

Roman Catholics and Immigrants
in the Age of the Chautauqua

by

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The Chautauqua era coincided almost exactly with the period of the Great Immigration after the Civil War that brought millions of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe to the United States and fundamentally transformed America. At the time of the Centennial in 1876 America was still a Protestant country whose citizens were primarily of Northwest European and British ancestry. In two generations, however, the ethnic and religious make up of the population changed. We can see how rapid the change was when we realize that three quarters of the Americans who are Catholic, ninety percent of those of Jewish background and 98% of those who are Eastern Orthodox are members of families that arrived in the United States after the Civil War. The Northern industrial cities were suddenly flooded with people who differed dramatically from older stock Americans in language, culture and world view. It is not surprising that someone like Henry Cabot Lodge could see it as "a great and perilous change in the nature of our race".

The new immigration coincided with and was an integral part of the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the nation which created a profound cultural crisis in the country. The factory, the city and the corporation which emerged out of these processes threatened the identity which the Founding Fathers had given the republic. The national covenant had been rooted in an agricultural base and the simplicity of a society of yeoman living on their own land. David Noble writes, "For leaders like John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson the United States was the first modern nation to have completely freed itself from the heritage of Medieval civilization. They accepted the premises of the Reformation and the Renaissance that the Medieval period was a dark age because it was an artificial culture, artfully contrived by priests and feudal aristocrats." The reaction to Catholicism, the heart of the Medieval culture they so violently rejected, and

to immigrants who filled the teeming cities and who brought original sin and the weight of history to America was therefore part and parcel of the general reaction to the changing nature of America.

This new world revealed all the paradoxes and contradictions that beset an agrarian Republic transformed by dynamic capitalism into a world industrial power: equality and justice were in tension with rights of private property, individualism and entrepreneurship were mocked by their natural outcomes in a capitalist state--insecurity, conformity and new corporate organization of wealth and power, reliance on the stability and strength of the family collided with the reverence for rapid social, occupational and residential mobility that tore families apart, respect for craft vied uneasily with respect for high speed, the value of self restraint that had permitted the accumulation of moral, physical and monetary capital was called into question by a ravenous materialism encouraged by the very mass production self restraint had made possible. Americans wrestled with the problem of immigration against the background of their ambivalence about the value of Progress and their anxieties about losing the America of their ancestors in the exuberant march forward to the rhythm of the machine.

The immigrants came to America, of course, to escape want and oppression, to make a new life and seek their fortunes but they were also encouraged to come. From the 1870's booming industries, underpopulated states and territories, expanding railroads all sent agents to Europe to recruit immigrants. Immigrants brought muscle and capital with them. Disregarding the fears of anti-entrepreneurial patricians who saw great difficulties in socializing what they not infrequently called the stream of "human garbage" and "the stream of human excrement that flows through our cities," American industrialists lusted after the immigrant

Andrew Carnegie called immigration a "golden stream" and he didn't mean that just figuratively. In his Triumphant Democracy Carnegie calculated the value of the 789,000 immigrants who arrived in 1882. Each of the immigrants

between ages 15 and 40 was worth \$1500 "for in former days an efficient slave was worth this sum." Those of other ages were valued at \$1000 apiece and the average cash savings brought in by each immigrant was put at \$125. All of these figures totaling a cash value of \$1.25 billion for the immigrants of 1882.

Nevertheless, regardless of their attitudes on the value of immigration, practically all Americans agreed that the new arrivals were different and inferior. The new immigrants were inferior because they were Catholic or Jewish rather than Protestant, they were inferior because they came from inferior stock, "beaten men of beaten races", as Francis Walters, President of MIT called them. They were also inferior because they held to degenerate political philosophies such as socialism and anarchism. All of these characteristics made them dangerous and liable to upset the religious, social or political order or to dilute the Anglo-Saxon Race.

The American Philosophy of individualism so magnificently summarized in Conwell's "Acres of Diamonds" Chautauqua speech, denied any relationship between personality and character and the social environment. It helped, ironically, to persuade a large number of Americans to accept Anglo-Saxon Racism. The Anglo-Saxons, it was claimed, had the biological strength of personality and character to reject the corrupting institutions and traditions of Europe and to migrate to the New World to live as free men in harmony with nature. Poverty was explained as a moral weakness that reflected biological weakness.

The rationalization for withholding aid to the poor was two fold. In theological terms the poor were being punished for their sins and in biological-racial terms they were being punished for their failure to embody the strength of the race. In this sphere a corrupted Darwinism and a corrupted Christianity

got along quite well. In either case, the poor were unclean and abnormal beings who must be segregated and allowed to perish in isolation from the good and normal.

This attitude toward the lower classes was reinforced by the immigration. Here were biologically inferior people of the Old World who had neither the strength of character to become Protestant, nor to rebel against their ancient and profane institutions and traditions.

