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**"Stay at Home and Live with Integrity":  
Advice to German Emigrants to the United States  
from the Journeymen's Father**

In recent decades, American historians have asserted that a broad chasm existed between the rhetoric of equality in Jacksonian America and the actual economic reality that existed. Several years ago, Edward Pessen observed that the so-called "Era of the Common Man" brought no startling social or economic improvements for the common sort of people. More recently, authors like Alan Dawley, Paul E. Johnson, and Sean Wilentz have argued that not only was there no improvement in the conditions for working men, but the universe of options for skilled journeymen was undergoing a radical contraction, which endangered their integrity as an independent productive class.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, eroding economic conditions seem to have led to a decline in the commitment to democratic ideology. Michael Holt posits that economic dislocation of the artisan class as a result of the industrial revolution and increased pressure for jobs created by rising immigration led many Americans to support programs which were designed to reduce immigration, or at least to reduce the political influence of incoming immigrants. This support resulted in the rise of such antidemocratic organizations as the nativist societies which eventually formed the American Know-Nothing party.<sup>2</sup>

Although these conclusions seem quite apparent in light of recent scholarship, documentary substantiation from within the period is difficult to find. There was, however, at least one nineteenth-century European observer, a German craftsman's advocate, Father Adolph Kolping, who recognized the chasm between the rhetoric of equality of the American Revolution and the reality of American freedom during the antebellum period. Founded in his own antidemocratic bias and unique in its realization of the shrinking opportunity for the artisan, Kolping's writings provide corroboration for our current understanding of the processes at work in Jacksonian America and peculiar insights into the role of those processes in the industrializing world at large during that era of upheaval.

Father Kolping assumed the leadership of the Journeymen's Association (*Gesellenverein*) in 1847 and headed it until his death in 1865. Headquartered in Cologne, the Association grew until it had 420 clubs with a membership of sixty thousand by Kolping's death. With the expansion of the Journeymen's Association throughout the German-speaking parts of Central Europe, Kolping became a prominent spokesman for the Catholic wing of the Christian social movement and an influential Catholic leader. The Journeymen's Association was founded to aid this "most rootless segment of German society" and to guide them in the right direction so that they would become good middle-class citizens.<sup>3</sup> Kolping was convinced that the fortune of the artisan class rested on individual ability tempered with religious and middle-class virtues. The purpose of the Journeymen's Association was to take the young journeyman and make of him a religious and able master.<sup>4</sup>

Because the Journeymen's Association emphasized education as a crucial factor in achieving middle-class status for journeymen, Kolping began publication of the *Rheinische Volksblätter* in 1854 to disseminate information to the members. The *Rheinische Volksblätter*, a weekly newspaper, contained information about other clubs in the association, articles on morality, articles on religion, poetry, and a section on politics entitled "Politisches Tagebuch" (political diary). The newspaper reflected Kolping's opinions on any number of issues, especially politics. During the twelve years he edited the paper, he wrote over 45 percent of the articles. The "Politisches Tagebuch" section was written almost entirely by Kolping.<sup>5</sup> Because the *Rheinische Volksblätter* was the link between Kolping and the members and reflected Kolping's opinions, it provides us with an excellent forum to study and analyze Kolping's opinions on the United States between 1854 and 1865.

As a champion for independent journeymen, especially as an outspoken advocate of their gradual transition into a politically responsible, economically independent, and morally upright middle class, Kolping reacted in horror to what he perceived as the artisan's fate upon emigrating to the United States. In the news coming from the United States prior to the Civil War, Kolping believed he detected a society in decline. Although he was in no position, either geographically or philosophically, to diagnose fully the disease, Kolping recognized symptoms in American political, economic, and religious life that he felt would be fatal to his hopes for a strong German middle-class labor force.

Political stability was an essential component in Kolping's program for middle-class development. He favored monarchy over republicanism, though he vehemently opposed the revolutionary overthrow of a legitimate government.<sup>6</sup> This promonarchical position can be seen in his denunciation of the United States for its lack of freedom, despite American claims to the contrary.<sup>7</sup> He wrote that "one should thank God if a clever prince, with the fear of God in his heart, has the regiment in hand, and protects rights, law and order." Kolping's sentiments toward democracy are abundantly clear from his

statement that a monarchy brings order and rights while a republic, even if it claims to be free, brings only anarchy.<sup>8</sup> Kolping was negatively disposed toward the American democratic experiment on general principle. This prejudice was greatly aggravated, however, by the peculiar forms of political instability characteristic of the years just prior to the American Civil War.

Given its startling newsworthiness, peculiarly American character, and immediate relevance to Kolping's audience, it is not surprising that he seized upon the Know-Nothing party as an example of American democratic excess. Kolping's appraisal of the Know-Nothings is aptly illustrated in an article from the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung* which reprinted accounts of a Know-Nothing attack on foreign-born voters during an election in 1855 in Louisville, Kentucky. The implication of the article was that "free" America allowed indiscriminate attacks on Catholics and foreigners.<sup>9</sup> He continued this theme by reprinting a personal letter from a German emigrant to America which warned potential emigrants about the Know-Nothings whose goal it was to deny civil rights to foreigners and to outlaw the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>10</sup> In another case, Kolping reported that, because of the Know-Nothings, bishops needed bodyguards to go to church. His editorial comment: "Oh, the praised American tolerance!"<sup>11</sup>

In seizing upon the Know-Nothings, Kolping came much closer than one might expect to identifying a real problem for journeyman laborers—native or German—in America. Lurking beneath the nativist rhetoric in Know-Nothingism was a structure of sentiments not unlike Kolping's own. Like Kolping's constituency, support for the Know-Nothing party was drawn primarily from small-scale masters and journeymen who practiced as yet non-industrialized skilled trades.<sup>12</sup> In the face of the twin threats of industrialization and competition from skilled and unskilled immigrant workers, threats to both their socio-economic integrity and middle-class aspirations, American journeymen struck out at the most obvious and vulnerable source of their discomfort—the immigrants. Hence the Know-Nothings had much the same goal as the *Gesellenverein*, championing the causes of American journeymen as Kolping championed that of their German counterparts. Kolping was thus in a good position to understand the severity of the Know-Nothing threat to German immigrant workers, and he used his various publications to dramatize the gross actions of his American counterparts in an effort to dissuade his own constituents from entering into a conflict that they could not win.

