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An Historical Analysis of the Racial, Community and Religious Forces in the Establishment and Development of St. Monica's Parish Chicago, 1890-1930

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AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RACIAL, COMMUNITY AND RELIGIOUS FORCES IN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF ST. MONICA'S PARISH CHICAGO, 1890-1930

by

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VITA

The author, Helen Kathryn Marie Rhodes, was born July 27, 1938 in Chicago, Illinois. She is the daughter of Lily Kate (Sykes) Rhodes and Joseph Edward Rhodes. Her educational achievements include: St. George Grammer School, 1952; St. Dominic High School, 1956, Chicago State University, B.A., 1982; and Chicago State University, M.S., 1983.

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DEDICATION

To My Ancestors

The Families of

Hawkins

Lavandier

O'Brien

Rhodes

Sykes

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the historical dynamics behind the establishment and growth of a separate structure of Catholic worship and education for blacks in Chicago at the turn of the twentieth century. It revolves around a single research questions: How did racial, community, and religious forces in the city of Chicago at the turn of the century contribute to the emergence of a racially-divided, "parallel" Catholic parish?

Although the background to this inquiry is quite broad, it can be briefly sketched in the space of a few short paragraphs. Entering the final decade of the nineteenth century, Chicago was on the cusp of intensifying racial conflict and community fractionalization. By 1890, the city had an established legacy of progressivism in race relations, the strong statutory enforcement of legal rights for its black population, and the extension of economic, social, and political opportunities to blacks. While Chicago's black community was already beginning to show signs of concentration into a "black belt," Negroes in pre-1890 Chicago were residentially dispersed throughout the

burgeoning metropolis.

All of this was about to change. Chicago's black populace would grow by leaps and bounds over the course of the next three decades, from barely 5,000 to over 100,000, much of the growth being the result of Great Migration from the South before and during World War I. As this took place, competition between blacks and Chicago's immigrant ethnic groups for economic, political and social opportunities intensified; a black ghetto was created in the city's second and third wards; lax enforcement of existing civil rights statutes, regressive segregationist movements, and outright violence between races began to rule the day. A gross contradiction erupted between Chicago's nominal commitment to equality between blacks and whites, on the one hand, and the de facto segregation of the races.

The black community's response to this was fragmented. While dividing its leadership between pro-Washington and pro-Du Bois lines is certainly an over-simplification, close scrutiny indicates that the community's spirit was torn between the "self-help" strategy being advocated by Tuskegee and the call to constant struggle against discrimination and racial inequality clarioned by the Niagara Movement. This fracture manifested itself along class, political, and religious affiliation lines, with an older black establishment holding firm to "militancy" and a more newly-prominent "business" class focused upon expanding the

community's economic base before scaling segregationist walls.

Within the Catholic Church, related developments at both the national and local levels displayed equally deep and long-suffering issues coming to a head. Both the Second and Third Plenary Councils (1866 and 1884) had failed to comprehensively address the questions central to contemporary and future black Catholics. Having already stood silent on the issue of slavery prior (and through) the Civil War, the Church's stance was necessarily equivocal, with despair hanging over its perceived capacity to minister to the emancipated slaves, pessimism about "natural bounds" to upgrading their lot, and controversy enveloping the crucial question of a separate black priesthood in a parallel parochial structure versus the continuance of a unified but effectively segregated system.

It was into this setting that Father Augustine (or Augustus) Tolton, the first ordained American priest to work with people of his color, stepped in 1889. Father Tolton's appearance in Chicago at this juncture was itself the product of conflict and contradiction. He had originally been assigned to work in Quincy, Illinois and his appointment to a parish in the United States was the result of decisions made by the Propaganda of the Curia, now known as Congregation of Propagation of the Faith, not the American hierarchy. His request for reassignment to Chicago

was motivated chiefly by inter-personal conflict with the local clergy and lay whites, and, as revealed in his correspondence, by an abject sense of loneliness and failure. Indeed, the erection of St. Monica's as Chicago's first Catholic Church for blacks was as much the outcome of overflow in the basement of St. Mary's (where many of St. Monica's parishioners were meeting at the time of Tolton's arrival) combined with tension between white and black lay Catholics, as it was an "affirmative" response to the needs of Chicago's black Catholics. Moreover, a highly controversial order issued by Chicago Archbishop Mundelein in 1917 would effectively authorize racial segregation in the Catholic churches and schools of Chicago, while a 1922 directive would enhance educational provisions within St. Monica's.

I have adopted a straightforward sequence of presentation, the analysis moving from the broadest historical matters to those specifically related to the evolution of St. Monica's parish. Apart from this brief introduction, the dissertation is comprised of eight chapters divided into three broad parts. The first of these three sections includes Chapters 2, 3, and 4, and is essentially "national" in scope. Chapter 2 examines the "debate" between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois concerning what course blacks should adopt in trying to better themselves in a turn-of-the century America dominated

by whites. The next chapter surveys the "Great Migration" of blacks from the rural South to the urban North during the second decade of the twentieth century. While this exodus was a nation-wide phenomenon, to highlight its impact and furnish background for subsequent chapters, Chicago's experience during the Great Migration will be investigated as exemplary of the forces that drove Southern blacks north and of the effects that this movement had upon race relations in the North. The last chapter in this section concerns the American Catholic Church and its evolving stance toward blacks as free men, co-religionists and as clerics.

A second section is comprised of two chapters and is dedicated exclusively to "local" scene in Chicago. The first covers the emergence of ideological and political factionalism between "old guard" militants and a rising business/professional elite of racial accomodationists. Chapter 6 surveys religious affiliations among Chicago's blacks and the emergence of black Catholicism in that city.

The study's third and final portion begins with a concise biography of Father Augustine Tolton, the black Catholic priest who "founded" St. Monica's parish. The penultimate chapter traces the development of St. Monica's parish during the quarter century after Father Tolton's death. A concluding Chapter 9 summarizes the study's chief findings.

Study findings suggest that St. Monica's came about as the result of contradictions in the city of Chicago's implementation and enforcement of racial equality law, from fragmentation within the local black community along ideological lines, and as an outgrowth of submerged and overt conflict in the American Catholic Church's response to black Catholics. More affirmatively, as is highlighted in the study's final chapter, parochial education played a salient part in the rapid growth of St. Monica's parish during the first three decades of the twentieth century, black parents affiliating themselves with St. Monica's to gain greater educational opportunities for their sons and daughters than those available in Chicago's public school system at the time.

PART I

THE STATUS OF BLACK AMERICANS AT THE TURN-OF-THE CENTURY

CHAPTER II

WASHINGTON VERSUS DU BOIS

Introduction

Prior to the Civil War, American blacks were unified under the leadership of Frederick Douglass. According to August Meier, the traditional orientation of this leadership was militant integrationist and an uncompromising assault upon all forms of racial discrimination.[1] As Spear sees its:

> The ultimate goal was unquestioned: the integration of Negroes into the mainstream of American life. The means of attack, too, were well-established: a continual barrage of law suits against the vestiges of formal segregation, political pressure to secure broader civil rights legislation, and frequent protests and indignation meetings to voice the Negro's discontent over any violation of his rights. To the integrationist, any type of separate Negro institution smacked on

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[1] August Meier, Negro Thought in America, 1880-1915 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 196.

> segregation and represented a compromise of principle.[2]

As an "old line" abolitionist who had witnessed the liberation of his people from the bondage of slavery, Douglass would conscience no retreat from that militant stance, no compromise with the objective of full and immediate equality between blacks and whites. This position was shared by the vast majority of educated blacks who had assumed leadership positions in those comparatively small pockets of black residence that emerged in Northern cities both before and after the Civil War. While relatively small in number, members of the black "elite" in the last half of the nineteenth century were strongly united in their commitment to carry out the aims set forth by Douglass. Factionalism on this front was nowhere to be found at this time.

Booker T. Washington and the Philosophy of "Separate Development"

After 1900, a new position arose that challenged the position of the established elite, an ideology of "separate development" and "self-help" championed by Douglass's self-appointed successor, Booker T. Washington. Early on in Washington's career, as a student under the tutelage of

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[2] Allan H. Spear, Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1967), 51.

white benefactor General Samuel Armstrong (founder and director of the Hampton Institute) he was exposed to the ideology of hard work being necessary for the black individual to "earn" his way into the white mainstream. This notion of hard work leading eventually to a rightful place in white society would stay with Washington throughout his life.

It was in early adulthood, as director of the Tuskegee Institute (a Hampton-style institution for black education) that Washington's "Atlanta Compromise" speech established him (in his own eyes and the view of whites) as the successor to Frederick Douglass. In his address of 18 September, 1895, Washington would employ two memorable metaphors that capture the gist of his self-help, separate-development program for American blacks. The first was "Cast down your bucket where you are," a phrase that recurs throughout the speech. By this Washington meant that blacks should recognize, accept and live within race-bound limitations, explaining the home-spun quality of his image, "Our greatest danger is that, in the great leap from slavery to freedom, we may overlook and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labor."[3]

The second crucial metaphor spoken by Washington at

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[3] Booker T. Washington, The Story of My Life and Work (Naperville, Illinois: Hampton Press, 1900), 168.

Atlanta was "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress,"[4] that is, racial cooperation through separate institutional development. Later, in an essay written by Washington in 1916 in reaction to racial disturbances and reproduced by Scott and Stowe, he would expand upon this separatist image of black development by stating: "Let us in future spend less time talking about the part of the city that we cannot live in, and more time in making that part of the city that we live in beautiful and attractive."[5]

Lastly, to allay the fears of whites, Washington disparaged black calls for full suffrage and spoke out against the migration of blacks from the South to the metropolitan centers of the North. In the Atlantic Compromise oration we hear Washington proclaim: "The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing."[6]

Washington, it must observed, did not merely express

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[4] Ibid., 169.

[5] Booker T. Washington quoted in Emmet J. Scott and Lyman Beecher Stowe, Booker T. Washington, Builder of a Civilization (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1916), 40.

[6] Washington, 170.

the separatist, accomodationist "self-help" philosophy. As the "leading black" of his age, he created organizational and institutional mechanisms for its realizations, often aided in this by "progressive" white businessmen and reformers. For example, in 1900. Washington founded the National Negro Business League. There has been a tendency to equate the name of Booker T. Washington with "Uncle Tom." To be fair, Washington's public stance of quiescence may have been partially a front: There is evidence of his working clandestinely against the more objectionable manifestations of Southern segregation. Still, the thrust of Washington's view was avoidance of conflict with whites, acceptance of many of their views about blacks, and, at bottom, retrenchment from the militancy that pervaded Frederick Douglass's leadership.

W.E.B. Du Bois and Niagara Movement

Across the black communities of the urban North, vestiges of the old elite searched for a means to counter Washington's gospel of separate development. Many of them found their commitment to integration expressed in the words and works of W.E.B. Du Bois and the Niagara Movement (so named because its first convention was held in Niagara Falls, Ontario in 1905), and Du Bois himself repeatedly contrasted his principles to Washington's accommodationism. When the Niagara Movement collapsed, this same group found

yet another vehicle through which they could act on behalf of principled integration, the newly-formed and militant National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

From the Niagara point of view, in direct relief to Washington's perspective, common humanity or brotherhood, as they called it, was not something to be earned by blacks and conferred by white people. They accused Washington of accepting the practical inferiority of blacks and believed the relations between blacks and whites could never be straightened out on that basis because it placed the burden for the existence of a color line on the blacks. For Du Bois' associates, attaining that relationship and that definition of the 'Negro's place' "required unremitting protest -- the only incontrovertible proof that the blacks at least did not acquiesce in this assault on their humanity."[7]

At the first meeting of the Niagara movement, Du Bois himself set the tone, telling his listeners. "We want to pull down nothing but we don't propose to be pulled down . . We believe in taking what we can get but we don't believe in being satisfied with it and in permitting anybody for a

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[7] Alan B. Anderson and George W. Pickering, Confronting the Color Line: The Broken Promise of the Civil Rights Movement in Chicago (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), 28.

moment to imagine we're satisfied.'"[8] As reported in the pages of the New York Times of 22 July 1905, the Niagara movement's principles were enunciated at its first convention and have been edited into the statement:

> We believe in manhood suffrage . . . We also believe in protest against the curtailment of our civil rights . . . We especially complain against the denial of equal opportunities to us in economic life . . . Common-school education should be free to all American children, and compulsory. High School training should be adequately provided for all, and college training should be the monopoly of no class or race in any section of our common country . . . We demand upright judges in courts, juries selected without discrimination on account of color, and the same measure of punishment and the same efforts at reformation for black as for white offenders . . . We refuse to allow the impression to remain that the Negro American assents to inferiority, is submissive under oppression, and apologetic before insults. Through helpfulness we may submit, but the voice of protest of 10 million Americans must never cease to assail the ears of their fellows so long as America is unjust.[9]

Understandably, in what remains his most famous single written work, The Souls of black People, Du Bois's summary statement of "What the black Man Wants," concisely captures the heart of the prospective Niagara Movement program, with the author replying to the rhetorical question forming the title of this piece: "He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the

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[8] W.E.B. Du Bois cited in Elliot M. Rudwick, W.E.B. Dubois: A Study in Minority Group Leadership (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1960), 95.

[9] Quoted in New York Times, 22 July 1905.

doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face."[10] As for Washington's separate fingers image and his idea that political power can best be achieved by blacks after the attainment of economic power and cultural "refinement," Du Bois would retort:

> Work, culture, liberty, all thee we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each other, and all striving toward the vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of race; the ideal of fostering and development the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American republic, in order that some day on American soil two world races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack.[11]

In the same text, Du Bois asked another rhetorical question, "How is it possible, and probable, that nine million men can make effective progress in economic lines if they are deprived of political rights, made a servile caste, and allowed only the most meager chance for developing their exceptional men?"[12] Obviously, while Washington's followers may have believed that economic and political advancement were separable, Du Bois and like-minded blacks were having none of it.

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[10] W.E.B. Du Bois, "What the Black Man Wants," in The Negro in American History: Volume II, Taste of Freedom, 1854-1927 (New York: Encyclopedia Britannica Press, 1969), 74.

[11] Ibid., 79.

[12] Ibid., 229.

Given the chasm in their views, one might naturally assume that Washington and Du Bois looked upon each other as enemies. This is basically true. Washington, holding the stronger hand politically, i.e., with white support, rarely mentioned Du Bois by name, but categorically denounced him under the generic rubrics of "agitators" and "rabble-rousers". Du Bois was far more candid about his personal views of Washington. After allowing that "his program of industrial education, conciliation of the South, and submission and silence as to civil rights was not wholly original," being a program for blacks practiced in the pre-Civil War period, Du Bois would single out his nemesis, "But Mr. Washington first indissolubly linked these things; he put enthusiasm, unlimited energy, and perfect faith into this program, and changed it from a bypath into a veritable way of life."[13] In his explanation of Washington's large "cult" following, Du Bois would sarcastically assert that it was the result of the narrowness of his vision: "And yet this very singleness of vision and thorough oneness with his age is a mark of the successful man. It as though nature must needs make men narrow in order to give them force."[14] Du Bois then inquired what had "Mr. Washington's program" given to blacks?" In reply to his own question, Du Bois cited three particulars: (1) their disenfranchisement, (2)

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[13] Du Bois, The Negro in American History, 80.

[14] Ibid., 81.

the creation of an inferior status for him upheld by law, and (3) "the steady withdrawal of aid from institutions for the higher training of the Negro."[15]

Lastly, we have already referred to Washington's reaction to racial disturbances in the section above. As for Du Bois, while not endorsing racial violence, his attitude can be readily discerned from a statement he made in 1921 regarding the investigation of Chicago's race riot in 1919:

> We would advise our friends in Chicago to watch narrowly the work and forthcoming report of the Interracial Commission appointed by the Governor of Illinois after the late riot. The Commission consists of colored men who apparently have a much too complacent trust in their white friends; of white men who are too busy too know; and of enemies of the Negro race who under the guise of impartiality and good will are pushing insidiously but unswervingly a program of racial segregation.[16]

By the time of this statement, the Niagara Movement had been out of existence for over a decade, having "collapsed" in 1909. In fact, that Anderson and Pickering observe, the formal membership of the Niagara movement never exceeded four hundred in number.[17] Nonetheless, when the Niagara Movement disintegrated, those sympathetic to this militancy found yet another vehicle through which they could act on

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[15] Ibid., 85.

[16] W.E.B. Du Bois, "Chicago," The Crisis, 21 (January, 1921), 102.

[17] Anderson and Pickering, 27.

behalf of principled integration, the newly-formed and militant National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Thus, like Washington's philosophy, Du Bois's alternative vision remained very much alive throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Between the end of the Civil War and the last decade of the nineteenth century, small enclaves of middle and upper class blacks located in cities across the north were unified in an uncompromising commitment to racial integration and equal rights as an enduring legacy of Frederick Douglass's leadership. Booker T. Washington's "Philosophy of Separate Development" represented an abrupt and significant departure from this ideological heritage. In diametric contrast to Douglass's views, Washington espoused a doctrine that combined the notion of blacks helping themselves to become worthy of political equality with a call for racially segregated institutional development. In his Atlanta Compromise address and elsewhere, Washington argued against immediate black suffrage, and he tried to dissuade southern blacks from travelling north in a premature quest for accelerated economic and political advancement. Washington's accomodationist stance was adopted by the National Negro Business League and became an article of faith among its members.

Understandably, Washington's retrenchment from the militancy of the Douglass era provoked a negative reaction from the old-line black elite of the urban north. Steadfastly adhering to Douglass's demand for immediate racial integration and equal civil rights for blacks, they turned to W.E.B. Du Bois and the short-lived Niagara Movement as an alternative voice. Du Bois stridently rejected Washington's revisionism. His own program, as set forth at the first convention of the Niagara Movement and in his The Souls of Black People, centered upon immediate universal manhood suffrage and the full equalization of economic, political, and social opportunities among the races. While Du Bois never achieved the same degree of consensus evident during Douglass's time, much of his program was incorporated into the platform of the N.A.A.C.P. Consequently, throughout the opening decades of the twentieth century, these competing visions of the future for race relations in America were in widespread circulation within the black communities of the north, and the division between Washington and Du Bois was replicated in microcosm at the local level.

CHAPTER III

THE GREAT MIGRATION AND ITS IMPACT UPON BLACK LIFE IN THE NORTH

INTRODUCTION

It is by no means a coincidence that the debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois took place just before what may be looked upon as the most significant transformation to take place in the lives of American blacks since the Emancipation itself, the "Great Migration."[1] By the time of the Niagara Movement, conditions for most blacks in the rural South were roughly equivalent to the privations they had experienced under slavery a half-century before. Materially, the majority of rural Southern blacks labored to eke out subsistence as sharecroppers or in other menial pursuits and were firmly denied any opportunity for advancement by "Jim Crow" laws segregating the races, particularly in the area of education. While the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth Amendments to the Constitution extended fundamental rights to American blacks,

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[1] James R. Grossman, Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1989), 196-197.

once the Reconstruction Era ended in the mid--1870s, these rights were effectively rescinded.[2] Although black Southern churches afforded emancipated slaves and their descendents with comfort and solace in the face of hardship, discrimination, and bigotry, given the abject subordination to which blacks were subjected in this region, they too searched for an earthly solution to an increasingly unbearable situation.[3]

It was in the decade of the First World War that opportunities for Southern blacks to extricate themselves from these circumstances arose. At one and the same time, conditions for blacks in the South eroded still further while portals to a better life opened in the metropolitan centers of the North. Pushed from the rural South and pulled toward the urban North, a virtual torrent of black migration was unleashed between 1910 and 1920.[4] The destination points of the "Great Migration" were spread across the northern United States, as Southern blacks undertook the trek to New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati and myriad other "promised lands."[5] Of these,

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[2] Diane M. Pinderhughes, Race and Ethnicity in Chicago Politics: A Re-examination of Pluralist Theory (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1987), 16.

[3] Spear, 5.

[4] James Dorsey, Up South: Blacks in Chicago's Suburbs, 1719-1983 (Bristol, Indiana: Wyndam Hall Press, 1986), 24.

[5] Grossman, 33.

Chicago was among the most prominent of the northern urban centers receiving large numbers of Southern blacks at this time, and its experience during the "Great Migration" is representative of the changes that occurred within nearly all of America's cities north of the Mason-Dixon line.[6] Thus, in what follows, while a phenomenon of national dimensions is under investigation, its causes and consequences will be illustrated with explicit reference to Chicago.

In this context we find that entering the final decade of the nineteenth century, Chicago was already on the cusp of intensifying racial conflict and community fractionalization. By 1890, the city had an established legacy of progressivism in race relations, the strong statutory enforcement of legal rights for its black population, and the extension of economic, social, and political opportunities to blacks. All of this was about to change. Chicago's black populace would grow by leaps and bounds over the course of the next three decades, from barely 5,000 to over 100,000. As this took place, competition between blacks and Chicago's immigrant ethnic groups for economic, political and social opportunities intensified; a black ghetto was created in the city's second and third wards; lax enforcement of existing civil rights statutes, regressive segregationist movements, and outright

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[6] Spear, 11-12.

violence between races began to rule the day.[7] A gross contradiction erupted between Chicago's nominal commitment to equality between blacks and whites, on the one hand, and the de facto segregation of the races. Although similar developments occurred in other northern cities, nowhere were the changes that unfolded under the pressure of the "Great Migration" more intense than in Chicago.

Chicago was a plainly focal point of the Great Migration of southern blacks that took place around the time of World War I. As noted by the Chicago Commission of Race Relations later constituted to investigate the roots of the racial strife of 1919, between 1910 an 1920 the black population of Chicago increased from 44,103 to 109,594, with the Commission observing that "within a period eighteen months in 1917-18, more than 50,000 Negroes came to Chicago according to an estimate based on averages taken from actual count of daily arrivals.[8] Very little of this increase was the product of births within the existing black community. Indeed, net in-migration of 61,000 blacks to Chicago between 1910 and 1920 accounted for 94 percent of the growth in the city's black populace over this time span.[9]

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[7] Pinderhughes, 16.

[8] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1922), 79.

[9] Otis Dudley Duncan and Beverly Duncan, The Negro Population of Chicago: A Study of Residential Succession (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), 34.

In contrast to previous in-migrations of blacks to Chicago, which came principally from the Upper South and from other regions of the North, the source of "newcomers" to the city's black community was almost exclusively the Deep South. Most of the blacks who arrived in Chicago prior to 1900 were from areas close to the Mason-Dixon line, especially Kentucky and Missouri (from where 43 percent of black immigrants to Chicago prior to the turn-of-the-century hailed), while the Deep South contributed to but 17 percent of the black immigrants ranks in Chicago during this period.[10] After 1900, these ratios would be reversed, with the Deep South providing the majority of the new black arrivals to Chicago. Most of the black "newcomers" after 1910 were from the "heart of Dixie", with Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana and Missouri being the chief departure points for blacks headed to Chicago during the Great Migration.[11] Of some 9,000 black registered voters in Chicago in 1930, only 6.4 percent listed their state of birth as Illinois, while 46.3 percent listed the states of the East South Central region, 17.3 percent being born in the West South Central region, and 17.0 percent being natives of the South Atlantic states.[12]

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[10] Spear, 11.

[11] Duncan and Duncan, 41.

[12] Harold F. Gosnell, Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1935), 18.

Contrary to the contemporary impression that this "new" wave of blacks consisted of a "lower class" of individual, W.E.B. Du Bois would cite from the pages of the Birmingham Alabama Age-Herald in his essay on the Great Migration.

> 'It is not the riff-raff of the race, the worthless Negroes, who are leaving in such large numbers. There are to be sure, many poor Negroes among them who have little more than the clothes on their backs, but others have property and good positions which they are sacrificing in order to get away at the first opportunity.'[13]

Still, as the Chicago Commission would imply, the Great Migration blacks coming to the city during this period were generally less educated, less refined, and far less accustomed to urban ways than had been true of their immediate predecessors.

Causes of the Great Migration

The reasons for the Great Migration in the understanding of the Chicago Commission on Race Relations could be divided under two broad rubrics: (1) economic causes and (2) sentimental causes.[14] An alternative typology of motivations was rendered by Du Bois, who would enumerate a list of responses by some fifty blacks to the question of why they left the South. The answers they gave varied somewhat but showed a great deal of overlap, with bad

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[13] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Migration of Negroes," Crisis 16 (June 1917), 47.

[14] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 80.

treatment, low wages, oppression and poor schools being mentioned as frequently as the boll weevil or the floods. Among the etiological variables that "caused" the Great Migration, a full analysis would speak to the following.

Economic "Push" Factors: Depressed Conditions and Lack of Economic Opportunity for Southern Blacks

As the set of the economic conditions, the Commission cited the "push" factors of low wages in the South, the boll weevil, lack of access to capital and credit, and unsatisfactory living conditions.[15] After the "Counter-Revolution" of 1876 ended the Reconstruction era in the South, "a system of sharecropping replaced slavery and debt peonage was substituted for legal bondage.[16] It was the hope of Booker T. Washington's and his associates that by hard work and thrift the Negro masses would ultimately establish their freedom by buying the land. But southern landlords, selling their cotton in a world market, had no intention of relinquishing the chief source of their comparative advantage. They used terror and intimidation to keep the former slaves in their place.[17] Under the share-cropping system, many southern blacks found themselves

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[15] Ibid., 80-83.