The most important and fearsome of those institutions was the Catholic Church. In John Higham's words: "No other xenophobia functioned in so highly organized a way as anti-Romanism." Aside from Protestant Churches, the main agencies of Anti-Catholicism were ad hoc committees such as the National League of American Institutions, nativist fraternal orders such as the Junior Order of United American Mechanics which reached membership of 160,000 by 1890's and the secret political societies such the A.P.A. (American Protective Assn.) of the 1890's and the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920's.

The fear Catholicism aroused was two fold: That the Pope and his minions would subvert the Republic and or take it over and that Catholicism as a degenerate and sinful parody of Christianity would undermine morality. Rev. Josiah Strong in his 1885 work, Our Country: Its Possible Future and Present Crisis identified "an unreconcilable difference between papal principles and the fundamental principles of our free institutions." The immigrant urban political machine was just the first of the pernicious Catholic influences that the U.S. would suffer. During the depression of 1893, a Catholic war scare spread across the Midwest. The Detroit Patriotic American, an APA paper, (Michigan was strongest APA state) gave wide circulation to a bogus Papal Encyclical to Catholics by Leo XIII absolving them of all oaths of loyalty to the U.S. and instructing them to exterminate all heretics "on a

certain day in September." A Minneapolis version of the story numbered the secret papal forces in the U.S. at 700,000 soldiers - all ready to spring into rebellion at a moment's notice.

Many Protestants eyed their Catholic neighbors suspiciously as disloyal adherents of a foreign tyrant and feared to go to bed at night lest they be murdered in their sleep. The Catholic war scare had its greatest impact in midwestern rural areas, the Chautauqua region, where "flesh and blood" Catholics were virtually non-existent. Illinois farmers feared to leave home lest Romanists burn their barns and houses. A rural school teacher in Minnesota went about heavily armed to defend himself against the anticipated massacre. A large part of the population of some of the small towns in Ohio was terrorized by blood curdling reports of the preparations for war which the Catholics of Columbus were supposedly making.

The war scare passed by 1894 and Catholicism did not evoke so much organized opposition again until the post World War I period. Nevertheless, anti-Catholicism persisted throughout the period and the Spanish American War gave an opportunity to Americans to revel in the defeat of Catholic Spain, as a papal surrogate. For some Protestant immigrant groups such as Scandinavians and Orangemen and even for some Blacks, the APA and its ilk created the opportunity to make common cause with white Americans as a way of glossing over other differences and even as a way to facilitate acceptance, at least for the immigrants, if not for the Blacks.

Besides its political threat, Catholicism also presented a moral threat. Catholics opposed prohibition and didn't regard dancing as a sin. But even more than that Protestant America harbored dark suspicions about the power of the confessional and the goings on in rectories and convents. The "awful revelations of Maria Monk," a pre-civil war forgery, joined newer exposes

of sin that supposedly reached up to the very throne of the "Man of Sin", i.e. the pope. Preachers with an apocalyptic bent revealed to rapt audiences the identity of the Scarlet Women astride the beast and of the Whore of Babylon as the Roman Church. The conquest of the Philippines brought forth a new literature that depicted, in lurid detail, the despoiling of virgins, fornication in converts, infanticide and other sins traditionally found listed in this genre of Protestant apocrypha. Anti-Catholicism frightened and titillated a vast audience in America and served up a respectable pornography in a strait-laced age.*

If it wasn't Rum and Romanism that made Catholics suspect, it was, in the words of a later commentator: "Beer and Bolshevism." The New York Tribune writing on an 1891 strike of coke workers most of whom were Eastern Europeans (although American workers had called and led the strike) noted that "Huns...were the most dangerous of Labor unionists and strikers. They fill up with liquor and cannot be reasoned with." Presumably, unlike the reasonable state militia at that strike which fired into an unarmed and fleeing group of strikers, killing 10 and wounding 50.

The fear of foreign radicalism—the so-called Red Scare—reached a crescendo in the wake of World War I and the Russian Revolution. Four thousand foreigners were arrested and held without trial because they were foreigners. Some were deported without a hearing.

The height of the God and Country Campaign that characterized the post war repression came during the 1919 Steel strike. The main theme of the anti-strike movement and of the vigilante groups that threatened, attacked

* Anti-Catholicism has occasionally provided a cover for other attitudes and habits that would ordinarily not be given free rein in public if not for it. In our own time, the savage mockery of nuns, such as the fictional Sister Ignatius, is as much misogynism as it is an attack on pre-Vatican II Catholicism.

and sometimes killed the strikers, was in the words of the Gary Indiana Tribune "There is such a thing as Americanism and it is involved in this strike. The American is not going to desert it for imported theories."

The President of the Allegheny Valley Chamber of Commerce appealed to the men to remain at work as Loyal Americans. Everywhere English language papers were filled with talk of the foreign character of the strike.