But to Kolping, the evils of Know-Nothingism were only the tip of the iceberg in the catalog of social ills in the United States. He also pointed to political corruption as indicative of the general depravity in America and as another reason not to emigrate. Astonished by reports that the election of the Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1856 cost bribes of \$100,000, he agreed completely with an American journalist who had written that in American politics anarchy and shabby tricks are the rule.<sup>13</sup> The railroad land scandal in Wisconsin gave Kolping another chance to report on the dishonesty

of Americans. The Wisconsin state legislature awarded over two million acres of land, which it had received from Congress to help in railroad building, to the Milwaukee and LaCrosse Company. Upon investigation, it was revealed that the company had bribed several state officials, including the governor, for the acquisition of the land. Kolping expressed shock at the example this set for the public and naively commented that such a scandal would never happen in Europe.<sup>14</sup>

The caning of Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts by Congressman Preston Brooks of South Carolina in 1856 provided Kolping with another example of American barbarism. After recounting the incident, Kolping sarcastically editorialized: "In America freedom stands at its prime. The representatives come to Washington armed to the teeth in order to defend their skins. If this country is not on its way out of freedom to barbarism, then I miss my guess."<sup>15</sup> He later added that the men of the Revolution were dead and a degenerate generation now ruled. The race was totally corrupt and consumptive and only the fresh, healthy blood of the new immigrants held it together. The people were morally corrupt as well. Even the church ministers who publicly condemned the bloodletting in Kansas collected money for guns and ammunition. Kolping commented that he had not heard of any Catholic priests doing this.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1854 and 1865 Kolping reprinted several letters from German emigrants, complaining about the bad economic conditions in the United States. The most common complaint was high prices. He reported that New York was more expensive than London and that in 1854 alone these high prices had caused three to four thousand emigrants to return to Europe. One artisan complained that a married craftsman, even when he could get work, could not earn enough money to have any left for savings.<sup>17</sup> Kolping claimed that one result of the high prices was a rise in poverty that led to an increase in crime. He used the high incidence of robbery and murder in the United States to reinforce his basic position against emigration.<sup>18</sup> Some of the letters concluded that unless conditions improved economic misery might lead to revolution.<sup>19</sup> To Kolping, the United States was a land of want, hunger, unemployment, steadily increasing cost of living, and great unrest. "Whoever comes to America," he wrote, "is ruined." He claimed he had not received a single, good report about America, only a river of complaints about the people and the conditions.<sup>20</sup>

This pessimistic view of economic conditions in America continued to be a major theme in the *Rheinische Volksblätter* for the rest of the 1850s. Besides his own editorial comments, Kolping reinforced his position by reprinting a warning from the German Society of New Orleans. This report advised Germans not to emigrate because poverty and misery were major problems. Many immigrants were forced to become beggars because the victuals were so expensive, work was difficult to find, and the pay was low.<sup>21</sup> During the Panic of 1857, Kolping reported that in America honest people were forced into

bankruptcy because they could not collect what was owed them. The speculators, however, used the crisis to declare bankruptcy because it was to their advantage.<sup>22</sup>

Kolping's nickname for America was Brother Jonathan, a name he equated to the word "speculator."<sup>23</sup> Because the number of speculators far outweighed the honest people, he reported, you needed a lantern to find the honest ones.<sup>24</sup> Kolping blamed the crisis of 1857 on the speculators. He wrote that the mistrust was so great that father and son could not even trust each other.<sup>25</sup> The strongest warning against emigrating printed in Kolping's journals during the financial crisis of 1857 came from the *Präses*<sup>26</sup> of the St. Louis Journeymen's Association, Father Jacob Meller. In 1856 German immigrants, who had been members of the Journeymen's Association in Germany, organized a Journeymen's Association in St. Louis. Some one hundred young men joined the club.<sup>27</sup> In October 1857 Präses Meller sent a report to Kolping about the economic crisis and warned potential emigrants about the high unemployment, the hard times, and the danger of losing their faith.<sup>28</sup>

Kolping's partisan view of conditions in the United States prevented him from including any positive reports on America in the *Rheinische Volksblätter*. The closest he came to this was a letter he received in 1854 from a former member of the Cologne Journeymen's Association. But even here, he presented the letter in the worst light. The young man who wrote the letter was a cabinetmaker who had emigrated to Utica, New York. He wrote that he was working in a furniture factory, and that the four furniture factories in Utica produced more furniture than all the masters of Cologne together. Kolping used the letter to make the point that the journeyman was not working as an independent artisan but as a factory worker. He warned the journeymen that they would lose their independent standing and become nothing more than factory workers, a decline in status, if they emigrated.<sup>29</sup> This aspect was an important one for Kolping because the preservation of the independent artisan was one of the major goals of the Journeymen's Association.<sup>30</sup>

