was intended to rally the Germans behind the Democratic Party in the upcoming election. See Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 33.

³⁹⁶ Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 35, 65.

³⁹⁷ Frederick Douglass, "The Adopted Citizen and Slavery," in *Douglass' Monthly* 2, 3 (August 1859).

³⁹⁸ Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 44.

exiled revolutionaries represented only a small percentage of the German-speaking population. Furthermore, despite their radicalism and abstract denunciations of the institution of slavery, most editors of radical German papers exercised caution when discussing the subject of abolition, especially before the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854.

The editor of one such German paper, the radical *Hochwaechter*, affirmed that no one had the right to hold a human being as property and stated that slavery was a “contradiction to the principle of liberty,” despite the fact that it also claimed immediate abolitionism was far too extreme a measure.³⁹⁹ Its editor, the exiled revolutionary Friedrich Hassaurek, viewed all hierarchal institutions to be a threat to autonomy. Thus, he condemned slavery as adamantly as he condemned Christianity. However, his anticlericalism refused to allow him to endorse abolitionism, for he believed religious fanaticism as being the motivating factor of the abolitionists. It was only after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and Hassaurek’s defection to the Republican Party that he became an outspoken advocate for immediate abolition.⁴⁰⁰

Another radical print, the *Menschenrechte*, saw as its mission to bring about an end to all violations of human rights, whether they are against African Americans held in slavery or the underpaid white laborer. Of all the German papers published before the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the antislavery sentiment of the *Menschenrechte* was the most pronounced and extreme. Its editor, another exiled revolutionary named Wilhelm Rothacker, argued in nearly every issue against the horrors of slavery as

practiced in the South. However, even Rothacker believed immediate abolitionism to be too “reckless” of a measure. Unfortunately, having ceased publication after only five months due a lack of public interest, the *Menschenrechte* never had a chance to explain why it considered immediate abolition too extreme or articulate how it planned to alleviate the violations to human rights it denounced so strongly.⁴⁰¹

The failure of the *Menschenrechte* and the post-Kansas-Nebraska Act *Cincinnati Republikaner* suggests that the average German-speaking immigrant in Cincinnati did not relate to the strong pronouncements these prints made against the institution of slavery. In reality, as was the case for most immigrants, the average German-speaking immigrant living in the city of Cincinnati did not publicly voice his or her opinion on the issue of slavery. Most would be concerned with establishing themselves in their new country rather than engaging in theoretical arguments about the morality of the South’s peculiar institution. Since the immigrant German community in general tended to isolate themselves from the rest of society, one should not think the typical German-speaking immigrant went out of his or her way to speak on behalf of the African American. Only when slavery or race directly affected their interests did the representatives of the average German-speaking immigrant voice their opinions.

For Protestant German immigrants, there were two pre-Kansas-Nebraska Act publications. For the Lutheran German there was the *Protestantische Zeitblaetter*. In this weekly, one finds a clear condemnation of slavery. In the August 4, 1853, edition,

³⁹⁹ *Hochwaechter*, June 16, 1852, quoted and translated in Richter, “Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race,” 51-52.

⁴⁰⁰ Richter, “Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race,” 53-55.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 55-59. Quotation from page 58.

the editor urged all immigrants of German descent to reject any politician who defended slavery. The writer evidently felt that the only way to eliminate slavery was through voting proponents of slavery out of office. Similarly, while rejecting abolition, the Methodist-oriented *Christliche Apologete* renounced slavery and saw fit to praise Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in a December 1852 publication.⁴⁰²

At the beginning of the 1850s, German-speaking Democrats still had the *Demokratisches Tageblatt* and the *Volksblatt* from which to choose. However, with the passing of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the two papers began to polarize in political opinion. The *Tageblatt* continued to advocate the Democratic platform. Thus, the paper unabashedly supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act and stressed the principle of popular sovereignty. The *Volksblatt*, however, viewed the Kansas-Nebraska Act as a threat to free labor. It also believed that the presence of slaves in the territories of Nebraska and Kansas would discourage foreign immigration to the region because of the immigrant's distaste towards African Americans. Thus, although opposed to abolition, the *Volksblatt* was equally opposed to its extension into new territories. The *Volksblatt's* editor accused the *Tageblatt* and its readers as blindly following partisan politics without first judging the potentially devastating consequences to the stability of the Union. The two papers would remain engaged in a heated debate over the issue for the next two years until the *Volksblatt* defected to the Republican Party and the *Tageblatt* disappeared. It remained

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 60-62.

for the previously non-affiliated albeit conservative-minded *Volksfreund* to provide a voice for Cincinnati's German-speaking Democrats.⁴⁰³

When the German Catholic immigrant Joseph Hemann founded the *Volksfreund*, he intended for it to be a conservative, yet nonpartisan alternative to the more radical and liberal German prints in circulation. Being a leader in the German Catholic community, Hemann used his paper in order to support those political policies that benefited German Catholics. Over the course of its publication, it became apparent that the Democratic Party more often than not advocated policies that most benefited the Catholic community. Thus, before Hemann openly pronounced in 1856 that the *Volksfreund* was officially a Democratic paper, it had long since become a Democratic paper in principle. For example, the *Volksfreund* was an outspoken proponent of the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. For this reason, the *Volksblatt* was already attacking Hemann and his paper as mindless and unquestioning supporters of Democratic policy.⁴⁰⁴

In its inaugural year, the *Volksfreund* took pause to address the issue of slavery. In an editorial entitled "The Slavery Question," Hemann stated that humans have "no natural right" to enslave other humans. Indeed, slaveholders were considered "unworthy" beneficiaries of the principles of liberty advocated in the Constitution. Hemann believed that these indictments were self-evident and did "not need any further evidence." However, Hemann believed that given the political climate in which he lived, the solution for the problem of slavery proved to be "rather difficult." Hemann believed that immediate abolitionism was a threat to the stability of the Union because he feared it

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 65-67.

would unleash upon the state of Ohio “two or three millions of free black citizens” hostile to the white population. He believed in the natural inferiority of African Americans and feared that, if immediately liberated from their current geographical locations, their “hate against whites will rise according to their rise in numbers because there is no chance for them to become equals.”⁴⁰⁵ In a subsequent publication, Hemann advocated amending the constitutions of the Southern states to prepare for a gradual abolition of slavery. After their emancipation, Hemann suggested transferring former slaves to the Florida peninsula and, after having proving themselves capable of self-government, incorporating the territory into a state solely for emancipated African Americans.⁴⁰⁶

As one can surmise from the previous paragraph, although Hermann was of the opinion that slavery was wrong in principle, his pronouncements against the institution seemed to have been motivated primarily by his racially biased fear of the African American. Already living in a city with a relatively large percentage of free African Americans, Hemann dreaded the prospect of having emancipated slaves flooding his city and competing for the jobs that employed a large percentage of his readers. Thus, he advocated a slow and calculated emancipation and relocation program not out of a spirit of egalitarianism, but so that he may carefully remove people of African descent from his and his readers’ presence. Although it is possible that Hemann’s opinion were solely his own, there is evidence that other average German-speaking citizens were suspicious of

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, October 19, 1850, quoted and translated in Richter, “Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race,” 46-47.

⁴⁰⁶ *Cincinnati Volksfreund*, October 21, 1850, cited in Richter, “Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race,” 48.

African Americans.⁴⁰⁷ Furthermore, given the fact that the *Volksfreund* had the largest circulation of the German-language dailies during the 1850s, it seems logical to conclude that Hemann's opinions on slavery and race were readily digested by sympathetic German readers, many of whom were German Catholics. Therefore, a brief analysis of the *Volksfreund* during the decade immediately preceding the Civil War may prove beneficial in illuminating the racial attitudes held by the German Catholic population of Cincinnati.

A chief concern of Hemann was the threat of the amalgamation of races. He believed the white race was naturally superior to all other races. Therefore, if a white person produced offspring with a person of African descent, Hemann viewed that offspring as being the product of an inferior stock thus an abomination to the natural law. In Hemann's final analysis, descendants of mixed race would not be able to survive more than a couple generations due to their inherent weaknesses.⁴⁰⁸

Another fear Hemann expressed concerning amalgamation was his belief that interracial slaves would see themselves as superior to full-blooded slaves due to their possession of white blood. Indeed, Hemann believed that the blood of their white masters that flowed through their veins would predispose interracial slaves toward a stronger desire for personal liberty and a greater resentment of their servile state. This would foster within the interracial individual an even greater hatred towards the white

⁴⁰⁷ For example, a German immigrant to Ohio commented, "...the first creature that attracts attention when one comes to America are the many black people from Africa." The German stated that these individuals "make a strange, strong, unpleasant impression on the newcomer from Germany....partially due to their color and partially due to their poverty and slovenliness." (Christian Friedrich Gottlieb Schnicke to Ernst W. Schnicke, July 26, 1836, quoted and translated by Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 80.