[16] St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Clayton, Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1962), 53.

[17] Ibid.

unable to eke out even a subsistence existence and at the same time compensate venal white landholders and creditors.

The systematic factors keeping southern blacks in poverty embedded deep in the institutional fabric of the South were exacerbated by cyclical market factors and severe externalities. At the beginning of the First World War there was a significant decline in cotton prices (1912-1914), and, with it, reduction in demand for black labor and the wages paid to blacks for their work in the fields. The Mexican boll weevil had first crossed the Rio Grande in 1892; by 1915 (and through 1916) the insects had ravished cotton crops in much of the Deep South. Southern planters reorganized their fields, cutting back on cotton production and moving into less labor-intensive crops, so that many black fieldworkers were laid idle.[18] At the same time, a series of disastrous floods hit the region with the same result: widespread unemployment and under-employment for black fieldhands unable to find work even at reduced wages.

Economic "Pull" Factors: Opportunity in the North

Prior to 1914, with employment opportunities in the North circumscribed, while there was certainly enough economic "push" to cause blacks to leave the South, the "pull" of the North was by no means strong enough to sustain

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[18] William M. Tuttio, Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer (New York: Atheneum Press, 1970), 80.

that desire. Over a million European immigrants were entering the United States each year. The cutting off of immigration from Europe during World War I was then a major factor in the migration of southern blacks to Chicago. Regarding the economic factors "pulling" Southern blacks to Chicago, the Commission underscored the end of European immigration during World War I.

> Prior to the war the yearly immigration to the United States equaled approximately the total Negro population of the North. Foreign labor filled the unskilled labor field, and Negroes were held closely in domestic and personal-service work. The cessation of immigration and the return of thousands of aliens to their mother-country, together with the opening of new industries and the extension of old ones, created a much greater demand for American labor. Employers looked to the South for Negroes and advertised for them.[19]

When the war started, the floodtide of white immigrants to man the assembly lines of engorged metropolitan centers in the North was reduced to a trickle; in 1915 only 325,000 immigrants came to America, and by 1918, that reduced flow had diminished still further to 110,000.[20] With the stream of European immigrants coming to the United States temporarily halted by the War, the stockyards, mills and industrial plants of Chicago held forth the promise of unprecedented economic opportunities for blacks.

This situation was intensified and sustained by the

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[19] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 83.

[20] United States Bureau of Immigration, Annual Report of the Commissioner General of Immigration (Washington: U.S. Bureau of Immigration, 1922), 108.

fact that the war years were boom times for American industry which faced a labor shortage at the "worst" possible moment, i.e., during a cycle of expansion, and was therefore virtually compelled to scour the bottom of the American socio-economic pyramid to fill its manpower needs. Indeed, when the United States entered the War, demand for production increased at the same time that available manpower was siphoned off by the armed forces.

Political "Push"/Injustice & Second Class Status of Southern Blacks

Abuse in the South was plainly a strong motive for undertaking the Great Migration.[21] By "sentimental causes of the migration," the commission gave a somewhat misleading "subjective" or "perceptual" caste to the institutionalized violence and discrimination that blacks faced in the South, including (1) lack of protection from mob violence, (2) injustice in the courts, and (3) inferior transportation facilities (e.g., "Jim Crow" railroad cars).[22] In fact, while no empirical evidence has been located to support it, one can plausibly speculate that as blacks were idled by economic circumstances, instances of white hostility and violence against them may have mounted, as is frequently the case with "superfluous" minority groups.

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[21] Tuttio, 79.

[22] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 84-86.

Recruiting Agents and The Black Northern Press

During World War I, recruiting agents hired by northern firms sojourned throughout the South, urging blacks to come North and carrying with them free railroad tickets and glowing promises.[23]

> Labor agents, sent south first by the railroads and later by the steel companies, met Negroes on street corners, at churches, in barber shops and in pool rooms. They offered free transportation plus the transportation plus the prospect of high wages to any laborer who agreed to migrate.[24]

Somewhat paradoxically, most of the claims made by the agents were genuine, and as time elapsed, southern blacks came to eagerly await their coming.

Perhaps the greatest "recruitment agency" of the Great Migration did not acting on behalf of any commercial entity, but, instead, as a spokesperson for the black race, i.e., the seminal elements of the Northern black press. Black newspaperman Robert Abbott's biographer, Roi Ottley, would later assert that the editor of The Defender "singlehandedly set the migration in motion."[25] The claim is clearly exaggerated and, in fact, The Defender's role was not one of unrequited social altruism and concern, but, instead a "two-way street" with the growth of blacks in Chicago closely

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[23] Drake and Cayton, 58.

[24] Spear, 133.

[25] Roi Ottley, The Lonely Warrior: The Life and Times of Robert S. Abbott (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1955), 160.

following an increase in the Defender's circulation of nearly 150 percent between 1916 and 1918.[26]

As for the Defender's adamancy on this front, perusal of a singel editorial (7 October 1916) leave no doubt whatsoever, with Abbott propounding:

> Every black man for the sake of his wife and daughter should leave even at a financial sacrifice every spot in the south where his worth is not appreciated enough to give him the standing of a man and a citizen in the community. We know full well that this would almost mean a depopulation of that section and if it were possible we would glory in its accomplishment.[27]

With Abbott himself a native of the deep South, the Defender was able to draw sharply-etched contrasts between the injustices and lack of opportunity for blacks in the South and unbounded vistas awaiting them in the North as a whole, and Chicago in particular.[28] At every opportunity, the Defender reported stories of racial atrocities committed against blacks in the South. Abbott even went so far as to compile a list of southern blacks who had frozen to death below the Mason-Dixon line to counter the argument that blacks risked deathly cold by traveling to the northern climate of Chicago. White southerners, realizing that they were being "usurped" of cheap, black labor (which was not likely to return once the boll weevil and the floods had run

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[26] Spear, 185.

[27] The Defender, 7 October 1916.

[28] Grossman, 88.

their courses, tried to stop both northern labor recruiters and the circulation of the Defender in their communities. Given black distrust of southern whites, this made the promise of the North seem all the more authentic.

The Vision of Greater Educational Opportunity

Sheer economic considerations were not the only reason for black migration. Another reason was the paucity of educational institutions in the South for blacks.[29] Many prospective immigrants wrote of their intention to place their children in good schools, and education was Central to the meaning of the Great Migration as a new departure for black Americans."[30] The Chicago Commission found that the desire to place their children in good schools was a reason often given by migrants with families for leaving the South.[31] Perceptively, the Chicago Commission emphasized the lack of school facilities in the South (to which the Commission allotted more space than any other "economic" cause of the black migration to Chicago during World War I.[32]

Statistics certainly bear this out. In 1914, school

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[29] Philip T.K. Daniel, "A History of Discrimination Against Black Students in Chicago Secondary Schools," History of Education Quarterly, 20, (Summer 1980), 150.

[30] Grossman, 246.

[31] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 82.

[32] Ibid., 82-83.

systems in Louisiana spent nearly thirty dollars per capita to educate students enrolled in white institutions, but less than a dollar per capita for black children.[33] The situation actually deteriorated as blacks advanced (or rather failed to advance) to higher grade levels. According to the U.S. census for 1910, there were 315,000 blacks fifteen to twenty years old attending school in the southern states. The statistics of secondary schools indicate that only 25,000 of these were above the elementary level. This meant that 290,000 or over ninety percent were overage pupils in the elementary grades.[34]

Regarding the qualitative facets of education for blacks in the South, the Commission would allow the words of a superintendent of a Southern state school system to speak for themselves.

> There have never been any serious attempt in this state to offer adequate educational facilities for the colored race. The average length of term for the state is only four months; practically all the schools are taught in dilapidated churches, which, of course, are not equipped wth suitable desks, blackboards, and other essentials of a school; practically all the teachers are incompetent, possessing little or no education and having had no professional training whatever, except a few weeks obtained in the summer schools; the schools are generally overcrowded, some of them having as many as 100 students to the teacher; no attempt is made to do more than teach the children to read, write, and figure, and these subjects are

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[33] Tuttio, 80.

[34] Daniel, 150.

learned very imperfectly.[35]

Clearly then, the chances for a southern black youth to pull him or herself up by the bootstraps in the school system of the South during this time were practically non existent.

While the "reality" may have been quite different, as news spread from the North to the South, many blacks in the latter region came to believe that the public schools of Chicago and other northern migration magnets offered their children unlimited opportunities. Indeed, some middle-class southern blacks had already visited Chicago and, at least a handful had sent their children there to live with relatives and attend Chicago's schools. particularly Wendel Phillips High School which had no counterpart as a secondary school for blacks in many southern states.[36] Evidence of this is found in the fact that by 1919, Chicago school officials were complaining of the number of southern black children living in Chicago with aunts and uncles.[37] True, Chicago's educational provisions for blacks were by no means utopian. However, as Grossman contends:

> Even Chicago's worst schools, however, could seem impressive to black newcomers from the South. Migrants from Georgia, where 85 percent of the schools attended by blacks operated in one-room buildings often without blackboards or desks, were

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[35] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 83.

[36] Grossman, 91.

[37] Chicago Board of Education, Sixty-Fifth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Schools for the Year Ending June 1919 (Chicago: Chicago Board of Education, 1919), 73.

> unlikely to be disappointed when they walked into a Chicago classroom.[38]

Thus, as much as the promise of an immediate upgrade in their material circumstances, the vision of a better future for their children, grounded in a glowing picture of the Chicago's public school system's opportunities for blacks was a primary force behind the Great Migration there.

The Multiplier Effect of Interpersonal Networks

As more blacks travelled North, a multiplier effect came into existence. The "newcomers" often wrote letters home describing better conditions in Chicago and urging families and friends to join them there. In fact, the dynamic element in this network of personal ties linking the terminal points of the migration from the South to Chicago was the influence of migrant already in the North, a factor which multiplied as the migration accelerated. Like European immigrants and white southerners who moved north and west, black southerners established migration chains linking North and South by means of kin and community relationships. The first contingent to leave a town frequently functioned as scouts for the whole community.[39] Harkening back to a previously mentioned theme, many of the letters transmitted to the South spoke of the contrast

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[38] Grossman, 247.

[39] Ibid., 89.

between entirely inadequate educational provisions for blacks in the South and Chicago schools that were integrated and offered far better facilities on an "across-the-board" basis, i.e., to both white and black children.[40] In the South, the most active champions of the migration "cause" formed so-called migration clubs, such organizations often coming into existence to take advantage of group railroad fare rates.[41]

Black Congregations and the Great Migration as a Religious Pilgrimage

Similar to families and personal friendship ties, churches would provide North-South links based in a traditional, stable institution. Black southern ministers occasionally preached in Chicago churches and then related their impressions to their home congregations.[42] Many local black leaders in the South concurred with The Defender's conclusions and encouraged the migration North, often personally leading or following the train to the black metropolis in Chicago.

This facet of the migration has not received much attention from scholars, chiefly because much of this exhortation to go to the "promised land" was muffled, black

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[40] Ibid., 90.

[41] Ibid., 96.

[42] Ibid., 94.

leaders fearing reprisals from Southern whites anxious to retain cheap black labor. Grossman cites a comment made to a Chicago black leader, Charles Johnson, touring the South to encourage migration northward, and being told not to search for a "Moses" among Southern black leaders because "'it is not safe to be Moses.'"[43] Operating without fanfare, as migration decimated their congregations, many southern black clergyman headed to Chicago in the "caboose" of the train, often bringing with them the vestiges of their churchers' memberships.

Indeed, as the image of the North filtered south through the promise of agents, the flowing letters of friends, and the appeal of the Negro press, it took on a mythical quality that gave to the migration an almost religious significance.

> The rhetoric of the migration was highly charged with biblical imagery: the Flight out of Egypt; Bound for the Promised Land; Going into Canaan; Beulah Land. A party of migrants on their way from Mississippi to Chicago held solemn ceremonies when their train crossed the Ohio River; they stopped their watches, knelt down to pray, and sang the gospel hymn, 'I Done Come Out of the Land of Egypt With the Good News.'[44]

While it is customary to interpret the Great Migration as being chiefly a result of labor shortages and dislocations, seen in this light, the movement North takes on overtones of a religious pilgrimage.

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[43] Ibid., 86.

[44] Spear, 137.

Additional Factors Behind the Emergence of Chicago as a Mecca of the Great Migration

Finally, there is the question of why so many southern migrants journeyed to Chicago, as opposed to New York or Boston, for example. Indeed, all of the cities of the North found their black populations rising during World War I, and many were actively engaged in encouraging such movements of surplus labor into their local economies. In fact, Chicago had lagged behind other northern industrial centers in the recruitment of blacks during the first two years of World War I. In 1916, fearful lest other cities siphon off this repository of labor from the South to fill their own manpower shortages, the city of "broad shoulders" mobilized its own agents and sent them to Dixie en masse.

Chicago had some special advantages as a "drawing card" for black southern migrants. To begin, as the terminus of the Illinois Central Railroad, Chicago was the most accessible northern city for Negroes in Mississippi, Louisiana and Arkansas.[45] More importantly, many southern Negroes who had barely heard of Cleveland or Detroit knew of Chicago from the pages of the nationally-circulated Defender. Consequently, when the Great Migration reached its zenith in the last two years of World War I, Chicago received more than its "share" of black "newcomers.

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[45] Ibid., 129.

The Consequences of the Great Migration for Race Relations: The Example of Chicago

As elsewhere in the urban North, blacks had long been resident in Chicago by the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the first permanent resident of Chicago was a black fur trapper and trader, Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable who built a cabin at the mouth of the Chicago River sometime around 1790.[46] By the lare 1840s a small but growing community of freed blacks from the East and runaway slaves from the South was present in Chicago, and the city's first black church (African Methodist Episcopal) was established there during the 1850s. Thus, as the issue of slavery came to dominate national affairs, the blacks of Chicago had already established a tightly-knit community capable of mobilization and unified action.

Along with sympathetic whites, Chicago's black community reacted vehemently against the Compromise of 1850 in which of reactivation of the fugitive slave law was exchanged for California's entrance into the United States as a free state.[47] Upon word of the Compromise reaching Chicago, "three hundred Negroes---over half of the permanent adult population---met in their Methodist Church, organized

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[46] Milo Quaife, Checagou (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1933), 44-46.

[47] Dorsey, 29.

a Liberty Association, and set up vigilante groups."[48] Shortly thereafter, a convention of blacks met in Chicago and determined that they would not flee to Canada "but...remain and defend themselves." A few days later, the Chicago City Council met and issued a resolution to the effect that the city's police department should not assist in the recovery of slaves by their owners.[49] With these organizational and policy features in place, Chicago became an important terminal in the Underground Railroad harboring fugitive slaves.[50]

This is not to say that blacks in Chicago before the Civil War enjoyed the same status and privileges as did their white counterparts. According to Spear:

> Despite the presence of an active antislavery movement, Negroes in antebellum Chicago were severely circumscribed. Residents of downstate Illinois frequently characterized Chicago as a 'sink hole of abolition' and a 'nigger-loving town'; yet the sympathy that many white Chicagoans expressed for the Southern slaves was not often extended to the local Negroes. To be sure, the anit-slavery press, on occasion, noted approvingly the orderliness and respectability of the city's Negro community, but little was done to improve the status of the group. Chicago's Negroes could not vote, not could they testify in court against whites. State law forbade intermarriage between the race. Segregation was maintained in the schools, place of accommodation, and transportation. Chicago's abolitionists regarded

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[48] Drake and Cayton, 34.

[49] Gosnell, 14.

[50] Drake and Cayton, 32.

these conditions as side issues and manifested little interest in them.[51]

Nor was the general harmony between Chicago's races prior to 1890 unblemished by incidents of white violence against blacks.[52] In 1864, for example, the Chicago Tribune spoke in equivocal language about an episode in which a mob of four or five hundred Irish dock laborers assaulted a dozen blacks because "'it was degrading to them to see blacks working upon an equality with themselves, and more so, while their brothers were out of employment.'"[53] Nevertheless, at the start of the Civil War, Chicago's black populace was at least one thousand, and under the guidane of their acknowledged leader, the well-to-do tailor and real estate mogul John Jones, the city's black community formed the nucleus of abolitionist activism for which Chicago would develop a strong reputation.[54]

During the 1870s with the cause of emancipation won, Chicago's black populace was invested by the Illinois State Legislature with a lengthy list of civil rights.[55] By 1870, suffrage was extended to Chicago's blacks, and in 1874, the legislature passed a civil rights bill that was a

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[51] Spear, 506.

[52] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 479-80.

[53] Drake and Cayton, p. 43.

[54] Ibid., 33.

[55] Dorsey, 24.

model in its call for equal treatment of the races in public accommodations.[56] Attracted, at least in part, by this favorable" treatment, by 1870, Chicago's black populace stood at more than 4,000; during the next two decades, the city's black community swelled to in excess of 15,000. Between 1890 and 1915, Chicago's Negro populace mushroomed from 15,000 to more than 50,000.[57] During the heyday of the Great Migration, the black community would swell still further, to somewhere around 110,000 by the beginning of the 1920s. However, "as their numbers increased between, 1890 and 1910, Negroes became ever more conspicuous, and the indifferences with which they had been regarded in the nineteenth century changed to hostility."[58] This heightening racial tension manifested itself in several important areas including: residential succession, occupational barriers, and segregation/discrimination in public services and accommodations, most notably the City's educational system.

Residential Succession and the Emergence of the "Black Belt"

During the era prior to 1890, while most blacks lived on the South Side (soon to become the "black belt"), they

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[56] Spear, 6.

[57] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 139-140.

[58] Spear, 7-8.

could be found residing throughout the city.[59] Residential surveys of Chicago reveal that despite the "natural" concentration of blacks in enclaves on the South and West sides of the city, their population was relatively well distributed. As Spear observes, "as late as 1910, Negroes were less highly segregated from native whites than were Italian immigrants," within Chicago's borders.[60] As their numbers proliferated, blacks came into competition with white immigrant ethnic groups for political, economic and social resources and were pressured into residential concentration in the Second and Third Wards of Chicago's South Side.[61] In the decades that followed a pattern of residential concentration (or, rather, "ghettoization") arose, and a clearly demarcated color line becam evident.

This was not a "natural" residential succession, i.e., one based purely on lack of economic wherewithal.[62] White community associations and related street gangs labored long and hard to keep Chicago's blacks on their "side" of the color line. Confrontation was particularly hostile in the area of Hyde Park, where, in 1909, the Hyde Park Improvement Protective Club was organized and issued a "manifesto" to blacks (and to white real estate agents) "advising" them to

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[59] Duncan and Duncan, 89.

[60] Spear, 15.

[61] Pinderhughes, 17.

[62] Duncan and Duncan, 90.

keep the so-called "districts," i.e., out of the "reserved-for-whites" sections of the area.[63]

With housing opportunities thus constrained, blacks were frequently compelled to pay higher rents for inferior housing as unscrupulous landlords and rental agents found that the color line could be put into service as an instrument of economic gouging.[64] According to contemporary observer Sophonisba P. Breckenridge, blacks paid approximately 50 percent more than ethnic immigrant whites for comparable housing.[65]

At the same time, while the housing offered to white immigrants was by no means grand, compared to that afforded to blacks in the "black belt," it was in far better repair. Having a captive market supported by racial barriers, landlords saw no reason to upgrade or to even maintain housing in Chicago's black ghetto.[66]

One factor that would contribute to the further deterioration of the "black belt" (both physical and moral) was the policy of Chicago's municipal authorities in

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[63] Record-Herald, 21 August 1909.

[64] Louise De Koven Bowen, The Colored Population of Chicago (Chicago: Juvenile Protective Association, 1913), n.p.

[65] Sophonisba P. Breckenridge, "The Color Line and the Housing Problem," Survey, 40 (1 February 1913), 576.

[66] Alzada P. Comstock, "Chicago Housing Conditions; VI: The Problem of the Negro," American Journal of Sociology, (September 1912), 244.

permitting various types of vice (prostitution, gambling, etc., the former being legal in Chicago until 1912) within city limits (as a vent and a source of bribes), but limiting it to a red light district. Although its unofficial boundaries shifted over time, the chosen district for such activities was invariably located in or near the "black belt." Speaking for "respectable" blacks, prominent black civic leader Fannie Barrier Williams would describe this situation:

> The huddling together of the good and bad, compelling the decent element of the colored people to witness the brazen display of vice of all kinds in front of their homes and in the faces of their children, are trying conditions under which to remain socially clean and respectable.[67]

Eventually, this practice of locating the red light district in or near the "black belt" led white reformers to urge black community leaders to "clean house." The "accommodationists" in their ranks (of whom more will be said later) took this mission seriously, while the "militants" correctly pointed to City Hall as the real force behind the "vice district" and decisions regarding its location.[68]

For a time, it was possible to sustain the argument that blacks were following the traditional pattern of residential succession, with each ethnic group first

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[67] Fannie Barrier Williams, "Social Bonds in the Black Belt of Chicago," Charities, (7 October 1905), 40-41.

[68] Drake and Cayton, 55.

settling in Chicago's most run-down areas and then leaving for better wards, thereby creating "room" for the next ethnic group that arrived. But with blacks, there was a substantial deviation from this paradigm. Sophonisba Breckenridge would write of residential immobility along racial lines that could not be broken down by individual economic, educational or social accomplishments.

> The problem of the Chicago Negro is quite different from the white man and even that of the immigrants. With the Negro housing dilemma was found to be acute problem, not only among the poor, as in the case of the Polish, Jewish, or Italian immigrants, but also among the well-to-do....Thus, even in the North, where the city administration does not recognize a 'Ghetto' or 'pale', the real estate agents who register and commercialize what they suppose to be a universal race prejudice are enable to enforce one in practice.[69]

If there was a single dimension of life for Chicago's blacks that virtually ensured a subordinate status, it was this concentration into a "ghetto" from which no degree of individual exertion was able to furnish an escape. However, with the Great Migration, not only did the residential lines separating the races grow more rigid, white opposition to any attempt to break through them became more strident.

As newly-arrived blacks departed from railway stations and sought relatives, friends and members of their own race,

> The pattern of Negro settlement in Chicago continued to follow the outlines established before the turn of the century. Instead of expanding the boundaries of the Negro districts,

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[69] Breckenridge, 576.

> the migration converted the South Side black belt from a mixed neighborhood into an exclusively Negro area.[70]

Instead of Chicago's black belt becoming wider, its strands became denser and more uniformly dark. Again, this was not a "natural" phenomenon, but largely the outcome of both systematic and personal discrimination against blacks by whites, invariably backed by the threat of physical violence.

Black Occupational Status

The occupational profile of Chicago's blacks in the late-nineteenth century mirrored the pattern of concentration brought about by "external" forces. In 1900, almost 65 percent of the Negro men and over 80 percent of the Negro women worked as domestic and personal servants, while only 8.3 percent of the men and 11.9 percent of the women were engaged in manufacturing (and most of the women so employed actually worked in their own homes as dressmakers and seamstresses).[71] Despite the fact that Chicago was a burgeoning industrial city, this occupational color line persisted throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. By 1910, 45 percent of Chicago's black males were engaged in just four occupations---porter, personal servant, waiter, and janitor---while nearly two-

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[70] Spear, 146.

[71] Ibid., 29.

thirds of black women employed outside of the house worked as either domestic servants or laundresses.[72] Even in the Chicago of 1915, "Fewer than one black male in twenty---and virtually no black females---worked in an occupation that might be described as managerial, professional, or proprietary; even many of these operated marginal businesses."[73]

One factor behind this lack of vocational advancement was that blacks were kept from apprenticeship in skilled and semi-skilled jobs by employer preferences for whites, by local trade union rules that kept blacks from entering the rank-and-file on an equal basis, and, increasingly with the Great Migration of World War I, by a decidely low skill profile among black immigrants to Chicago from the Deep South. At the same time, despite the nominal "color-blindness" of civil service job requirements, blacks faced discrimination in public sector employment.

In these difficult straits, blacks allowed themselves to be frequently cast in roles that were not likely to endear them to the white working-class in exchange for (often temporary) entrance into basic trades, i.e., as strikebreakers. "The use of Negro scab labor heightened anti-Negro feeling in the city and left a legacy of

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Grossman, 128.

bitterness and distrust between white and black workers.[74] This was especially so within Chicago's meat-packing industry, where management actively recruited blacks from the South who had little comprehension that they were acting as strike-breakers even after arriving in Chcago to take the place of whites who had walked off their jobs.[75] As Hearst pointed out, on this front, the black striekbreakers were doubly deceived: once settlements were reached with striking whites in Chicago's meat packing facilities, blacks were summarily discharged.[76]

It was in the area of employment, that the vision of Chicago which drew southern blacks came closest to being fulfilled. According to Thomas Lee Philpott, for the blacks of Chicago. The war years were times of economic advancement as well as paradoxes.

> Despite the pressures for segregation, these were flush years for blacks. Economic opportunities remained restricted. The telephone company, department stores, most business offices, construction firms, and the mass transit and taxicab companies still hired only whites except in the most menial capacities. Yet more blacks worked in the steel mills and packing plants than ever. A number of Negroes secured employment in factories like the Pullman Works, where no black person had ever held a job before. Never had black workers been so well paid. Never had so many Negro families been able to afford adequate

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[74] Spear, 36.