Kolping rejected emigration also for religious reasons. He was extremely pro-Catholic and the United States was predominantly Protestant. Mid-nineteenth-century America was marked by a resurgence of political nativism. Foreigners and Catholics especially were attacked. German Catholic emigrants, like the Irish, were prime targets of nativistic groups such as the Know-Nothings. The anti-Catholic wave in the United States was commented upon frequently in the *Rheinische Volksblätter*. Writers warned potential emigrants that the goal of the nativistic parties was to deprive all foreigners, especially Catholics, of the rights of citizenship and that the ultimate goal of nativism was the extinction of the Catholic faith in America.<sup>31</sup> One writer reported that the Know-Nothings had demolished ten Catholic churches.<sup>32</sup> Another writer warned about the personal dangers Catholic immigrants had to endure, including personal injury, loss of property, and the destruction of

their churches.<sup>33</sup> Still another writer reported similarly that the hatred Americans had for Catholics resulted in the demolition of Catholic churches and in the murder of Catholics.<sup>34</sup>

In 1855 Kolping ostensibly wrote about slavery in the United States, but the article really was about religion. He wrote that there were two political parties (but never named them) in the United States, one which wanted to retain slavery while the other wanted to abolish it. Kolping argued that these two parties had only one point of commonality, their hatred of the Catholic church. Without indicating to which party program he referred, Kolping wrote that in the party program there was a plank that opposed the encroachment of Catholicism which said, "No one who is a subject, direct or indirect, of a foreign ruler (the pope) should accept a government position. Americans should rule America." Another plank indicated that children should be educated in state schools without religious instruction, but should be taught that the Bible is the source of Christian faith.<sup>35</sup>

These references were almost direct quotes from the Know-Nothing party platform of 1855. The platform specifically states in article 8 that "Americans only shall govern America." The same article states the party's intent to resist the inclusion of those who hold allegiance "to any foreign power whether civil or ecclesiastical" as office holders in any branch of government. In many ways this document mirrors Kolping's views of American society. The platform calls for the reform of corrupt government, the return to the purer days of the Republic, reformation of the national legislature, and the restriction of executive patronage. These calls for reform were integral to the Know-Nothing perception of American society and to their political agenda.<sup>36</sup>

There are several interesting parallels between Father Kolping's assessment of American political, social, and economic circumstances to the assessment of that same situation offered by the very group which Father Kolping assumed to be the root of the problem for German emigrants to the United States, the Know-Nothings. Both were concerned with perceived political corruption in the party structure of American politics, and related much of that corruption to a breakdown of morality and religious instruction. Both were concerned over the deterioration of economic conditions in the United States and the role of immigrants to the United States as a factor in that deterioration. Both were concerned with the preservation of the independent artisan. Both were vitally concerned with the educational process and the role of religion in that process. Both feared that immorality and godlessness in American society would result in barbarism and the ruin of the nation, and both argued that the generation of the American Revolution was dead and had been supplanted by a new generation which did not possess the same moral character and commitment to virtuous government as the revolutionary founders of the United States.

Many participants in the Know-Nothing party felt that American society was in a state of decline. While the solutions the Know-Nothings presented

to solve these societal problems bore no resemblance to the proposals of Father Kolping, the Know-Nothing assessment of the problems facing American society is remarkably similar to that of Kolping. Nativist leaders like Thomas Whitney defended Know-Nothing platforms on the grounds that American society had slipped from the high ideals of the revolutionary fathers.<sup>37</sup> Whitney and other nativists attributed the decline to the increasing flood of European immigrants. Whitney particularly pointed out that economic dislocation for American artisans was exacerbated by a flood of paupers from Europe. The immigrants were further singled out because of their religion and rapid entry into political life. Nativists believed that they detected symptoms of religious, social, and economic decay that led to political instability and corruption. Not only was there decay, but there was the distinct possibility of the nation sinking into some form of barbarism.<sup>38</sup>

Know-Nothings, as well as Father Kolping, feared the excesses of democracy. The official party line was anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic, but the thrust of the party's position emphasized moral decay and political fraud within the structure of democratic politics. It was not the immigrant alone who was the problem, rather it was the immigrant as a tool of corrupt political leaders that was destroying American democracy. In the election of 1852, both the Whig and Democratic parties courted the Catholic vote. The official Know-Nothing platform called for a twenty-one year naturalization period as a palliative to the excesses of the political system. Cited instances of voter fraud and immigrants who became registered voters almost upon entry into the country fueled the call for reform of the political system.<sup>39</sup> Alliances between Democratic party leaders and high-ranking Catholic priests merely increased the perception of corruption. As one nativist writer put it, political parties "have long since, like all humanly devised things, given unmistakable signs of corruption" and "need repairing, and sometimes reconstruction, just as any other structure of which man is the author."<sup>40</sup>

The Know-Nothing position for a twenty-one year naturalization period was based on the premise that it took twenty-one years for a native-born citizen to acquire the necessary education to learn the American system in order to vote correctly. The same time limit should be required for immigrants to acquire the necessary education and learn the fundamentals of the democratic process before they were granted the privilege of voting. If the nation was to remain committed to the principles of the founding fathers, the alliance between the current corrupt political leaders and the incoming hordes of immigrants must be broken. The political structure must be returned to the integrity and political honesty of the revolutionary period.<sup>41</sup> The commitment of the American nation to its heritage of Protestantism and democracy which were perceived to be two parts of the same whole were under attack both from without and within—from unscrupulous politicians allied with not only Catholics, but with "socialists and infidels."<sup>42</sup>



The Know-Nothings also stressed the corruption and degeneration of American society and based their dogma on the idea that America had lost the true faith of the revolutionary generation. One of the major issues of nativism was the possible corruption of the democratic process and American society. This corruption and degeneration was found not only in the incoming immigrant population, but within the native-born as well. Many of the early nativistic writers were also active in a variety of reform movements, especially the temperance movement and abolitionism.<sup>43</sup> Sean Wilentz points out,

The main questions . . . centered on native distress at the political parties, municipal misdeeds, and public immorality. Democrats had long made appeals to the Irish as an important part of their campaigning; with the immigrant vote secure, the nativists charged, Tammany had enriched itself with shady public contracts, at the taxpayers' expense.<sup>44</sup>

Ever reformers, many nativists would join forces with abolitionists, temperance advocates, and Northern ex-Whigs in 1856 to form the American Republican party.<sup>45</sup> This alignment pulled Know-Nothings firmly into one of two schismatic political camps that divided the nation in a Civil War.