⁴⁰⁸ *Volksfreund*, February 9, 1856, cited in Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 85.

race than those held by typical African Americans. Hemann feared that as the numbers of interracial citizens steadily increased, the more threat there was for an insurrection the likes of which had not been witnessed since the Saint-Domingue revolution of 1793.⁴⁰⁹

Another illuminating detail found in Hemann's editorials was his choice of language when referring to African Americans. While all the other German-language newspapers chose racially tolerant terms when describing individuals of African descent, Hemann freely used the term "nigger." The word was used most often in articles dealing with crimes or fights involving African Americans. Thus, in the March 18, 1854 issue of the *Volksfreund* one might read the article entitled "Loafer versus Loafer," in which is described a fight between "Anton Croigs, a coal-black fat nigger" and Jeffery Casey, a thin mulatto. These types of articles were commonplace throughout the 1850s.⁴¹⁰

If the partisan *Volksfreund* did not suit certain German-speaking Catholics' taste, they could always turn to the Cincinnati's only explicitly Catholic German weekly. *Der Wahrheitsfreund* was the first German-language Catholic newspaper in the United States. Published in 1837 to aid German Catholic immigrants in their transition to life in the Midwest, *Der Wahrheitsfreund* defended Catholic dogmas against fierce anti-Catholic bigotry and informed German-speaking Catholics about important political events occurring in Europe and the United States. Each week, the reader could find an article dealing specifically with the affairs in the German nation-states. The weekly was founded and edited by a German priest named John Martin Henni. Henni would edit the

⁴⁰⁹ *Volksfreund*, January 22, 1854, cited in Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 87.

⁴¹⁰ Cited in Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 90. Richter has documented no fewer than eleven instances of the *Volksfreund's* use of the term "nigger." Even when the term was not used, Hemann

weekly until becoming the Bishop of Milwaukee in 1844. On August 31, 1850, *Der Wahrheitsfreund* was sold to Joseph Hemann. Although Hemann published the weekly for the next fifteen years, he did not begin to edit it exclusively until the September 10, 1862 issue.⁴¹¹

Der Wahrheitsfreund is noteworthy for being one of the first German-language newspapers published in Cincinnati that discussed the issue of slavery prior to 1850. After only its fourth issue, Father Henni affirmed that he and the publishers of *Der Wahrheitsfreund* were “certainly no friend of slavery” and “as opposed to the system of the slave trade as the most ardent abolitionist.” However, rather than endorsing abolitionism, Henni stressed the need for northern and southern states to promote harmony by peacefully maintaining the status quo. Indeed, Henni condemned abolitionism as a foreign plot conceived in order “to sow discord and bring about bloodshed” by inciting “the northern and middle states against slavery in the southern states.” The abolitionists, Henni charged, were “occupied with igniting the spark of Civil War.” Henni concluded by stressing to his readers exactly what was at stake if the abolitionists were successful. “And what do these people want? Why, nothing less than to make the black negroes equal with us. They want to set them free; give them the vote, admit them to hold office in all of these states; and make marriages between whites and blacks as ordinary as they are between whites and whites. Think about it!!!”⁴¹² Like the majority of the secular German-language papers that would discuss slavery in the 1850s,

habitually used racist imagery when referring to African Americans in his paper. See Richter, “Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race,” 90-91.

⁴¹¹ *Pioneer Catholic Journalism*, 181-187.

Der *Wahrheitsfreund* stated its opposition to slavery in principle while at the same time rejecting the idea of immediate abolitionism. It should be noted, however, that after his visit to Rome in 1862, Henni, now Bishop of Milwaukee, returned to America leaning in favor of the of immediate emancipation.⁴¹³

In the 1840s and 1850s, *Der Wahrheitsfreund* remained silent on the issue of slavery, choosing instead to focus on the immediate religious and temporal needs of Cincinnati's German-speaking Catholic community. Though not the official Catholic print of the diocese, it was clearly regarded as such by the German-Catholic citizens for which it spoke for. When the Southern states began to secede and the Civil War broke out, the weekly remained loyal to the Union. Although it remained anti-abolitionists, *Der Wahrheitsfreund* stressed the importance of supporting the Union cause throughout the conflict.⁴¹⁴ However, the paper chose not to reveal much detail about the personal views held by its editorial staff. More often than not, *Der Wahrheitsfreund* simply reprinted the news and views expressed in other publications. When remarks were given, it was often to voice its disapproval of abolitionism. Remarkably, no opinion was expressed when Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation went into effect in January 1863 nor did Hemann comment when the *Catholic Telegraph* strongly adopted its abolitionist slant in April 1863. When New York's *Freeman Journal* and the *Catholic Telegraph* began a bitter war of words over the issue of slavery, *Der Wahrheitsfreund* remained silent.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² *Der Wahrheitsfreund*, August 17, 1837, quoted and translated by Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race," 45.

⁴¹³ See *Catholic Telegraph*, October 1, 1862.

⁴¹⁴ *Der Wahrheitsfreund*, April 25, 1861, cited in Anthony H. Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell and the Civil War," 86.

⁴¹⁵ Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell and the Civil War," 87.

In July 1863, the *Der Wahrheitsfreund* announced to its readers the imminent threat presented by the French government ruling over Mexico. Unless the North and South ceased the war at once, both sides could fall victim to a French invasion. How to achieve this peace, however, was not explained.⁴¹⁶

While *Der Wahrheitfreund* seemed to slightly advocate an antislavery position in the fall of 1863, by 1864 it was once again advocating a neutral position. As a religious paper, Hemann claimed the *Der Wahrheitfreund* was neither for abolition nor for secession. Until the end of the war, whenever the weekly felt the need to reprint contentious material, its editor made sure to add a disclaimer that the views expressed in such articles did not necessarily convey the opinions of *Der Wahrheitsfreund*.⁴¹⁷

In conclusion, the German-speaking population of Cincinnati appears to have been an exceedingly heterogeneous conglomerate of people sharing the same language and same basic culture. However, differences in religion, politics, and region of origin created many divisions within the community. Nonetheless, when it came to the issue of slavery, all of the representative newspapers—whether Catholic, Democratic, Protestant, or radical—stated their general opposition to the institution in the abstract while all save one maintained that abolitionism was too radical a step to take. Typically, German-speaking immigrants did not care much for American, let alone slave issues, choosing instead to isolate themselves within their Little Germanys rather than make a stand on a political issue. Nevertheless, there is evidence that certain German-speaking immigrants

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

harbored racial bias toward African Americans. This can clearly be seen in the racially charged language of the *Volksfreund*.

CHAPTER V
A LONE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS:
ARCHBISHOP JOHN PURCELL'S
POSITION ON SLAVERY

The early life of John Baptist Purcell was not very different from that John Hughes. Like Hughes, Purcell was an Irish immigrant and son of an Irish laborer. Although of limited means, Purcell's parents provided him with the best education available. Attending a local pay school, John excelled in all subjects. From an early age, he had desired to train for the priesthood and thus received supplemental education from his local parish priests. However, like Hughes, Purcell's parents did not have the financial resources to continue his education. Thus, at the age of eighteen, Purcell left his homeland for the United States to pursue his dream in the land of opportunity.⁴¹⁸

Upon landing in Baltimore, Purcell promptly obtained a certificate from Asbury Methodist School declaring him proficient in Latin, Greek, and Mathematics. The Institution also issued him a teaching certificate and highly recommended him to any institution looking for a teacher or any private citizen looking for a tutor. It was in the latter position Purcell found employment for the next two years. In the summer of 1820,

⁴¹⁸ Anthony H. Deye, "Archbishop John Purcell of Cincinnati, pre-Civil War Years" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 1949), 8.

Purcell gained admission to the same seminary John Hughes had entered a year previously as a gardener. However, Purcell entered Mount Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Maryland not as laborer, but as a fulltime student and teacher of Latin and arithmetic. During their years at the seminary, Purcell and Hughes would develop a friendship that would last a lifetime.⁴¹⁹

In February 1824, Purcell sailed for Paris to complete his theological training at St. Sulpice. It was here where Purcell was ordained to the priesthood on May 20, 1826. After completing his studies, he returned to Mount Saint Mary's as a fulltime professor in August 1827. By October, Purcell was promoted to vice-president of the seminary. In December 1829, he succeeded Father McGerry as president of the institution. Purcell would remain in this position until he was appointed Bishop of Cincinnati in 1833.⁴²⁰

As has been asserted in Chapter 4, the archdiocese was dominated by German-speaking Catholics. Although the massive numbers of Germans did not arrive in the city until the late 1840s, when Purcell arrived as Bishop in 1833, there was already a substantial German-speaking Catholic population.⁴²¹ During this period of American Catholic history, there were few German-speaking priests to serve the ever-increasing German population. Although the diocese of Cincinnati had more German-speaking priests than any other diocese in the United States, their numbers were unable to accommodate the massive influx of German-speaking immigrants flooding its borders

⁴¹⁹ Deye, "Purcell pre-Civil War Years," 10-12, 17-18, 20; Mary M. Meline and Edward F. X. McSweeney, *The Story of the Mountain: Mount St. Mary's College and Seminary, Emmitsburg, Maryland*, vol. 1 (Emmitsburg: The Weekly Chronicle, 1911), 94.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 34, 38, 40.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 259.

during the 1840s and 1850s.⁴²² Consequently, many German Catholic communities had to either settle for an Irish priest or go without a priest altogether. The differences in culture, style, and language led to numerous altercations between German-speaking laity and the Irish clergy sent to serve them. For example, Father Joseph McNamee expressed a frustration shared by many Irish priests assigned to German-speaking congregations when he wrote to Purcell that he would rather suffer at the hands of anti-Catholic bigots than deal with “stubborn Germans.”⁴²³ Nevertheless, despite numerous Irish-German altercations, Purcell was always careful to support his German flock and praise them publicly in the press. After one of his numerous visits to German Catholic communities within his jurisdiction, Purcell commented in the *Catholic Telegraph* that the German Catholic “experiences no greater pleasure than to swell the chorus of voices, when all the congregation unites in wonderful harmony, to sing the praises of the Almighty Father, in the language of the Universal Church.” Purcell went on to express his admiration for the piety of one elderly German Catholic who after walking ten miles to receive Holy Communion, slipped and fell on a patch of ice yet still continued on his march refusing the aid offered by Purcell’s convoy to transport him the rest of the way.”⁴²⁴

Despite Purcell’s public commendations of the German-speaking Catholic community, there were severe ethnic divisions within his diocese. On several occasions, Purcell had to chastise numerous German congregations rebelling against their Irish

⁴²² By 1842, fifteen of the forty-six in the diocese spoke German. See Deye, “Purcell “pre-Civil,” 276.