Michigan's own Edgar Guest leaped into the fray with a poem "Dan McGann Declared Himself." In it Dan tells a "foreign man" working on the next bench: "I stand for America. I'm done with your fads and your wild eyed lads. Don't flourish your rag o'red...I'm boosting for Uncle Sam."

By making demands for decent working conditions, just wages and the right to some control by workers over their work the elements of a foreign plot initiated by immigrants to destroy the American System, employers and their allies on Main Street were able to defeat strikes and disarm those seeking even minimal social justice and fair treatment. They also deprived Mainstream America of the critical tools to analyze the problems of the rapidly changing world in which they lived and even the language to talk about them.

Racial Nativism was most often expressed in books written by self-appointed guardians of America's Anglo Saxon heritage who were frequently scientists and professors. This gave their views considerable weight (although even Calvin Coolidge wrote a book in 1921 opposing intermarriage between Nordics and other lesser types). Confident that certain races would triumph over unfit competitors because of a natural fitness, they insisted that heredity alone determined which species could and which could not adapt to democratic forms of government and the competition of the free enterprise system. To establish which were most fit, they measured skulls

and compared cranial volumes of members of various ethnic groups. Others used I.Q. tests. These measurements and observations were, of course, culture bound. Nevertheless, these investigators contended that science ratified their prejudices. (Even when the evidence didn't show it, they often also claimed it. The conclusions of the famous Dillingham. Congressional Commission, for example, bear little relationship to the evidence it collected).

Edwin Alworth Ross, professor of Sociology at University of Wisconsin, in The Old World and the New (1914) concluded that immigrants were inferior racially and that they would "racially" cripple the American population if permitted unrestricted entry. His investigations drew an absolute connection between "different" and "inferior". With a great concern for scientific objectivity, he writes; "observe immigrants not as they come travel worn up to the gangplank, nor as they issue toil-begrimed from pit's mouth or mill gate but in their gatherings, washed, combed and in their Sunday best. You are struck by the fact that from 10 to 20% are hisute, low browed, big faced persons of obviously low mentality... These oxlike men are descendants of those who always stayed behind."

Others such as Madison Grant in The Passing of the Great Race (1916), the most popular summary of these theories, concluded that "Race" mixing i.e. Nordic interbreeding with Alpine and Mediteranean types-produced a hybrid Race that "reverted to a more ancient, generalized and lower type."

What was the American response to this apparent threat to their basic values? First, to Americanize the immigrant - to inculcate in him or her the values of Mainstream America, to socialize the immigrant into his or her proper role. The main agency of that process was to be the school. Putnam's Weekly wrote "Our readers will agree with us that for the effectual defecation of the stream of life in a great city, there is but one rectifying agent - one infallible filter - the school." The imagery of purification as will be

noted below, is suggestive of certain deep revulsions Americans felt toward the immigrants.

Nothing expresses the deepest contradictions in the American attitudes toward the immigrant and to their own values than the educational goals they set. The common school had emerged in the nineteenth century as the secular church of the American civil religion. It was the agency that was to create a common civic culture and to equip each for the race for success. However, the common school lost its appeal as the new immigrants arrived. It was replaced by a more clearly stratified educational system with schools specifically designed to provide manual training, later called vocational training, primarily for immigrant children. Ellwood Cubberly, the father of American School Administration, summed up the tasks facing American educators when he wrote:

These Southern and Eastern Europeans are of a very different type from the Northern Europeans who preceded them. Illiterate, docile, lacking in self-reliance and initiative, and not possessing the Anglo-Teutonic conceptions of law, order and government their coming has served to dilute tremendously our national stock, and to corrupt our civic life...everywhere these people tend to settle in groups...and to set up here their national customs and observances. Our task is to break up these groups or settlements, to assimilate and amalgamate these people as part of our American race and to implant in their children, so far as can be done, the Anglo-Saxon conception of righteousness, law and order, and popular government, and to awaken in them a reverence for our democratic institutions and for those things in our national life which we as a people hold to be of abiding worth."

His statement was an eloquent example of the ambiguity Americans felt toward the immigrant. It contained the belief that immigrants were inferior and yet held that the schools and other institutions could save them but with the ominous qualifier "so far as can be done."

The lessons the schools taught included also lessons in some of the less attractive aspects of American culture. For example, a teacher of Polish immigrant children in Gary, Indiana, wrote: "the promiscuous association of white and colored pupils is a terrible thing. It should not be allowed,

especially in a school with a large number of foreign students. They will soon lose sight of a color line."

Besides the schools, other institutions carried on Americanization programs. Factories taught English and tried to make their workers loyal and docile American workers. The lessons repeated American biases and prepared immigrants for their subordinate place in American society. Lesson One in the International Harvester Corporate English program reads:

I hear the whistle. I must hurry
 I hear the five minute whistle
 It is time to go into the shop
 The lunch whistle blows
 I eat my lunch
 It is forbidden to eat until then
 I work until the whistle blows to quit
 I leave my place neat and clean.