During the 1850s the Know-Nothings also had a very pessimistic view of the economy and the plight of immigrants. Thomas Whitney noted that the poorhouses were full of immigrants, many of whom were Irish and German Catholics. The Know-Nothing party reacted violently to the social and economic dislocation caused by industrialization and increased immigration. Whitney questioned whether it was wise to allow "paupers and criminals" to enter the country when native residents could not find work.<sup>46</sup>

This view of the problem facing the immigrant was shared by others besides Kolping and the Know-Nothings. Even the American Catholic journals began to advocate restrictions on immigration. The plight of the immigrant in the seaboard cities was so bad that American Catholics began a colonization plan for Irish Catholic immigrants to relocate them to the frontier areas away from the poverty of the industrial cities.<sup>47</sup>

It is particularly ironic that Kolping would pick the Know-Nothing plank on religion and the schools to illustrate the lack of religious instruction in American society. The entire reason for the inclusion of such a plank in the party's platform was to combat what nativists perceived as a potential loss of religious instruction in the American common school system.<sup>48</sup> This perception was the result of American Catholic attempts to alter the nature of religious instruction in the public school system.<sup>49</sup> The public school issue arose in the early 1840s and again in 1851. The support for the nativist position was overwhelming. The public school controversy and the alliance between high-ranking Catholic leaders and the Democratic party again caused many moderate Protestants to join in the anti-Catholic sentiment of the nativist

movement.<sup>50</sup> Protestant leaders decried attempts to place the Catholic Bible in the public school system, and perceived this to be a threat to the moral and spiritual fiber of the nation.<sup>51</sup> The plank in the Know-Nothing platform states that common schools should be free from denominational or partisan character, but argues that the Bible was the source of Christianity, the foundation of civil and religious freedoms, and concludes that the party would oppose all attempts to exclude it from the schools as a means of combating rising immorality in American society.<sup>52</sup>

Kolping's statement that there were only two political parties in America, one slavery and one antislavery, and that their only point of commonality was a hatred of the Catholic Church appears on the surface to be merely a rhetorical statement designed to enhance his argument against emigration. A closer look at American politics, however, reveals that there is some truth in Kolping's allegations. As early as 1824, Martin Van Buren stated that political parties that were truly national in scope were necessary to prevent the sectional, factional nature of the slavery issue from destroying the nation.<sup>53</sup> During the Mexican-American War territorial conquest placed slavery and sectionalism high on the political agenda and created a major stumbling block that eventually disintegrated the existing party structure and caused a structural realignment of national politics.<sup>54</sup> Increasingly throughout the 1850s, the major political issue was slavery and eventually it superseded all others on the political agenda.<sup>55</sup> As sectional tension increased, many people in both the North and the South feared immigrants. The proslavery forces feared that immigrants were antislavery, particularly as the political refugees from the European revolutions of 1848 made their way into the United States. These so-called "red republicans" were antislavery, which enhanced the fears of proslavery advocates that immigrants as a group were a political problem for the proslavery forces.<sup>56</sup> The antislavery forces, on the other hand, feared that because so many of the immigrants were Catholic, and since the Catholic Church as a political entity tended to favor non-democratic forms of government in European affairs, that the majority of the immigrants were proslavery.<sup>57</sup> In the Know-Nothing party, in particular, both of these groups were able to find commonality and attempted to form a national party by using the immigrant as the external enemy. When it became necessary to define why the immigrant was the enemy in the party's platform, the commonality, which was based on entirely different perceptions of the problem, disappeared and the party fragmented over the slavery issue.

The attempt to rebuke immorality in the political arena reflected the fears of the party over issues that were a result of the social dislocation of the Jacksonian period as new and different groups grew in political power and the structure of politics changed vastly. These fears also reflected the economic dislocation caused by increased industrialization, and the accompanying loss of social and political status for those classes who became downwardly mobile as a result of that economic dislocation. This was particularly true of the artisan

class.<sup>58</sup> It seemed somehow that society and politics had changed and that the change was not only undesirable, but was the result of immorality in American society caused by a loss of religion and virtue possessed by previous generations of Americans. The dangers confronting the nation as a result of that immorality were immense. The only potential solution was a return to the ideals upon which the nation had been founded—both by altering the internal structure and removing the potential for change by limiting the influence of incoming persons of different beliefs.<sup>59</sup>

Father Kolping agreed wholeheartedly with the Know-Nothings that America displayed a rising immorality, and he too blamed that immorality on the lack of religion, which to him meant Catholicism. He reported that ten million Americans belonged to no church and that most of the children of these ten million were not even baptized. He sarcastically editorialized that "they would be a good brood for America's future!" He further stated that the ten million followers of the different Protestant churches represented a true Tower of Babel.<sup>60</sup> Kolping was under the impression that the suicide rate was increasing in the United States, and he attributed this upswing to a lack of religion.<sup>61</sup> He even criticized the normally praised separation of church and state because it meant that the citizens, and not the state, had to underwrite all of the costs of their churches. This worked a hardship on the German immigrants who did not understand this principle.<sup>62</sup>

Kolping also criticized the moral character of the Americans. He wrote that American friendship resembled the nature of a fox.<sup>63</sup> He especially liked to use American politics to show the depravity of the American people. In the "Politisches Tagebuch" he frequently described with horror the physical violence that occurred in the Congress and interpreted it as a symptom for a depraved people. American freedom was not the freedom of children of God, he concluded.<sup>64</sup> After recounting another episode of physical violence in the Congress, Kolping affirmed that the "praised America is either on the way to a moral wilderness or ripe enough that one can take control and finally rule it."<sup>65</sup> In general, however, he saw no hope for America and expressed the opinion that it carried its death seed in its birth.<sup>66</sup>