⁴²³ McNamee to Purcell, May 16, 1841, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴²⁴ *Catholic Telegraph*, December 19, 1840.

pastors.⁴²⁵ More serious were the charges some disgruntled German-American Catholics were making to Catholic ecclesiastics in Europe against the American hierarchy. The discontented element complained that the primarily Irish-American hierarchy cared only for the Irish Catholic community while abandoning the German Catholic community. The Archbishop of Vienna apparently felt the charges were serious enough to warrant an investigation. Since Purcell presided over the largest concentration of German Catholics, his diocese received the lion's share of the scrutiny. Consequently, Purcell felt obligated to document the numerous contributions he made for the German Catholic community within his diocese.⁴²⁶

The underlying tension evident between Purcell and Cincinnati's German Catholic community would persist throughout the antebellum period. In 1844, Purcell wrote to the Congregation for the Propagation for the Faith the following indictment:

The spirit of Luther has entered this country with the Germans. It presages a sad future for the church of America, if it is not successfully subdued in the beginning. They were interdicted originally by the patriarch of the United States, Carroll, our first archbishop. They are actually in revolt at Buffalo against the bishop of New York—at Philadelphia & elsewhere they were manifested the same Lutheranism. This is not all—I am writing to the Archbishop & to several of my colleagues. I promise you something more special shortly.⁴²⁷

In 1854, Purcell wrote to the Archbishop of New Orleans that the German Catholics of Cincinnati had revolted against his authority. The only way that Purcell was able to reconcile the conflict was by sending to them “a very good German priest.” The priest

⁴²⁵ Deye, “Purcell pre-Civil Years,” 269.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 270-272.

⁴²⁷ Purcell to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, February 15, 1844, quoted in Deye, “Purcell Pre-Civil Years,” 291.

was able to convince the unruly congregation to obey their Irish prelate.⁴²⁸ The incident underscores the unstable relationship Purcell had with the largest ethnic group under his jurisdiction. German Catholics would grudgingly respect Purcell's episcopal position. However, they typically only listened to German-speaking clergymen. Thus, when Purcell began to espouse a decidedly antislavery position during the years leading up to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, one should not assume that he automatically spoke for the entire Catholic population in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

This chapter deals specifically with the opinions expressed by Archbishop Purcell and the *Catholic Telegraph* concerning the issue of slavery and abolition. Although in many cases, the opinions expressed in the publications of official diocesan newspapers during the antebellum era did not necessarily represent the opinions of the diocese's bishop, in the case of the *Catholic Telegraph*, this does not appear to be the case. Beginning in 1840, Purcell's younger brother, Father Edward Purcell, was the editor of the *Telegraph*. He would remain in this position for the next forty years. In 1852, Purcell shared editorial duties with Father Sylvester Rosecrans, brother of the future Union General, William Rosecrans. Both brothers were German-American converts to Catholicism. Father Rosecrans faithfully helped edit the *Catholic Telegraph* until appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati in 1862. Both clergymen were extremely close to the Archbishop. Indeed, many members of the episcopacy recognized an intimate union of opinion expressed by the Purcell and the *Telegraph*. While there were times when editorials appeared in the weekly that expressed solely the opinions of the editor,

⁴²⁸ Archbishop John Purcell to Archbishop Anthony January 21, 1854, Archdiocese of Cincinnati

these were the exception. Thus, this chapter holds that the opinions expressed by Archbishop Purcell and the *Catholic Telegraph* are essentially one in the same.⁴²⁹

While still the president of Mount Saint Mary's, Purcell had indicated his initial distaste for slave labor. Writing to one of his subordinates, Purcell expressed his desire "that something decisive be done regarding our negroes." Two slaves had already "gone off" and Purcell had been tempted to manumit three others. However, he decided to discuss first what other labor arrangements could be made. Purcell suggested that, in lieu of slaves, "white men who [could] come as lay-brothers and work for us."⁴³⁰ The letter does not specify whether the two slaves that had "gone off" were runaways or had been emancipated. Nor does the letter indicate whether Purcell's sentiments were a moral expression of his condemnation of the institution or an economical reaction to the ineffectualness of slave labor. However, given Purcell's later outlook, it is likely that this incident represents an early stage in his developing opinion concerning the evilness of slavery.

The next reference Purcell made concerning slavery came five years into his episcopacy. While the guest of honor at a banquet in his native Malow, Purcell gave a speech praising the United States as possessing the most conducive environment for the spread of Roman Catholicism. The principles of liberty expressed in its Constitution elevated the United States above all other nations, even the so-called "Catholic" countries of Europe. In regard to American slavery, Purcell:

Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴²⁹ Anthony H. Deye, "Archbishop John Baptist Purcell and the Civil War" (Master's Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1944), 57-62.

...explained away the apparent inconsistency between the admission in the American charter, which said “that all men were born free”, and the existence of slavery in that country. He wished it to be understood that he condemned slavery in the abstract, as did every American. It was a degrading form of society. The moral “virus” was not introduced by free Americans; it was part of the system established during her dependence, and in existence for centuries. There were a great many political improvements, however desirable, that a government could not from prudential motives, introduce as soon as it wished.⁴³¹

This sentiment expressed by Purcell was not very different from most of the other American ecclesiastics at that time. Following the example set by Bishop England and Archbishop Kenrick, Purcell could offer a general acknowledgement that slavery was an evil but coupled it with an impotency to do something about it. The issue was dismissed as a primarily a political rather than a religious issue.⁴³²

Despite these initial antislavery views, Purcell would not broach the subject again until the eve of the Civil War. Indeed, in the numerous letters exchanged between Purcell and Archbishop Blanc of New Orleans between 1835 and 1860, not once does the former specifically condemn the institution of slavery or call for its abolition. When Pope Gregory XVI promulgated *In Supremo Apostolatus* in December 1839, the *Catholic Telegraph* occasionally espoused its opposition to slavery in the abstract, but failed to discuss how to end the institution.⁴³³ Typically when making antislavery comments, as was the case with many Cincinnati newspapers of the time, the *Telegraph* concluded by

⁴³⁰ Rev. Purcell to Rev. Jamison, September 10, 1830, quoted in M.M. Meline and Rev. E.F. McSweeney, *The Story of the Mountain*, vol. 1, 244.

⁴³¹ *Catholic Telegraph*, October 11, 1838.

⁴³² Bishop John England effectively summed up the antebellum Catholic position when he wrote: “I have been asked by many... whether I am friendly to the existence or continuation of slavery? I am not,—but I also see the impossibility of now abolishing it here. When it can and ought to be abolished, is a question for the legislature and not for me.” See John England, *Works of the Rt. Rev. John England*, 190-191.

⁴³³ *Catholic Telegraph*, March 14, April 25, 1840; February 6, 1841.

strongly condemning abolitionism.⁴³⁴ Given the ambiguity of both himself and his weekly, it appears that Purcell's views concerning slavery and what ought to be done about did not go beyond his sentiments expressed in 1838.

When President Buchanan announced that January 4, 1861 would be a national day of prayer for peace, Archbishop Purcell urged his flock to adhere to it. On January 5, Purcell wrote in the *Catholic Telegraph* for Catholics to support peace by any means necessary, even if it meant the secession of the Southern states. "At least let us beg," Purcell asserted, "that if we cannot have Union, we may have peace, and that if these States cannot be sisters, they may be allies."⁴³⁵

On January 13, Purcell addressed a crowd at Cincinnati's Catholic Institute in which he made further comments concerning the growing threat of secession. The following day, the Cincinnati *Daily Commercial*, published excerpts of Purcell's speech and then concluded that the Archbishop's statements suggested a condemnation of secession and favored the use of force to preserve the Union.⁴³⁶ Four days later, the *Commercial* boldly proclaimed that Purcell had "emphatically" thrown his support behind the Union. The Republican paper expressed its hope that Purcell's supposed pro-Union position would be duplicated by other Catholic prelates since the "Catholic influence is one of the great forces of the land and exerted for the preservation of the Union will make itself felt with a power that calculating politicians will not care to

⁴³⁴ *Catholic Telegraph*, January 28, 1836; May 29, 1845; May 17, 1851; July 2, 1853; July 1, 1854; May 29, 1858; November 19, 1859; January 7, 1860.