A model English lesson for Immigrant women repeated the pattern:

I want to work.
 What can you do?
 I can wash and iron
 What else?
 I can wash windows and clean house.

No one carried the process further than Henry Ford. He made his famous five dollars a day dependent on the achievement of a minimal standard of Americanization. Workers were required to attend English classes. If the worker failed to respond to the first invitation to join a class, he was visited by a foreman who explained the advantages of the class. If he was still reluctant to join, he was laid off for a few days to think about it. Most usually joined the class after that sort of warning. The classes deliberately mixed men of various nationalities. In addition to the English requirement, workers were expected to live like Americans. Investigators, accompanied by an interpreter, visited the worker's home to see if he was worthy of an American wage. He and his family were expected to live in decent, clean quarters, have certain minimal furniture, not overcrowd the rooms, have a savings account, insurance, etc. In other words, the workers

were to aspire to Henry Ford's notions of Middle Class American living standards and accept the values inherent in them.

The graduation ceremony for his English school summed up symbolically what Ford and his contemporaries expected from the immigrants. The ceremony, held at the Detroit Masonic Temple, required the graduates to appear in their old clothes carrying immigrant bundles. They marched up and into a huge cauldron and the teachers with long ladles mixed and stirred the "Melting Pot". After a short time, the graduates emerged wearing their Sunday best waving American flags.

The overwhelming immigrant presence in American cities forced a political response from the leadership of American society. The Radical reconstruction in the South had created a concept of second class citizenship for newly freed blacks in which they would be subordinate clients of the dominant white Protestant Elite. This concept was brought north to deal with the dilemma of immigrants eligible for citizenship but deemed congenitally unfit to ever fully understand and appreciate American institutions. Ironically enough, just as the concept was being implemented in the North it was being abolished in the South and replaced by the exclusion of the Blacks from public life.

American elites could have tried to systematically deny civil, political and educational rights to the immigrants but chose not to. Instead they chose to encourage Catholics and Jews in a second class citizenship in which they would follow the political, economic, social and intellectual leadership of the Anglo-Saxon first class citizens. Unlike the Southerners, Northern Anglo-Saxons did believe that one could create a subordinate democracy within a dominant democracy. That belief became one of the impulses of the turn of the century urban reform movement.

To offset the growing voting power of the immigrants and their desire to control the governing institutions Anglo-Saxon reformers redid the government to maintain their hold on power. The reform's purpose was to remove the power from the hands of venal and ignorant men and put it into the hands of those better qualified to protect the public weal. In practice, it meant taking it from immigrants and giving it to Anglo-Saxons. It is true that some of the inefficiency and corruption needed reforming, especially in municipal government and that there were substantive improvements that could be made. There is also no question that some of the reformers saw the need for reform prior to the arrival of Eastern and Southern European immigrants. But the movement did not take off until after the immigrants had settled in.

In addition, decreasing corruption and inefficiency and tightening the hegemony of the upper classes did not have to be synonymous. In eliminating the crude corruption of the past they ended up creating a more sophisticated financial corruption in which the public money did not go directly into the pockets of the boss but rather was diverted to serve elite interests and provide work for the middle class. More importantly it was a corruption of the public interest. The reforms could have been initiated without violating so thoroughly the Jeffersonian notion that citizens should be permitted to participate in the control of the institutions which govern them and that this participation is itself the best training in self government. Samuel Hays' study of the 1911 reform in Pittsburgh showed that before the reform only 24% of almost 400 municipal officials were from the upper class; after the reform the great majority of the office holders were upper class. The smoke filled back room moved from the immigrant political clubs to the meeting rooms of the brotherhoods of the prestigious downtown Protestant Churches.

The reforms proceeded on the premise that politics was bad for politics. Wherever possible city councils and neighborhood school boards were subordinated to powerful city managers and school superintendents, trained at the best universities. Ward and precinct politics which provided representation and mobility for immigrants and their children were replaced by non-partisan, at-large elections which obfuscated class differences and reinforced the over representation of upper class Protestants. For example, the 1919 reform of Detroit's system ended, in this way, the representation of the Polish community which at the time made up almost 25% of the population and which had regularly elected councilmen from its wards. From that date to the present only three Polish Americans have been elected to the city council. Of these one bore a name not easily recognizable as Polish and another served as Lt. Governor of Michigan prior to his election and had minimal contact with the city's Polish community. These reforms were accompanied by a drastic reduction of jobs available by political appointment and an accompanying increase in civil service and professional positions.