Kolping viewed not only politicians, but also the man on the street as depraved. Although he agreed that there were some virtuous Americans who did good, he argued that there was a rawness, a viciousness, and a wildness in them that was not found anywhere else in the world. He attributed this to the collapse of the family brought on by an uncontrolled search for material pleasures. "Man," he concluded, "could not live by bread alone but needed the word of God."<sup>67</sup>

Recent scholars have come to much the same conclusion about the rawness and violence of American society in the antebellum period. Michael Feldburg examines the phenomenon of rioting in the Jacksonian period and concludes that this violence was perceived as a viable means of political participation.<sup>68</sup> David Grimsted also examines rioting in its antebellum setting

and concludes that it was a means of participation and expression that was based on a perception of moral right and political expediency. He argues that Jacksonian Democracy is best understood as a psychological construct, and that participation in mob violence was a valid means of expressing concerns over perceived social and political injustice. As the reality of American society and politics failed to match the rhetoric of democracy, many varied groups chose general mob violence, vigilante justice or violent attacks aimed at those groups perceived to be the root of the problem.<sup>69</sup> Most of the reform movements of this period have a certain commonality with nativism because they reflect fears of society gone awry and immoral, overly materialistic tendencies in the individual members of that society.<sup>70</sup>

Kolping's attacks on American materialism provide the real clue why Kolping begged his journeymen members to stay at home. St. Thomas had criticized the abuse of private property for the benefit of the individual and to the detriment of society, a view that was part of the social teachings at the University of Munich, where Kolping had studied.<sup>71</sup> Thus he judged American materialism as anti-Christian and as a repudiation of the teachings of St. Thomas and of the Christian social movement of the mid-nineteenth century.

From Kolping's perspective the Civil War was God's punishment of the United States for this false worship of materialism. He claimed that the poor military and civilian leadership of the Republicans was the fatal fruit of the dollar religion. There were plenty of "smart" speculators but no heroes in the military and civilian leadership. Brother Jonathan should come to his senses, he advised, and honor the true God.<sup>72</sup> "America was suffering through her misery [the Civil War] today," he wrote on another occasion, "because American freedom was based on material values." That meant that evil was also free. And where evil was free he concluded, then both the men and the country were ruined.<sup>73</sup>

Perhaps Kolping's overall impression of American ills is best conveyed by a fictional short story he published in 1861 in his *Calendar for the Catholic Population*. The story concerned Johannes Dorner, who abandoned his two sons, ages five and three, after their mother died and emigrated to America. Because this is a morality story, the two sons fortunately were taken in by an uncle, a priest, and grew up to be fine, Christian young men. They were taught to pray for their father and for his return. Johannes, on the other hand, endured many hardships in America. His partner swindled him out of his money, and he lost his business. After rebuilding his fortune, his new wife took all of his money and ran off with another man.

Johannes learned that Americans were only interested in business and profits. Morality was pushed into the background. Even religion was a business. For Americans, their hero was the smart man who used all means to achieve his ends. Finally, Johannes had enough of this materialistic culture and, after thirty years, sailed home to search for his sons who had become respectable, God-fearing citizens; they were delighted to see their father again

and welcomed him back with open arms. Johannes lived happily with his sons until his death.<sup>74</sup>

A dilemma, however, confronted Kolping regarding America. On the one hand, he believed that, of all places in the world, America needed the Journeymen's Association and what it stood for the most.<sup>75</sup> That meant, of course, that German members who had emigrated would establish the Journeymen's Association in the United States. On the other hand, however, he strongly advised his members against emigrating. Kolping reported regularly on the progress of chapters of the Journeymen's Association in the United States. The first American chapter was founded in St. Louis in 1856 by two members of the German association;<sup>76</sup> in 1858 a second chapter was founded at Quincy, Illinois,<sup>77</sup> in 1859 a third in Racine, Wisconsin,<sup>78</sup> and the fourth at Milwaukee.<sup>79</sup> Eventually all of the American chapters dissolved, but after the Civil War new chapters in Dayton and Chicago were founded and some of the earlier ones revived.<sup>80</sup>

Although proud of the expansion of the Journeymen's Association to the United States, Kolping advised Germans not to emigrate to the United States.<sup>81</sup> He warned his readers about the increasing cost of living, the immorality, barbarism, and misery in America. He concluded that the country was only a bundle of religious and political sects carrying its own death seed in its birth.<sup>82</sup> He also warned potential emigrants that the United States wanted them only for servile duties and that those who emigrated would live in misery. In fact, he wrote, thousands of emigrants were now coming back to Europe because of the miserable conditions in America.<sup>83</sup> Kolping also cautioned his readers that freedom in America was not what was promised.<sup>84</sup> He pointed out that vigilante groups were multiplying rapidly. As a result, the people were beginning to take justice into their own hands. When that happens, he warned, anarchy and lawlessness are at the door.<sup>85</sup> He concluded that America was "a sick country, despite protests to the contrary."<sup>86</sup>

Poignant as the morality story of Johannes was, neither it nor any of Kolping's above litany of ills concerning the United States was very successful in persuading either Catholic journeymen or Germans in general from emigrating. The four American chapters of the Journeymen's Association, founded by men who had been members in Germany, indicates that Kolping could not even prevent his own members from emigrating. He also had no success in hindering German emigration to the United States in the nineteenth century. It is always possible, of course, that anonymous, individual members of the Journeymen's Association stayed home because of the warnings of the "journeymen's father," but probably even this number is not significant. Kolping, then, despite his dire predictions of what would happen if one emigrated, could not prevent German emigration.