⁴³⁵ *Catholic Telegraph*, January 5, 1861.

⁴³⁶ *Cincinnati Daily Commercial*, January 14, 1861. Cited in Deye, "Slavery," 28.

encounter.”⁴³⁷ However, the *Catholic Telegraph*, while not denying Purcell gave the speech quoted in the *Commercial*, issued a request that no secular papers publish either the private or the public statements made by the Archbishop unless specifically given the permission to do so since the data and opinions expressed in such publications “are frequently imperfect and inaccurate.”⁴³⁸ Indeed, in the period between the election of Lincoln until the start of the Civil war, Purcell and the *Catholic Telegraph* publicly supported the typical Catholic position stressing peace through compromise.

After news got out that the Confederacy had attacked Fort Sumter in the early hours of April 12, 1861, both Purcell and the *Catholic Telegraph* abandoned their previously conciliatory positions and began openly supporting the Union cause. On April 20, 1861, the *Catholic Telegraph* reported that although it had always pressed for peace, “individual opinion must yield to the obligations we owe the Union. The President has spoken.”⁴³⁹ Three days later, the Archbishop showed where his allegiances lay by conducting a public ceremony in front of the Cathedral at which time he raised a large Union flag atop its spire.⁴⁴⁰

On April 29, 1861, the bishops of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati met for their third provincial council. In his opening statement, Purcell referenced the war and spoke again in favor of peace and unity.⁴⁴¹ At the council’s conclusion, a pastoral letter was issued that condemned the disunion caused by the war, prayed for peace, and blamed the

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, January 18, 1861. Cited in Deye, “Slavery,” 29.

⁴³⁸ *Catholic Telegraph*, January 26, 1861.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, April 20, 1861.

⁴⁴⁰ Deye, “Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War,” 30.

⁴⁴¹ Mary Agnes McCann, “Archbishop Purcell and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati” (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1918), 78.

current state of affairs on the abolitionists. The author of the document, Bishop Spalding of Kentucky, concluded by praising the Catholic Church for staying aloof from politics and for its refusal to take sides in the conflict. All the bishops of the diocese, including Purcell, signed the document.⁴⁴² However, given his actions on April 23, Purcell clearly did not agree completely with the document's neutrality. Indeed, from that point forward, Purcell's decidedly pro-Union position stance would place him at odds with a number of his suffragan bishops.

Although increasingly in favor of the Union cause, Purcell was quick to point out his continued disapproval of abolitionism. After honoring President Lincoln's call for a national day of prayer and fasting in September 1861, Purcell wrote to the current president of Mount Saint Mary's, Father John McCaffrey, stressing he only was advocating the North's right to defend itself against Southern atrocity.⁴⁴³ Likewise, when the discussion of a proposition advocating emancipation as a war measure began to heat up thanks to Augustin Cochin's *L'Abolition de l'esclavage* and Orestes' Brownson's "Slavery and the War," the *Catholic Telegraph* firmly opposed it, stating:

The proposition to emancipate the slaves, as a war measure, seems to us incendiary and stupid....Do the American people believe that we could be a nation with 4,000,000 of free negroes in our midst? What then is to be done? Exile them? We have not the means. Exterminate them as Boston did the Indians?⁴⁴⁴

From this passage, it is apparent that *Telegraph* expressed an apprehension toward the prospect of thousands of previously enslaved African Americans migrating into

⁴⁴² Deye, "Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War," 30.

⁴⁴³ Archbishop Purcell to McCaffrey, October 4, 1861, cited in M.M. Meline and Rev. E.F. McSweeney, *The Story of the Mountain*, vol. 2, 10.

border cities like Cincinnati. This fear was previously conveyed by the German Catholic *Der Wahrheitsfreund* in 1837 and German Catholic Joseph Hemann's *Volksfreund* in 1850. It is possible that the *Telegraph* was expressing the opinion of Hemann, who had recently been placed in charge of publishing the weekly. However, Hemann's influence on the *Telegraph*'s opinion is highly suspect. It is far more likely that the *Telegraph* was expressing a commonly held fear among the white Catholic population throughout the Union.

In addition to expressing its racial intolerance, the *Telegraph* was worried that an increase in the African American population would lead to job competition between the lower classes and that such competition would spark racial violence. The Catholic weekly was clearly not alone in acknowledging this fear. When in the spring of 1862, a fancy Cincinnati hotel replaced a large number of Irish employees with former slaves hired at lower wages, the fear appeared to be becoming a reality. A similar event also occurred at Cincinnati's dockyards to both Irish and German employees.⁴⁴⁵ In July, the Catholic editor of the Democratic *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, James John Faran, wondered how...

...do our white laborers relish the prospect that the emancipation of the blacks spreads before them? What do they think of the inundation of two or three thousand free [African Americans] into Ohio, which inundation will come if we carry out the emancipation policy of President Lincoln? How many whites will be thrown out of employment? How much will it reduce the price of labor?⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁴ *Catholic Telegraph*, January 29, 1862.

⁴⁴⁵ Wilson H. Lofton, "Northern Labor and the Negro during the Civil War," *Journal of Negro History*, 34 (July 1949): 251-73.

⁴⁴⁶ *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, July 15, 1862. See also Charles Ray Wilson, "The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer and Civil War Politics; a Study in 'Copperhead' Opinion" (Master's Thesis, University of Chicago, 1934).

As luck would have it, a large number of Cincinnati's Irish population would show the world exactly what they thought of the proposition of emancipation. On the same day Faran's editorial appeared in the *Enquirer*, a mob of Irish laborers headed for the dockyards and attacked the recently hired African American employees. Not yet satisfied, the angry rabble entered the local neighborhood where most of Cincinnati's African American population lived, assaulted anyone they could lay their hands upon, and torched the neighborhood's houses.⁴⁴⁷ The *Telegraph* condemned the violence. However, the editor identified to an extent with the sentiments expressed in the *Enquirer* and sympathized with the motivations that led the Irish to riot. He believed that there was no place for the emancipated slave in the city of Cincinnati. Thus, as Hemann previously suggested in the *Volksfreund*, the *Telegraph* even considered advocating plans for colonization.⁴⁴⁸

In the spring of 1862, just two months prior to the events described in the preceding paragraph, Archbishop Purcell and a number of other bishops from around the world had set off for Rome to participate in the canonization of twenty-six missionaries crucified in Japan in 1527.⁴⁴⁹ Although the topic of the American Civil War undoubtedly was on the minds of the American and European representatives at the celebration, there exists no firm evidence that any exchange of ideas on the matter took place. However, it is known that while in Rome Purcell met with the French bishop of Orléans, Félix

⁴⁴⁷ *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* July 16, 17, 1862; Leonard Harding, "The Cincinnati Riots of 1862," *Bulletin of the Cincinnati Historical Society* 25 (October 1967): 229-239.

⁴⁴⁸ *Catholic Telegraph*, August 27, September 3, 17, 1862.

⁴⁴⁹ *Catholic Telegraph*, May 7, 1862. For a description this event, see James Duggan, *Reminiscences and Impressions of a Visit to Rome, During the Canonization of the Japanese Martyrs: A Lecture Pronounced in Bryan Hall, Dec. 18th, 1862* (Chicago: J.J. Kearney, 1863).

Antoine Philibert Dupanloup, the outspoken liberal Catholic and antislavery activist.⁴⁵⁰ Just one month previously, Dupanloup had written his pastoral letter strongly condemning American slavery. The letter proved a hotly debated subject in American Catholic papers.⁴⁵¹ While it is not known what the two prelates discussed during their time together, one might assume that the subject of the war and American slavery came up, for upon Purcell's return from Europe, he immediately made plans to hold a lecture dealing specifically with those issues.⁴⁵²

Purcell's lecture, entitled "Impressions from Rome," was delivered in Cincinnati on September 1, 1862. As the title suggests, the lecture dealt primarily with the criticisms Purcell had heard while in Europe concerning the American Civil War. After listing several European critiques, Purcell changed the subject and began to talk specifically about slavery. The southern states, he said, "kept millions of men in bondage, forbidding them to marry...and forbidding them to be educated."⁴⁵³ While

⁴⁵⁰ *Catholic Telegraph*, July 9, 1862; Monsignor Dupanloup to Archbishop Purcell, March 12, 1865, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁵¹ For example, the *Catholic Telegraph* approved of Dupanloup's sentiments. However, since the weekly was still strongly anti-abolitionist, the *Telegraph* stressed that Dupanloup was not advocating immediate abolition of the institution, but rather a gradual emancipation process with compensation to slave owners. It is noteworthy that Archbishop Purcell was still in Europe when the *Catholic Telegraph* addressed Dupanloup's pastoral letter. See *Catholic Telegraph*, June 11, 18, 25, 1862.