[75] Alma Hearst, The Negro in the Slaughtering and Meat Packing Industry in Chicago (New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1932), 19-20.

[76] Ibid., 24.

> shelter. At the same time, the Black Belt and its satellites had never been so overcrowded, with twice as many people in need of accommodations as the available space could hold.[77]

Economic opportunities were available to blacks in Chicago during the war years, and would remain so until the recession of 1920. While in 1910, over half of the Negro labor force was engaged in the domestic and personal service trades, ten years later, this proportion had declined to 28 percent.[78] In essence, the migration gave birth to a black proletariat in Chicago. However, boom times for Chicago's blacks soon proved ephemeral. In the spring of 1919 as a nation-wide recession hit, the city's meat-packing houses laid off 15,000 workers, a large percentage of them being recently-arrived blacks.[79]

Race and Public Accommodations

Enacted in 1885, the Illinois Civil Rights Law stated: "that all persons...shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of inns, restaurants, eating houses, barber shops, theaters, and public conveyances on land and

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[77] Thomas Lee Philpott, The Slum and the Ghetto: Neighborhood Deterioration and Middle-Class Refor, Chicago, 1880-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 160.

[78] Spears, 151.

[79] Ibid., 158.

water...and all other public accommodations.[80] As the ranks of Chicago's blacks increased, however, enforcement of this statute became lax at first and virtually non-existent in time. Only when the black community raised its public indignation on the steps of City Hall were the most blatant examples of discrimination against blacks in public accommodations dealt with by those charged with upholding this law. White businessmen were certainly aware of the State Civil Rights Law and of the protests that might follow in the wake of its abrogation. Still, they found ways to dissuade blacks from frequenting their establishments, e.g., by instructing personnel to treat blacks with diffidence or to charge them higher prices than were charged to whites for the same items or services.

Even in non-profit services, de facto and overt racial discrimination increased in proportion to the size of Chicago's burgeoning black community. In 1889, several community leaders proposed the establishment of a 'separate and distinct organization known as the Colored Young Men's Christian Association, but the suggestion aroused immediate opposition from the city's "integrationist" black leadership. By 1900, blacks were no longer welcome in the original "Y" on Madison Street, and, in 1913, after an extensive fund raising campaign among the black community's "accomodationist" business leaders, a second "Y" for blacks

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[80] Illinois, Laws (1985), 64.

was established on Wabash Avenue. As Ida Barnett would write in the Record-Herald, by 1900, neither the YMCA, the YWCA, the Salvation Army or Mills Hotels allowed blacks to pass through their doors.[81] Similarly, separate voluntary social service agencies, civic associations and fraternal groups for blacks arose between 1890 and the First World War. In each instance the pretext was to better serve the black community in an environment in which blacks would feel comfortable, while the real motivation was clearly to accommodate white racial prejudice.

The Great Migration and Educational Opportunities for Blacks

In this chapter we observed that the desire for greater educational opportunities was a primary, if not the primary force, driving, southern blacks to Chicago. As more blacks came to the city, the number of youths requiring public education grew commensurately. By 1920, there were nearly 13,000 school-aged black children in Chicago, representing an increase in this group of nearly 200 percent in just ten years.[82] Of course, this upsurge required the expansion of provisions to accommodate the newcomers. Before the war, only two or three schools had predominantly Negro; by 1920, ten elementary schools and one high school--Wendell

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[81] Ida Barnett, Record-Herald, 26 January 1912.

[82] Daniel, 151.

Phillips---were over 50 percent Negro.[83]

"The legal status of Negroes in Illinois differs in no respect from that of white persons," the Chicago Commission on Race Relations would declare.[84] This would strongly suggest that equal educational opportunity existed for people of all races in Chicago. In nominal terms the public school system in Chicago was legally integrated in 1874, and, "on the books," at least, this would not change. There were, however, repeated efforts to do just that. In 1903 the Equal Opportunity League, which later became the Illinois branch of the Niagara Movement, was organized to protest against a return to segregated educational facilities being considered at the time by the Chicago Charter Commission.[85] This incident testifies to both the underlying hostility of some white city residents to integration and to the capacity of the black community to repulse their designs on this front. What developed in the Chicago school system at this time, then, was a queasy synthesis between formal racial integration, on the one hand, and actual segregation, on the other.

Between 1900 and 1915, groups of white parents repeatedly campaigned for a return to a segregated school system in Chicago. In 1906, according to an article

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[83] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 242.

[84] Ibid., 232.

[85] Anderson and Pickering, 45.

appearing in the 30 June issue of the black newspaper the Appeal, blacks organized a campaign to stop a white effort to revise the City Charter to allow for segregated schools.[86] In 1910, somewhat ironically, the Southern Society of Chicago sought the aid of blacks in its bid to have school segregation reestablished in Chicago, arguing that this "dual" system would afford greater opportunities for black teachers.[87] The Hyde Park Improvement Protective Club was especially vocal in this quarter, and launched several drives on behalf of a racially separated school system in Chicago, petitioning the mayor in both 1909 and 1912 toward that discriminatory end.[88] School superintendent Ella Flagg Young (a progressive reformer and personal friend of John Dewey and Jane Addams) once threatened to suspend social activities at Wendell Phillips altogether when a pressured principal reported that he was about to establish racially separated social activities at the behest of white parents and students.[89] In the end, none of these efforts had much headway in restoring Chicago's school system to segregated status. Still, these public campaigns created animosity within the black community and perpetuated a cycle of white action leading to

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[86] Appeal, 30 June 1906.

[87] The Defender, 12 November 1910.

[88] The Defender, 22 June 1912.

[89] The Defender, 23 January 1915.

black protest and then to white reaction as race hatred mounted.

Subtle forms of discrimination filled in the segregation cracks left by the combined effect of artificial constraints on black residence and the Chicago school board's decision to assign pupils to schools according to a strict criteria of neighborhood residence. The official school board policy during this time was that children should attend the school closest to their residence. However, exceptions were made "for good cause," and white students living near the black belt and its satellites were allowed to transfer to "white" schools. As Daniel observes: "For the most part, blacks were not conceded the same opportunity."[90]

This pattern became more firmly entrenched as the Great Migration unfolded. At a meeting of the Chicago Real Estate Board (CREB) in 1917, the "problem" of black migrants led to the construction of a two-part solution that real estate agents and landlords would carry out. First, migrants were to be concentrated in the black belt to the highest densities possible; second, when overflow arose, blacks would be "permitted" to move into "white" neighborhoods only a block at a time.[91] By 1922, the Board of Education adopted a stringent policy of neighborhood schools. When

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[90] Daniel, 157.

[91] Anderson and Pickering, 46.

combined with the real estate board's policy of block-by-block expansion of the black population, the neighborhood school policy guaranteed separate schools for black and white children.[92] Tension between black and white students was comparatively low at the elementary school level, but increased substantially as black children reached high school age. In one incident, sixty blacks attempting to attend a Chicago technical high school were physically driven away by the white student body.[93] Latent hostility was consciously or inadvertently fanned by statements coming from school officials. In 1918, for instance, Max Loeb, a member of the city's Board of Education wrote an open letter to Chicago's black community that appeared in the 17 August issue of The Defender. In it he offered blacks a chance for "input" on the issue of a return to segregated schools.

> The colored population has increased largely since the War. Colored attendance in public schools has grown accordingly. How best can the Race antagonisms be avoided which so often when the two races are brought into juxtaposition. Do you think it wise, when there is a large Colored population, to have separate schools for white and colored children?[94]

Such disingenuous "appeals" to blacks did not cause racial violence in Chicago's schools, but plainly they added kindling and fanned the flames.

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[92] Ibid., 49.

[93] Ibid., 254.

[94] The Defender, 17 August 1918.

In a statement made by the Chicago Commission we find the seeds of another form of mistreatment that migrant blacks suffered at the hands of even "well-intentioned" white officials. In that passage we read,

> It became evident as soon as the investigation started that it was necessary to distinguished between the northern and the southern Negro. The southern Negro is conspicuous the moment one enters the elementary school. Over-age or retarded children are found in all the lower grades, special classes, and ungraded rooms...The southern child is usually retarded by two or more years when he enters the northern school because he has never been able to attend school regularly, due to the short term in the southern rural schools, distance from school, and inadequacy of teaching force and school equipment.[95]

By the term "retarded" the Commission was alluding to an environmental condition "caused" by inadequate education in the South. Unfortunately, the word implies and may have reinforced a widespread belief among school officials that, for southern blacks at least, poor school performance was a natural outgrowth of genetic inferiority. Grossman observes that some three-quarters of immigrant black children entering the Chicago school system between 1915 and 1924 were classified as "retarded" and placed in "separate" classes.[96] There they were often left to languish under chaotic classroom conditions, as a policy of educational triage was applied to the black children of Chicago by school officials.

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[95] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 239.

[96] Grossman, 251.

Finally, no matter where they went, black children in Chicago's public school system were exposed to a white-oriented curriculum, "from white teachers who were frequently prejudiced and almost universally unattuned to black culture, sensibilities, and concerns.[97] Even W.E.B. Du Bois came to recognize the dilemma of educational integration leading to the inculcation and socialization of blacks into white-based values and habits.[98]

Under these circumstances, an inordinate failure rate for blacks in the Chicago school system was almost foreordained as a self-fulfulling prophecy. A 1918 survey ranking the 272 Chicago elementary schools according to the proportion of courses passed by students placed black schools at 87, 88, 215, 216, 246, and 263.[99] Initial failure, in its turn, was often as proof that the negative assumptions about black students in circulation at the time were based in fact.

Quite naturally, "private educational and social welfare institutions developed widely varying policies, but few were completely free of discrimination.[100] Although both the University of Chicago and Northwestern University admitted blacks, they experienced repeated white student

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[97] Grossman, 256.

[98] Ibid., 257.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Spear, 46.

protests when blacks attempted to set up residence in on-campus dormitories.[101] Moreover, as we shall see in Chapters 6 through 8, the Catholic parochial schools of Chicago prior to 1925 were openly segregated: all Negro students attended St. Monica's school.[102]

The Intensification of Black/White Conflict

The migration of blacks had a determinative influence upon the attitudes of the white Chicagoans which eroded as rapidly as the black population grew. The sporadic racial violence of the prewar years reached crisis proportions: the situation deteriorated so quickly that, by the beginning of 1919, civic leaders---both Negro and white---realized that the city was on the brink of full-scale racial war.[103]

Long-standing prejudices within Chicago's white community certainly played its part in all this, but there were other forces afoot as well. Walter White, later to become national secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), noted in his essay on the racial turmoil of 1919, that in addition to the blacks of the Great Migration some 20,000 southern whites had come to Chicago during the War years, bringing with them the racial prejudice of the South and spreading the "virus"

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[101] Ibid.

[102] The Defender, 18 March 1913.

[103] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, 19-20.

of race hatred to Chicago's whites.[104]

On the other side of the coin, as an editorial in the Chicago Whip would phrase it: "It's no difficult task to get people out of the South, but you have a job on your hands when you attempt to get the South out of them.[105] In other words, the migrants brought with them the "cultural baggage" of the "darkie" South, much to the chagrin of Chicago's "refined" blacks who exhorted them to leave plantation melodies behind and embrace grand opera.[106] Not only were the migrants of World War I "different" from the white residents of Chicago, they were much more "different" (and abrasively so) than their forerunners.

The Culmination of Conflict, the Riot of 1919

In the summer of 1919, racial disturbances erupted throughout the North with migrants now present in large (even threatening) numbers and work growing scarcer as a result of national recession. A race riot was sparked in Chicago on 27 July 1919, with the death of a seventeen-year old Negro boy, Eugene Williams at the Twenty-ninth Street Beach, Williams having been stoned to death after floating into an area reserved for whites, with white policemen on

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[104] Walter White, "Chicago and Its Eight Reasons," Crisis, 18 (October 1919), 293-294.

[105] Whip, 23 October 1920.

[106] Grossman, 154.

the scene being averse to investigating the murder. The riot ended with scores of white and black Chicagoans killed or seriously injured. But while it was certainly the worst such episode in the city's history to that time, it was by no means an isolated incident. Between 1917 and the start of 1921, no fewer than fifty-eight bombings with racial overtones took place in the city of Chicago.[107]

In the wake of this tragedy, Illinois Governor Frank Lowden appointed the Chicago Commission on Race Relations to study the causes of the outbreak and the general status of race relations in Chicago. As can be seen in the passages from the Commission's final report already cited, to its credit, the multiracial panel concluded that the violence was not random, that it grew out of long-standing race hatred, and that its roots were deeply planted within the city long before the outbreak of 1919. On the surface, then, Chicago was racially integrated; beneath, however, segregation, discrimination and race animosity was an all too fecund ground for the fruit of racial violence.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Concurrent with the conflict between the respective followers of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, political repression and economic deprivation in the south coupled with the promise of a better life elsewhere fueled a

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[107] Spear, 211.

massive migration of southern blacks to Chicago and other racially enlightened northern cities. This "Great Migration" gained momentum during World War I, reaching its zenith in 1919 and 1920, with Chicago becoming a salient terminus for southern blacks fleeing the south for a promised land of equal opportunity. Between 1890 and 1920, Chicago's black population increased some twenty-fold.

The growth of the black community in Chicago brought blacks into direct competition with recently-arrived white immigrants for economic, political, and social opportunities, and a contradiction emerged between Chicago's formal commitment to full equality between races and de facto segregation. Instead of racially integrated housing, Chicago's blacks found themselves being shunted into an increasingly dense "black belt" on Chicago's south side, residential race barriers being enforced by white community associations and street gangs. Many of the job promised to the migrants by labor recruiters proved to be only temporary work replacing white strikers in Chicago's mills and stockyards, and when the recession of 1919 assumed full force, even these limited opportunities were denied to the black newcomers. Hope for greater educational opportunities was plainly a central causal factor behind the Great Migration, and given the abysmal conditions of segregated schools in the South, the migrants had good cause to believe that their children would benefit from relocation to

Chicago. These hopes were dashed when the Chicago school board issued its decision to assign pupils according to a stringent neighborhood residence criteria. In conjunction with real-estate board's policy of constraining the growth of the black belt, this policy was bound to yield de facto segration in the city's schools. Worse, racial discrimination in the Chicago school system was reinforced by the common white view that the new arrivals from the Deep South were congenitally slower than their Northern counterparts. Many students from migrant families were errantly classified as retarded and set apart in special education classrooms. Quite naturally, black student performance in the Chicago public school system was well below that of whites. Ultimately, racial tensions in Chicago reached the breaking point as the race riots of 1919 erupted. To be sure, the primary causal factor behind the riots was racial intolerance on the part of working--class whites. Nevertheless, the gross disparity between black expectations and their actual experience created frustrations among blacks that had an ancillary part in precipitating racial violence. For black Catholics, an analogous gap between expectations for racial equality in worship and a resurgent racial segregation in practice had been enlarging since the end of the Civil War, and it is to the topic of American Catholic Church's handling of racial issues during this period that we now turn.

CHAPTER IV

THE AMERICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND RACIAL ISSUES

Introduction: Hindsight and the Moral High Ground

Prior to the Civil War, the understandable desire of the American Catholic Church to avoid embroilment in incendiary political issues caused its leadership to remain silent on the issue of slavery. With the collapse of that peculiar institution, the Church was spared from taking a stance on the potentially divisive matter of slavery, but it now faced a set of equally knotty internal issues revolving around the question of how best to propagate the faith among the nation's black people. To be sure, the Church was unwavering in its concern for the spiritual well-being of current and prospective black Catholics; indeed, it had demonstrated its heartfelt concern for both free and enslaved blacks long before the outbreak of the Civil War. Nevertheless, on such practical matters as whether blacks should worship alongside and attend the same parochial schools as their white co-religionists, the Church adopted the course of least resistance. During the post-Reconstruction era, the path of expediency led to racial segregated parishes and an extremely gradual integration of

the clergy. Indeed, it was only under pressure from the propagation of the Faith in Rome that the innovation of black priests ministering to Catholics was advanced within the American Church, and very slowly at that. Aside from the special case of the Healy brothers, it was not until nearly two decades had elapsed since the conclusion of the Civil War that the first full-fledged parish priest from among the ranks of American black Catholics, Augustine Tolton, was appointed to his post in Chicago's black belt.

At this juncture in time, it is easy---perhaps too easy in fact---to berate the American Catholic Church for its standpoints on both slavery (before and during the Civil War) and on racial segregation within the Church (before, during and after the Emancipation). While hindsight may permit us to occupy the moral high ground, seen in the light of their time, these issues were handled by the American bishops is a cautious, rather than a retrograde way. To begin, the Catholic Church in the United States and elsewhere looked upon the lot of the black slaves not as consequence of their racial inferiority or hereditary sinfulness, but as an "accident" of history, that the Church simply could not redress.[1] Similarly, in response to a question regarding the Church's de facto tolerance of segregation after the Civil War, Father John LaFarge has

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[1] W.D. Weatherford, American Churches and the Negro: An Historical Survey From Slave Days to the Present (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1957), 243.

responded:

> The Church permits in certain cases the toleration of immoral actions in order to avoid greater evil. Hence, in certain times and places in this country the Church has tolerated segregatory practice for the simple reason that without such toleration the Negro would simply have been cut off from any spiritual or educational ministration.[2]

The historical annals of the Church clearly demonstrate that race per se has not been a major divisive factor or a characteristic associated with its hierarchy. Edward Scobie has observed in the earliest years of the Catholic Church, there were three black popes: St. Victor I (189-198), St. Militades (311-314) and St. Gelasius I (492-496).[3] In addition, the Catholic Church has a number of definitely black (and probably black) saints: St. Cyprian, St. Augustine of Hippo, St. Moses the Hermit, St. Elesbaan, St. Benedict the Moor and St. Martin de Porres.[4] In this sense, the roots of the Church have never been artificially separated along racial lines.

However, position on development of black priesthood and the continued segregation of blacks and whites into separate parishes and congregations after civil integration were less defensible Church policies. It was Pope Gregory

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[2] John LaFarge, "American Catholics and the Negro," Social Order 12, (January 1962), 153-54.

[3] Edward Scobie, "African Popes," Journal of African Civilization (April 1982), 84-85.

[4] Bernetta J. Hayes, "The Black Catholic," Dollars & Sense, June-July 1981, 41.

XV (reigned 1621-1623) who established the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in January, 1622, after which, his successor, Pope Urban VIII (reigned 1623-1644) established the Urban College, a seminary for the training of missionaries. Exploration and conquest by the Europeans in the Western Hemisphere, Africa, and Asia provided the college's graduates with copious opportunities for evangelizing among "native" populations. Often known simply as the Propaganda, from its start the body took as a seminal and salient principle the importance of nurturing native priesthoods.

An exception, perhaps the sole exception, was made in the case of American blacks. The creation of a black priesthood ministering to blacks was an inordinately slow process. Granted, there was an order of black nuns established in Baltimore in 1827 by Marie Joubert. But even in 1929, Father Gillard would observe that "so far nine colored priests have been ordained and assigned to work in the United States,"[5] By any yardstick, the ordination of but nine black American priests over the course of half a century represented an anomaly in Church policy toward "native" races.

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[5] John T. Gillard, The Catholic Church and the American Negro (Baltimore: St. Joseph's Society, 1929), 85.

The Position of the American Bishops on the Issue of Slavery Before and During the Civil War

As the conflict between the North and South mounted in the decades before the Civil War, the episcopacy of the United States remained generally silent on the potentially explosive issue of slavery and, indeed, of the future pastoral care of blacks. According to Cyprian Davis, in the seven provincial councils of Baltimore held between 1829 and 1849, "neither slaves nor African Americans in general were mentioned."[6]

This deafening silence was apparent at the First Plenary Council of Baltimore (1852). At that conclave the desire of the assembled bishops to avoid the divisiveness that the slavery issue might engender within the Church was viewed as a prudent strategy. During the years leading up to the Civil War, the American Catholic Church would fail to take a stance on the issue of slavery, with contemporary Catholic observer Richard Clarke capturing the Church's position by default by summarizing a proclamation from the First Plenary Council:

> 'We leave Catholics, as men and American citizens, to avail themselves of such lawful and constitutional means of protection and defence as their own good sense, their charity, and their consciences might suggest and approve. We have no political course to propose, or political cause to

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[6] Cyprian Davis, The History of Black Catholics in the United States (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1990), 116.

promote.'[7]

Referring specifically to the decision of the Third Provincial Council of Cincinnati to shun the political arena by avoiding the slavery question two weeks into the Civil War, Ellis asserts that: "Some might characterize this policy as an abdication of moral leadership, but with the Catholic faithful already aligning themselves on opposite sides of the barricades...the bishops of Cincinnati acted with wisdom in the course that they pursued."[8] According to yet another "apologist" for the American bishops, Peter Guilday, the First Plenary Council simply held fast to this same circumspect course.

> When, therefore, as the Council proceeded, it became evident that the attending prelates had decided to keep silence on the question... Catholics realized more acutely than ever the real meaning of the church's place in American life, and non-Catholics appreciated the fact that here was a body of American spiritual leaders who meant to bring to the disturbed conditions of the times the one asset the country needed: peace and calm...By their silence our prelates divorced this burning political question from church affairs.[9]

Couched in this manner, the position of the American bishops was that the Church was inherently apolitical and that slavery was, among other things, an incendiary political

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[7] Richard H. Clarke, "Thoughts and Suggestions on the Catholic Question in America," Metropolitan 5 (April 1857), 141.

[8] John Tracy Ellis, American Catholicism (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1956), 92.

[9] Peter Guilday, A History of the Councils of Baltimore 1791-1884) (New York: MacMillan, 1932), 169-170.

issue.

But today we acknowledge that there were political factors entailed in the American Catholic Church's stance on slavery. To the question of the American Catholic Church's position on slavery during the civil war, Father La Farge would assert in 1962:

> Theoretically, the Church always disapproved of slavery. At the same time, the Church's minority and largely immigrant position discouraged Catholic participation in active anti-slavery movements. Unfortunately, too, many of those persons and agencies most active in those worthy movements displayed virulent anti-Catholic bigotry, thus alienating the Catholics still more, and driving them into political association with the Southern slaveholders.[10]

Hence, while one can still plausibly accept the Church's silence about slavery was congruent with its longstanding desire to remain free of secular politics, from this vantage point, political considerations did have a part in the Church's "neutrality."

What then did the American bishops think about blacks and the Church's prospects for working among them if and when slavery was abolished in the United States? We get some inkling of their thoughts by looking ahead to the

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[10] La Farge, 154.

statements of the Second Plenary Council in Baltimore held after the end of the Civil War. The bishops' views on the emancipation of the slaves are captured in a pastoral missive stemming from the Second Plenary Council:

> We must all feel, beloved Brethren, that in one manner a new and most extensive field of charity and devotedness has been opened to us, by the emancipation of the immense slave population of the South. We could have wished, that in accordance with the action of the Catholic Church in past ages, in regard to the serfs of Europe, a more gradual system of emancipation could have been adopted, so that they might have been in some measure prepared to make a better use of their freedom, than they are likely to do now. Still the evils which must necessarily attend upon the sudden liberation of so large a multitude with their peculiar dispositions and habits, only make the appeal to our Christian charity and zeal, presented by their forlorn condition, the more forcible and imperative.[11]

The statement, of course, in condescending in tone and betrays a deep-seated assessment of blacks being "peculiar" in their ways and spiritual needs. At bottom, we may speculate that the American bishops prior to the Civil War were no more and no less enlightened than the average man in the street, whether that thoroughfare was located in the North or in the South.

The internal contradictions of the American Catholic Church on the issue of black servitude are nowhere more apparent than in the person of Martin J. Spalding who became Archbishop of Baltimore in 1864. Previously holding office

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[11] Peter Guilday (ed.), The National Pastorals of the American Hierarchy (1792-1919) (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Council, 1923), 220-221.

as the Bishop of Louisville and coming from a slaveholding family himself, Spalding's sympathies were with the Confederacy during the Civil War. In 1863, Spalding wrote to the Vatican's Congregation of the Propaganda and, after allowing that he found slavery to be a "great social evil," he nonetheless argued against the emancipation of the slaves, stating: "'Our experience shows us that those who are liberated ordinarily become miserable vagabonds, drunkards, and thieves...Such emancipated ones are lost in body and soul.'"[12] Yet, Spalding, as we shall now see, would become a champion of the cause of black Catholics after the War, casting aside his reservations about the impact of emancipation and working tirelessly on behalf of the spiritual and material needs of blacks.

The Second Plenary Council in Baltimore, 1866

Throughout his career, Bishop Spalding maintained an authentic concern for the spiritual welfare of American Blacks. Indeed, it was for the purpose of devising a program addressed to the needs of the emancipated slaves that he convened the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore. While receiving the whole-hearted support of the Vatican, the reaction of Spalding's fellow bishops to his calling of the council was decidedly tepid. To boost support for it,

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[12] David Spalding, "Martin John Spalding's 'Dissertation on the American Civil War,'" Catholic Historical Review, 52 (1966-1967), 76-77.

Spalding would write to New York Archbishop McCloskey and justify the Second Council by characterizing the emancipation as "a golden opportunity for reaping a harvest of souls, which neglected may not return."[13]

In this evaluation of the Second Plenary Council in Baltimore, Ellis asserts that: "Facing the problem squarely, the council decreed that every means be implemented for the religious care and instruction of Negroes."[14] Careful examination of the proceedings does not conform to this appraisal. So divisive was the matter of ministering to the emancipated blacks that the assembled bishops were unable to tackle it during the regular schedule of meetings and left it for a special session held in camera.