Despite his geographical distance from the United States, Kolping presented a remarkable assessment of the ills that plagued American society. That assessment, with its similarities to the assessments advanced by the

Know-Nothings, offers a unique opportunity to reevaluate the understanding of the period preceding the Civil War. Although Kolping suffered from prejudices that colored his perception of conditions in the United States, still his observations stand as remarkable testimony to the social, economic, and political tumults that characterized the era leading up to the American Civil War. His failure to persuade his countrymen to "stay at home and live with integrity" does not detract from the insights he provided of the conditions for and aspirations of both German and American artisans and the clues he furnished concerning their perceptions of each other and their role in the industrialization of the American nation.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Edward Pessen, "The Egalitarian Myth and the American Social Reality: Wealth, Mobility, and Equality in the 'Era of the Common Man,'" *American Historical Review* 76 (1971): 989-1034; Herbert G. Gutman, "Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, 1815-1919," *American Historical Review* 78 (1973): 531-88; Alan Dawley, *Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976); Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Michael F. Holt, "The Politics of Impatience: The Origins of Know-Nothingism," *Journal of American History* 60 (1973): 309-31; and "The Antimasonic and Know-Nothing Parties," in *1789-1860, From Factions to Parties*, v. 1 of *History of U.S. Political Parties*, ed. Arthur M. Schlesinger (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1973), 575-740.

<sup>3</sup> Christian Hermann Vosen, *Trauerrede beim Begräbnis des Gesellenvaters Adolph Kolping, gehalten am 7. Dezember 1865 in der Minoritenkirche zu Köln* (Cologne: J. P. Bachem, 1865), 13; George S. Werner, "Traveling Journeymen in Metternichian South Germany," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 125 (1981): 199; Adolph Kolping, *Der Gesellen-Verein* (Cologne and Neuß: L. Schwann'sche Verlagshandlung, 1849), 6-14; and *Der Gesellenverein und seine Aufgabe* (Cologne: Kolping Verlag, 1952), 11-12, 21. For further information on the *Gesellenverein*, see Sarah C. Neitzel, "The Salzburg Catholic *Gesellenverein*: An Alternative to Socialism," *Journal of Religious History* 12 (1982): 62-73; "Priests and Proletarians: The Catholic *Gesellenverein*, 1846-65," *Fides et Historia* 16 (1983): 35-44; and *Priests and Journeymen: The German Catholic *Gesellenverein* and the Christian Social Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (Bonn: Kommissions-Verlag L. Röhrscheid, 1987).

*German Catholic Gesellenverein and the Christian Social Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (Bonn: Kommissions-Verlag L. Röhrscheid, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Kolping, *Gesellenverein und seine Aufgabe*, 11-12, 21; *Mitteilungen für Vorsteher der katholischen Gesellenvereine*, Heft 4 (1865), col. 107.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Schmolke, *Adolph Kolping als Publizist: Ein Beitrag zur Publizistik und zur Verbandsgeschichte des deutschen Katholizismus im 19. Jahrhundert* (Münster: Verlag Regensburg, 1966), 194-95; Kolping to Anton von Schmit, 26 September 1855, Kolping to Anton Gruscha, 14 April 1859, in Adolph Kolping, *Adolph Kolping Schriften* (Cologne: Kolping Verlag, 1975-85), 2:185, 258-59.

<sup>6</sup> Kolping, *Gesellenverein und seine Aufgabe*, 21.

<sup>7</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *Rheinische Volksblätter für Haus, Familie und Handwerk* (hereafter cited as *RV*), no. 26, 28 June 1856, p. 413; no. 36, 6 September 1856, p. 573; no. 40, 4 October 1856, p. 635; no. 1, 1 January 1859, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 1, 1 January 1859, p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> "Amerikanisches. Scenen in Louisville," *RV*, no. 37, 15 September 1855, pp. 591-94. The Know-Nothings attempted to deny German immigrants the right to vote and on "Bloody Monday," 6 August 1855, twenty were killed and hundreds lay wounded. See James Hennesey, *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 125-26.

<sup>10</sup> "Amerikanische Geschichten," *RV*, no. 2, 13 January 1855, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> "Amerikanisches," *RV*, no. 31, 28 October 1854, pp. 494-96.

<sup>12</sup> Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 316-17; Holt, "The Politics of Impatience," 329-31.

<sup>13</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 10, 8 March 1856, p. 155.

<sup>14</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 26, 26 June 1858, p. 412.

<sup>15</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 25, 21 June 1856, p. 398; no. 26, 28 June 1856, p. 413.

<sup>16</sup> "Was die Amerikaner von sich selber sagen," *RV*, no. 28, 12 July 1856, 446-47.

<sup>17</sup> "Beitrag zur Kenntnis amerikanischer Zustände," *RV*, no. 7, 13 May 1854, pp. 103-4; "Amerikanisches," *RV*, no. 10, 3 June 1854, pp. 152-154; "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 32, 4 November 1854, p. 506; "Amerikanisches," *RV*, no. 10, 8 March 1856, pp. 155-59; "Amerikanisches," *RV*, no. 12, 22 March 1856, pp. 187-91.

<sup>18</sup> "Beitrag zur Kenntnis amerikanischer Zustände," *RV*, no. 7, 13 May 1854, pp. 103-4; "Amerikanisches," *RV*, no. 10, 3 June 1854, pp. 152-154; "Amerikanische Geschichten," *RV*, no. 5, 3 February 1855, pp. 76-79.

<sup>19</sup> "Amerikanische Geschichten," *RV*, no. 5, 3 February 1855, pp. 76-79.

<sup>20</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 8, 24 February 1855, p. 125; "Amerikanisches," *RV*, no. 10, 3 June 1854, pp. 152-54; "Beitrag zur Kenntnis amerikanischer Zustände," *RV*, no. 7, 13 May 1854, pp. 103-4.