⁴⁵² See Deye, "Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War," 31-32.

⁴⁵³ *Catholic Telegraph*, September 3, 1862. Civil law in slave states typically forbid slaves from marrying without the consent of their masters. The penalty for violating the will of the master regarding matrimony was death. In his *Theologia Moralis*, Kenrick taught that slaves unjustly prohibited to marry were free to marry each other without the presence of a priest. See Brokhage, "Francis Patrick Kenrick's Opinion on Slavery," 188. Regarding the ability for a slave to receive an education in the South, a very good summary can be found the commentaries of James Kent:

In Georgia, by an act of 1829, no person is permitted to teach a slave, negro, or free person of color to read or write. So, in Virginia, by statute in 1830, meetings of free negroes, to learn reading or writing, are unlawful, and subjects them to corporal punishment; and it is unlawful for white persons to assemble with free negroes or slaves, to teach them to read or write. The prohibitory act of the legislature of Alabama, passed in the session of 1831-2, relative to instruction to be given to the slave, or free colored population, or exhortation, or preaching to them, or any mischievous influence attempted to exert over them, is sufficiently penal. Laws of

many in America had argued for peace through compromise (as Purcell had once done), Purcell blamed the South for their refusal to compromise on the issue of slavery. If they had, he reasoned, “after a given period, say fifty, seventy or an hundred years, she would abolish slavery...” there would be no need for war. However, the South has refused to do this. Displaying perhaps knowledge of Cochin’s *L’Abolition de l’esclavage*, Purcell continued his lecture by stressing that the War could end immediately if slaves were declared free by a presidential proclamation. However, the Union has chosen not to do this. Purcell concluded by stressing that the Union could not allow the South to secede because it would establish a dangerous precedent for secession and encourage border warfare.⁴⁵⁴

The lecture is significant for it marks the major shift in Purcell’s view on emancipation. It is also noteworthy because it seems to suggest the possibility of a governmentally enforced emancipation project just three weeks prior to the September 22 issuing of Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. While Purcell at this time was not yet ready to advocate a policy of immediate emancipation, his September confession made him the first and only American Catholic bishop prior to January 1, 1863 to openly call for an end of slavery after the war. However, Purcell’s lecture seemed to have had little effect upon his flock. Just barely a month removed from the racial riots that rocked the

similar import are presumed to exist in the other slave-holding states; but in Louisiana the law on this subject is armed with tenfold severity. It not only forbids any person teaching slaves to read or write but it declares that any person using language, in any public discourse, from the bar, beach, stage, or pulpit, or any other place, or in any private conversation, or making use of any signs or actions, having a tendency to produce discontent among the free color population, or insubordination among the slaves, or who shall be knowingly instrumental in bringing into the state any paper, book or pamphlet having the like tendency, shall on conviction, be punished with imprisonment or death, at the discretion of the court.” See James Kent, *Commentaries on American Law* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1884), 133.

city, the average Cincinnati Catholic was not interested in hearing from their prelate sentiments advocating the emancipation of slaves. In the upcoming state elections, the Peace Democrats overwhelmingly won control of the State, spurred on by the slogan championed by the editor of the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*: “The Constitution as it is, the Union as it was, and the Negroes where they are.”⁴⁵⁵

Purcell would not make another public statement on the Civil War or slavery for nearly a year, leaving it up to the *Catholic Telegraph* to issue statements on the two heated topics. Purcell’s lecture evidently had an affect on the *Telegraph*’s outlook, for in the final months of 1862, the weekly became more open to idea of emancipation, and thus moved further away from the opinions advocated by the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*. When Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation was issued, the *Telegraph* did not criticize it for its immediacy policy.⁴⁵⁶ By the start of 1863, The *Telegraph* found itself increasingly at odds with not only secular papers like the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, but also Catholic papers like Baltimore’s *Catholic Mirror* and New York’s *Freeman’s Journal*. For example, when the Emancipation Manifesto abolished serfdom in Russia, the *Catholic Telegraph* rejoiced that now Catholicism would flourish in that country, for “Our Church and slavery have never gone along well together.”⁴⁵⁷ The New York *Freeman’s Journal* judged the *Telegraph*’s sentiment an argument for the Catholic Church’s fundamental opposition to the institution of slavery. Thus, the journal’s editor attacked the *Telegraph*

⁴⁵⁴ *Catholic Telegraph*, August 27, 1862.

⁴⁵⁵ Deye, “Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War,” 35; Frank I. Klement, “Catholics as Copperheads during the Civil War,” in *Lincoln’s Critics: The Copperheads of the North* (Shippensburg: White Mane Books, 1999), 93-108; Wilson, “The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer and Civil War Politics,” 8.

⁴⁵⁶ *Catholic Telegraph*, October 1, 1862.

⁴⁵⁷ *Catholic Telegraph*, March 25, 1863.

as being ignorant of ecclesiastical history.⁴⁵⁸ In its reply to this attack, the *Telegraph* appealed to ecclesiastical history and in its final analysis, crossed formally over into the abolitionist camp.

The April 8 edition of the *Catholic Telegraph* began by restating the thesis of its March 25 entry, namely, “that slavery and the Catholic Church could never get along well together.” Rather than using “revolutionary means,” the Church patiently advocated gradual manumission until slavery had been abolished. Once abolished, the Church would not allow it to begin again. In the United States, the *Telegraph* asserted, slavery had been snuffed out for good, and thus time should not be spent defending or condemning a “dead” institution. However, before concluding the article, the weekly’s editors wished to defend their knowledge of ecclesiastical history.⁴⁵⁹

The *Telegraph* begins its defense by quoting from the renowned Catholic priest and author, Jaime Luciano Balmes. Concerning the Church’s influence on the abolition of slavery, Balmes had wrote:

...this is a truth too clear and evident to be questioned....It did all that was possible in favor of human liberty; if it did not advance more rapidly in the work, it was because it could not do so without compromising the undertaking—without creating serious obstacles to the desired emancipation. Such is the result at which we arrive when we have thoroughly examined the charges made against some proceedings of the Church...That slavery endured for a long time in the presence of the Church is true; but it was always declining, and only lasted as long as was necessary to realize the benefit without violence—without shock—without compromising [sic], its universality and its continuation.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁸ *Freeman’s Journal*, April 4, 1863.

⁴⁵⁹ *Catholic Telegraph*, April 8, 1863.

⁴⁶⁰ The editor of the *Catholic Telegraph* is quoting Jaime Luciano Balmes, *Protestantism and Catholicity compared in their effects on the civilization of Europe*, trans. C.J. Hanford and Robert Kershaw (Baltimore: J. Murphy; Pittsburg: G. Quigley, 1851), 91-94. The purpose of Balmes’ study was to defend Catholicism’s orderliness against the anarchical spirit of Protestantism. The study is essentially apologetic in nature. From a historical standpoint, it is of little significance.

The *Telegraph* questions how one could possibly argue that the Church was ever in favor of slavery, for as Balmes' words show, Catholicism has always "proclaimed men's fraternity with each other, and their equality before God, and therefore could not be the advocate of slavery."⁴⁶¹

After briefly citing scripture to defend its abolitionist tilt, the *Telegraph* concluded by listing what a few Popes have had to say on the matter.⁴⁶² The editor noted how Paul III, Urban VIII, and Pius II had all "condemned in the strongest terms the crimes of reducing men to slavery, separating them from their wives and children, or in any manner depriving them of their liberty, or upon any pretext to preach or teach that it is lawful." The editor then focused his attention squarely on Pope Gregory XVI's *In Supremo Apostolatus*. The *Telegraph* quoted the apostolic letter at length, emphasizing the pope's condemnation of all ecclesiastics and laypersons that "presume to defend that very trade in negroes *as lawful under any pretext or studied excuse*, or otherwise to preach, or in any manner, publicly or privately, to teach contrary to those things in which we have charged in this Apostolic Letter."⁴⁶³ For all who claimed that the letter dealt solely with the foreign slave trade—whether it be James McMaster, Archbishop John England, or Bishop Augustin Verot—the *Telegraph* asserted such individuals were worthy of such a condemnation.⁴⁶⁴ Those "who wish to despise the venerable Pontiffs

⁴⁶¹ *Catholic Telegraph*, April 8, 1863.

⁴⁶² The *Catholic Telegraph* quotes Paul's letter to Philemon 1:8-16. The *Freeman's Journal* had also used Paul to support slavery. See *Freeman's Journal*, April 4, 1863.

⁴⁶³ *Emphasis* added by the editor of the *Catholic Telegraph*.