As a result of the reform movement the fiscal and political autonomy of city government in general was reduced, with control given to the rural and Protestant-dominated state legislatures. In addition, the informal mechanisms and institutions of politics were also changed. The influence once wielded by local political party organizations and political clubs passed to municipal research bureaus, blue ribbon committees, civic searchlight panels, candidate screening committees, appointive non-partisan commissions and professional city managers. These allegedly "neutral" devices and offices, in fact, made very hazy the distinction between upper class interests and the public interest.

Although they excluded themselves from the Melting Pot, the presence of huge masses of Eastern and Southern Europeans did force Northern American

Elites to redefine their identity from American to White, Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP). The "white" part of the identity was not as superfluous as it sounds in making a distinction between immigrants and natives. We have forgotten how much "white" was a social category as well as a racial one. The newspapers of the day were full of references to "white men and Dagoes" and talked about Southern Europeans as "colored".

The darker skinned people of the Mediterranean, of course, were the most easily identified as non-white. Laws that applied to Blacks in the South were often invoked against Italians. In 1924, an Armenian had to sue in the state of California to prove he was "white".

Skin tone, however, was less important than social class and alien origin in determining "whiteness". The press was also full of references to "white men and Polacks," "white men and Hunkies," "white men and foreigners." A company doctor wrote, for example, that "a Polack" can do work and endure conditions "that would kill a white man." These distinctions were wide spread enough that even Black Americans used them. In response to a question about whites practicing his trade of white washing, a Black man told a Detroit News reporter in 1899 "There's no wite men. There's some Polacks but they ain't white, you know."

The need to become "white" as much as anything else helped to erode ethnicity in the twenties and thirties as immigrants and their children discovered that being "white" gave them a leg up in the job competition.

To sharpen the distinction between themselves and the newcomers Anglo-Saxons practiced exclusion and separation. Although the exclusion in the North did not go to extent of Southern segregation, it did put considerable social (as well as physical) distance between Anglo-Saxons and the immigrants.

One part of this reaction was to ignore the immigrants. For example, the popular Detroit News columnist, George Caitlan wrote a 746 page History of Detroit published in 1927 which made no mention of the Polish or other Slavic Immigrants who constituted about 30% of population of the city at that time. The other part of the reaction was to flee. Protestant Americans fled from the cities and abandoned them to the immigrants. They withdrew to tastefully zoned suburbs, to a few privileged enclaves in the cities, to shaded avenues in smaller towns, to hunting and fishing lodges, to board rooms, clubs and private schools. Just as the Chautauqua era got underway, the retreat began. As Digby Baltzell notes in The Protestant Establishment, symbolic events included the increased use of exclusive summer resort areas starting in 1880-81; creation of the first country club in 1882; birth of the American genealogical preoccupation with the founding of the Sons of the Revolution in 1883, the establishment of Groton School on the British model in 1884, the publication of the Social Register in 1887 and the founding of the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1890.

The establishment of exclusive private-boarding, country and suburban day-schools continued through the last two decades of the nineteenth century including such schools as Taft, Hotchkiss, Deerfield, St. George's, Kent, Haverford, Browne and Nichols and Morisstown.

One of the aspects of this reaction to immigrants and to the industrial urban world they inhabited was a desire to return to the colonial rural past in home furnishings and decoration that fueled both the Colonial (Early American) Revival and the Arts and Crafts movement. It allowed one to return to the true simplicity of the genuinely American style when this was an agrarian, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant land and to avoid using things mass produced by machines run by immigrants in ugly urban factories. At the same time, the new fashion was also touted as a modern and advanced style, so that one could be progressive by adopting it.

The Arts and Crafts movement, evolved concurrently with the Colonial Revival. It stressed exteriors and interiors which boasted natural materials such as wood, shingles, and greenery, exposed structural elements and surfaces, and open, flexible spaces. A historian of that movement writes:

Middle-class people's attraction to the Colonial Revival and Arts and Crafts movement corresponded to prevailing social attitudes, particularly toward workers and immigrants. Nativism, anti-industrialism, and a propensity toward environmental solutions for social problems were values incorporated into the new aesthetic. Patriotic organizations, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the National Society of Colonial Dames, both formed in the early 1890s, frequently encouraged the preservation of colonial artifacts and buildings. Architects and client congregations found in the Colonial Revival an appropriate architecture for Protestant churches to replace the Catholic-associated Gothic style. Founders of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities blamed immigrant residents for the destruction of historical areas like Boston's North End. Outspoken xenophobes like Henry Ford, Abbott Lawrence Lowell and Henry Cabot Lodge were important patrons of the preservation and Colonial Revival movements.

The Arts and Crafts style satisfied the anti-industrial instincts of many middle-class Americans. Montgomery Schuyler, organizer of an arts and crafts production studio outside Philadelphia, argued that this new style was not only wholesome, but it revived the accomplishment of the colonial craftsman, "an educated and thinking being" who loved his work" without demanding a wage or labor union membership".