<sup>21</sup> "Circularschreiben der deutschen Gesellschaft von New Orleans an alle auswanderungslustigen Deutschen," *RV*, no. 20, 19 May 1855, pp. 311-14.

<sup>22</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 45, 7 November 1857, pp. 714-15.

<sup>23</sup> This was probably a reference to the American magazine titled *Brother Jonathan*, which reprinted European novels, ran political features, and was primarily funded through ads which were inserted throughout the magazine.

<sup>24</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 45, 7 November 1857, pp. 714-15.

<sup>25</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 46, 14 November 1857, pp. 728-29; no. 49, 5 December 1857, p. 778.

<sup>26</sup> The German word *Präses* is used as the clerical title for the head of the Journeymen's Association instead of the secular word president.

<sup>27</sup> "Katholischer Gesellenverein," *RV*, no. 10, 8 March 1856, pp. 159-60; no. 30, 26 July 1856, pp. 479-80; Kolping to Franz Josef Ficke, 29 February 1856, in Kolping, *Schriften*, 2:202.

<sup>28</sup> "Eine Stimme aus Amerika," *RV*, no. 48, 28 November 1857, pp. 764-66; no. 49, 5 December 1857, pp. 780-82.

<sup>29</sup> "Amerika," *RV*, no. 2, 8 April 1854, pp. 30-32.

<sup>30</sup> Kolping, *Gesellen-Verein*, 6-14; Kolping, *Gesellenverein und seine Aufgabe*, 11-12, 21; *RV*, no. 15, 14 April 1855, p. 236.

<sup>31</sup> "Amerikanische Geschichten," *RV*, no. 38, 16 December 1854, pp. 597-98; no. 2, 13 January 1855, p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> "Amerikanisches," *RV*, no. 31, 28 October 1854, pp. 494-96.

<sup>33</sup> "Amerikanische Geschichten," *RV*, no. 2, 13 January 1855, p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> "Amerikanisches," *RV*, no. 8, 24 February 1855, pp. 125-28.

<sup>35</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 28, 14 July 1855, pp. 447-48.

<sup>36</sup> Holt, "The Antimasonic and Know-Nothing Parties," pp. 701-5.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas R. Whitney, *A Defence of American Policy* (New York: Dewitt and Davenport, 1856).

<sup>38</sup> See Horace Bushnell, *Barbarism the First Danger* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1847).

<sup>39</sup> Charles E. A. Gayerre, *Address to the People of Louisiana on the State of Parties* (New Orleans: Sherman, Wharton, 1855); and *Address of Charles Gayerre to the People of the State on the Late Frauds Perpetuated at the Election Held on the 7th November, 1853, in New Orleans* (New Orleans: Sherman & Wharton, 1853); John H. Lee, *Origin and Progress of the American Party in Politics* (Philadelphia: G. D. Miller, 1855).

<sup>40</sup> Frederick Anspach, *The Sons of Sires* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Grambo and Co., 1855), 82. See also his assessment of the role of Bishop John Hughes in American politics and the connection between the Catholic Church and the Democratic party, pp. 30, 46.

<sup>41</sup> "The American Party Platform of 1855," reprinted in Holt, "The Antimasonic and Know-Nothing Parties," pp. 701-5.

<sup>42</sup> Anspach, *Sons of Sires*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> One of the primary leaders of early nativism was Lyman Beecher, his *Plea for the West* (Cincinnati: Truman and Smith, 1836) was one of the most influential documents in early nativistic literature. Beecher was heavily involved in the temperance movement. See *Six Sermons on the Nature, Signs, Evils and Remedy for Intemperance*, 10th ed. (New York: American Tract Society, 1843). One of the dominant political slogans of the day was "Rum, Romanism, Rebellion."

<sup>44</sup> Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 315.

<sup>45</sup> William E. Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987). Gienapp traces the fusion and coalition of these groups on a state by state basis.

<sup>46</sup> Whitney, *A Defence of American Policy*.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Francis Hueston, *The Catholic Press and Nativism, 1840-1860* (New York: Arno Press, 1976).

<sup>48</sup> Anspach argues that the attacks on the Protestant Bible were the primary cause of the Know-Nothing party. See *Sons of Sires*, 31-37.

<sup>49</sup> The major instances of violence between nativists and Catholics in the 1840s were triggered by debates concerning the Bible and public education. The Catholic Church under the leadership of Bishop John Hughes pushed for the inclusion of the Catholic Bible as well as the Protestant one within the public school teaching curriculum. This issue brought numerous moderate Protestants into the ranks of nativism and eventually led to the Philadelphia riots of 1844. Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study in the Origins of Nativism* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1938), 142-235, presents a detailed study of the crisis over public education and the events which culminated in the Philadelphia riots of 1844. See also Michael Feldburg, *The Turbulent Era: Riots and Disorder in Jacksonian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3-32.

<sup>50</sup> This period from 1851 to 1856 was the height of Know-Nothing strength, and the issue of the Bible and the public schools was a critical factor in the rise of the party. For most Protestants, the ties between education and religion were exceptionally strong. See Billington, *Protestant Crusade*, 262-343.



<sup>51</sup> For extended views of the relationship between religion and education in America, see Timothy L. Smith, "Protestant Schooling and American Nationality, 1800-1850," *Journal of American History* 53 (1967): 679-95; Merton J. England, "The Democratic Faith in American Schoolbooks, 1783-1860," *American Quarterly* 15 (1963): 194-96; and Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979).

<sup>52</sup> Holt, "The Antimasonic and Know-Nothing Parties," 705.

<sup>53</sup> Van Buren's statement is quoted in Michael Wallace, "Changing Concepts of Party in the United States: New York, 1815-1828," *American Historical Review* 74 (1968): 490.