⁴⁶⁴ "But it will be said that Gregory XVI alluded to the foreign slave trade! This however, is a pretext, and has not even the dignity of a "studied excuse." (The *Catholic Telegraph*, April 8, 1863).

and be jailors of their fellowmen, may endeavor to close and lock and bolt it. We take no part in any such proceeding.”⁴⁶⁵

The *Telegraph*'s April 8 article coincided with the Republican Party carrying the city elections held April 4, 1863. However, as is evident by the paper's March 25 edition, the *Telegraph* was already declaring itself fundamentally opposed to maintaining the institution of slavery. Furthermore, it must be stated that the paper was never meant to be a political paper. It was written for Catholics to instruct them on Catholic teachings and morality. The editors firmly believed slavery to be primarily a moral issue. However, given that the majority of Catholics still voted for the Peace Democrats in the city elections, it is clear that the *Telegraph*'s sentiments were at odds with those of Cincinnati's Catholic population. Still, the paper pressed on.⁴⁶⁶ It boldly pronounced that all subscribers who objected to its “telling these plain truths,” and wished to cancel their subscriptions, “we hope [they] will do so at once.”⁴⁶⁷ The paper did indeed lose subscriptions during this time, though not enough to financially cripple its publication. Rather than compromise its views to appease its audience, the *Telegraph* maintained its abolitionist streak for the remainder of the Civil War.⁴⁶⁸

Consequently, the *Catholic Telegraph* won the respect and admiration of Orestes Brownson. Brownson was aware that the majority of American Catholics dismissed his antislavery arguments as a product of his elitist, Puritan upbringing. With the *Catholic Telegraph* and its Irish editor on his side, Brownson reasoned that the immigrant Catholic

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁶ Deye, “Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War,” 70-72.

⁴⁶⁷ *Catholic Telegraph*, April 8, 1863.

community would finally stand up and take notice.⁴⁶⁹ However, far from winning the approval of his fellow Catholic journalists, the *Catholic Telegraph* was decidedly unsuccessful. In addition to the *Freeman's Journal*, the *Catholic Telegraph* found itself consistently battling with New York's *Metropolitan Record*, Baltimore's *Catholic Mirror* and the *Boston Pilot*.⁴⁷⁰

During the gubernatorial election of 1863, the Archbishop of Cincinnati once again took center stage in his support for the Union and for emancipation. The contest was a battle between Republican John Brough and the notorious "Copperhead" Democrat Clement Vallandigham.⁴⁷¹ Known for his outspoken attacks against the Union's war effort, Vallandigham had been exiled to the Confederacy, but had since journeyed to Canada where he conducted his campaign for governor for the state of Ohio.⁴⁷² If Vallandigham won, it would amount to a loss of Ohio to the Confederacy. Fortunately for the Union, Vallandigham was soundly defeated by over one-hundred-thousand votes. President Lincoln was overjoyed at the results. In not electing Vallandigham, he believed, "Ohio has saved the Union."⁴⁷³

On Election Day, October 13, 1863, Archbishop Purcell went to the polls to cast his ballot publicly for Brough. Auxiliary Bishop Rosecrans also made no secret of his

⁴⁶⁸ Deye, "Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War," 70-72.

⁴⁶⁹ Brownson, "Are Catholics Pro-Slavery and Disloyal?" *Brownson's Quarterly Review* (July 1863): 367-379.

⁴⁷⁰ Deye, "Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War," 72.

⁴⁷¹ Brough was a recent convert to the Republican Party. He had formerly been a War Democrat. See Frank L. Klement, "Ohio Politics in 1863," in *Lincoln's Critics: The Copperheads of the North* (Shippensburg: White Mane Books, 1999), 118-134.

⁴⁷² Frank L. Klement, "Clement L. Vallandigham's Exile in the Confederacy, May 25-June 17, 1863," *The Journal of Southern History* 3 (May 1965): 149-163.

⁴⁷³ George Henry Porter, *Ohio Politics During the Civil War Period* (New York: Columbia University, Longmans, Green & co., 1911), 167-179; Klement, "Ohio Politics in 1863," 131-132.

support for the Republican candidate. Fellow Cincinnati Catholics, however, did not follow suit. Vallandigham's highest poll numbers came from wards with a heavy concentration of Irish Catholics.⁴⁷⁴ After the election, Purcell received criticism for campaigning for a candidate that supported the continued prosecution of the war. The *Catholic Telegraph* answered these charges by insisting the Archbishop had not campaigned, but had exercised his civic right to vote for whichever candidate he felt most qualified. The *Telegraph* went on to remind Purcell's critics that the Catholic Church does not align itself to any political party.⁴⁷⁵ Still, there was considerable opposition against Purcell on this issue. The *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* viciously attacked the Archbishop for his role in the elections for the next several months.⁴⁷⁶ The opposition against Purcell was so strong that the prelate felt it necessary to offer a public defense of his position. Thus, on November 1, 1863, Purcell gave a lecture at Mozart Hall in an attempt to articulate his motivations.

In his lecture, Purcell argued that his vote for Brough was a vote for law and order. He then acknowledged the commonly held fear that emancipated slaves would pose a threat to the white population of Ohio. Purcell did not think such a scenario would take place once slavery had been abolished since such migration on the part of the African American was next to impossible. As far as the emancipated slave, Purcell

⁴⁷⁴ Deye, "Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War," 38. Deye unfortunately only considers the Irish element in his figures while ignoring the German Catholic population. However, it is safe to assume that a large percentage of Catholic Germans also cast their vote for Vallandigham. See Alexander Richter, "Slavery, Abolitionism, and Race in Cincinnati's Antebellum German-language Press and Emil Klauprecht's German-American Novel" (Master's Thesis, University of Cincinnati, 1999). See also Klement, "Ohio Politics in 1863," 122.

⁴⁷⁵ *Catholic Telegraph*, October 21, 28, 1863.

⁴⁷⁶ *Daily Enquirer*, October 30, November 3, 5, 7, 1863; January 2, 9, 19, February 27, March 26, 1864.

admitted he had always wished for racial equality, for it was the Christian mission to set people free. Purcell concluded by quoting the French liberal Catholic, Charles Forbes René de Montalembert, who, while giving a speech calling for a free church in a free state at a large Catholic congress at Malines, stressed the universal freedom that all races share.⁴⁷⁷

The abolitionist stance taken by the Archbishop and the *Catholic Telegraph* had taken its toll on the suffragan bishops of the archdiocese, particularly Bishop Martin Spalding of Louisville. Four days after The *Catholic Telegraph* published its April 8, 1863 strongly worded antislavery apology, Spalding wrote disgustingly in his journal that the piece was “a straight-out Abolition article” that devoted the Church to the “almost Satanic” agenda of its adversaries.⁴⁷⁸ Determined to halt the aggressive stance taken by his metropolitan, on April 14, Spalding sent a letter to Archbishop Francis Kenrick seeking his advice on a proposed treatment on the Civil War he intended on giving to the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation to the Faith. He wished to describe to the Congregation the causes of the War and its influence on religion. He also intended on telling the Congregation that most bishops in the United States advocated a policy of nonintervention and that many of the members of his flock were embarrassed by the pro-Union stance taken by Archbishop Purcell and the *Telegraph*. Having gained Kenrick’s

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., November 4, 1863; *Daily Commercial*, November 2, 1863; *Daily Enquirer*, October 30, November 3, 1863.

⁴⁷⁸ Quoted in Thomas W. Spalding, “Martin John Spalding, bishop of Louisville and Archbishop of Baltimore, 1810-1872,” (Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1971), 204.

approval, Spalding proceeded to write his dissertation. The document was sent to the Cardinal Prefect Alessandro Barnabò in May 1863.⁴⁷⁹

After several weeks, a frustrated Spalding sent a follow-up letter in August 1863 to Cardinal Barnabò in order to determine if his dissertation had been received. After inquiring about the dissertation, Spalding made mention of the good the Holy Father's letters to Archbishop Hughes and Archbishop Odin had done in fostering peace and charity in their respective jurisdictions. Perhaps, Spalding wondered, if all the bishops in America were guided by the principle of nonintervention, the conflict in which they were currently embroiled might be assuaged. The implication was clear. Although he did not come out and say it, Spalding believed that a similar letter addressed to Archbishop Purcell would persuade his metropolitan to refrain from using the pulpit as a political soapbox. In his response, Barnabò notified Spalding that he had read the dissertation with great interest and had presented it to the Holy Father. He assured Spalding it would be examined with great prudence.⁴⁸⁰ Apparently Pope Pius IX understood what Spalding had implied, for on November 15, 1863, the pontiff wrote a personal letter addressed to Archbishop Purcell similar to the two he had previously written the Archbishops of New York and New Orleans.

While waiting for an official reply from Rome, Spalding tried to remain unassuming. However, his frustrations with Purcell and the *Telegraph* were sometimes difficult to hide. For example, on October 21, 1863, just one week after Purcell had cast his vote for Republican John Brough in Ohio's gubernatorial race, Spalding wrote to his

⁴⁷⁹ Thomas W. Spalding, "Martin John Spalding," 205-207.

archbishop informing him that he would be unable to send priests and sisters to aid Bishop William Elder of Natchez in ministering the growing number of African American orphans there. Spalding then suggested that Purcell's clergy "should be the first to volunteer in the good cause...especially those who write for the *Telegraph*—I merely report—I do not know whether I am acting prudently in doing so." It was hard to miss Spalding's insinuation.⁴⁸¹

By the beginning of 1864, it appeared as if Spalding's covert actions with the Vatican had finally paid off. Purcell himself informed the Bishop of Louisville that the former would shortly be receiving a letter from the pope, presumably the same type of letter sent to Archbishop Hughes and Archbishop Odin. Spalding was overjoyed by the news. "The Autograph Letter of Pius IX with which you are to be honored will no doubt become public, & then we may perhaps be better able to judge his sentiments, in which we all no doubt willingly & lovingly acquiesce."⁴⁸² Spalding was sure that the letter would include a strong insistence by the Holy Father for Purcell and the *Telegraph* to stop delving in partisan politics and start working towards bringing about peace. However, the Archbishop of Cincinnati had an entirely different understanding concerning the contents of the letter.