It was during this extraordinary session held after the scheduled completion of the Council on 22 October 1866, that the bishops discussed the American Catholic Church's future work among Blacks. The exchanges were stormy, debate centering upon the creation of a separate "ecclesiastical man" to oversee and coordinate the Church's work among blacks, especially Spalding's suggestion that the Pope

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[13] Edward Misch, "The American Bishops and the Negro From the Civil War to the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1865-1884" (Ph.D. Diss., Pontifical Georgian University, Rome 1968), 182.

[14] Ellis, 99.

elevate this officer to the status of bishop.[15] Among those bishops with large Black populations, Archbishop Odin of New Orleans opposed Spalding's plan, but Augustin Verot, the Bishop of Savannah supported it and would later write a pastoral letter to his white parishioners exhorting them "'to put away all prejudice...against their former servants.'"[16] The majority of the prelates, however, stood in opposition to the Spalding proposal and claimed that Rome's support for the measure was distorted by its distance from America. Indeed, the archbishop of St. Louis, Peter Kenrick, asserted that he would not recognize the spiritual authority of a prefect for blacks and would renounce the episcopacy if compelled to do so.[17]

Contrary to Ellis's assessment and rhetoric aside, the American bishops made little headway toward a consensus as to what should be done for current and future black Catholics. Davis summarizes the outcome of the Second Council:

> In the end the council fathers rejected the notion of an ecclesiastical coordinator or prefect apostolic. It was decided that each bishop who had blacks in his diocese should decide what was best and work in concert with others in the provincial synods.[18]

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[15] Davis, 119.

[16] Michael Gannon, Rebel Bishop: The Life and Era of Augustin Verot (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1964), 124.

[17] Ibid., 255-256.

[18] Davis, 120.

True, in the published decrees of the Council, the bishops agreed on the need for greater pastoral care for the benefit of the freed slaves and cited the "success" of the Protestant denominations in proselytizing among them. However, the Council remained divided between those who argued for separate churches for blacks and those who favored the continuance of black worship in segregated areas of parish churches, and on the issue of a black American priesthood. Indeed, the Council's failure to arrive at a consensus regarding Blacks did not go unnoticed by the Roman Curia: in the decades that followed the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith (Congregation of the Propaganda) would take an increasingly active part in determining the policy of the Catholic Church in the United States toward Blacks.

Foreign Missions and Religious Order

At the Second Plenary Council the bishops had requested that missionaries be sent from Europe to work with the emancipated slaves, thereby skirting the central controversy regarding a black Catholic clergy. Spalding wrote to Pope Pius IX requesting a mandate from the Vatican conscripting the assistance of certain religious orders (the Jesuits, Dominicans, Redemptorists, and Vincentians) with American bishops evangelizing among Blacks in the United States. The

pope, however, never issued this decree.[19]

Bishop Augustin Verot was more successful on this count. Sojourning to his native Le Puy in France, the American churchman persuaded the superior of the motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph to send a contingent of eight volunteers to his diocese. Arriving there in 1866, the French nuns opened a small school for Black children.[20]

To the delight of Bishop Spalding, further assistance form Europe came in 1871 (a year before his death) when the first four English missionaries of what would become known as the Mill Hill mission arrived in the United States under the guidance of Herbert Vaughn. The works of the Mill Hill fathers were slow to get off the ground: their chief American supporter, Spalding, died shortly after their arrival; Vaughn had difficulty establishing new contacts among others in the American church hierarchy.[21] Their fortunes improved when the Anglo-Belgian Canon Peter Benoit arrived in Baltimore in 1875 (as Vaughn returned to England) and soon toured the South to examine the prospects for evangelization among the freed slaves while collecting donations for the Mill Hill society. Benoit was favorably impressed by the black community at St. Francis Xavier Church in Baltimore, and succeeded in persuading the Jesuits

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[19] Ibid., 122.

[20] Gannon, 132.

[21] Davis, 125-126.

to turn over its care to the Mill Hill Fathers, as well as by "separate but equal" provisions for Black worship in Washington's St. matthew's Church.[22]

Benoit's tour of the South was less encouraging, and in his diary, he recorded numerous instances in which lay white Catholics (and, in muted form, even Southern Catholic clergy), expressed animosity toward the freed slaves and the establishment of a "special" mission to minister to them. Certainly there were exceptions to the reception that Benoit received from American Catholic hierarchs in response to his advocacy of expanded work among blacks. James Gibbons, soon to become archbishop of Baltimore, and Charleston's Bishop Lynch (Charleston having a separate church for Blacks, St. Peter's), welcomed Benoit's offer of assistance from the Mill Hill Fathers. Moving deeper South, however, Benoit found that polarization among whites and blacks became more pronounced and found its expression in the relative neglect of blacks by the Church. In New Orleans, home to a substantial Black Catholic population and the original "home" of many St. Monica parishioners, Benoit found that Catholic slavemasters had ignored any religious education for their slaves, and it was on this basis that he explained

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[22] John P. Muffler, "This Far By Faith: A History of St. Augustine's, the Mother Church for Black Catholics in the Nation's Capitol" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1989), 21-24.

there lack of morality.[23] Worse, St. Louis Archbishop Peter Kenrick displayed an indifference toward the blacks and refused Benoit permission to collect money on behalf of the Mill Hill Fathers' mission in America. In 1893, the Mill Hill Fathers transferred their work to the American Catholic Missionary Society for the Evangelization of the Negro Race organized as the St. Joseph's Society of the Sacred Heart and first headed by Father Slattery.[24]

Other European-based missionary societies helped fill the "gap" in the American Catholic Church's policy toward freed blacks. In 1872, the Congregation of the Holy Ghost, or Spiritans, established for missionary work in Africa, came to Kentucky to pursue their work among the freed slaves but soon moved their headquarters to Pittsburgh. The Regional superior of the Southern Province, in Arkansas, Joseph Strub, and his council welcomed them, writing to the Holy Ghost Fathers, that in the United States, "'almost nothing has been done so far by Catholic missionaries.'"[25] The Holy Ghost fathers established an orphanage and were later joined in Arkansas by the Sisters of St. Joseph who established a school for black children in Conway in 1884

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[23] Davis, 128-129.

[24] W.D. Weatherford, American Churches and the Negro: An Historical Survey From Slave Days to the Present (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1957), 264.

[25] Henry J. Koren, The Serpent and the Dove: A History of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost in the United States, 1745-1984 (Pittsburgh: Spiritus Press, 1985), 118.

which lasted until 1898.[26]

Indigenous religious orders also played a role in Catholic ministration to blacks with enlightened American bishops "inviting" them. In Savannah, Bishop William Gross enlisted the aid of two Benedictine monks, who established a parish there and tried to start a school for Blacks on nearby Skidway Island with the curriculum emphasizing vocational skills in agriculture and the industrial arts. Although the school opened in 1878, the local black population was primarily Protestant and black Catholics expressed a preference for a regular liberal arts school that would prepare their children to enter professional careers.[27] Eventually a public school was erected on Skidway Island, and, in 1887, ten years after its establishment, the parochial school there shuttered its doors forever.[28] In Cincinnati, the Jesuits established St. Ann's in 1866 to serve Black Catholics who were denied access to worship in the city's white parishes along with a parochial school renovated from an existing, abandoned public school.[29]

Thus, "good works" were performed on behalf on black

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[26] Ibid., 124.

[27] Davis, 123.

[28] Ibid., 124.

[29] Joseph Lackner, "St. Ann's Colored Church and School, Cincinnati," The U.S. Catholic Historian 7 (1988), 146.

Catholics by foreign missionary societies and American branches of religious orders. But as for the core of the Catholic hierarchy, it remained unable to agree on a proper path for the Church's work among blacks; a Third Plenary Council would be convened in Baltimore to overcome indecision and stalemate.

The Third Plenary Council in Baltimore, 1884

Between the time of the Second and the Third Plenary Councils (1866-1884) the record of the American Catholic Church in evangelizing among Blacks was spotty and lackluster. Noting this, Cardinal Simeoni of the Propaganda took steps that would lead to the Third Plenary Council. In 1883, he personally invited the archbishops of the United States to Rome for a meeting to address the issue of the American Church's policy toward blacks. Once there, Simeoni made it plain that he was not satisfied with their work among the emancipated slaves, and that another plenary conclave would be required with black Catholicism at the top of the agenda.[30] The Third Plenary Council met between 9 November, 1884 and 7 December of that year. Marginal steps were adopted: a special collection from all Catholic dioceses was authorized for work among Indians and Negroes; seminarians and religious orders were encouraged to expand their activities among Blacks. On the other side of the

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[30] Misch, 498-502.

ledger, the Third Plenary Council spent much of its time decrying the inadequacy of both black and white Protestant clergymen working with Blacks. Bishop Gross of Savannah would charge,

> 'We know as a fact that at present the colored people know very little if anything of these great truths of holy faith, whence all morality must grow. As a general rule, their ministers are poor colored men, the vast majority of them uneducated, and they only make a travesty of religion---'the blind leading the blind'...The white ministers are so disunited and divided on doctrines and dogmas that they could not teach these fundamental truths were they to go among them (which) they do not, especially in the South.'"[31]

So inflammatory were Gross's remarks, that they prompted a protest among Baltimore's Protestant black ministers.[32] Still, what did emerge from the Third Plenary Council was the view that the current course was inadequate and that if the Church was to "reap the harvest" of black converts that Spalding had spoken of, a different path was required.

In a sense, the first steps on the path were taken by Father Augustine Tolton, the first "true" American black priest. But before we examine Tolton's career, it is instructive to look at the lives of four other Catholic clerics who had a hand in the story of black Catholicism, i.e., Katharine Drexel and the three Healy brothers.

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[31] William Gross (ed.), "The Missions for the Colored People, " The Memorial Volume: History of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, November 9--December 7, 1884 (Baltimore: Baltimore Publishing, 1885), 72.

[32] Davis, 135.

The Work of Katharine Drexel

At the risk of extrapolating general points from individual careers, the anomalous position of black Catholics in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century can be appreciated by contrasting Katharine Drexel's pioneering work with that of the first American priest of mixed racial origin, the Healys. On the one hand, the individual at the forefront of the campaign to advance black Catholicism was Katharine (or Katherine) Drexel, beatified in November 1988 to become Blessed. On the other, prior to Father Augustine Tolton (the seminal and salient figure in the history of St. Monica's) there were three prominent Catholic clergymen, the Healy brothers. Katharine Drexel's work was well known during her life time, but while at least two of the Healy brothers made no effort to conceal their black parentage, the fact that they were partly black and attained high posts in the American Catholic Church was virtually unknown to their contemporaries.

In the aftermath of the Third Plenary Council, it was an extraordinary Catholic laywoman, Katherine Drexel took the charge of working among emancipated blacks and transformed it into a personal crusade. Drexel was a fabulously wealthy Philadelphia heiress who would employ her fortune and her person to work among American blacks and Indians. She was born in Philadelphia in 1858 into a

banking family of Austrian and German origin.[33] Father James O'Connor (later to become the bishop of Omaha) became Katherine's spiritual director in 1870 and would be instrumental in encouraging her mission to American blacks.[34]

In 1885, Katherine's father, Francis Anthony Drexel died, leaving her and her two sisters (both of whom would also be active in philanthropic work) an estate of some $14 million.[35] She first turned her energies and financial resources to alleviating the plight of American Indians. Through the guidance of the great Indian missionary, Monsignor Joseph Stefan, she became active in seeing to the material and spiritual needs of Indians on reservations throughout the United States. In January of 1887, Katherine Drexel was granted a private audience wit Pope Leo XIII, petitioning the Holy Father to send priests into the Indian territory.[36] The Pope reportedly looked at her, saw the depth of her commitment, and suggested that she herself become a missionary. In 1889, with the encouragement of Bishop James O'Connor, Katherine Drexel entered the

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[33] Sister Consuela Marie Duffy, Katherine Drexel: A Biography (Cornwall Heights, Pennsylvania: Mother Katherine Drexel Guild, 1966), 74-75.

[34] Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Mother Katharine Drexel (Bensalem, Pennsylvania: Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, 1987), n.p.

[35] Duffy, 74-75.

[36] Ibid., p. 100.

novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy in Pittsburgh. Upon O'Connor's death, Archbishop Ryan of Philadelphia became Katherine Drexel's spiritual guide. On 12 February, 1891, in the chapel of the Mercy Sisters in Pittsburgh, Katherine Drexel made her profession as the first member of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People.[37]

Six months later, the Sisters were ten in number and a motherhouse had been established in Torresdale, Pennsylvania. From there, Drexel worked ceaselessly in the "black" parishes of both the North and South. Indeed, she would develop a personal friendship with Father Tolton sending him financial support and spiritual solace as he built St. Monica's parish, and, as we shall soon see, he regarded her as without peer among Catholic clerics working on behalf of American blacks. After Tolton's death (as will also be detailed) it was Katherine Drexel and her order of Sisters who established St. Monica's school. On 21 November 1989 Katherine Drexel was Beatified by Pope John Paul II,[38] with His Holiness stating: "To those who suffered the evil events of racism, she directed her greatest attention, establishing orphanages and schools and organizing collaborative efforts, thereby helping American Indians and

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[37] Ibid., 169.

[38] Pope John Paul II, "Blessed Katherine Drexel," The Pope Speaks 34 (1989), 80-81.

Blacks to overcome severe injustices and social disadvantages."[39] There can be no doubt then, that Katherine Drexel played a crucial role in the church's institutional relationship with the black community. "Both with personnel and with funds, she helped shape black Catholic America."[40]

The Healy Brothers

In nominal terms, the three Healy brothers were the first "colored" Catholic clergymen known to have practiced their vocation in the United States. Two aspects of this statement require qualification: (1) the Healys were not known to be colored outside a small circle; and (2) the fact that they ministered to white catholics is by no means remarkable given the intransigence of the American bishops regarding the development of a black priesthood in the United States.

What remains beyond controversy is that the first three "black" priests in the United States were three brothers born into slavery between 1830 and 1836, James Augustine Healy, Patrick Francis Healy, and Alexander Sherwood Healy to a light-skinned black mother and a white slave-owning father, Michael Morris Healy in the backwoods of Georgia. Although he remained monogamous throughout his life, Michael

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[39] Ibid., 81.

[40] Davis., 136.

Morris Healy was unable to marry his "wife" owing to miscegenation laws in Georgia, and there are no birth or baptismal records of his three sons (a fourth son, Hugh, would die before entering the priesthood).[41]

Sending his sons to the North to receive an education, it was through Michael Healy's friendship with the bishop of Boston, John Fitzgerald, that he was able to send them to the newly-founded Holy Cross College in Worchester, Massachusetts. Subsequently, James Augustine Healy was ordained a priest in the Cathedral of Notre Dame on 10 June, 1854 in Paris and later served as secretary of Bishop Fitzpatrick, as chancellor of the Boston diocese and eventually as vicageneral. Still later, he would be named the second bishop of Portland, Maine (1875), thereby becoming the first black bishop in the United States. His brother, Sherwood also continued his studies in Europe (Rome and Paris) and became a prominent churchman, while Patrick Francis Healy would eventually become the President of Georgetown College.

From what we can garner, Patrick Healy's mixed racial blood was <u>not</u> made known to either contemporary whites or blacks. This is evident when we consider that Georgetown University, the school that he headed and where he became known as its second founder, "did not admit African American

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[41] J. Taylor Skeritt, "Is There Anything Wrong With Being a Nigger?: Racial Identity and Three Nineteenth Century Priests," <u>Freeing the Spirit</u> 5 (1977), 30.

students until the middle of the twentieth century, and then only as a result of the civil rights movement."[42] While Patrick Healy probably concealed his Black parentage, James and Sherwood apparently did not. Still, they never used their position to champion the cause of their fellow blacks. Nor did they ever give their fellow blacks the opportunity to bask in the reflected glory of their noteworthy achievements.[43]

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Looking back on the Church's record during this era, one can come to the summary judgement that the American bishops and their subordinates were unequal to the task of treating blacks as full-fledged Catholics. Cyprian Davis finds no reason to avoid this conclusion, writing:

> The history of the Catholic Church's efforts to evangelize the black people of the United States in the period following the Civil War was not a very glorious one. One might note that the ethnic group that she had known the longest in this country, aside from the Indians, was the group she treated as stepchildren, the last considered and the first to be jettisoned when funds and personnel were scarce.[44]

Nonetheless, while the Church may have taken a more aggressive posture, the general drift was toward accommodationism, both in society at large and within the

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[42] Davis, 151.

[43] Skeritt, 37.

[44] Davis, 146.

black community. Moreover, it is against this undistinguished backdrop that an innovation would arise, as Augustine Tolton would become the first genuine black Catholic priest in the United States.

Part II

THE EMERGENCE OF IDEOLOGICAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS FACTIONALISM AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

CHAPTER V

FACTIONALISM IN BLACK CHICAGO AND THE TRIUMPH OF "SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT"

Introduction

Prior to 1900, Chicago's unified black elite wholeheartedly embraced the militant integrationism of Frederick Douglass. From this uncompromising orientation flowed Chicago's Vigilance Committee which responded to cases in which the rights of blacks were violated through overt public protests and spirited indignation. It was John Jones who "became the undisputed business and civil rights leader for Blacks in Illinois," and "Jones' life-long battle for civil rights enabled him to become the first Black to hold elective office in Cook County and in the State of Illinois. Jones became a Cook County Commissioner in 1871."[1] Indeed, as Travis informs us, "No single Black to

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[1] Dempsey J. Travis, An Autobiography of Black Chicago (Chicago: Urban Research Institute, 1981), 9.

this date has been endowed with the overall power displayed by John Jones during his thirty-four years in Chicago."[2] Illustrative of the dominance of the original Frederick Douglass militancy among Chicago's black elite is an incident involving a prominent black woman, Ida Wells-Barnett (of whom more will be said later). When she and her husband (Ferdinand Barnett) settled in Chicago in 1893, she tried to establish a separate kindergarten for blacks, but Mrs. Wells-Barnett was forced to abandon her plans when the black community protested with a single voice against the educational segregation that her proposed class for black children would have entailed.[3]

After Douglass' death and with the onset of the Great Migration, the response of Chicago's black community to growing white hostility and the erection of barriers to both contact between the races of black progress was deeply fragmented. While dividing its leadership between pro-Washington and pro-Du Bois lines is certainly an over-simplification, close scrutiny indicates that the community's spirit was torn between the "self-help" strategy being advocated by Tuskegee and the call to constant struggle against discrimination and racial inequality clarioned by the Niagara Movement. This fracture manifested itself along class, political, and religious affiliation

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[2] Ibid., 10.

[3] Spear, 52.

lines, with an older black establishment holding firm to "militancy" and a more newly prominent "business" class focused upon expanding the community's economic base before scaling segregationist walls. It can be seen in the most direct relief in the division of editorial stance between the pro-Washington black newspapers (e.g., the Appeal and the Conservator) and their militant rivals (e.g., the Broad Ax and The Whip) with the largest and most enduring member of Chicago's black press, The Defender, leaning to both sides while trying to tread the middle way. In order to fully comprehend the extent of this division, we shall first examine the thoughts of two men who epitomized the debate over how blacks should proceed in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, i.e., Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois.

Before turning to this comparative reading, it might be observed that in 1941, Warner et. al. distinguished four classes within Chicago's black community along economic class lines of upper class, upper-middle and lower middle classes, and the lower class. They observed, along with many others, that the upper class of blacks in Chicago supported the NAACP and affiliated themselves with "white" churches, e.g., those of the Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic denominations.[4] While this

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[4] W. Lloyd Warner, Buford H. Junker, and Walter A. Adams, Color and Human Nature: Negro Personality Development in a Northern City (Washington: American

is "true," the division of Chicago's black community along customary economic class lines is not entirely accurate at least insofar as the period under study is concerned. Grossman's more recent analysis alludes to its main shortcoming. He would describe the hierarchy within Chicago's black community in the early twentieth century:

> Severely truncated at the top, this class structure rested less on wealth or contemporary white definitions of occupational status ... than on notions of 'refinement' and 'respectability' maintained by the upper and middle classes.[5]

The same "manners," (as opposed to economic class) division appears in Drake and Cayton's Black Metropolis, in which the authors delineate the beginnings of a class structure within Chicago's black community organized along three hierarchical strata.

> A small, compact, but rapidly growing community divided into three broad social groups. The 'respectables'---church-going, poor or moderately prosperous, and often unrestrained in their worship---were looked down upon somewhat by the 'refined' people, who because of their education and breeding, could not sanction the less decorous behavior of their racial brothers. Both of these groups were censorious of the 'riffraff,' the 'sinners'---unchurched and undisciplined.[6]

No matter what taxonomy is adopted, it is apparent that by 1890, Chicago's black community boasted an established elite characterized by long residence in the community (with their

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Council on Education, 1941), 20.

[5] Grossman, 120.

[6] Drake and Cayton, 48.

parents having attained freedom prior to the Emancipation and hailing from either Chicago itself or some other part of the urban North), extensive educational achievements (including both college and advanced program graduates), professional occupational status (as doctors, lawyers, journalists, etc.), and frequently having personal friendships with progressive whites. Again, this situation would undergo a dramatic change in the decades ahead, and the pace of change would accelerate substantially as "newcomers" from the Great Migration appeared at Chicago's gates.

The "Old Guard" Militants

What will be alternatively referred to as the "old guard" the "militants" and the "integrationist(s)" in this study was comprised chiefly of a professional class of doctors, lawyers and clergymen whose families had settled in Chicago before 1890. Within the ranks of the old elite we find the figure of Daniel Hale Williams. Williams was the best known American Negro physician of his day, and he wholeheartedly adopted Du Bois' ideas regarding a "talented tenth". Along with like-minded colleague Charles E. Bentley, Williams founded Provident Hospital in 1891, with an inter-racial staff. Throughout his tenure there, Williams sought candidates from both races and insisted that black and white medical professionals meet the same high

standards, a policy that brought him into conflict with those arguing that lower requirements be applied to blacks.[7]

While Williams was certainly prominent within the "old guard," perhaps the most militant individual in the black community at this time was John G. Jones (not to be confused with the "original" John Jones), an attorney and politician who had been a resident of Chicago from Civil War days and whose uncompromising stance earned him the appellation "Indignation Jones." Sharing a law office with Ferdinand Barnett, Jones launched vitriolic broadsides against Booker T. Washington and kept up the custom of convening "indignation meetings" when the community was confronted with legal challenges to equality between the races or especially vile instances of white prejudice.

Within the clergy of the "traditional" black church, Reverdy Ransom, minister of the Bethel A.M.E. Church from 1896 to 1904, was a leader of the Niagara Movement and, along with white social reformers (e.g., Jane Addams) helped to establish the Institutional Church and Social Settlement in 1900, offering a full range of social services to the black community and, significantly, having whites as supporters, staff, and clients.[8]

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[7] Helen Buckler, Doctor Dan (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1954), 191.

[8] Reverdy Ransom, The Pilgrimage of Harriet Ransom's Son (Nashville: Sunday School Union, 1950), 15.

Ransom's successor at the Institutional Church, Archibald J. Carey, initially tried to steer clear of the Washington-Du Bois division within Chicago's black community. Indeed, Grossman cites a statement by Bishop Archibald Carey, "'the interest of my people lies with the wealth of the nation and with the class of white people who control it.'"[9] But Carey was ultimately forced to chose sides and he allied himself with the militants.

Lastly, there was J.B. Massiah, the rector of the "fashionable" St. Thomas Episcopal Church. Like Carey, Massiah also tried to avoid political embroilments. Nonetheless, when the Washington-dominated Negro Business League (see below) held its meeting in Chicago in 1912, Massiah took to the pulpit and issued a stunning denunciation of the Tuskegee strategy. Reproduced in the 13 August 1912 issue of The Defender, the diatribe ran, in part:

> I cannot refrain from deploring the failure of the race, in the north especially, to continue to agitate against infringement of the constitutional rights of our people in the south. We should not cease to agitate, even for the sake of trying the policy of conciliation, which is proving too plainly, even in the north, that bank accounts and property are not changing the black man's skin or the white man's spotted prejudice.[10]

Thus, while Chicago's black congregations plainly evinced institutional tendencies toward accommodationism, within the

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[9] Grossman, 230.

[10] The Defender, 13 August 1912.

ranks of the clergy one could find several individuals working in the opposite direction, i.e., toward the maintenance of "old guard" militancy.