<sup>54</sup> Eric Foner, "The Wilmot Proviso Revisited," *Journal of American History* 56 (1969): 262-79.

<sup>55</sup> Larry Gara, "Slavery and Slave Power: A Crucial Distinction," *Civil War History* 23 (1969): 5-18. See also William E. Gienapp, "The Republican Party and the Slave Power," in *New Perspectives on Race and Slavery in America*, ed. Robert H. Abzug and Stephen E. Maizlish (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 58-69.

<sup>56</sup> W. Darrell Overdyke, *The Know-Nothing Party in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), 153. Overdyke also quotes Congressman A. R. Sellers of Maryland as saying, "the immigrants were the backbone of settlement of the West where they became abolitionists because of the competition of slave labor" (203). See the denunciation of "red republicanism" in the Virginia Know-Nothing platform reprinted in Holt, "The Antimasonic and Know-Nothing Parties," 720. See also William G. Bean, "An Aspect of Know-Nothingism—the Immigrant and Slavery," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 23 (1924): 319-34. Bean was the first to suggest that Southern Know-Nothings were unionist and had different perceptions of immigrants than did northern nativists.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Francis Hueston, *The Catholic Press*, 206-15, discusses at length the reasons that abolitionists and free-soilers feared Catholicism and felt that it was proslavery. He attributes part of the fear to the connections between nativism, abolitionism, and free-soil thought in the North.

<sup>58</sup> Holt, "Politics of Impatience," 329-31.

<sup>59</sup> Anspach, *Sons of Sires*, 50, 62.

<sup>60</sup> "Amerikanisches. Streiflichter auf amerikanische Verhältnisse," *RV*, no. 15, 8 July 1854, p. 236.

<sup>61</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 38, 19 September 1857, pp. 605-6.

<sup>62</sup> "Amerikanisches," *RV*, no. 9, 3 March 1855, pp. 139-43.

<sup>63</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 16, 15 July 1854, p. 251.

<sup>64</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 6, 9 February 1856, p. 95; no. 32, 9 August 1856, p. 510; no. 12, 20 March 1858, p. 189.

<sup>65</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 12, 20 March 1858, p. 189.

<sup>66</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 6, 9 February 1856, p. 95.

<sup>67</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 47, 21 November 1857, p. 747; no. 41, 9 October 1858, pp. 654-55.

<sup>68</sup> Feldburg, *The Turbulent Era*.

<sup>69</sup> David Grimsted, "Rioting in its Jacksonian Setting," *American Historical Review* 77 (1972): 361-97.

<sup>70</sup> Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), xiv, argues that downward social mobility and noble idealism are not sufficient alone to explain the reform movements of any period. By examining the rhetoric of the group and the social and political circumstances in which they find themselves, he attempts to evaluate the reform of the period and illustrates the relationships between the various groups that make up what he calls the "sisterhood of reforms." Jean H. Baker, *Ambivalent Americans: The Know-Nothing Party in Maryland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), argues that the Know-Nothings were a reform party intended to cleanse and purify American politics and that their appeals were as often pro-American as anti-Catholic or anti-immigrant. Baker offers evidence that the party is as reflective of the antebellum reformist tradition as those groups traditionally classified as part of that general category.

<sup>71</sup> Glenn Blackburn, "Franz von Baader: Precursor of Christian Socialist Thought," paper read at the Southern Historical Association Conference, November 1980, pp. 2-5; Eric Dorn Brose, *Christian Labor and the Politics of Frustration in Imperial Germany* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985), 22-23.

<sup>72</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 3, 17 January 1863, pp. 46-47.

<sup>73</sup> "Politisches Tagebuch," *RV*, no. 44, 31 October 1863, pp. 697-700.

<sup>74</sup> "Lebensschicksale eines Heimatlosen," *Kalender für das katholische Volk 1861* (Cologne: Verlag der M. DuMont-Schauberg'schen Buchhandlung, 1860), 31-86.

<sup>75</sup> "Katholischer Gesellenverein," *RV*, no. 10, 8 March 1856, pp. 159-60.

<sup>76</sup> "Das Kolpingwerk in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika," in *Kolping in Berlin* 23 (1978): 8; *RV*, no. 10, 8 March 1856, p. 159; no. 30, 26 July 1856, pp. 479-80; Kolping to Franz Josef Ficke, 29 February 1856, in Kolping, *Schriften*, 2:202.

<sup>77</sup> *RV*, no. 45, 6 November 1858, p. 719.

<sup>78</sup> *RV*, no. 4, 28 January 1860, p. 63; no. 9, 2 March 1861, p. 143.

<sup>79</sup> *RV*, no. 17, 28 April 1860, p. 271.

<sup>80</sup> "Das Kolpingwerk in den Vereinigten Staaten," 8; *RV*, no. 52, 28 December 1872, p. 826; *Mitteilungen*, Heft 36 (1874), cols. 375-76. A scholarly study of the Journeymen's Association in the United States is needed.

<sup>81</sup> *RV*, no. 15, 12 April 1856, p. 236.

<sup>82</sup> *RV*, no. 32, 4 November 1854, p. 506; no. 40, 30 December 1854, pp. 622-23; "Politisches Tagebuch," no. 6, 9 February 1856, p. 95.

<sup>83</sup> *RV*, no. 32, 4 November 1854, p. 506; no. 3, 20 January 1855, p. 44; no. 15, 12 April 1856, p. 236.

<sup>84</sup> *RV*, no. 32, 4 November 1854, p. 506.

<sup>85</sup> *RV*, no. 36, 6 September 1856, p. 573.

<sup>86</sup> *RV*, no. 9, 1 March 1856, p. 141; no. 10, 8 March 1856, p. 155.