The new Anglo-Saxon enclaves were off limits to Jewish and Catholic immigrants and workers. Constantine Panunzio tells how even the Italian Vice Consul "a man of fine and keen intelligence, tall and pleasing in appearance, and a gentleman in every sense of the word" was unable to find decent housing in a major American city. Ironically, even the chairman of the local Protestant Americanization committee refused him because "the neighbors would object to having an Italian (Eye-talian) next door to him". The Mexican writer, Octavio Paz has called this tendency "the North American contradiction...a universalism made up of ethnic, cultural, religious and sexual exclusions."

This exclusionism was at least as significant in creating ethnic neighborhoods as the desire to be with one's own. The distance not only isolated Protestant Americans from the immigrant but immunized them against the pain and suffering that their attitudes and policies created. Labor historians have argued that the appalling safety record of American industry and the brutal way in which workers were driven was the result of the gulf that separated them from their employers. European industrialists constantly expressed amazement at the willingness and ability of their American counterparts to speed up work and push their employees to the limit. The result was an appalling slaughter. At the South Chicago works of Illinois Steel in the five year period 1906-1910 one out of every four immigrant workers were killed or injured every year - a total of 3,200 over five years. Some employers and managers could not even imagine that their workers were fellow human beings, so great was the divide. One coal baron who tried to bring his Slavic workforce to heel during a strike cut off their food at the company store, refused them fuel to heat their homes and finally removed the doors from their company owned houses in mid winter. When he was asked by a reporter if he didn't think the immigrants were suffering, he replied in puzzled amazement: "Suffering? How can they be suffering? They don't even speak English."

Part of the impulse to exclude and segregate was rooted in a fear of contamination and a desire to maintain purity. One of the strongest impulses of the Americanization movement was to clean the immigrant up, to purify him, to sweep his streets and houses and to wash him down. The impulse went far beyond the needs or ordinary hygiene - it was ritual purification. The Putman's Weekly image of defecation is embarrassingly revealing. Even as sympathetic an observer as Jane Addams noted privately " I recoil before the unclean minds of these people".

All but the most adventurous Americans stayed away from the foods and spices of the immigrants. Octavio Paz has written of problem of food and purity in a brilliant essay titled Eroticism and Gastrosophy.

In other countries a meal is a communion and not only among the people at the table but among the ingredients themselves: A Yankee meal is saturated with puritanism, is made up exclusions. The maniacal preoccupation with the origin and purity of food is the counterpart of racism and discrimination. The North American contradiction is reflected in its cooking.

The North Americans...love tender and fresh colors and flavors. A cuisine equivalent to pastel and water color painting. It is a cooking that fears spices more than the devil himself but that wallows in swamps of cream and butter. Orgies of sugar. Extremes: the almost apostolic simplicity and sobriety of lunch together with the suspiciously innocent and pregenital pleasures of ice cream and the milk shake.

Let me close this brief discussion of exclusion with a fascinating modern example of the projection, guilt and justification it has caused. The TV guide distributed with Sunday Minneapolis Star-Tribune for January 9, 1983, describes a new TV show, Square Pegs, written by Anne Beatts. The show depicts the problems of two young women with the good WASP names of Patty Greene and Laurin Hollister who are trying to get accepted by the in-crowd at their new school. The TV guide goes on: "On the "inside" and fighting to keep Patty and Lauren out, are Muffy Tepperman, a combination Jewish princess and preppie; airhead Jennifer DeNuncio and her space cadet boyfriend Vinnie Pasetta and LaDonna Fredericks, a hip black coed."

Its been going on for so long that their children think that we are keeping them out. The stereotypes haven't changed - a wealthy socially mobile Jewish Princess, dumb but sexy Catholics, and jiving Blacks. It is only our relative social positions in the show that are reversed.

It is worth noting that among the American elite there were some who never lost faith in democracy and in what can justly be called the American dream. They continued, in a world of fear and exclusion, to speak out in the name of the best and most generous traditions of American culture.

These include Emily Balch and Rudolph Bourne who advocated a genuine democratic pluralism and others such as Jane Addams, more ethnocentric perhaps, but willing nevertheless to try to understand and deal with the immigrants as fellow human beings.

For Mainstream American culture, however, the immigrant served as a kind of Caliban. He was the brutish, anti-democratic ignoramus, the strike breaking supplanter of honest American labor, the advance guard of Anarchism and Bolshevism and the mindless tool of the papal conspiracy. These contradictory stereotypes reveal more about the projected hopes and hidden fears of American Society than they do about the immigrants or the communities they established in our urban areas. In the 1960's, in an eerie echo, Eastern and Southern European Catholics, despite all hard evidence to the contrary, reemerged as the "ethnic Racist Hardhat".

The immigrants' reaction to American society was highly ambivalent. It was, of course, not only a reaction to America but also a reaction of rural immigrants to an urban industrial society. A common theme of the letters that flowed from immigrant neighborhoods to home villages in Europe was: "Don't come if you are not strong enough. A man can do well here but it is a hard place. They use you up here and then throw you away."