The Business Class Accommodationists

What will be called the "new elite," "accomodationist" or "separatist" moiety within black Chicago's leadership during this era was a far more heterogeneous grouping. As racial strife intensified and the old protest techniques proved less effective than they had been in the past, some members of the "old elite" switched sides, so to speak, and began to echo Washington's sentiments. For example, Lloyd Wheeler, a personal friend of Dan Williams and a co-founder of Provident Hospital, belonged to this faction, helping to establish the Chicago branch of the National Negro Business League, a Tuskegee-backed association. Attorney-politician S. Laing Williams and his wife, the aforementioned Fannie Barrier Williams went even further, and produced a stream of reports on the activities of Chicago's militants that were mailed to Booker T. Washington.[11]

But the majority of those in the pro-Washington camp were not converts from the "old guard" within Chicago's black community leadership. They were, instead, primarily business men and professional politicians who migrated to Chicago from the South as descendants of slaves, found their

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[11] Spear, 67.

power base not on the national level, but within the local community (having few contacts with white reformers), and generally lacked the educational and cultural attainments of the older elite, being exemplary self-made men. Of them, Spear states: "As men who had their primary economic and social ties in the black belt, they contributed to the development of a separate institutional life of Chicago Negroes."[12]

The doctrine of separate development was, in the final analysis, a business doctrine, and, consequently, its rise paralleled changes in markets and business conditions. While in 1890, most black businesses catered to whites, as racial tensions mounted and waves of ethnic immigrants began to compete for the white service trades (barbering, catering, tailoring, and the like), black businessmen turned to the black community for their clientele. Even though service establishment still predominated among businesses owned by blacks, by 1900 they began to set up shop in and around the "black belt" for the purpose of reaching the market comprised of their racial cohorts. Adapting Booker T. Washington's doctrine of racial solidarity and self-help to the northern city, these business leaders and politicians de-emphasized the fight for integration and dealt with discrimination by creating black institutions.[13]

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[12] Ibid., 71-72.

[13] Grossman, 130.

Within their ranks was Dr. Williams' arch-rival, Dr. George Cleveland Hall, who despite his professional status, served as a spokesman for the "pro-business" Tuskegee camp and never considered himself part of the original elite. As reported in the militant Broad Ax on 28 October 1899, Hall would address the Bethal Church Sunday Forum, and, after criticizing Chicago's blacks for their less than complete support for black business, the physician asserted: "The race is not progressing as rapidly in all those things which must necessarily be acquired before we can become substantial and highly respected individuals and citizens."[14]

The symbol of Chicago's "nouveau riche" blacks was undoubtedly Jesse Binga, an itinerant barber who settled in Chicago sometime in the mid-1890s and who would go on to establish the Binga Bank once he amassed a fortune in real estate transactions and married Eudora Johnson, sister of the "shady" gambling lord John "Mushmouth" Johnson.[15] In time, Binga would surpass John Jones, who was considered as the city's foremost black capitalist. And, in a sense, the depth of the dichotomy between Chicago's two black elite groups is illustrated by the personal differences between the two, with Jones being an individual of unblemished

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[14] Broad Ax, 28 October 1899, italics added.

[15] Inez V. Cantey, "Jesse Binga," Crisis 34 (December 1927), 329.

character and Jesse Binga being a man with shadows in his background, known for questionable business dealings and his contacts with Chicago's black underworld.

As time elapsed, most of the black churches of the two main denominations (Baptist and A.M.E.) received the lion's share of their financial support from the emerging black business class and tended to ally themselves accordingly. This bond between the "accomodationist" faction within Chicago's leadership elite and the most visible black churches led Julius Taylor to deliver invectives against them in the pages of his Broad Ax. A speciman of Taylor's harangues against the black churches in Chicago can be found in an editorial that reads:

> If we possessed the power, we would abolish or do away with negro churches and establish in their stead ethical culture societies....How long! Oh how long! will the Negro continue to erect costly and expensive temples unto the Gods, while his children are growing up in rages and tatters and in ignorance, and while poverty and squalor surrounds him on every hand.[16]

The names of these clergymen and their role in the rise of Chicago's new black elite are far more obscure than their militant counterparts. Still, from Taylor's statement, we can assume that their ranks were numerous and that over the years, organizational forces propelling the churches toward accommodationism over-powered the customary militancy of black Chicago's pulpits.

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[16] Broad Ax, 25 January 1902.

The Debate in Chicago's Black Press

The change in race relations within Chicago and the emergence of the Tuskegee alternative presented black newspaper editors with a set of hard choices. As Spear comments:

> Like all Negro newspapermen, the Chicago editors faced a peculiar dilemma. As businessmen catering to a Negro market, they sympathized with those leaders who called upon Negroes to stand together in support of race enterprise. Yet the raison d'etre of the Negro press was to protest prejudice and oppression. As a result, many editors combined the doctrine of self-help with the militant protest technique of the old elite.[17]

Although broad tendencies are difficult to trace out from individual cases, with the exception of the heterodox Whip, the black fourth estate in Chicago followed the same general trend as the black clergy as personal militancy was subsumed by market forces leading in the direction of separatism.

On the accomodationist end of the spectrum, Cyrus Field Adams, the black editor of the Appeal was squarely in the pro-Washington camp and when colleague W. Allison Sweeney took control of the Conservator, he transformed it from an anti-Tuskegee vehicle into a conduit for Washington's ideas. Indeed, most of the critical commentary appearing in these periodicals was addressed not to the "white" community and its actions, but, instead, to "persuading" blacks, particularly "newcomers," of the need to assume "white"

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[17] Spear, 79-80.

standards of public decorum and behavior.

Smack in the middle stood the most famous Negro journalist in Chicago during this period, Robert S. Abbott, founder of the highly successful Chicago Defender. Abbott tread a thin line. On the one hand, his editorials expressed distaste for Du Bois' "haughty" personal style, especially the "talented tenth" axiom, and The Defender assiduously avoided any direct attacks on Washington. Indeed, the Defender's emergence not only heralded the emergence of black business in Chicago, it also embodied it, becoming a newspaper with a national circulation and one of the largest black-run businesses in the United States.[18] Nevertheless, the Defender was instrumental in the establishment of the NAACP in Chicago and always exhorted its readers to adopt a militant stance in the face of discrimination and segregation. Conveniently enough, the Great Migration sounded in both the accomodationist and the militant stripes that could be detected in Abbott's publication. "On the one hand, by leaving the South, Negroes were effectively protesting against oppression and injustice; on the other hand, by coming to the North, they were swelling the urban black belts and strengthening Negro economic, political and institutional life.[19]

Journalists Ferdinand and Ida Barnett, although newly

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[18] Ibid., 114-115.

[19] Ibid., 134.

arrived in Chicago, embraced Du Bois's stance, and, until Sweeney assumed its control, aired this position through the pages of the Conservator. On the far "left" side of the journalistic spectrum stood the vehemently militant Board Ax. Its editor, Julius F. Taylor, never bypassed an opportunity to hurl barbs in Tuskegee's direction. Moreover, Taylor extended his wrath to local representatives of Washington's views, denigrating accomodationist black clergyman and business leaders, while advocating heterodox socialist policies. As for Washington himself, Taylor made no bones about his feelings, referring to the self-appointed leader of America's blacks as "the greatest white man's 'Nigger' in the world"[20] and as "the Great Beggar of Tuskegee.[21]

Organizational Manifestations: The NAACP Vs. Business League

While white reformers could support both the NAACP and the Urban League, as Strickland contends, "negroes usually made a choice as to the group with which they preferred to be identified."[22] For example, George C. Hall was extremely prominent in the Chicago Urban League while one of

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[20] Broad Ax, 16 May 1903.

[21] Broad Ax, 4 July 1908.

[22] Arvah E. Strickland, History of the Chicago Urban League (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 35.

his personal adversaries, Williams' associate Charles Bentley was a salient personality in Chicago's NAACP.

Quite naturally, these two camps gravitated toward decidedly different means of dealing with racial discrimination. After attending the first Niagara Conference in Ontario, two members of the "old guard," Charles Bentley and James Madden (close associates of the Barnett/Indignation Jones cadre) established the short-lived Equal Opportunity League. The League was successful in placing a black within the New Chicago Charter Commission and in protesting the appearance of Thomas Dixon's play The Clansman in its Chicago production of 1908. However, when the Niagara Movement declined, the Bentley-Madden League fell apart.[23] Concurrently, the pro-Tuskegee group viewed such protest activities as futile, and busied themselves establishing organizations of self-sufficiency along the lines advocated by Washington, with the Chicago branch of the National Negro Business League as their core and S. Laing Williams as their liaison with and conduit to Tuskegee.

As previously mentioned, the end of the Niagara Movement did not signal the death knell of the integrationist elite in black Chicago, for another organization, one that would prove more enduring, arose from

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[23] Elliot N. Rudwick, "The Niagara Movement," The Journal of Negro History (July 1857), 187.

the ashes of Du Bois' movement, i.e., the NAACP. Founded in New York, in 1909, the NAACP attracted many of Chicago's old guard. The NAACP differed from previous racial action organizations in Chicago. Primarily a legal and legislative action association dedicated to equal rights and integration, the group was avowedly interracial and in its early years was dominated by white progressives.[24] Upon its arrival there, the NAACP went to work immediately in Illinois, successfully defeating segregationist bills in the state legislature calling for segregated public accommodations and a ban on interracial marriage, and it also succeeded in barring the distribution of The Birth of a Nation (with its overtly discriminatory thrust) to Chicago movie houses.

The Chicago Urban League was a branch of the National League on Urban Conditions among Negroes, which had been founded in 1911 in New York City. Unlike the NAACP, the Urban League was not primarily a protest organization "but...an extension of the social work movement into the growing urban Negro enclaves."[25] With black Chicagoan T. Arnold Hill as its national secretary, the Urban League tapped into many of the same alliances with white social reformers as the NAACP, and, in a sense began to compete with the latter for progressive whites and diminish the

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[24] Spear, 87.

[25] Ibid., 169.

NAACP's resources by doing so.

Perhaps most importantly, as a coordinating body chartered to meet a number of economic and social needs within the black community, the watchword of the Urban League was "efficiency." In this, the League developed a working philosophy that was more congruent with that of separate development than with insistence on principles and rights. While its members labored to improve the lot of the black working man, "the League identified itself, in most cases, with the interests of the large employers."[26]

The Advantages of and Triumph of the Accommodationists

By the time of the Great Migration, the accommodationists within Chicago's black elite had taken the upper hand over the militant integrationists and, as will be discussed further, the influx of blacks from the south plainly strengthened the former's position against the latter. There were voices of the old militant style, particularly in the pages of the Whip, but, as Spears has it, "the migration had sealed the triumph of the self-help ideology," filling Chicago with southern blacks more concerned with immediate wherewithal to survive than with abstract principles.[27] One can explain this victory simply by examining "external" forces, i.e., the greater intensity

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[26] Ibid., 173.

[27] Ibid., 192.

of the white community's fixation with keeping blacks "in their place." But a more accurate interpretation of the accomodationist "triumph" must concentrate upon "internal" variables, alliances with elements of the white community and the changing political preferences of the black community at large as its ranks swelled with migrants from the South.

To begin, while many members of the "old guard" had amassed personal fortunes, their aggregate wealth would be far surpassed by the collective capital of the new business elite. Hence, in terms of financial resources, the competition between the two ideological groups grew more lopsided in favor of the accommodationists as the "black belt's" commercial establishments increased in number and size. In addition, many of the "respectable" businessmen who formed the Negro Business League's Chicago branch, had under-the-table ties, to "shady" figures like "Mushmouth" Johnson and Pony Moore, who, for their own ulterior reasons (the endemic conservatism of the lumpenproletariat supported Booker Washington's call for separate development.

The white power structure in Chicago clearly had a vested interest in "siding" with the black accomodationist business elite in its debate with the militant integrationist. Grossman describes the "enlightened" white vision of black community development in Chicago during the Great Migration.

> Most philanthropists, city officials, and social service professionals thought they could address the issue of social service and wholesome leisure in the ghetto by developing a system of parallel public and private services in the Black Belt. Municipal agencies or white philanthropists, would decide what blacks needed, build facilities, provide resources, determine policy, and oversee administration if necessary. Black leaders deemed reliable and competent by white standards would deliver services, and the black institutions created in the process would act as training grounds for community leadership. Black managers and board members would provide responsible (i.e., middle-class) community input, indigenous leadership, and a useful visage of black control. If successful, this program would both discourage blacks control. If successful, this program would not discourage blacks from insisting on their statutory right to access to unfriendly public agencies located outside the ghetto and foster the growth of a viable network of private black institutions.[28]

The accommodationists naturally had greater access to the purses of white philanthropists and industrialists like George Pullman, P.D. Armour, Gustavus Swift and Potter Palmer than did the militants.[29]

As the bonds between the accommodationists and this dominant white elite evolved, the former employed the institutional vehicles of the black community toward their own ends. For example, often featuring athletic and recreational programs "sponsored" by Chicago's major industrial companies (Pullman, Armour, Swift's) and even lectures by company officials, the black "Y" explicitly

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[28] Grossman, 173.

[29] Drake and Cayton, 57.

rejected the militant tradition.[30] In its official bulletin, as Grossman observes the Wabash Avenue YMCA used a motto to the effect that its purpose was "to change men. Not primarily to change the existing social or industrial order."[31]

Prior to 1890, the black community in Chicago was too small and too dispersed to support a separate political organization. Instead, black politicians generally attached themselves to white political groups, usually those associated with the local, county, or state-wide Republican organization. In return for this support, blacks were occasionally appointed to minor level positions, with only one black, the aforementioned John Jones, attaining a major elective office prior to World War I.

Illustrative of the fate of blacks in Chicago's political life during this time was Ferdinand Barnett's 1906 campaign running on the Republican ticket for the post of judge in the municipal court. Barnett's candidacy was stridently opposed by the white community, with the Chicago Chronicle saying of it, "The bench is a position of absolute authority and white people will never willingly submit to receiving the law from a Negro."[32] Nevertheless, in a Republication sweep, while Barnett gathered fewer votes than

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[30] Grossman, 222.

[31] Ibid., 228.

[32] Chicago Chronicle, 8 November 1906.

other candidates supported by the G.O.P., all the Republican hopefuls out-polled their strongest Democratic Party rivals, meaning that Barnett had made the long-awaited breakthrough for Chicago's blacks. Unfortunately, the Democrats charged ballot fraud, and recount of the votes reversed Barnett's victory.[33] White Republicans protested, but by no means vigorously.

Chicago's black businessmen were joined in their pro-Washington position by a class of professional politicians, including such figures as Edward H. Wright (Chicago's first Negro ward committeeman) and Oscar De Priest (the city's first black alderman and the first black to be elected to the United States Congress from the North). This group occasionally espoused militant rhetoric, but, at bottom, their power base was built upon the combination of a separate black constituency and shifting alliances with white-dominated political organizations, chiefly factions in Chicago's and Illinois' Republican Party.

In the wake of the Barnett recount fiasco, black politicians in Chicago realized that they would have to establish their own grass-roots political organization, firmly grounded in the Second and Third wards (although still attached to the Republican Party), if they harbored ambitions for elective city-wide offices. Between 1906 and 1915, Edward Wright, Oscar De Priest and Robert R. Jackson

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[33] Record-Herald, 23 November 1906.

developed a local power base in Chicago's "black belt." According to Spear:

> They labored under favorable conditions. The Negro community was growing rapidly enough to provide an adequate base for political support. It was geographically concentrated in two South Side ward, enabling the politicians to gain the maximum benefit from those votes that they could mobilize. And the political balance of power of Chicago---both between the parties and between warring factions within the Republican Party---was precarious enough to give the leaders of any sizable voting bloc considerable leverage.[34]

Their political leverage within the Republican party in Chicago was amplified by the fact that most blacks in the city were both eligible to vote and intent upon doing so. In contrast to the foreign-born immigrants, practically all the colored migrants were citizens of the United States. "As a result ... the relative importance of the Negro voter was greater than the mere population figures suggest."[35] In 1920, it was estimated that 72 percent of the eligible black voters in the city of Chicago were registered to vote, as compared with 66 percent for the entire city.[36]

The emergence of the accomodationist black power base in Chicago circa World War I was given a boost by fragmentation within the local Republican Party. Immediately before the War, the Illinois Republican Party was split between a faction headed by the ruthless and

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[34] Spear, 120.

[35] Gosnell, 15.

[36] Ibid.

corrupt Senator William Lorimer and his successors (Fred Lundin and William Hale Thompson), and a reform-minded governor, Charles S. Deneen. While some "respectable" blacks, like the Barnetts, backed Deneen, most threw in their lot with Lorimer, Lundin and Thompson. By working with the "transactional" as opposed to the "transformational" branch of the Republican Party, Chicago's black political leaders made substantial inroads toward securing political "say so" and with it, patronage appointments. It was with the backing of the Republican machine (and their leverage against it) that Chicago's Oscar De Priest became Chicago's first black alderman in 1914, while Robert R. Jackson and Sheadrick B. Turner were elected as Chicago's black representatives to the Illinois State Senate in that same year.

Under the reign of corrupt Chicago Mayor William Hale "Big Bill" Thompson (1915 to 1923 and 1927 to 1931), black patronage and black office-holding in Chicago increased substantially.[37] Thompson's patronage of blacks and placement of them in highly visible posts prompted his white critics to refer to City Hall as "Uncle Tom's Cabin."[38] Knowing full well that Thompson's clique was systematically rifling the city's exchequer, The Defender in its issue of 12 February 1918 nonetheless referred to "Big Bill" as "the

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[37] Anderson and Pickering, 47.

[38] Spear, 188.

greatest friend the Race has in high office since the days of Lincoln."[39] Chicago's mayor had a personal style that appealed to the lowest common denominator within the black community of his time. He once told black voters: "'I'll give you people jobs, and any of you want to shoot craps go ahead and do it.'"[40]

Blacks came to dominate Second Ward politics not by rebelling against the regular organization but by using their leverage within it and, "by 1920, Negroes had more political power in Chicago than anywhere else in the country."[41] Not only were the benefits of this development disproportionately slanted toward the separatists, "success" demonstrated the greater efficacy of the accomodationist approach. There was, to be sure, a price to pay. By forming an alliance with a corrupt political machine, the black business elite of Chicago in the 1920s effectively traded in all hope for a transformational reform movement in favor of a pure "transactional" (pork barrel) mode of advancement. No longer did blacks see themselves as naturally entitled to equal rights, nor would they be willing to wait for such entitlement to be conferred upon them by whites; instead, they now bargained for rights, using the political muscle that working with and having

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[39] The Defender, 12 February 1912.

[40] Spear, 187.

[41] Ibid., 191.

leverage against the Republican machine afforded them.

Although the "new elite" had "early settlers" at both its apex and within its body, the numerical mass of this camp was comprised by migrants from the South. In fact, by 1919, approximately two-thirds of all black-owned businesses in Chicago were operated by "newcomers" from the South.[42] In cultivating the support of this group, "self-made" men had a marked advantage vis-a-vis the "refined" integrationist. The perceived backwards ways of the immigrants, their uncouth manners, unkempt appearance and low moral standards were distasteful to both the "old elite" and the new "business elite," but the latter displayed far more faith in the newcomer's capacity for change than the educated militants who frequently expressed the view that the newcomers would never become respectable or refined.

Summary & Conclusion

What we find, then, is that between 1890 and 1920 a comprehensive circulation of elites took place in Chicago's black community leadership. Pressured by external circumstances, but driven mainly by internal forces, a commercial elite grasped the mantle of authority and power from an older, professional elite as Du Bois's "talented tenth" gave way to Washington's self-made men. Thus, as the white community imposed formal and informal restrictions on

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[42] Grossman, 155.

opportunities for blacks in Chicago, indignation and protest were shunted aside in favor of acceptance and accommodation.

> Chicago leaders responded to growing white hostility, not with direct counterattack, but by trying to build a Negro community that would itself provide all of the advantages of white Chicago. While the ultimate goal of complete integration was never abandoned in Chicago, it was temporarily relegated into the background. Negro leaders now showed a willingness to work within the framework of a biracial institutional structure and encourage the semi-autonomous development of the Negro community. They emphasized self-reliance and racial cooperation rather than protests against mounting injustices.[43]

Clearly, the accommodationists shared many of the same long-term objectives that guided the integrationist, but they differed substantially in terms of methods, and, in the short run, with these ends barely in view, means became the working determinant of black strategy in practice. The triumph of the black pro-business class in Chicago over the city's militant "old guard" elite and acceptance of a separate development ideology, also exercised an indirect but powerful influence upon the evolution of black Catholicism in that metropolis, for as we shall see in the next chapter, both Catholic worship and parochial education would evolve along segregated lines.

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[43] Spear, 54.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AMONG CHICAGO'S BLACKS AND THE EMERGENCE OF BLACK CATHOLICISM IN CHICAGO

The Distribution of Blacks Among Christian Denominations

The first black churches to be established in Chicago were in the "traditional" denominations, e.g., Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal. Black church affiliations with these two denominations remained strong throughout the period under investigation. In 1920, about 60 percent of total black church membership in Chicago was Baptist, while 14 percent belonged to the A.M.E. church.[1] Significantly, although there were certainly white Baptist and Methodist congregations in Chicago, "mixed" congregations were unknown. Even during the pre-1890 era, separate religious institutions for blacks were in existence.

Among the institutions of Chicago's black community at the turn of the century, the oldest and most stable was the church. The first Negro church, Quinn Chapel A.M.E. was founded in 1847, fewer than fifteen years after the city's incorporation. By 1900, Chicago had well over a dozen

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[1] Gosnell, 95

"black" churches, and between 1900 and 1915 this number doubled.

As indicated above, the majority of these churches were affiliated with the two largest Negro denominations---African Methodist Episcopal and Baptist---and were controlled and supported exclusively by Negroes from the beginning.[2] Most of the black churches in Chicago grew out of schisms from the Olivet church (the oldest and largest Baptist church for blacks in the city) or within the A.M.E.'s or Quinn Chapel or Bethal Church congregations.

Chicago's Black and "white" Religious Affiliations

From an early juncture in the city's history, Chicago's upper-class blacks, who considered themselves to be "respectable" were generally drawn to "white churches," e.g., to the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Roman Catholic Churches.[3] It was during the late nineteenth century, that these educated and relatively affluent Negroes gravitated to churches affiliated with the major white denominations which offered more sophisticated worship services than the traditional Negro churches.

By 1900, moreover, all of these denominations had attempted to organize among Chicago's Negroes and all but

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[2] Spear, 91.

[3] Grossman, 129.

the Congregationalists had been successful.[4] Among them were the Grace Presbyterian, St. Thomas Episcopal, and St. Mark's Methodist. "Unlike the A.M.E. and Baptist churches, these (black) congregations began with white support."[5] St. Marks, for instance, came about as the result of Methodist missionary activities. St. Thomas was a scion of a white Episcopal church, and while Grace was formed by black Presbyterians from Tennessee and Kentucky, it received substantial financial help from white Presbyterians during its formative years.[6] Within the Roman Catholic Church, as will be detailed later in this study, St. Monica's Roman Catholic Church as a special type of white-affiliated Negro congregation. Like St. Thomas Episcopal Church, it was founded by Negro members of a white church who asked for their own parish.

The Great Migration and the Rise of Storefront Black Churchs

The Great Migration brought with it profound changes in the religious life of Chicago's blacks. Prior to the migration, most of Chicago's church-going blacks were affiliated with the large Baptist and A.M.E. congregations or with offshoots from them. For the migrants themselves,

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[4] Spear, 93-94.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

the majority of whom had few, if any choices, about church membership in the rural South, Chicago presented a large, even bewildering, number of religious affiliation options. No longer was their choice between attending a single, dilapidated church "designated" for blacks or going unchurched.[7]

Many migrants felt distinctly uncomfortable in Chicago's churches, "because of both the size of some congregations and the style of worship acceptable to their ministers and laity."[8] Migrants, especially those from the rural South, were accustomed to service accompanied by improvisational singing, 'shouting,' and other forms of active participation and demonstrative enthusiasm.

> The migration, however, brought into the city thousands of Negroes accustomed to the informal, demonstrative, preacher-oriented churches of the rural South. Alienated by the formality of the middle-class churches, many of the newcomers organized small congregations that met in stores and houses and that maintained the old-time shouting religion.[9]

Fundamentalist in orientation and ebullient in demeanor, these store-front churches stood in decided relief to the comparatively staid proceedings of the Baptist and A.M.E. congregations, to say nothing of black churches in "white" denominations.

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[7] Grossman, 159.

[8] Ibid., 157.

[9] Spear, 175.

Impact of the Great Migration on the "Old-Line" Congregations

The rise of the fundamentalist Holiness or Pentecostal churches put pastors in the older, established Baptist and A.M.E. congregations in a bind. To attract newcomers and compete with the storefronts, several formerly staid pastors allowed more animation into their services. As this occurred and as "unrefined" black migrants entered into the larger congregations, some upper and upper-middle class blacks of higher refinement and longer residence in Chicago began to turn toward the "white churches," to the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Roman Catholic faiths to restore decorum and "decency" to their worship. As Chicago's "old line" Baptist and A.M.E. ministers tried to enliven services to attract the migrants, many of the "old settlers" in their congregations began to look elsewhere, often to the more "refined" worship of "white churches" such as the Roman Catholics.

Transformation in the Social Outlook of Chicago's Black Congregations

The Negro churches of Chicago had from the beginning of their history exemplified the "self-help" philosophy, and were in opposition to the more militant forms of protest that would be advocated by Du Bois and the Niagara Movement. We have seen that since the mid-nineteenth century, Negroes

had reacted against the hostility of most white churches by organizing separate congregations where they could manage their own affairs. The Negro churches, then, were already self-sufficient by the turn of the century and underwent no sudden or unprecedented changes between 1890 and 1915.