On January 27, 1864, Purcell published his Lenten Pastoral in the *Catholic Telegraph*. In this letter, he informed his flock that he had been informed of the

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., 210-211. For a discussion on the two letters sent by Pius IX to Archbishop Hughes and Archbishop Odin, see Stock, *United States Ministers to the Papal States*, 282.

⁴⁸¹ Bishop Spalding to Archbishop Purcell, October 21, 1863, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁸² Bishop Spalding to Archbishop Purcell, January 11, 1864, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

impending arrival a letter from Pope Pius IX. The Archbishop boldly proclaimed that he had little doubt concerning its contents, since, according to Purcell's advisors, Pope Pius had expressed his sympathy for the Union. With this tacit approval from the Holy Father, Purcell closed his pastoral by reiterating his strong antislavery position: "We go with our whole heart and soul *for the maintenance of the Union and the abolition of slavery—against neither of which does the Supreme Pontiff of Christendom utter a single word...*"⁴⁸³

The Archbishop's use of the yet-to-be-received papal letter to espouse more pro-Union propaganda in a Lenten pastoral must have really displeased Spalding and other American bishops. Even before issuing the letter, the Archbishop had been advised by Spalding that if the former felt the need to delve into partisan politics, it would be better if he did not issue one at all.⁴⁸⁴ After its publication, Bishop Elder wrote to Purcell to express his shock at the abolitionist stance the Archbishop has continued to take and that the latter has caused a great deal of grief to Southern citizens.⁴⁸⁵ Even the pro-Union Bishop John Timon of Buffalo expressed his disappointment toward the political slant of Purcell's pastoral.⁴⁸⁶

The apparent tension between Purcell and some of his suffragan bishops became evident in the former's effort to convene a provincial council in the spring of 1864. In his letter to his suffragans announcing the council, the Archbishop specifically alluded to

⁴⁸³ *Catholic Telegraph*, January 27, 1864. *Emphasis* in original.

⁴⁸⁴ Bishop Spalding to Archbishop Purcell, January 4, 1864. Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁸⁵ Bishop Elder to Archbishop Purcell, February 18, 1864, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

how they as bishops could participate in ending the Civil War. Given Purcell's history and the attitudes held by some of his suffragans, one could easily conclude the latter looked upon the Archbishop's motives with some degree of suspicion.⁴⁸⁷ Indeed, just two weeks later, Bishop Lefevere of Detroit informed Purcell the Civil War clause caused him unease given that it would inevitably lead to a discussion of politics at the council. Lefevere went on to describe his personal distaste for politics and even proposed that the American clergy be forbidden from participating in the political affairs of the country.⁴⁸⁸

Evidently, many of the suffragan bishops, already apprehensive about Purcell's strong pro-Union position, felt that the Archbishop was under the influence of his auxiliary, Bishop Rosecrans. As previously noted, Bishop Rosecrans was the brother of Union General William Rosecrans. In September 1863, the Union army was dealt a crushing blow when Rosecrans' troops were massacred at the Battle of Chickamauga. The defeat essentially ended the Union's western campaign. Judged by many as displaying poor judgment in the battle, Rosecrans military career never recovered. After the defeat, General Rosecrans was reassigned and given command of the Department of Missouri until the end of the war. Many of the suffragans of Cincinnati's archdiocese believe that General Rosecrans asserted his influence on his bishop brother who then in turn asserted influence on the Archbishop.⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁶ Bishop Timon to Bishop Lefevere, February 16, 1864, Diocese of Buffalo Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁸⁷ Archbishop Purcell to the Bishops of the Province of Cincinnati, February 2, 1864, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁸⁸ Bishop Lefevere to Archbishop Purcell, February 17, 1864, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁸⁹ Deye, "Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War," 42-43.

In his reply to Lefevere, Purcell acknowledged that Bishop Rosecrans was the author of the agenda for the council and thus gave credence to Lefevere's suspicion of outside influence. However, Purcell did not understand why this proved to be an obstacle. He assured his suffragan that politics would not be a part of the official agenda. However, one cannot expect to be politically neutral on certain issues. As for the issue of slavery, argued Purcell, to be antislavery is not akin to being a politician. For Purcell, slavery was a moral evil that the Church had a right to condemn. Indeed, other clergy and laypersons had condemned it. For proof, all Lefevere had to do is look at the antislavery example of Dupanloup and Montalembert. Purcell did, however suggest postponing the council until warmer weather could allow the suffragan bishop of the diocese of Sault Sainte Marie to attend.⁴⁹⁰ Most of the bishops wrote back letters of approval, including Bishop Maurice De St. Palais of Vincennes. However, De St. Palais was of the opinion that given the troubled times, there should be no council at all.⁴⁹¹

In the midst of all the excitement surrounding the proposed council, the long-awaited letter from Pope Pius IX was delivered to Archbishop Purcell. The letter did not contain the pro-Union sentiment the Archbishop expected. On February 17, 1864, the *Catholic Telegraph* printed an article entitled "Autograph Letter of his Holiness" but failed to actually include the letter itself. The article merely acknowledged that the Pope had written the Archbishop encouraging peace.⁴⁹² A quick inspection of the letter reveals the Pope's personal dissatisfaction with the course that Purcell had chosen to take. The

⁴⁹⁰ Archbishop Purcell to Bishop Lefevere, February 19, 1864, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Bishop De St. Palais to Archbishop Purcell, March 14, 1864.

⁴⁹² The *Catholic Telegraph*, February 17, 1864.

Pope referenced letters he had already sent to Archbishop Hughes and to Archbishop Odin calling for peace, and asked Purcell to align himself with the other bishops to achieve conciliation between the North and the South. The Holy Father expressed his personal doubt on the North's desire and preparedness to work for peace and thus asked Purcell to exercise discretion in his actions.⁴⁹³ The letter amounted to a rebuke of both Purcell and the *Catholic Telegraph's* pro-Union stance. The publication of the letter would have provided plenty of ammunition for the "Copperhead" Catholics, such as Bishop Spalding or James McMaster, the editor of New York's *Freeman's Journal*. It is no wonder Purcell refused to let the letter be promulgated.

Upon learning of the *Catholic Telegraph's* failure to reproduce the papal letter, an exasperated Spalding issued a letter of protest to Cardinal Barnabò. In addition to protesting Purcell's refusal to print the Pope's letter, Spalding also complained about his metropolitan's January 27 Lenten Pastoral advocating the continuance of the prosecution of the war and the abolition of slavery. Spalding insisted Purcell's uncompromising abolitionist position was actually doing more harm than good for the slave population and was causing a rift between the Archbishop and the rest of the bishops of his province. Spalding insisted that these issues, along with the general belief among the suffragan bishops of the influence the Rosecrans brothers had upon Purcell, made it impossible for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati to unite with the wishes of peace expressed by the Holy

⁴⁹³ Pope Pius IX to Archbishop Purcell, November, 15, 1863. A photostatic copy was consulted at the University of Notre Dame; the original is at the Ursuline Convent, Saint Martin, Brown County, Ohio.

Father. Spalding concluded by expressing his doubts about the upcoming provincial council given all the turmoil.⁴⁹⁴

The issue even to hold a council began to gain steam after the March 9 edition of the *Catholic Telegraph* supported a Union proposition calling for an oath of allegiance of all persons holding a public office, and after General Rosecrans required a similar oath for all participants of religious convocations in Missouri. It did not take long for both Lefevre and Spalding to conclude that the real purpose of the proposed provincial council was for the swearing of an oath of allegiance to the Union.⁴⁹⁵ Bishop Lefevre even apparently contacted the Archbishop of St. Louis about the matter and received his recommendation that Cincinnati's provincial council ought to be postponed indefinitely. He also called into question the Catholicity of General Rosecrans.⁴⁹⁶ When another suffragan informed Purcell that he was heading for Rome and would not be back until September, the Archbishop had heard enough.⁴⁹⁷

An angry Purcell wrote back to Lefevre stating he hoped the Detroit Bishop made a good act of contrition before saying Mass for accusing General Rosecrans of merely pretending "to be a dutiful son of the Church." Purcell assured Lefevre that the General's devoutness to his religion was no act. Nevertheless, Purcell stated that given

⁴⁹⁴ Thomas W. Spalding, "Martin John Spalding," 214-215.