A Slavic editor described America as a country that takes the good and returns bad. "We brought to this country our strength, health and youth. That capital of our land which built the well being and wealth of this nation. In return we receive the lowest wage, discrimination, lack of rights and dangerous conditions." The result is "a massive catastrophe in the mines, factories, on the rails and at the furnaces. People's lives here are nothing, especially those of immigrants. The reaction of the industrialist is "He's gone. There will be other". In 1916, an immigrant paper wrote: "The lot of the workers is indeed heavy in this famous land of freedom...The economy of

this country sacrifices more lives than the war in Europe." Similarly, a Polish woman wrote after a mine disaster in Pennsylvania anthracite fields: "How many of our brothers are lost in those gloomy pits, condemned to death by the frightful greed of the exploiters and the indifference of the Government".

Some, especially the children, often greeted America with great enthusiasm. "I thought I was in heaven when I first arrived," one woman remembered of her arrival at age nine. The school for all of its faults and ethnocentrism opened up for some of these immigrant children a new world.

Some took to their new status with gusto. In 1910, a Polish newspaper carried a story of a woman who came as a child and was raised as an "American" who wanted a divorce because her husband was a Greenhorn. As an American, she did not have to put up with a backward immigrant. A newly arrived Jewish immigrant lad who found work in a relative's dry goods store wrote a letter lecturing his aunt in the home village on the backwardness of conditions back home. Here social relations were so advanced he announced that he could keep company with a young woman without a chaperone. He had become so sophisticated that he even sold underwear to women with nary a blush, he noted smugly.

Most were grateful for the opportunities but aware of their inferior status in it. But as long as they could build their communities and support their families and achieve some dignity, they were willing to endure it. Petro di Donato, in his novel, Christ in Concrete has his Italian Workman say: "Blessings to thee Jesus. I have fought wind and cold. Hand to hand I have locked dumb stones in place and a great building rises. I have earned a bit of bread for mine and for me".

The immigrants also noticed that no matter how bad things got at

least there was no starvation in America. Perhaps the streets were not paved with gold but there was a chance, if your health stayed good, to save enough to buy a house and land for a garden. For many immigrants this was a realizable dream. It was the chance to be a landowner, a person of dignity with an established place in the moral and physical universe. Such a possibility made America a step up for a large number of the newcomers.

As for many Americans, the aspect of America that excited and frightened them most was its materialism. Often they drew the contrast between their spirituality and "higher values" and Americans' relentless search for profit and goods. Yet immigrant preachers and newspaper editors inveighed enough against these American values to indicate they also had a fatal attraction for the immigrants.

Immigrants also, had stereotypes of Americans which were often class as well as ethnic stereotypes. Americans were "cake eaters" (You went to their houses and they gave you cake to eat instead of real food). Eating "American style" was to have the food served already on the plate (in less than adequate portions) rather than piled high in serving dishes. My favorite from Glos Polek, the newspaper of the Polish Women's Alliance, was of middle class American women whom young Polish women were warned not to emulate. They had "long feet like the runners of a sled," their countenance was "distorted by constant gum chewing" and they thought only of shopping and bridge games.

While the Chautauqua was bringing Mainstream values to Rural America, the immigrants, another group of rural people were having their own encounter with those values and most importantly not only learning and adapting them in light of their own values and needs but also shaping and creating them. On the one hand, the reaction to the immigrants by Protestant

Anglo-Saxon Americans caused Mainstream American culture and values to develop in certain ways, so that in a negative way they affected them. On the other hand, however, the choices they made about work, leisure, learning, mobility, housing and life in general in an industrialized society shaped the future of many aspects of American culture. They were making these choices just as mass popular culture was developing and they shaped its direction. The content of American working class cultures is, to a significant degree, ethnic. It is impossible to understand New York City unless you understand it as a partially Jewish and Italian city or to comprehend Detroit and Chicago without an appreciation that they were built by Slavs. Thus the immigrants and their children were not only becoming American; they were helping to determine what it means to be an American.

To fully understand ethnicity one must realize that above all it is a way of being an American. In America ethnicity is a modern identity that replaced older loyalties. It was an identity around which immigrants organized their sense of self, located the boundaries of their moral universe in America and built a new community. Thus it was only in part an attempt to preserve the old and even that had to be done by building something new. In the process of building their ethnic communities, the immigrants were accepting and adapting "modern" and "American" values even if that was imperceptible to their fellow citizens.

The new Americans followed the pattern of their predecessors from New England pilgrims to settlers on the Great Plains by building their communities around their churches. Like other Americans they also became joiners. The number of associations that were created in immigrant communities were astounding. Almost every community began with a society to build a church. These were rapidly followed by branches of fraternal and sororital insurance companies, religious confraternities, social clubs, cultural organizations and political clubs. For example, in Polish Detroit between the wars there were

over 300 different organizations and clubs. Writing constitutions attained the rank of a cottage industry in some immigrant communities. The organizational experience provided many immigrants with their first experience in democratic politics.