On the other hand, certain "innovations" did occur. The churches started to broaden their programs to include a wide range of social activities. The large churches, dominated by the middle class, were still the most important religious institutions in the community, but they now faced competition from new churches, designed to meet the special needs of those at the upper and lower reaches of the social and economic spectrum. By virtue of their original orientation and their "outreach" work, Chicago's black religious bodies tended to reinforce the "accomodationist" side in its debate with the "militants" described in Chapter 5 of this study. Largely unintentionally, then, the churches became a vehicle through which the "separate development" philosophy of Booker T. Washington would be advocated and embodied, and, as such, a major force in a significant instance of elite circulation that transpired in Chicago's black community during this time.

Black Catholics in Chicago

Chicago's first black Catholic was Mrs. Eliza Armstrong, who arrived in the city with her daughter in 1863

and was joined two years later by her husband James. [10] it was not until 1870 that another black Catholic, James McNeal, took up residence in Chicago, but it is evident that many others came to the South Side during the next twelve years. This is apparent from the fact that in 1881, Father Joseph Rowles, the pastor of old St. Mary's, a predominantly Irish congregation and his assistant, Father Lonergan observed that Chicago's black Catholics were completely shepardless, and organized some of their number into the St. Augustine Society which performed a variety of social outreach functions ranging from visiting the sick to burying the dead. Further confirmation of the existence of a growing body of black Catholics in Chicago prior to the "Great Migration" comes from an article appearing in a 1913 number of The New World. In that item it was reckoned that there were approximately 50 black Catholic families residing in Chicago in 1889, this number multiplying to more than 400 families in 1913.[11]

In 1882, black Catholics at St. Mary's, effectively barred from becoming full members of the parish, asked to hold their own church services in the basement of the Church, i.e., segregated from the worship of whites on the main floor. Thus, in this instance, it was not necessary

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[10] St. Elizabeth's Church, St. Elizabeth's Church, 1881-1981 (Chicago: St. Elizabeth's Church, 1981), 19.

[11] The New World, 19 December 1913.

for the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to "order" a separation along racial lines. According to a newspaper article appearing in the Chicago Times after Father Tolton's arrival:

> In Chicago the colored Catholic population is small and their needs are amply ministered to by Father Tolton, ... in the basement of St. Mary's Church. It was by their own wish to be formed into a congregation by themselves, but if prevented from attending their own mass they were always made welcome at any of the other churches. In this way there has been no cause for friction, and white and colored live in perfect harmony with the other.[12]

The writer, of course, neglected to mention that the white parishioners of St. Mary's would not allow them to join their parish. The request of St. Mary's blacks for a separate parish was granted in 1882 and Father McMullan, a white priest, celebrated the first mass for Chicago's black Catholics in that same year. The reason for this oversight may stem from the fact that at the time the article was written, the policy of the Catholic Church at the national level was already fixed and set against integration of the races within individual local parishes.

The Impact of the American Church's Stance Upon Black Catholics in Chicago

When the Second and Third Plenary Councils left the question of race relations in local parishes in the hands of

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[12] Chicago Times, 13 September 1891, p. 22

individual bishops, the effect was to reinforce segregation in the South and to expose the episcopacy to pressures for segregation in the North. As it turned out, the Catholic policy toward blacks as they moved into the northern cities before and during the Great Migration was to segregate them in their own separate parishes. This had been the policy since the mid-nineteenth century, and like the national-parish concept for separate white ethnic groups, both the lay people and clergy viewed this arrangement as appropriate at that time.

Prior to the accession of Archbishop George Mundelein, the Archdiocese of Chicago was led for an extended period by Archbishop Patrick Feehan. As Cornelius Kirkfleet, Feehan's principal biographer, informs us, the archbishop "realized the paramount necessity and salutary effect of gradually blending all the various elements of the Catholic population into one concordant whole."[13] Feehan's policy was to give each of Chicago's numerous ethnic groups a pastor of their own nationality, a spiritual leader "who was doubly in sympathy with the people, both from natural and religious motives."[14] Although other forces were also at work in bringing the first black priest to Chicago, Kirkfleet claims that it was "due to the wise providence and far-reaching

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[13] Cornelius Kirkfleet, The Life of Patrick Augustine Feehan (Chicago: Matred Company, 1922), 212.

[14] Ibid.

judgment" of Feehan that Augustine Tolton was given to the Chicago mission.[15]

Within Archbishop Feehan's express policy we see a "positive" basis for a system of segregation along ethnic and racial lines emerging within the Church. Indeed, the local policy propensity toward segregated parishes intensified during the final decades of the nineteenth century, particularly with regard to black Catholic. When northern cities began to acquire sizeable black populations, one church in each city was designated exclusively for blacks. This was where they were expected to worship and receive the sacraments. To care for the spiritual needs of the black Catholic community in a given city, the local bishop would assign a religious order to care for a specific group of people, be they Italian, Indian, or black, was quite common in the church.[16] However, owing to the heightened discrimination that they faced and the act of black clergymen to minister to their needs, the "national origins" system had a deleterious impact upon black Catholics that was generally absent from its effects on various white ethnic groups. In Dolan's estimation, as racism hardened the line separating black and white Catholics, "what was once viewed as pastorally appropriate

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[15] Ibid., 213.

[16] Jay P. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience: A History From Colonial Times to the Present (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1985), 365-366.

now became racially desirable."[17]

To be sure, even under the banner of ethnic "local rule" racial segregation evoked protests from black Catholics. Led by Daniel Rudd of Cincinnati, they organized five national congresses in the 1880s and 1890s at which they protested such segregation and discrimination in church and school. Conflict along racial lines extended into the next century, with black Catholics charging mistreatment at the hands of the Church and their white co-religionists. For example, at the annual meeting of the archbishops of the United States held in April 1904 at Catholic University of America, the Archbishop of Baltimore, James Cardinal Gibbon presided and reported disturbing words from Rome about the American Church's treatment of black Catholics. He specifically remarked that a complaint had been made "to the Holy See of alleged unfair and uncharitable discrimination against colored Catholics by clergy and people."[18] The archbishop directed that corrective action be taken, and then qualified this mandate by suggesting that this be done "depending on local circumstances."[19] Moreover, even at this comparatively late historical juncture, the archbishop cited complaints from black Catholics to the effect, "that

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[17] Ibid., 365.

[18] Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Archbishops of the United States, 1904 (Chicago: Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago, 1904), n.p.

[19] Ibid.

far more in proportion is being done for the support of mission work among the Indians than among the Negroes in this country."[20] Some reforms were undertaken, but in terms of racial segregation within the Church, little changed: separate churches and schools for blacks remained the norm.[21]

Thus, when we come to examine the history of St. Monica's in Chicago, it should come as no surprise that while blacks could attend services in "white" churches, they were not allowed to participate on an equal basis. "If blacks were permitted to attend services in a white parish," as was the case in Chicago," they were clearly considered outsiders, and (as was the policy in Chicago), they could not become full members of the white parish.[22] Although not "welcomed" by black parishioners, separatism in the Church was probably the only viable approach, and there is some evidence that in Chicago after Tolton's arrival, this "dual system" was deemed acceptable by black Catholics. In a speech delivered by black Catholic Lincoln Valle as replicated by Kirkfleet, this lay spokesman for St. Monica's expressed genuine admiration for Archbishop Feehan and his "national" church policy, gratitude for the Archbishop's "bringing into our midst" the Rev. Augustus Tolton, and the

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[20] Ibid.

[21] Dolan, 365.

[22] Doland, 366.

belief that the operation of the Church in Chicago demonstrate that : "the solemn dogma of the Catholic Church is the quality of all men before God" and that "the whole history of the Catholic Church has been a ceaseless protest against slavery."[23]

In this context we note that the growth in the black Catholic population in Chicago, for example, came at a time when anti-black sentiment among white Catholic groups was mounting rapidly. Therefore, had blacks attempted to force the issue, white parishioners may have simply withdrawn from the parish or the Church altogether, and the result would have been the same, i.e., segregation. More so than in stabilized communities, where groups of whites were secure, "white Catholics in Chicago, most of whom were recent immigrants with adjustment problems of their own, made no significant effort to proselytize among Negroes."[24] Thus, a de facto segregated black parish with a black priest was practically the best that Chicago's black Catholics could expect given prevailing social circumstances. Again, this is not to say that blacks were indifferent to racial segregation being replicated in Chicago's churches. Within the program of the Niagara Movement, we discover the statement:

Especially are we surprised and astonished at the

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[23] Kirkfleet, 214-215.

[24] Gillard, 43.

> recent attitude of the Church of Christ---of an increase of a desire to bow to racial prejudice, to narrow the bounds of human brotherhood, and to segregate the black man in some outer sanctuary. This wrong, unchristian and disgraceful to the 20th century civilization.[25]

But, as accommodationism gained the upper hand over "old line" militancy, the notion of "separate but equal" churches (Protestant and Catholic alike) received widespread acceptance by blacks and voices of protest were temporarily stilled. Between 1880 and 1917, then, the policy of the Catholic Church toward blacks translated into a less than ideal, but still tolerable, system of segregated worship and parochial education from the standpoint of Chicago's black Catholic community.

The Accession of Archbishop Mundelein and the Formalization of Racial Segregation in the Chicago Archdiocese

George Mundelein was installed as Archbishop of Chicago in 1916. On the whole, Mundelein was a staunch supporter of what was called "100 percent Americanism" in the Church. As Dolan elaborates:

> For this reason, he was very reluctant to organize separate national parishes for differing foreign language groups; he also ordered that English become the principal medium of instruction in Catholic parochial schools.[26]

Mundelein would write to former President Theodore

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[25] New York Times, 22 July 1905.

[26] Dolan, 300.

Roosevelt: "There is hardly an institution here in the country that does so much to bring about a sure, safe and sane Americanization of immigrant people as do our parochial schools."[27] In fact, a group of Polish clergymen from Chicago, protested Mundelein's aggressive Americanization policy in a lengthy document transmitted to the Vatican.

Mundelein's insistence on ecumenical integration among white ethnic groups stood in contrast to his position on the integration of the Black and White, during his tenure in Chicago. A "separate development" model was adopted by Chicago's archdiocese in the 1880s. That is, when there were enough black Catholics in Chicago to form a parish, Mundelein saw no reason to depart from this paradigm. Yet a change was afoot, and in 1917, Archbishop Mundelein would legitimize the de facto segregation of Chicago Blacks occurring in St. Elizabeth's parish.

The first inkling of a new policy in the making appears in a letter written by Chicago Chancellor Edward Hoban to James madden, in which it was intimated that the Archbishop planned to organize St. Monica's as a "mission" under the direction of the Divine Word Fathers, and that under the new policy colored Catholics would retain "the entire liberty of attending and affiliating themselves with any parish in the

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[27] Ibid.

city."[28] The formal change was initiated by the Archbishop on 26 October 1917, and took the form of a letter to Father Burgmer, Provincial of the Divine Word Society of Techny, Illinois, in which the Chicago prelate revealed his desire to transfer the pastoral care of St. Monica's black Catholics to the "Techny Fathers." While there was nothing especially controversial about this personnel change, in the second paragraph of the letter the Archbishop would issue another order that would reverberate roundly among Chicago's black Catholics.

> With the change of rectors, a change of policy is likewise to take place at St. Monica's. Until now practically anyone who so desired could affiliate himself with St. Monica's, attend the services and receive the Sacraments there. But now I desire St. Monica's to be reserved entirely for the colored Catholics of Chicago and particularly of the South Side; all other Catholics of whatever race or color are to be requested not to intrude.[29]

In essence, the Archbishop was proposing to impose a system of formal racial segregation at a diocese-wide level upon the <u>de facto</u> system of informal racial segregation that had existed within Chicago's Catholic Church at St. Mary's for nearly four decades. Archbishop Mundelein would endeavor to couch the change in terms that would banish charges of racial discrimination, stating that:

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[28] Edward Hoban, Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago to James Madden, 30 April 1917.

[29] George Mundelein to A.J. Bergmer, 26 October 1917. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

> It is, of course, understood that I have no intention of excluding colored Catholics from any other churches in the diocese, and particularly if they live in another part of the city, but simply of excluding from St. Monica's all but the colored Catholics.[30]

Nevertheless, through the left-handed device of barring white Catholics from St. Monica's, the practical effect was to lend authority to the color line within the Archdiocese.

Perhaps sensing that objections to this change would be forthcoming from the parishioners of St. Monica's and sympathetic white Catholics, Mundelein sought to justify his policy on several grounds. He first noted that there were two large (white) parishes in the immediate vicinity of St. Monica's, with all Catholics (white and black) therefore having an existing alternative to the now-segregated parish of St. Monica's. Second, noting that St. Monica's was a small church with some construction work remaining to be completed, the archbishop asserted that, "by the intrusion of others, they are crowding, incommoding and embarrassing those for whom the mission was built,"[31] that is, the successors of Father Tolton's congregation. Finally, the archbishop employed a "self-reliance" argument, contending that the new system would furnish the blacks of St. Monica's with a chance to prove themselves by autonomously developing local institutions as prior waves of Europeans immigrants

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

had done. On this count, he wrote:

> When St. Monica's was first established, the colored population in Chicago was comparatively small, very poor, and there may have been reason to appeal for support to others outside. now, however, the colored population of Chicago has grown very large, the men are nearly all at work and obtaining a much more adequate wage or salary, the number of Catholics among them has grown proportionately, and they feel, I believe, even as I do, that they are able and willing to support their own church and school, and if they do, the credit therefore should go to them and to nobody else.[32]

The archbishop would further note in passing that simply overlooking the existence of a color line in Chicago would be "puerile," and subsequently commented that "It is sufficient to say that it does exist and that I am convinced that I am quite powerless to change it, for I believe the underlying reasons to be more economic than social."[33] In fact, widespread racial discrimination within Chicago would be wrenched by the archbishop into yet another rationale for his new policy, with Mundelein stating that: "the existence of this line of distinction, it seems to me, ought to be the very reason why St. Monica's ought to show splendid growth and progress within the next few years, now that its future lies with the colored race of this city."[34]

In a penultimate statement, Mundelein would sugar-coat this bitter pill by expressing his utmost confidence in the

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[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

capacity of Chicago's black Catholics to progress along formally segregated lines.

> Should they fail, I would be disappointed and sadly mistaken in my judgement of them, and a parish distinctly for them would die like a poorly nourished infant. But when I consider their many good qualities, their peaceful family life, their love for their children, their strong religious spirit, I fail to see how they can fail.[35]

The archbishop concluded this "bombshell" decree for St. Monica's with a truism, that is, by reminding colored Catholics of Chicago of their "great debt of gratitude" to Katherine Drexel.

Despite all of the ingenious arguments that he marshalled to justify the "new system" of 1917, it is now evident that the archbishop's "reform" was squarely to the detriment of racial integration, and, arguably the long-term interests of Chicago's black Catholics. his new policy not only confirmed the prior exclusion of blacks from leadership in "integrated" parishes, that is, those in which blacks were allowed to attend services, but also placed Mundelein within the mainstream of Chicago's reform community on the issue of institutional separatism.[36] Granted, the archbishop's letter placed no further restrictions on blacks beyond those that were already extant: in practice, however, his order furnished white Catholic parishes with an excuse for directly or indirectly barring blacks. In some

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Grossman, 174.

instances, white priests refused to marry or bury Chicago's black Catholics and would not even hear their confessions.[37] Instead, they pointed blacks toward St. Monica's and told them of the archbishop's request that they receive spiritual guidance and comfort at St. Monica's.

Again, looking at the letter of his decree, blacks could attend other Catholic churches, but given Mundelein's objection to the formation of 'national' parishes and the exclusion of black children from St. James School at 29th and Wabash, the Defender's charges of "Jim Crow" were not unwarranted, and the order's "spirit" was, at best, defensive.[38] Granted, the editor of the Pullman Porters Review, Z. Withers, was struck by the Archbishop's confidence in black Catholics, writing to Mundelein a fortnight after the missive to Burgmer was disclosed to the public, "never in my life have we hear or read of such a beautiful tribute as you pay to the colored race."[39] This was not a "typical" reaction, and it was clearly not the view held by the majority of the parishioners at St. Monica's.

This second point is plain when we consider that on 7 December 1917, the archbishop received a request for the

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[37] The Defender, 17 November 1917.

[38] Grossman, 174.

[39] Z. Withers to George W. Mundelein, 13 November 1917. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago

privilege of an audience to discuss "the anomalous position in which they (the Colored Catholics of Chicago) have been placed by your policy of segregation in relation to the affairs of St. Monica's mission."[40] Signed by Robert Hall, Edna Boarman, Carrie Warner, Pelagie Blair, and James Madden, it was collectively authored by a newly-formed Committee of the Colored Catholics of Chicago, an organization that took its existence and impetus from the ill-feelings of St. Monica's black Catholics toward the Archbishop's policy change. This request was abruptly denied in a letter from Chancellor Edward Hoban to Chairman James Madden, containing the instruction that "if your committee will kindly mail the address you have prepared" the Archbishop "will give it his earnest consideration."[41]

With this directive in hand, the Committee of the Colored Catholics of Chicago did draft their address and send it to Mundelein on Christmas Eve of 1917. After assuring Archbishop Mundelein, that the committee's members did not intend to be presumptuous or insolent in the face of his authority, Chairman Madden noted that the petitioners:

> only desire the religious welfare of their people and are deep in the conviction that the new policy is diametrically opposed to all real progress of the faith or permanent lodgement of the truth with

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[40] Committee of the Colored Catholic of Chicago to George W. Mundelein, 7 December 1917. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

[41] Edward Hoban to James P. Madden, 11 December 1917. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

> them. They resent and oppose it and no condescension regarding parish rights will ever mitigate the reproach placed upon them or alleviate the suffering caused them by the offenses of prejudice which this policy encourages.[42]

Madden would also assert that the black Catholics of St. Monica's were particularly disconcerted by the "new Policy" since, "It opens before them a long vista of dispiriting contention and angry assertion of religious rights and privileges never before openly denied or seriously questioned."[43]

As for the accompanying address itself, it assumed the form of a petition to which some eighty signatures were appended, the first three being committee members Hall, Bourman, and Warner, the last two being those of Madden and his wife. The document began with force and candor, observing that the Colored Catholics of Chicago, specifically those of St. Monica's, had read with "astonishment" Mundelein's pastoral letter to Father Burgmer with its plan to revamp their parish along segregated lines and place it under the stewardship of the Divine Word Fathers. Making no bones about the negative impact of this directive upon at least some of St. Monica's parishioners, the petition continued:

> The change of policy in the administration of the

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[42] James Madden to George W. Mundelein, 24 December 1917. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

[43] Ibid.

> affairs of the Mission, so clearly and explicitly set forth in the second paragraph of that letter, has so deeply affected them by its unmodified declaration of a plan, has so overwhelmed them by a studied purpose to impose upon them the hated and hateful condition of segregation that they sit in stupefied wonder that so uncharitable a proposition should emanate from the Chancery Office of the great Archdiocese of Chicago.[44]

Recounting that the establishment of St. Monica's had evoked diverse reactions from the white Catholics of Chicago, the committee pointed out that a non-segregated but predominantly black Catholic parish was a source in inspiration to its members.

> It was the hope and belief of many that it would prove a focus in which would center all our spiritual enterprise and religious development and bring us as a race in the fullness of religious equality from the back pews of the church to the altar rail of a sanctuary, and that it would above all else establish a closer and more harmonious relation with our white brethren and more helpfully assist them in their labors to spread the faith amongst us.[45]

The petition then proceeded to characterize the "new policy" as effectively extinguishing that vision.

> But as a bolt from the blue has come the announcement of your 'new policy.' The children of the bond woman shall no longer kneel at the alter with their heirs of the free. The holy wafer of the tabernacle shall rest in solemn benediction only on the tongues of Africa's sons and daughters; and proscribed and forbidden they alone shall enter into the sanctuary over whose

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[44] Committee of the Colored Catholics of the City of Chicago, An Address to the Archbishop of Chicago Protesting Against a Policy of Segregation in the Administration of the Affairs of St. Monica's Parish (Chicago: Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago, 24 Dec. 1917.

[45] Ibid.

> portals is written in blazing letters of shame "SEGREGATED".[46]

The committee members further noted that all of this had unfolded even while the U.S. Supreme Court was issuing a series of rulings attacking "jim crow" segregation in the public sphere. The petition terminated with some highly figurative but nonetheless graphic assaults on the archbishop and his imposition of "the black cross of segregation" upon Chicago's Catholic Church.[47]

The archbishop was able to respond to the petition in a letter dated 26 December 1917, that is, just two days after its transmission to him, for, as Chancellor Hoban would inform the committee, Archbishop Mundelein had already given the matter his careful attention, his direct affirmation of the right of colored Catholics to affiliate themselves with other parishes demonstrated that segregation was not his purpose, and so the archbishop "bids me say the case is closed and he desires no further correspondence on the subject."[48] Indeed, no additional evidence of formal protest by the members of St. Monica's has been unearthed. Still, among some of the parish's members, the directive of October, 1917 was a source of deep resentment and continued animosity, much of it being directed toward Father Augustine

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Edward Hoban to James P. Madden, 26 December 1917. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Reissmann, the Divine Word Father chosen as pastor for St. Monica's mission.

From available documents, we do know that the archbishop was personally "satisfied" with the outcome of his new policy, attributing the committee[s protest to the work of a small handful of black Catholics. Retrospectively analyzing the measure in an exchange with the Reverend L.J. Walberg of San Antonio, Texas, the Chicago archbishop wrote in February 1918:

> I was glad to hear your friendly and kindly estimate of my words, for it is another proof that the step was a wise one. There was some doubt expressed as to this, and even opposition on the part of some nearly-white colored folks, of whom there are always quite a number in a big city, but I quietly insisted with the result that things are settled satisfactorily now.[49]

As far as Mundelein was concerned, the "new policy" was the proper one, and local criticism of it was confined to a small group of "typical" malcontents, that is, blacks with white pretensions.

There is one further primary record that has been located which is related to the reception of Mundelein's new policy: a letter written to Chancellor Hoban, not by a black parish member from Chicago, but by a white Catholic clergyman, the Reverend Stephen Theobald of St. Paul, Minnesota. Dated 9 February 1918 and addressed to Hoban, Theobald initiated his commentary by rightfully noting that

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[49] George Mundelein to L.J. Walberg, 11 February 1918. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

he had no real "standing" to allow him to remark upon the affairs of the Chicago Archdiocese, but that he writes nonetheless rather than suffer the pangs of being remiss "in the interest of the faith."[50] After giving his offhand portrayal of the psychology of the Negro as being hopeful for truth but sensitive to betrayal, the Minnesota clergyman would note that reaction to Mundelein's segregatory policy extended well beyond the confines of the Chicago metropolis.

> Accordingly, what I feared has happened. On the publication of the Archbishop's letter, it was immediately construed as nothing short of 'jim crowing' the negro is a most solemn manner in the Catholic Church, and within a fortnight the Negro press from the Atlantic to the Pacific announced the fact to their readers. Whether explanations can eradicate this conviction is very doubtful.[51]

Carefully avoiding any intimidation of a discriminatory motive on the Archbishop's part or the suggestion that Mundelein had acceded to pressure from white segregationists, Theobald nevertheless asserted that the new policy was counter-productive, particularly in terms of the Church's desire to convert blacks to the Catholic faith. "Thus, however justifiable, for internal reasons, were the Archbishop's letter, however praiseworthy and sincere his motive in making the changes," Theobald maintained, "he has probably laid the condition for the ruin of the very work he desired to encourage," that is, the missionary work of the

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[50] Stephen L Theobald to Edward P. Hoban, 9 February 1918. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

[51] Ibid.

Catholic Church among the blacks of the United States.[52] In Theobald's estimation, the chief beneficiaries of the archbishop's new policy were "the Colored Protestant ministers" who were able to "ridicule" the Catholic Church as an instrumentality of racism. Bringing his critique to a close, Theobald urged the archbishop through the Chancellor to reconsider this errant policy, concluding with the appraisal that "the Church's missionary effort among negroes, especially in the North, has received a shock, the effects of which only time will show."[53] But, as Hoban had informed the Committee of the Colored Catholics of Chicago months earlier, Archbishop Mundelein's mind was set; no further argument, be it from the new policies "subjects," that is, the black Catholics of St. Monica's, or interested observers (e.g., Theobald) could alter the policy toward black Catholics in Chicago set forth by Archbishop Mundelein in October 1917.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Black Catholics comprised only a minuscule portion of all religiously-affiliated blacks living in Chicago between 1890 and 1920. Indeed, among the city's blacks, roman Catholicism was considered to be a "white" denomination. This perception was grounded in the relatively small number

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[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

of the city's blacks attending Catholic services, and in the fact that they had virtually no say in the Church's policies at the diocesan or the parish levels.

Although many of the Great Migration newcomers to Chicago joined Fundamentalist "storefront" churches, a large segment of this population affiliated itself with the city's "traditional" black denominations, notably the Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal churches. This, in turn, prompted some blacks of higher social standing and longer residence in Chicago to turn toward more refined "white churches," including those of Catholic parishes within or close to the city's "black belt." With their numbers increasing at a fairly rapid pace, black Catholics who had been worshipping in the basement of St. Mary's Church sought the establishment of their own parish, and, in 1882, they received permission to form St. Monica's and Father Augustine Tolton was appointed to serve this informally segregated congregation. Although it wa snot openly endorsed by some militant black parishioners, due to anti-black sentiment among white Catholics residing in immigrant communities adjacent to the black belt, de facto segregation in the Chicago's diocese was tolerated as a compromise solution, and there is some evidence that after Tolton's arrival in the city, this "dual system" was deemed acceptable by black Catholics living there. Consistent with the equivocal position of national Church, a policy of tacit

and "benevolent" racial segregation was implemented within the Chicago archdiocese.