⁴⁹⁵ Bishop Lefevre to Archbishop Purcell, March 15, 1864; Bishop Spalding to Archbishop Purcell, March 22, 1864, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁹⁶ Bishop Lefevre to Archbishop Purcell, March 15, 1864, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection., University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁹⁷ Bishop Luers to Archbishop Purcell, March 24, 1864, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

the persistent objections made by Lefevere and other bishops, the Archbishop has decided to call off the provincial council.⁴⁹⁸

In preparing his report to Cardinal Barnabò explaining the postponement of the council, Purcell noted that the bishops feared that political issues would be part of the council's agenda and many were leery about the possibility of providing an oath of allegiance to the Union.⁴⁹⁹ To these two reasons, Bishop Spalding added that many suffragans might feel inhibited to criticize openly their Archbishop from meddling in politics and many in attendance would object to the presence of Bishop Sylvester Rosecrans at the council. Such animosity would make deliberations impossible.⁵⁰⁰ Although there would be at least two informal meetings of the bishops after this date, no official Provincial Council was called until 1882, one year after Purcell's death.⁵⁰¹

Purcell's insistence on convening the provincial council along with the difficulty he faced in achieving this end illuminates the prelate's strong conviction that slavery was a moral evil and that the Civil War must be continued until Union victory was achieved. The loss of subscriptions to the *Catholic Telegraph* after its April 8 editorial along with the majority of Cincinnati Catholics' refusal to follow his example in the 1863 gubernatorial election conveyed that the majority of his flock did not adhere to his antislavery sentiments. His repeated calls for the abolition of slavery and his condemnation of major Catholic papers like New York's *Freeman's Journal* and the *Metropolitan Record* conveyed that he was also at odds with a large percentage of

⁴⁹⁸ Archbishop Purcell to Bishop Lefevere, March 24, 1864, Archdiocese of Cincinnati Collection, University of Notre Dame Archives.

⁴⁹⁹ Deye, "Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War," 46.

⁵⁰⁰ Thomas W. Spalding, "Martin John Spalding," 215.

Catholics around the country.⁵⁰² The failure of the 1864 provincial shows that Purcell's steadfastness was also at odds even with the bishops of his own diocese.

⁵⁰¹ Deye, "Archbishop Purcell and the Civil War," 46.

⁵⁰² *Catholic Telegraph*, November 16, 1864.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

At a prestigious Catholic High School in Orlando, Florida, the 340 paged textbook used for its Church history course devotes only half a page on the subject of Catholics and slavery. Of this half page, only two sentences deal specifically with the Church's teaching concerning the peculiar institution.⁵⁰³ The rest of the material does not focus on slavery *per se*, but on American Catholic participation in the Civil War. From this scant information, the textbook's authors concludes that American "Catholics followed the beliefs of their neighbors. With no official Catholic policy on slavery, most people based decisions on what was economically best for their families."⁵⁰⁴ One can argue the textbook—possessing both the *Nihil Obstat* and *Imprimatur*—could only devote so much time and space to certain topics within a course dealing with the entire history of the Church. However, as has been seen within the pages of this study, the American Catholic response to slavery in the years leading up to the Civil War was far more complex and requires much more attention than just two sentences.

⁵⁰³ The text reads, "In 1839 Pope Gregory XVI condemned the slave trade. However, this pronouncement did not identify slavery as an evil in itself." See Maurice O'Connell and Joseph Stoutzenberger, *The Church Through History* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Religion Publishers, 2003), 236.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

The problem one finds when discussing a topic as complex as the American Catholic opinion on slavery is a failure to properly define the term “slavery.” For example, the abovementioned high school textbook concluded that there was “no official Catholic policy on slavery.” However, there is no attempt on the part of the authors to describe what they mean when they use the word “slavery.” There was the abstract slavery spoken of by the likes of Augustine and Aquinas. Theologians define this type of slavery as a perpetual servitude endured by an individual due to defeat in war, punishment for a crime, or the payment of a debt. Such forms of slavery were considered justified by the Catholic Church during the Middle Ages. On the other hand, there was the concrete form of slavery that existed in America’s southern states. This type of slavery was based upon the perceived inferiority of a given race and the exploitation of that race exclusively for the economic gain of their oppressors. As noted in the introduction of this study, the papacy consistently condemned racial slavery “as soon as it was discovered.”⁵⁰⁵

Indeed, there *was* an official American Catholic policy on slavery during the antebellum era. Concerned with establishing themselves within the country, American Catholics wished to remain as aloof as possible when confronted with potentially divisive issues. In the years leading up to the Civil War, there was no greater divisive issue than slavery. Thus, the official American Catholic policy was to take a thoroughly ambiguous stance on the issue. Theologians like Bishop John England and Archbishop Francis Kenrick effectively accomplished this by muddling the traditional, abstract classification

⁵⁰⁵ Joel S. Panzer, *The Popes and Slavery*, 10.

of slavery as defined by Augustine and Aquinas, with the concrete reality that was the southern states' system of chattel slavery. The Vatican's failure to condemn these prelates' interpretations ensured that strongly worded papal pronouncements, such as Gregory XVI's *In Supremo Apostolatus*, had little lasting effect upon the opinions of most American Catholics.

Due to a lack of clarity on the issue, few Catholics—lay or clerical—viewed slavery as practiced in the Southern States as being incompatible with the practice of their religion. Thus, few developed a definitive opinion concerning the issue. Armed with the theology of Kenrick and England, slaveholding Catholics could rationalize that slavery was not contrary to natural law, while ignoring the bitter reality of the South's chattel system. When abuses were brought to light by the abolitionists, Catholics, using the same theology, could lament slavery as an evil in the abstract yet fail to provide a practical solution on how to go about eradicating the institution. Thus, Catholics could have slaves yet condemn slavery at the same time.

There were several reasons why the antebellum Church wished to maintain ambiguity. First, the Church was subject to vicious nativist attacks. In the North, abolitionists typically attacked Catholics as being proslavery while southern nativists believed the majority of Catholics to be proponents of abolitionism. Finding themselves in a no-win situation, most Catholics chose a noncommittal approach. Second, since its earliest incarnation, the abolitionist movement was connected to anti-Catholicism. To be affiliated with such an organization was almost equivalent to renouncing one's faith. Finally, Catholic leaders, such as Archbishop John Hughes of New York, believed that

the actions of abolitionists would fuel sectional tensions and inevitably irreconcilably divide the nation.

The average American Catholic rarely expressed an opinion on the issue. However, their sentiments on race and slavery can be obtained by examining their social, geographical, national, and economic status within America. Irish American Catholics in New York, for example, typically wanted to move up the socio-economic ladder and stop being viewed as foreigners and immigrants, but simply as “white” Americans. They struggled to win their place within white America, and thus often found themselves in direct, frequently violent competition with African Americans. Their leader, Archbishop John Hughes, while “no friend of slavery,” was strongly anti-abolitionist and refused to adopt concrete measures to bring about his proposed emancipation policy, choosing to leave the matter entirely in God’s hands.

French Catholics in New Orleans, wary of the liberal opinions emerging from the French revolutions that rocked their homeland, also did not express definitive issues on slavery. Indeed, many 19th century French Americans had fled French territories such as Saint-Domingue after its extremely violent slave uprising. Living amongst a large population of both free and enslaved African Americans, French Catholics of New Orleans were terrified a similar scenario might happen in the South. There were also economic concerns to consider if immediate emancipation robbed their plantations of African slaves.

German Catholics in Cincinnati typically wanted to maintain their old world customs and language and were apathetic regarding the issue of slavery. They often

fought against assimilation to American culture. Although they typically held racist sentiments toward African Americans, the issue of slavery was an American issue and unless it had an impact on their personal lives, they generally believed Americans should deal with it. They usually did not listen to their Irish archbishop and there is no reason to conclude they chose to listen to him when he adopted his antislavery position.

Indeed, Archbishop Purcell and the editors of Cincinnati's *Catholic Telegraph* stood alone in their abolitionism. While he initially adopted the typical American Catholic ambiguous position, his 1861 trip to Rome and subsequent interaction with the French Catholic abolitionist Félix Dupanloup determined him to become an outspoken advocate for emancipation, even prior to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

Despite the consistent condemnation of racial slavery coming from papal encyclicals, the papacy's pronouncements never went beyond an appeal to one's Christian morals. Sadly, the Vatican did not endorse a course of action proposing an end to slavery prior to the Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Like the antebellum hierarchy, ambiguity seemed to hold sway within the Vatican. While Pius IX publicly endorsed Cochin's antislavery writings in 1862, at the beginning of 1864, he wrote a letter to Archbishop Purcell advising him to back off from his pro-Unionist, antislavery position and work instead for peace, even if peace meant the continuation of slavery in the South. Even the semi-official papal newspapers condemned Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and expressed its sympathy for the Southern cause. Only when the victor in the Civil War was all but decided, did Pius reaffirm the abolitionist spirit of Pope

Gregory's *In Supremo Apostolatus* in his condemnation of the proslavery sentiments of Bishop Auguste Marie Martin of Natchitoches.

For the reasons enumerated within this study, it can be reasonably concluded that the Catholic opinion of slavery in antebellum America, though influenced by factors such as location and social position, was in no way uniform across the country or even within specific communities or social classes. Ambiguous at best, it is not until after the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s that the Church made a fundamental stand against all forms of slavery. From this conclusion, it is apparent that more clarity is needed when speaking on the issue of slavery and the history of slavery and the Catholic Church, for when American Catholics of the antebellum era were called upon to respond to the evils of slavery, most were only able to offer a silent reply.

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