The church building itself became a mark of their Americanization. It is a mistake to interpret the magnificent churches the immigrants built solely as an expression of medieval religiosity or a desire to recreate the village church they left behind. The churches they created were far larger and more sumptuous than any but those in the largest towns in the old country. These immigrant churches were status symbols that marked the success of the community. They were a sign that the immigrants had made it in America and that they intended to stay. The parish church became the stone and mortar root that bound them to the soil of the new world.

The new Americans developed distinctive notions of mobility. For many of them upward mobility was tied to ownership of a home within one of their parish communities. Home ownership made one a respected member of the community, and it gave the family a place in it. Capital that among other groups would have gone to entrepreneurial activity was used to create the structure of the community. Their capitalism was decidedly communal with the bulk of the capital being accumulated and invested by savings and loan associations and fraternal insurance companies.

The role of women in immigrant communities changed markedly in America. They founded their own organizations such as the First Slovak Ladies Catholic Association and the Polish Women's Alliance. Such organizations were communal insurance and investment companies run entirely by women long before the founding of the first Women's Bank in the 1970's. The rapid growth of Catholic Religious orders dedicated primarily to teaching were another response to the American environment. The orders provided education and mobility for the daughters of

peasant immigrants and teachers for the growing network of parochial schools the immigrants built.

The immigrants and their children rapidly took up new forms of leisure in America. Baseball became unusually popular among the children of immigrants. By 1904, the Polish newspaper in Detroit was regularly carrying detailed accounts of Detroit Tiger games. Their interest in music led to the beginnings of the American Polka culture on the one hand, and the movement of a large number of children of immigrants into Jazz. They became the interpreters of the culture of Black America for white Americans. Both represented ways of being American which were alternative to the culture of mainstream America. (The first racially integrated group to appear on the American stage was composed of Teddy Wilson, a black man, Gene Krupa, son of a Polish Catholic immigrant, and Benny Goodman, son of a immigrant Rabbi from Eastern Europe.) Bowling became unusually popular with East European males and bowling alleys abounded in ethnic neighborhoods by the thirties and forties. As a result Detroit had three times more bowling per capita than any other major city.

In addition to parochial schools, the immigrants also sponsored adult education programs not unlike those sponsored by the Chautauqua. The Hungarian Free Lyceum, for example, gave classes on a variety of topics. One catalog listed the following courses: Modern Hungarian Poets, The Americanization of Hungarians, Discovery of America and Colonial History, The American Revolution and the Civil War, The Influence of the Press, Industrial Hazards. The Polish People's University set up branches in most of the large industrial cities of the East and Northwest and often established bookstores and published its own materials to supplement the courses offered. One organizer of the movement in Chicago wrote of its activities.

We took up questions about the beginnings of things, the world, the theory of evolution, primitive man and the development of language. Almost all of our members could understand and speak English but many others who attended the lectures could not.

Gradually we came to subjects connected with America and civic problems. But we do more than have lectures. We go and see for ourselves how things work. At different times we have visited most of the public departments and institutions of this city. We hold meetings at the public park center in the neighborhood...over a thousand people came to the last lecture. We haven't preached Americanization but practically all our members are citizens who take an active interest in civic affairs and if what America wants is people who think and act for themselves, then we're doing Americanization.

The educational structure of the immigrant community was supplemented by newspapers and lending libraries founded by fraternal, sororital and religious organizations. All of these were things that they had not known in the old country but which now became an essential part of their American community.

To the purely ethnic organization can be added such other organizations as labor unions. In the 1930's Catholic immigrants moved en Masse into the labor movement. In fact, they created the locals on which the C.I.O. was built. The depression of the 1930's and the brutal industrial policies followed by American corporations during that period when they enjoyed a unusually favorable labor market threatened the very foundations of the communities the immigrants had built. The defense of community drove them to form unions to protect the structures on which they had built their Americanism.

The immigrants developed a response to the American experience that changed and added to the meaning of America. They reshaped the American city, established a model of livable American urban neighborhoods and built some of the most beautiful churches in the country in some of the ugliest industrial districts in the United States. They adopted some values of mainstream America and created new ones to fit their new life. They also influenced many of the directions the new mass popular culture of the twentieth century would follow by the choices they made about life and leisure.

Ironically, as Catholic immigrants and their children were beginning their move into the mainstream and even to direct its flow, those older-stock Americans who had convinced themselves that such a thing was impossible won

their battle. As the Chautauqua era was ending, Prohibition, Municipal Reform directed against immigrant political power and Immigration Restriction legislation based on racist and nativist national quotas became the law at national, state and local levels.

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