In 1917, Archbishop George Mundelein issued two crucial directives for Chicago's black Catholics, the first transforming St. Monica's from a black parish into a mission staffed by the Divine Word Fathers, the second bidding white Catholics to refrain from worshipping at St. Monica's. These tandem orders lent formal episcopal authority to the system of racially segregated worship that had been in place since the early 1880s and relegated St. Monica's to a status subordinate to, or at the very least other than, that of a conventional parish. In explaining this change, Archbishop Mundelein stated that the Church was powerless to eradicate the hardening of the color line in Chicago, implying that forces outside of the Church had compelled him to issue these directives.

The receipt of the Archbishop's orders provoked a strong reaction from the Committee of the Colored Catholics of Chicago centered within St. Monica's. Their petitions for a reconsideration of the changes and requests for an audience with the Archbishop, however, were steadfastly denied: for better or worse, Mundelein's policy stood without emendation. This engendered deep animosity and resentment within the more militant faction of St. Monica's, much of it being directed at Father Reissmann, the first Divine Word Father to oversee St. Monica's as a mission.

Somewhat ironically, with the structural outlines of the Chicago Church's working policy toward blacks firmly in place, the Archbishop turned his attention and his efforts to upgrading educational provisions for blacks in the archdioceses's parochial school system.

PART III

ST. MONICA'S PARISH

CHAPTER VII

THE LIFE OF FATHER AUGUSTINE TOLTON

Introduction

It was into this historical context that Father augustine (Augustine) Tolton, the first ordained American priest to work with people of his color, stepped in 1889. As we shall shortly find, Father Tolton's appearance in Chicago at this juncture was itself the product of conflict and contradiction. He had originally been assigned to work in Quincy, Illinois and his appointment to a parish in the United States (upon completing his studies at Rome, Tolton was at first destined to be a missionary to Africa) was the result of decisions made by the Propagation of the Curia, not the American hierarchy. His request for reassignment to Chicago (with a group of nineteen parishioners following him there) was motivated chiefly by inter-personal conflict with the local clergy and with lay whites, and, as revealed in his correspondence, by an abject sense of loneliness and failure in Quincy. Rather than his fellow white churchmen

or even his black parishioners, Tolton's closest confidants and constant benefactors; during his ground-breaking tenure in Chicago were Cardinal Simeoni and, as Tolton's vision of St. Monica's developed, Katherine Drexel.

Early Background

Augustine (sometimes called "Augustus") Tolton was born a slave in Brush Creek, Ralls County, Missouri in 1854, the same year that James Healy was ordained a priest.[1] His mother, Martha Jane Chisley married Peter Paul Tolton, a black slave on the Hagar plantation in 1851. Both of Augustine's parents were Catholics and they were married by a Catholic priest in the small parish church of St. Peter's in Brush Creek, Missouri where Augustine, the second child born to the couple was baptized.

In 1861, Tolton's father escaped to St. Louis where he was attached to the Union army and lived in fear of slave-catchers operating freely in this pro-Confederate but divided state. At the start of the war, General John C. Fremont, an ardent opponent of slavery, became commander of the Department of the West with its headquarters in St. Louis and offered his protection to runaway slaves there with the Toltons living in what amounted to a refugee

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[1] Joseph Green, "Rev. Augustus Tolton," St. Joseph's Advocate 5 (1887), 202.

camp.[2] The exact year of Peter Paul Tolton's death has not been recorded. We do know however that it was Martha Tolton alone with her three children who fled Missouri for the free state of Illinois in 1863, having escaped the grasp of fugitive slave bounty hunters only through the intercession of Union troops.[3] We also know that Mary Tolton arrived at and settled in Quincy, Illinois, a locale inhabited by many fugitive slave families.

Religious Education in the United States

Mary Tolton was a fervent Catholic, and upon the family's arrival in Quincy, she attempted to enroll her children in a local parochial school. She was at first rejected in this because of racial segregation. Eventually, Augustine and his family found St. Peter's Catholic Church of Quincy, and the pastor there, Father Peter McGirr accepted the Toltons, encouraged Augustine in his faith (and vocation). Shortly thereafter, the Tolton children were enrolled at St. Peter's Catholic School with its unusual policy of accepting black students. Augustine's childhood, however, was divided between the formal studies and work in a tobacco factory, and it was in this adolescent period that he first announced his ambition of becoming a priest, a

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[2] Ibid., 204.

[3] Ira Berlin (ed.), Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867: Vol I, The Destruction of Slavery. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 411.

vocation encouraged by Father McGirr.[4]

Quincy's two Catholic pastors worked together (unsuccessfully) to find a seminary that would accept Tolton, and in the end they enlisted various priest to provide Augustine with private tutoring. One such priest was the curate of St. Boniface Church in Quincy, Theodore Wegmann, who furnished his charge with a knowledge of the classics, liberal arts and extensive language studies that included Latin, Greek, and German.[5] Green reports that Tolton read and spoke German fluently, a decided advantage in a region with a large population of German immigrants.[6] In 1878, Tolton registered as a special student at Quincy College, a school founded by the Franciscans, while continuing to work at wage labor during his "spare" time. Eventually, Tolton was able to trade his factory labor for a post as a Sunday school teacher for black children in Quincy. A Franciscan friar, Michael Richardt (a professor of philosophy at Quincy College) enlisted Tolton's services in his mission to Quincy's black Catholics.

Continuation of Tolton's Education in Rome and His Assignment to the United States

It was Father Michael who sought to circumvent the

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[4] Davis, 154.

[5] Green, 202-204.

[6] Ibid., 204.

color bar in American seminaries and bring Tolton's dream of becoming a priest into fruition. Father Michael wrote directly to Father Bernardino dal Vago da Portoguaro about Tolton's case and the latter used his influence with the Congregation of Propagation of the Faith to have Tolton accepted as a student at Urban College in Rome, where Tolton registered in 1880 at the age of twenty-five. At the time, there were 142 students enrolled at Urban, three of them Africans, providing Tolton with contact with fellow blacks seeking ordination as priests. While undistinguished academically, Tolton was a diligent and responsible students and completed the Urban College curriculum by 1886. It was at the age of thirty-two, on 24 April 1886 (Holy Saturday) that Tolton was ordained by Cardinal Parochi in the basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome.

Originally Tolton was destined to serve as a missionary to Africa, but, in a speech given in 1889 to the first black Catholic Congress, Tolton described how he was reassigned through the intervention of Cardinal Simeoni:

> I heard the words of St. John, 'prepare the ways of the Lord' and God gave me the strength to persevere, for Rome has heard that no one of us could be found to preach the Gospel. I rejoiced when I heard that I was to be sent to America. God is over us all, and he had many blessings for men of every race. When on the eve of going to St. John Lateran to be ordained, the word came expressing doubt whether I would be sent here (the United States). It was said that I would be the only priest of my race in America and would not be likely to succeed. All at once Cardinal Simeoni said, 'America has been called the most enlightened nation; we will see if it deserves

> that honor. If America has never seen a black priest, it has to see one now.[7]

Tolton was assigned to the diocese of Alton, Illinois (currently the Springfield diocese) and was accepted by Bishop Peter Joseph Baltes who had once written to Rome on behalf of Tolton's application to Urban College. Although Baltes died two months before Tolton's ordination, his temporary successor, Reverend John Janssen, wrote to him in Rome and also welcomed the black priest.

Having received a small loan from the Propagation of the Faith to finance his trip back to America, Tolton arrived in his homeland at the port back to America, Tolton arrived in his homeland at the port of New York on 6 July 1886. He would celebrate his first mass in the United States the next day at St. Mary's Hospital in Hoboken, New Jersey. This was followed by a mass held in New York City the next Sunday at the black parish of St. Benedict the Moor on Bleeker Street in lower Manhattan, the pastor of the parish being Father John Burke who would eventually become a prominent white clerical figure in the cause of black Catholics.

Experience in Quincy

Led by Father McGirr, Father Tolton was given a hero's

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[7] Three Catholic Afro-American Congresses (Cincinnati: American Catholic Tribune, 1893; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1978), 18.

reception when he reached his destination of Quincy, Illinois. As Zimmerman describes it:

> Thousands were at the station when his train arrived. There was even a brass band playing. Thousands more of all races and creeds stood in the streets along the line of march to cheer him as he rode in a flower-draped carriage drawn by four white horses. He was dressed in a black Prince Albert and wearing a silk hat. Several blocks from the church, the procession was met by the school children, more priests and sisters. When Father Tolton entered the church hundreds of persons of all races were kneeling at the communion rail awaiting his sacerdotal blessing. This blessing he first gave to his friend and benefactor, Father McGirr. In their religious fervor, race and creed were forgotten. As many white persons kissed Father Tolton's hand as Negroes.[8]

It was on 18 July 1886 that Tolton celebrated mass in Quincy, at the largely German parish of St. Boniface. In a letter to Cardinal Simeoni, Tolton ecstatically described the overflow house that his presence drew on this occasion, with more than a thousand whites and five hundred blacks in attendance.[9]

Tolton was then assigned as pastor of Quincy's black church, St. Joseph's, en extremely small and neglected parish. It was at this juncture that Tolton first encountered obstacles to his work. Writing to Cardinal Simeoni at the end of 1887, Tolton reported that he had only six conversions to Catholicism among the local blacks. In

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[8] Aloysius Zimmerman, The Beginnings of an Era: History of the Work of the Catholic Church Among the Negroes of Chicago (Chicago: Illinois Press, 1952), n.p.

[9] Davis, 156.

that same letter, Tolton told Simeoni that the local German and Irish Catholics of the city had been supportive of his mission to the blacks, but that he had encountered some hostility from other white parishioners and, especially from a German priest, Father Michael Weiss, of St. Boniface's Parish. By 1888, in a letter to James Gibbons, the archbishop of Baltimore, Tolton counted his black parishioners as being thirty-one in number (mostly women) but also noted that as many as two hundred whites were attending services at St. Joseph's.[10] Herein lay the bone of contention: white laymen and clergymen resented Tolton's ability to draw white parishioners and spoke disparagingly of the "nigger priest," and this talk, in turn, fueled resentment among blacks toward both whites and toward Tolton's disruptive presence.

With no fellow black priests to call on for counsel and consolation, Tolton found himself an isolated figure caught between the proverbial rock and hard spot. He later wrote to Gibbons: "'The priests here rejoiced at my arrival, now they wish I were away because too many white people come down to my church from other parishes'".[11] Tolton despaired and wrote to the Propagation of the Faith for

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[10] Augustine Tolton to Katharine Drexel circa 1988. Transcript in the hand of Augustine Tolton. Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

[11] Augustine Tolton to James Gibbons, 24 July 1988. Transcript in the hand of Augustine Tolton, St. Joseph's Archives, Philadelphia.

permission to be reassigned to another parish and made inquiry at St. Paul's archdiocese where John Ireland, an archbishop sympathetic to Catholic work among the blacks was resident. It was in July, 1889 that Tolton again wrote to Simeoni describing his untenable position and continued wrangling with Father Weiss. He backed his argument by stating that Quincy's new bishop, James Ryan, was also of the view that he should be reassigned, possibly to Galveston where the bishop had invited him to enter his diocese.

Reassignment to Chicago

It was not until October, 1889, when Chicago Archbishop Feehan invited Tolton to join the diocese that Cardinal Simeoni accepted his argument for reassignment. Noting that nineteen black converts he had made in Quincy were prepared to relocate to Chicago, and after Propagation inquiries to Bishop Ryan (including letters in which the bishop disingenously stated that Tolton had not had any success in converting blacks while omitting all references to his conflict with Weiss), Tolton was finally given permission to join Feehan in Chicago. Tolton was finally given permission to join Feehan in Chicago. Tolton arrived in Chicago sometime in December 1889, and despite the fact that nineteen black converts moved from the Quincy area with him, he did so with a sense that his two-and-a-half years of labor in his first American parish had been a time of

personal failure.

Tolton's Work at St. Monica's

With the encouragement of Bishop Feehan, Tolton went to the basement of St. Mary's Church where a Catholic black congregation had been worshipping since 1881. Again with Feehan's support, plans were drawn for the establishment of a separate black church to be located at 35th and Dearborn streets. By 1893, the church, St. Monica's, although structurally incomplete (and, in fact, never completed), opened for worship, and it was there that Tolton labored for the remaining four years of his life.[12]

Tolton's would write to Katharine Drexel in a letter dates 12 May 1891 that has been preserved in the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament Archives with a bittersweet enthusiasm about his initial work at St. Monica's:

> I have together 260 souls to render an account before God's majesty. There are altogether 500 souls but they have become like unto the dead limbs on a tree and without moisture because no one had taken care of them: just Sunday night last I was called to the death bed of a colored woman who had been 9 years away from her duties because she was hurled out of a white church and even cursed at by the Irish members, very bad indeed! She sent for me and thanked God that she

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[12] Sister Caroline Hemesath, From Slave to Priest: A Biography of the Rev. Augustine Tolton (1854-97), First Afro-American Priest of the United States (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 136-137.

had one (a black priest) to send for.[13]

During the years that Tolton spent at St. Monica's, he frequently corresponded with Katharine Drexel and expressed his embarrassment at so often requesting funds for his parish from her. The text of a letter dates 5 June 1891 reads, in part:

> I for one cannot tell how to conduct myself when I see one person at least (Katharine Drexel) showing their love for the colored race...As I stand as the first Negro priest of America, so you Mother Catherine stand alone as the first one to make such a sacrifice for the...downtrodden race," and of the expectation for him as the first black priest, Tolton added: "They watch us just the same as the Pharisees did our Lord.'"[14]

In that same letter, Tolton would continue to emphasize the unique difficulties of his position. "I really feel that there will be a stir all over the United States when I begin my church; I shall work and pull at it as long as God gives me life, for I see that I have principalities to resist anywhere and everywhere I go."[15] Tolton received more than thirty thousand dollars from Drexel during his tenure at St. Monica's and additional sums from the Commission for the Negro and Indian Missions to which she contributed

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[13] Augustine Tolton to Katharine Drexel, 12 May 1981. Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

[14] Augustine Tolton to Katharine Drexel, 5 June 1891. Transcript in the hand of Augustine Tolton. Archives of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

[15] Ibid.

heavily.[16]

Tolton's life in Chicago was modest, even spartan: he lived, with aging mother and a sister in relative poverty, but his renown stretched nationally among black Catholics. Tolton received numerous requests from black and white parishes and at one point wrote to Father Slattery of the Josephites,

> I wish at this moment that there were 27 Father Toltons (he had received 27 requests) or colored priests at any rate who could supply the demands...What a grand thing it would be if I were only a travelling missionary to go to all of the places that have called for me...What a grand thing if I were a Josephite belonging to your rank of missionaries.[17]

This letter, dated 29 January 1890 and held in Josephite Archives, clearly reveals a man loaded down by many demands and pulled in different directions simultaneously.

Much of Tolton's time in Chicago was occupied with fund-raising actives. Tolton's work on this front combined with her exertions in building up St. Monica's took a toll upon his health. During much of his time in Chicago he suffered from periodic bouts of illness. Returning from a brief retreat of Chicago priests held at St. Viator's College in nearby Bourbonnais, Illinois on 9 July 1897, Tolton fell victim to heat prostration, was rushed to a

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[16] Davis, 160.

[17] Augustine Tolton to Joseph Slattery, 29 January 1890. Transcript in the hand of Augustine Tolton. Archives of St. Joseph's Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

hospital and died the following day. Father Tolton was buried on 13 July 1897, with his mother and sister attending services at St. Peter's Church in Quincy along with a dozen priests and hundreds of mourners.[18] At his request, Tolton was interred at St. Peter's Catholic cemetery in Quincy.

Conflicting Appraisals of Tolton's Career

Ironically, while today Tolton is acknowledged as a seminal and salient figure in the history of black Catholicism in the United States, even at the end of his life, he judged himself to have been a failure.[19] Tolton remained obedient to his superiors and developed deep personal bonds with Ryan, Feehan, and Father Slattery. Paradoxically, while Slattery lent his support to Tolton, he did not hold the black priest's abilities in high esteem, nor did archbishop Ireland. The latter, inquiring about a black seminary candidate from Baltimore wrote in a letter to Slattery expressly stated that what he was looking for was a prospective black priest, "solidly good, and intelligent, fit to be a leader of his people. I want no Tolton's."[20] Slattery himself wrote to Walter Elliott, then editor of the Catholic World, and referred to Tolton and another black

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[18] "Funeral of Father Tolton," New World, 24 July 1897.

[19] Davis, 161.

[20] Archbishop Ireland to Joseph Slattery 25 August 1895. Archives of St. Joseph's Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

priest, Father Charles Uncles, who, in 1891 became the first black Josephite to be ordained.

> Alas, there is fresh opposition to negro priests. The two already ordained have not been conspicuous successes; one of them lost his health just as a bishop of the diocese he lives in, had his impaired. The other had a little trouble some years ago, nothing serious but enough to justify a hue and cry against negro priests.[21]

Today we can look back at Tolton's priestly career and recognize the courage and faith of a man who persevered in his vocation despite the insuperable obstacles and opposition. He was, admittedly, neither brilliant nor even clever, and on this count fell well below the caliber of the Healy Brothers. He was, nonetheless, America's first black priest whom all could recognize as a black man, with whom all black Americans could identify.

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[21] Joseph Slattery to Walter Elliot, 29 May 1897. Transcript in hand of Joseph Slattery. Archives of St. Joseph's Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER VIII

ST. MONICA'S AND ST. ELIZABETH'S

Tolton's Arrival and the Construction of St. Monica's

In Chapter seven it was stated that Father Tolton began his work in the basement of St. Mary's Church. St. Mary's itself was within the parish of St. Elizabeth, founded in 1881 by the Reverend Patrick A. Feehan (later archbishop of the Chicago diocese), and three years after the parish's establishment, a new facility was erected combining a church with an elementary school under the management of the Sisters of Mercy and having a student body in excess of two hundred during the first year of its operation. Somewhat later, the first Catholic high school, St. Elizabeth's, was built on the outskirts of Chicago, and was also placed under the supervision of the Sisters of Mercy.[1] St. Elizabeth's parish was situated in what was a predominantly Irish section of Chicago, the bulk of its parishioners and its parochial school students being of Irish descent, with black Catholics excluded from the mainstream of parish life.

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[1] Archdiocese of Chicago, Diamond Jubilee of the Archdiocese of Chicago (Des Plaines, Illinois: St. Mary's Training School Press, 1920), 483, 485.

It was in 1885 that the members of the St. Augustine Society began St. Monica's within St. Elizabeth's Parish for the use of black Catholics, an assistant of Father Rolls of St. Elizabeth's serving as St. Monica's first pastor until Father Tolton's arrival in Chicago in 1889.[2] At that time, there may have been 500 black Catholics in Chicago, most of them residing in the "black belt" adjacent to St. Mary's but, consistent with the pre-1890 pattern, also scattered throughout the city. In 1891, with the number of black Catholics in the city expanded by Tolton's flock, by conversions and by migration to the city, Father Tolton requested permission to draw plans for a new church to accommodate his parishioners. The request was granted by Archbishop Feehan. Tolton met personally with a group of prominent Catholic businessmen in December, 1892 and Mrs. Annie O'Neill, a wealthy white woman, generously donated a $10,000 matching fund for the purchase of a lot on the northwest corner of 36th an Dearborn streets.[3] The remainder of the money for the construction of what would become St. Monica's was collected through combination of fund-raising events held by the St. Augustine Society (fairs, picnics, socials and the like) and additional contributions from white Catholics.

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[2] Ibid., 515.

[3] Henry Koenig (Ed.) A History of the Parishes of the Archdiocese of Chicago (Chicago: Catholic Bishop of Chicago, 1980, 248.

A fairly modest building of some 6,000 square feet in a Romanesque design with twin towers, the church was dedicated to St. Monica, the mother of the great African bishop and doctor of the Church, St. Augustine.[4] Although construction of St. Monica's was halted for lack of sufficient funds, a temporary roof was stretched across its top and services for black Catholics were initiated in 1893, and in January of the following year, St. Monica's church was dedicated by the Reverend Maxmillian Neumann with the Irish priests of St. Elizabeth's participating in the inaugural ceremony.[5] The completion of this edifice required continued fund-raising, Father Riordan of St. Elizabeth's making an appeal for contributions to Chicago's white Catholics through The New World, reproduced in part by Koenig in a passage that reads:

> As the colored Catholics are few in number, it was not expected that they would be able of themselves to meet the large expense necessary for the building of their church...the church itself, though only partially built, is burdened with a very large debt, and I find myself greatly embarrassed in trying to meet even the current expenses. During a whole year I have practiced the most rigid economy, and an now obliged, though reluctantly, to appeal to the public for assistance.[6]

Additional funds were raised from "external" sources, with the white Catholic women of St. James and St. Elizabeth

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[4] Ibid., 249.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., 249-250.

parishes organizing a bazaar and like events in 1894 and 1895 to assist St. Monica's in meeting current expenses and loan obligations.[7]

Tolton's black congregation at St. Mary's had been comparatively modest in size, around thirty persons. Nevertheless, even during his lifetime, with St. Monica's now functioning as a focal point and more Catholics coming to Chicago within the ranks of the pre-War black migration, St. Monica's membership grew rapidly. By the end of Father Tolton's service there in 1897, the small chapel at Thirty-Sixth and Dearborn was the only place of divine worship "designated" for worship by black Catholics in the city of Chicago.[8] It was already too small to handle the throng, and over-crowding would intensify after the turn-of-the-century.

Father Riordan Supervises a Mission to St. Monica's, Father John Morris Becomes the Resident Priest, 1897-1917

When Father Tolton died in 1897, St. Monica's reverted to the status of a mission and did not have a full time priest until the end of 1909.[9] Upon Tolton's death pastoral care of St. Monica's was first transferred to Father Daniel Riordan, the pastor of St. Elizabeth's Church

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[7] Ibid., 250.

[8] Archdiocese of Chicago Diamond Jubilee, 515.

[9] Spear, 95.

at 41st Street and Wabash Avenue. Father Riordan remained at St. Elizabeth's, but sent a priest to St. Monica's to hear confessions and celebrate masses. St. Elizabeth's itself continued to expand, at least insofar as its physical facilities were concerned: in 1912, a parish hall was built, and a year thereafter, work was begun on a new grammar school and a new high school. Burdened by the task of paying off debts owed by his own parish, and realizing that St. Monica's should have its own resident priest, Father Riordan requested that the Archbishop appoint a pastor for the black congregation, and in December 1909, Father John Morris took charge.

The "Techny" Fathers at St. Monica and Archbishop Mundelein's Order

St. Monica's having both its own Church and its own school, Chicago's black Catholic populace rose from some 50 families in 1889 to more than 400 in 1913.[10] As mentioned above, during World War I, another pastoral arrangement was put into place, coming in the same stroke as the "segregation" of St. Monica's by Archbishop Mundelein. In 1917, Archbishop Mundelein asked Father Burgmer of the Society of the Divine Word, a missionary order with headquarters in Techny, Illinois ("the Techny Fathers"), to assume charge of St. Monica's parish, and it was this

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[10] St. Elizabeth's Church, 23.

religious order that would preside at the church. At Archbishop Mundelein's request, Father Burgmer appointed Father Augustine Reissmann for the task of ministering to the black parish, and Father Reissman arrived at St. Monica's on 14 November 1917.[11] Father Reissmann would serve as pastor at St. Monica's until September of 1921, when Archbishop Mundelein asked the Divine Word Fathers to supply a new steward for the parish, and the latter sent Father Joseph Eckert to fulfill that request.[12]

Under Father Reissmann's stewardship, efforts to convert Chicago's blacks to Catholicism took on additional urgency and impetus. Although only twelve adults were baptized in 1918, Father Reissmann's class system of religious instruction permitted the numbers to swell. Nevertheless, from documents housed in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago, we glean that Father Reissmann's tenure at St. Monica's was marked by conflict as well as growth.

To begin, in a crudely typed letter dates 29 May 1920, addressed to Margaret Doyle, and bearing an illegible signature, we find a complaint registered regarding a story that had appeared in The New World and which had implied "that the Saint Catherine Society was the chief organization upon which devolved the whole charge of affairs concerning

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[11] Archdiocese of Chicago, Jubilee, 515.

[12] Koenig, 249.

the Colored people of Chicago."[13] The "anonymous" author pointed out that this was not true, and that its presentation represented a "usurping (of) the rights and prerogatives of the Rev. Father Reissmann" and "border(ed) upon actual insolence towards the Most Reverend Archbishop and those whom he has officially appointed to direct this work."[14]

Further light is shed on the identity of Margaret Doyle and her role within St. Monica's during Father Reissmann's years as pastor in a missive written to Archbishop Mundelein by Father Peter Jansen of the Divine Word Fathers in June, 1921.[15] The purpose of the letter was to urge the prelate to reconsider his replacement of Father Reissmann, and as one of the arguments he raised in this respect, Jansen stated:

> Some dissatisfaction has been caused by the influence of a certain lady who pretended, and probably intended to do some good, a certain Miss Doyle. She has made herself a veritable nuisance to the good Sisters of St. Monica's to such as extent that Rev. Mother Catherine (sic) has instructed the local superior to keep that Lady from their premises. As a result she has been going around the parish, though herself a white woman, and spreading disrespectful remarks about Fr. Reissman and the Sisters.[16]

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[13] Illegible name to Margaret Doyle, 29 May 1920. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Peter Jansen to George Mundelein, Chicago, 29 June 1921. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

[16] Ibid.

Far more important than the Doyle incident was the fact that she had tapped into pre-existing resentment toward Father Reissmann among the parishioners of St. Monica's. Again Peter Jansen's letter of June 1921 is illuminating. Although down-playing personal hostility toward Reissmann in beseeching Archbishop Mundelein to retain him as St. Monica's pastor, Jansen intimates that Reissman was a scapegoat for the animosity of some parishioners over Mundelein's segregation policy, "the victim of hostility which he does not serve."[17] While pointing out "that very few people object to him" as the proximate embodiment of Mundelein's "colored only" dictate, Jansen commented that "the odium of segregation fell upon the paster and created a disgruntled element" among the black Catholics of St. Monica's.[18] Father Jansen's petition on Father Reissmann's behalf was not successful, the Provincial of the Divine Word Fathers later expressing "a little disappointment" after learning of the archbishop's decision to install new pastoral care for St. Monica's in a letter dates 15 July 1921.[19] In September, 1921, succeeding Father Reissman at St. Monica's, Father Joseph Eckert expanded his forbearer's work, and literally hundreds of blacks were converted to

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Peter Jansen to George Mundelein, 15 July 1921. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Catholicism in the years that followed.

Although the Divine Word Society had met the Archbishop's request to replace Father Reissmann, Father Jansen did not consider an endless succession of white pastors serving an exclusively black parish to be a viable approach in the long run. In a letter to the Archbishop written by Jansen in March, 1922, the administrative head of the Divine Word Fathers outlines a long-term solution to this quandary.[20] Stating his premises at the start of his letter, Jansen wrote to Mundelein: "It has been the every growing conviction of the men working among the colored that only negro priests could do the work successfully, if the conversion of non-Catholic negroes is taken up."[21] After citing the desire of black people to have black priest and the common practice of a black clergy for black congregations within Protestant denominations, Jansen would sketch a plan devised in concert with Catholic bishops and priests experienced in the Church's missionary work among blacks.

> The plan calls for negro PRIESTS and BROTHERS to become members of the SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD. The consensus of opinion was against a SECULAR negro clergy at this time; hence a RELIGIOUS clergy suggested itself....Private inquiries at Rome brought a most encouraging answer. Card. Valfre, Prefect of the Congregation for Religious, as also Card. Van Rossum, were deeply interested.

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[20] Peter Jansen to George Mundelein, Chicago, 13 March, 1922. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

[21] Ibid.

> The former suggested the plan of an AUTONOMOUS province within the Society, the exact plan as carried out. All are candidates of the Society, living under the same rule and the same superiors. They receive, however, their education in a separate institution, will be assigned to negro work only, and, whole remaining for years to come under the tutelage of white, will eventually have their own local and provincial superiors.[22]

In a second letter imprinted with the same date of 13 March 1922 and discussed in greater detail below, Jansen would propose the merger of St. Elizabeth's church and school with St. Monica's in tandem his plan for the development of black clergy as Divine Word Fathers, this being the first recorded reference to the prospective consolidation of the overlapping parishes.[23]

The Merger of St. Monica's With St. Elizabeth's

On 14 February 1922, now Monsignor Riordan passed away and Father John McCarthy temporarily assumed his post as pastor of St. Elizabeth's. By this time, however, St. Monica's little church was entirely too small for its congregation. St. Monica's had always drawn its membership chiefly from Negroes who had been Catholics in the Deep South, notably New Orleans and its environs. Consequently, the large migration from Louisiana had swelled its ranks between 1915

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Peter Jansen to George Mundelein, 13 March 1922. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

and 1920.[24] Indeed, some two years before the merger of the two parishes, a local Catholic newspaper reported that some 1,200 worshippers had crowded into St. Monica's Church for the Easter Mass of 1922.[25] Concurrently, the once giant St. Elizabeth's had lost most of its white parishioners who had departed as the "black belt" expanded "block-by-black". In fact, the highest concentration of blacks in Chicago was by now in the area between 22nd and 39th Street from State St. to Lake Michigan, within which the parish of St. Elizabeth was located.[26]

As noted immediately above, Peter Jansen first suggested the merger of St. Monica's with St. Elizabeth's in March of 1922, setting forth the reasons for this suggestion in a letter accompanying his blueprint for the establishment of a semi-autonomous society of black brothers and priests within the Divine Word Society. The chief reason for consolidating the two parishes, as Jansen saw it, was over-crowding in both St. Monica's church and, more particularly, its school. Remarking upon the rapid growth of the black Catholic community in Chicago, Jansen wrote to Archbishop Mundelein,

> The great trouble is, St. Monica's school and church are absolutely insufficient for the present needs and are very serious drawbacks for

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[24] Spear, 197.

[25] Koenig, 249.

[26] Ibid., 247.

> development. As to the school, your Grace has been informed that over 300 children had to be turned away, one half of them Catholic children. Some of these children come to church on Sundays, other will be lost. There is, furthermore, the lack of high school facilities. Catholic high schools will not accept our colored children, and in the public institutions their faith is too frequently underminded.
>
> St. Monica's church is by far too small to accommodate the people that ought to attend there. Every mass on Sundays shows crowded pews. The better class of people will not attend the colored church because it is so poor and small and unseemly, while the new-by Catholic churches are large and fine buildings. Protestants too, have a number of beautiful churches on the boulevards. Under these circumstances, the work is difficult and somewhat discouraging.[27]

As has also been previously noted, Jansen's solution was to consolidate St. Elizabeth's and St. Monica's, both their churches and their parochial schools. The Techny Father acknowledged that this might conflict with the desires of the remaining Irish Catholic families within St. Elizabeth's, but noted that for all intents and purposes the neighborhood had become "a black center." Jansen then presented his proposal in affirmative terms, observing that St. Elizabeth's had a large church around which "one of the finest colored parishes in the U.S. could be built up," and concluded his letter by stating that the interest of the Divine Word Fathers in a consolidation was not to have "a big church or a large parish, but only...to do great things for the salvation of souls and for the uplift of the colored

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[27] Peter Jansen to George Mundelein, 13 March 1922. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

people."[28]

Less than a fortnight later, Jansen received Archbishop Mundelein's reply. In a letter dated 23 March 1922, the Archbishop rejected the proposal to merge the two parishes. His main reason for eschewing Jansen's approach was that "the time is not ripe as yet" because "there are still three hundred (white) families left in (St. Elizabeth's) parish, and they vigorously object to being parcelled out to other parishes, claiming the buildings they helped to build, and which they say they can still maintain."[29] The archbishop did intimate, however, that he had a "definite plan" in mind for enlarging parochial education within St. Monica's through a qualified merger with St. Elizabeth's, and the use of Mother Drexel's order to educate the parish's elementary school black children apart from its whites and to pave the way for the black students of St. Monica's to enter St. Elizabeth's high school.[30] Nevertheless, two years later, in 1924, St. Monica's was consolidated with St. Elizabeth's as the parish's Irish communicants continued to dwindle and were replaced by blacks, and quite naturally, St. Monica's became "the center of Chicago's black Catholic community."[31]

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[28] Ibid.

[29] George W. Mundelein to Peter Jansen, 23 March 1922. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Koenig, 245.

Initially, having received word from Archbishop Mundelein that the black parishioners of St. Monica's would be moved to St. Elizabeth's, Father McCarthy welcomed them to his church. But, at Father Eckert's request, St. Elizabeth's parish was also transferred to the care of the Divine Word Fathers and St. Monica's Church was abandoned.[32] In 1930 a fire struck St. Elizabeth's Church and since plans to rebuild it did not materialize, services were transferred to the parish assembly hall, which was remodelled and functioned as St. Elizabeth's Church.[33]

St. Monica's School

In September 1885, the predominantly Irish St. Elizabeth's Parish School opened under the direction of the Sisters of Mercy with an enrollment of two hundred and fifty white students; this number would increase to five hundred and twenty-two by 1917, with fourteen Sisters of Mercy comprising the staff of the parish elementary school.[34] Five years later in 1890, the Sisters of Mercy opened St. Elizabeth's High School, with an initial student body of four hundred and sixty-nine girls; by 1913, as a result of the decrease of white Catholics in the vicinity of the school only about one hundred and sixty-five students were

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[32] Zimmerman, n.p.

[33] Koenig, 250.

[34] Ibid., 247.

enrolled in the all-girls secondary school.[35] Neither of these institutions accepted black students. Consequently, it was only with the establishment of St. Monica's parish that the opportunity for black Catholic children to attend a parochial school (albeit, an all-black, segregated school), and it was not until twenty years after St. Monica's Parish was established that such a school came into existence.

The story of St. Monica's school begins in 1912 when Elsie Hodges (later to become Mrs. Elsie Shepard) came to Chicago from St. Elizabeth's school in Cornwall Heights, Pennsylvania. When she arrived at the door of Father Morris's rectory and inquired where the parish school and sisters were to be found, she was startled to hear that St. Monica's lacked both. Miss Hodges suggested that Father Morris ask Mother Drexel to send sisters as the staff of what would become St. Monica's school. Morris personally travelled to Cornwall Heights with his request, and five Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament were eventually dispatched by Katherine Drexel to provide a parochial education to the black Catholic children of St. Monica's parish. In that same year, Father Morris purchased a former barracks at 37th and Wabash Avenue as the prospective site of St. Monica's elementary school for black children, and four classrooms were constructed inside of it. The sisters moved into Father Morris's rectory at 3669 South Wabash and set up

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[35] Ibid., 247.

additional classroom there, while Father Morris relocated to a nearby apartment. By 1917, St. Monica's school had a student body of two-hundred-and-fifty black children attending on a tuition-free basis.[36]

Between 1922 and 1925 another type of segregated parochial education unfolded in St. Elizabeth's parish. This system was instituted at the direction of Archbishop Mundelein and again required the assistance of Katherine Drexel's sisters. Apparently the archbishop wrote to Drexel sometime in the spring or 1922, asking that she supply some ten sisters to staff an enlarged primary school for the black students of St. Monica's, for on 13 May 1922, she replied in the affirmative to this request, asking only that two secular teachers fill out the staff complement since she could only spare eight sisters of her own order.[37] In turn, Archbishop Mundelein directed Drexel to forego the use of non-religious teachers, stating in a letter dated 18 May 1922:

> I am not very favorably disposed to the employment of seculars; the very presence of the Sisters in the classroom, her religious garb and quiet manner, have an immediate and lasting effect on the discipline of the room and the behavior of the children, even the smallest of them.[38]

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[36] Ibid., 249.

[37] Katharine Drexel to George Mundelein, 13 May 1922. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

[38] George Mundelein to Katherine Drexel, 18 May 1922. Archives of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Consequently, even in light of the "greater influx" of students that he anticipated under the new arrangement, the archbishop informed Mother Drexel that he would prefer t be slightly understaffed rather than to have recourse to lay educators. In concluding this response, the archbishop expressed enthusiasm for the expansion of educational facilities within St. Monica's, asserting that: "All in all, it looks as if we are on the way to pulling St. Monica's out of the rut of depression in which it has rested for so many years."[39]

Under the "new" parochial system, and in direct contrast to the hardening of racial lines with the segregation of St. Monica's church as being "for colored only," there was slightly greater flexibility in the integration of white and black students, at least at the secondary level. In terms of elementary school provisions, Mother Drexel's Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament conducted classes for black students in the main building at 4052 South Wabash Avenue, while the Mercy sisters operated an academy in the old Sheridan Club located at 4100 South Michigan Avenue for white students.[40] However, while St. Elizabeth's had a high school for whites, St. Monica's had no corresponding facility for black adolescents. In 1922, seventy students were selected from St. Monica's to

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[39] Ibid.

[40] St. Elizabeth's, 22.

integrate St. Elizabeth's High School. Granted, some of St. Elizabeth's white students transferred to St. James High school which was also staffed by the Sisters of Mercy. Still, St. Elizabeth's High School became the first secondary Catholic institution for black Catholics in Chicago and, in June 1926, graduated seven black students: Odessa R. Bennett, George A. Carroll, Mildred G. Harrison, Williams J. Howard, Beatrice H. Owens, Marie T. Pryor and Helen A. Rhodes.

A year earlier, in 1925, St. Monica's elementary school was shuttered for good, its students were transferred to St. Elizabeth's with a commensurate expansion of enrollment from five hundred and five to one thousand and sixteen pupils. In 1926 a "re-segregation" occurred at the secondary level, as the high school program under the supervision of Katherine Drexel's Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament was transferred from the main school building at 4052 South Wabash Avenue to the former Sheridan Club at 4100 South Michigan Avenue.[41]

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[41] Koenig, 249-250.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION AND ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

We have seen that forces at work within the city of Chicago as a whole, within its black community, and within the Catholic Church at both the national and local levels contributed to the establishment of St. Monica's parish as well as to its subsequent growth. In attempting to clarify the specific configuration of factors that had a part in the emergence of a segregated system of Catholic worship and education within Chicago at the time of the Great Migration, we must first reiterate some of the broad points made in previous chapters, and then concentrate our focus on a theme that runs throughout the study, the power of education opportunity.

Booker T. Washington's accommodationist philosophy of separate institutional development triumphed over W.E.B. Du Bois' militant integrationism at the turn-of-the-century. Although Washington's ideology was unable to stem the tide of black migration to Chicago, once these newcomers settled within that city, they found that the local distribution of power virtually precluded rapid advancement through militant insistence upon immediate racial equality. Although a

primary motivation behind the Great Migration was a vision of enhanced educational opportunities in racially enlightened cities such as Chicago, as their numbers swelled in the South Side's "black belt," blacks encountered a broadly rooted system of racially separate and qualitatively unequal educational provisions within the public schools.

The same forces that contributed to the triumph of accommodationism within Chicago's black community, notably a resurgence of white segregationist attitudes, virtually compelled the American Catholic Church to transfer responsibility for the design and implementation of policies toward black Catholics to the level of the archdiocese. In Chicago, both the triumph of accommodationism as a philosophy in the black community and the political, economic, and social forces that worked against racial equality created a situation in which Chicago's black Catholics and their spiritual leaders had little choice but to erect a system of racially segregated worship and education. Absent a willingness on the part of Archbishop Mundelein or his predecessors to openly oppose Chicago's white power structure without the benefit of a local black elite unified under the banner of immediate racial integration, segregation within the city's Catholic churches and it parochial schools was virtually a foregone conclusion.

While working tirelessly on behalf of his parishioners,

Father Augustine Tolton clearly lacked the power to alter de facto racial segregation within the archdiocese. Despite the hardships that Tolton endured at the hands of whites, he never adopted a militant philosophy. Arguably his assignment to Chicago was as much dictated by the need to place Chicago's blacks under separate pastoral care as it was by the desire of the Church to begin racial integration of the clergy.

When Tolton arrived in Chicago, the overlapping white parish of St. Elizabeth's had both an elementary and a high school in operation, but neither of these institutions accepted black pupils. It was only when St. Monica's came into existence as a separate black parish that the preconditions for opening Chicago's parochial school system to blacks arose. Through the efforts of Elsie Hodges, Father John Morris, and Katherine Drexel, St. Monica's elementary school for black children opened its doors in 1912, and, five years later, it had a student body of two-hundred-and-fifty black children attending on a tuition-free basis.

In 1922 Father Peter Jansen of the Divine Word Society first suggested the merger of St. Monica's with St. Elizabeth's, and one of the primary factors behind his proposal was over-crowding at St. Monica's school. Despite the formal segregationism stemming from Archbishop Mundelein's instructions of 1917, St. Monica's elementary

school and the Divine Word Fathers' mission for black Catholics that had replaced St. Monica's parish obviously underwent rapid growth in the years following World War I. The Archbishop rejected Jansen's proposal to merge St. Monica's with St. Elizabeth's parish, but he was already engaged in designing a blueprint for enlarging parochial education at St. Monica's through a qualified merger of its school with those of St. Elizabeth's. Consistent with Archbishop Mundelein's policies of benign segregation, provision was made for black Catholic children to continue their parochial education through the secondary level, fist through limited transfers to St. Elizabeth's high school, and then through the dedication of separate facilities under the supervision of Katherine Drexel's Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

Surveying this record, we can say with considerable assurance that a substantial proportion of the blacks who would eventually become St. Monica's communicants and participate in the erection of the parish church and school were motivated by their personal ties to Father Tolton. While in Quincy, Father Tolton was successful (although no by his own standards), in converting at least a half dozen adult blacks to Catholicism, and we also know that he brought a score of his followers from Quincy with him to Chicago.

At first glance, we appear to be verging upon

tautology, for to say that St. Monica's parishioners made their way to Chicago because of their loyalty to Father Tolton seems overly simplistic. However, we cannot discount such "personal" factors and, when properly construed, they operate on a somewhat broader level than may seem obvious in the first instance. To begin, St. Monica's came about as the consequence of faith and exertion on the part of an extraordinary group of individuals. Plainly, Father Tolton himself deserves a large measure of credit, but so do the white Catholics clerics that contributed to the parish's formation, notably Fathers Rowles, Lonergan, Riordan, Morris, Reissmann, McCarthy and Eckert. To their names one must join that of Katherine Drexel and her Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. It must also be recalled that Tolton, while by no means a radical, was a revolutionary figure, the first ordained black Catholic priest to work with blacks in the United States. Thus, beyond personal bonds, individual parishioners may have journeyed with him to Chicago or have been attracted to St. Monica's during his tenure because in doing so they were participating in a larger movement within American Catholicism, and, in fact, with American society.

Presumably the migrants from the South who swelled St. Mary's basement, and later the ranks of St. Monica's, were motivated by the same desires that prompted thousands of southern blacks to embark upon the Great Migration. From the records that we do have available, we know that a large

portion of their number came to Chicago from Louisiana, many from the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Many black Catholics lived in Southern Louisiana, particularly in New Orleans, and black Catholic freedmen comprised a significant portion of the 60,000 emancipated blacks living in Louisiana prior to the Civil War.[1] For these "free" black Catholics, the end of the Reconstruction Era plunged them into a subordinate status that they had never before experienced. Thus, we can speculate that they were even more motivated to leave the South than blacks who had been emancipated at the end of the Civil War.

Black Catholicism has often been seen as a sign of entry into the middle-class, the adoption of a "white" religion demonstrating the "refinement" of the convert and his adherence cultured values. A study conducted by Larry Hunt and Janet Hunt, reported mixed results when they used longitudinal data to investigate the research questions of whether black Catholics had achieved higher levels of occupational attainment than their black Protestant counterparts.[2] However, other studies seem to confirm a linkage between black Catholicism and what may be called "refined" or "middle-class" preferences. Daniel Collins

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[1] H.E. Sterkx, The Free Negro in Ante-Bellum Louisiana (Rutherford, New Jersey: Farleigh Dickenson University, 1972), p. 257.

[2] Larry Hunt and Janet Hunt, "Black Catholicism and Occupation Status," Social Science Quarterly, 58 (Fall, 1978), 657-670.

interviewed 24 black converts to Catholicism in Durham, North Carolina. He found that conversion was related to four preferences within his sample: (1) desire for intellectual stimulation, (2) desire for a faith with emphasis upon individual moral commitment, (3) for individual forms of piety and worship, and (4) for the formal ritual dimension of the mass, in contrast to the emotional informality of black churches.[3] In the context of the changes taking place in Chicago's black community during the period in question, then, the association of Catholicism with "refinement" may have been a factor inducing members of "traditional" black denominations, e.g., Baptists, to leave their churches and find more dignified services. If so, this motivation would certainly have increased as culturally "different" southern black began to appear in Chicago and at its black churches before and during the Great Migration.

The questions of why the blacks meeting in the basement of St. Mary's requested permission to form their own parish taps into a number of different points brought out in the study. We have seen the blacks were effectively barred from becoming full-fledged members of St. Mary's (or any "white" Catholic parish, for that matter), owing to the decision of the Second and Third Plenary Councils to leave this matter

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[3] Daniel Collins, "Black Conversion to Catholicism: Its Implications for the Negro Church," Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 10 (1971), 208-218.

in the hands of individual bishops. Without unequivocal support of the national episcopacy, individual bishops, even if they were disposed to do so, came under too much pressure from their white parishioners to insist upon racially integrated congregations. As we saw in our discussion of the blacks who comprised the community at St. Mary's, and of the racial prejudice common to white ethnic groups in Chicago, the indications are that blacks sought a separate parish because of hostility from the largely Irish members of St. Mary's. Plainly, having faced unconscionable treatment at the hands of white Catholics in the 1880s, Chicago's black Catholics had ample cause to seek the creation of a separate parish, even though this entailed acceptance of racial segregation.

If there is a single factor that stands out as a motive behind both the creation and the growth of St. Monica's, however, it is education. Desire for educational opportunity was a crucial and largely underestimated factor in the Great Migration. When blacks arrived in Chicago, the promise of equal educational opportunity and integrated school evaporated and that the Chicago public school system looked upon blacks as being intellectually inferior and best placed in a vocational program aimed at menial employment. As long as the blacks of St. Mary's continued to inhabit a "limbo" status, they would be unable to access an alternative parochial school education, with its liberal

arts curriculum, and would be left with only the Chicago public school system and all of its barriers to black advancement. Ironically, it was only by accepting racial segregation in their religious affiliation the Chicago's blacks could secure for their children the essential educational wherewithal that would eventually enable them to participate in white-dominated society on an equal basis. The available evidence from the period suggests that many blacks converted to Catholicism, re-entered the Catholic Church, or were drawn to join St. Monica's with its accommodationist stance based on the desire to secure a "good" liberal arts education for their children.

Studies of the relationship between black Catholicism and parochial education lend support to this interpretation. In research reported by Drake and Cayton in Black Metropolis and based on surveys conducted in the early-1930s, we read that,

> Interviews with Negro Catholics and with non Catholics whose children go to parochial schools, seem to indicate that one of the primary attractions of the Catholic Church is its educational institutions. With public schools running on double shifts through those years, many parents felt that the parochial school offered a more thorough education in a quieter atmosphere with adequate discipline and personal attention for all students.[4]

Much later Daniel Lehman interviewed an elderly black Catholic woman, Teacora Gatton, who volunteered that she had

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[4] Drake and Cayton, 415.

decided to convert from Protestantism to Catholicism in the 1940s chiefly because she felt that her children would receive a superior education at a parochial school than within Chicago's public school system.[5]

More recently, in an article appearing in the 1 March 1992 number of The (Chicago) St. Ailbe Church Bulletin, more evidence correlating black affiliation with Catholicism, on the one hand, and educational achievement of black Catholics, on the other, was reported.[6] After noting that blacks constitute nearly 10 percent of total Catholic elementary and secondary school enrollment, the Bulletin's editors cited the results of a survey conducted by two City University of New York professors in 1990. Based on responses from over one hundred thousand Americans, this study concluded that black Catholics have a significantly higher level of educational attainment than the norm for all Americans, e.g., that among respondents between the ages of 40 and 59, 26 percent of black Catholics reported having completed a college education, compared to 25 percent of white Catholics, 24 percent of all whites, and 15 percent of all blacks in this age group.[7] The article concluded with

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[5] Daniel J. Lehman, "White Folks Didn't Want You," Chicago Sun-Times, 17 September 1989.

[6] "News About Black Catholics: Success of Black Catholics," (Chicago) St. Ailbe Church Bulletin, 1 March 1992.

[7] Ibid.

the statement that,

> One reason why Catholic schools often enable their students to overcome class and racial handicaps is that they expect and reward academic diligence and personal development. Many people believe that the traditional values they teach help in the struggle against many social ills affecting inner-city youth.[8]

Consequently, the connection between black Catholicism and demonstrated educational excellence has endured to this day, and this furnishes us with strong, if indirect, evidence that the desire of blacks to further the education of their children was a primary cause behind the growth of St. Monica's parish. It was, then, the desire of black Catholics in Chicago to establish ladders of educational opportunity for their children that led them to not only accept de facto racial segregation from their white co-religionists but, far more affirmatively, to lend their whole-hearted support to the development of St. Monica's parish and the parochial schools associated with it.

One last questions that may be broached here is whether a system of racially segregated education such as that which emerged in Chicago's parochial school during the years enveloping the Great Migration might be superior to complete racial integration, at least insofar as individual academic outcomes are concerned. While no definitive response can be made to this hypothetical inquiry, the black students at St. Monica's and St. Elizabeth's schools plainly benefitted from

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[8] Ibid.

the willingness of their parents to accommodate themselves to the exigencies of the time. Any effort to fully integrate them into the existing parochial school system was bound to generate racial conflict, and thereby impair the educational process, a fact that Archbishop Mundelein clearly recognized. As it turns out, the students who graduated from the racially-segregated classes of St. Monica's and St. Elizabeth's exhibited a high level of academic achievement, and many distinguished themselves in later life. Thus, given the environing circumstances, although St. Monica's was formally segregated, its very separation from the rest of Chicago's parochial school system facilitated its extension of a high quality education to black children and, in turn, drew large numbers of Chicago's black community into the Catholic fold.

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