

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: LEARNED BEHAVIOR: RACE, RELIGION,  
ETHNICITY AND THE EVOLUTION OF  
EDUCATION IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND, 1825 - 1872

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This thesis examines the complex relationship between religion and racial/ethnic identity through the perspective of the evolving systems of public and private education in 19<sup>th</sup> century Baltimore. In doing so, this thesis argues that public education was constructed as a means of shaping a unified “American” identity, and that this purpose was understood by all relevant stakeholders. These stakeholders, regardless of their religious, racial or ethnic affiliation all fought to shape the public schools into something that validated their affiliations and included them in the definition of “American citizenship.”

LEARNED BEHAVIOR: RACE, RELIGION, ETHNICITY AND THE  
EVOLUTION OF EDUCATION IN 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BALTIMORE, MARYLAND,  
1825 - 1872

By

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## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Part I: Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Education in Colonial America.....	16
Education in Colonial Maryland.....	19
Conclusion.....	21
<b>Part II: The Early Days of Education in Baltimore: 1825 – 1850.....</b>	<b>22</b>
Baltimore, 1825 – 1850.....	23
Goals of Common and Free Schools in Baltimore.....	28
Growth of Baltimore Schools, 1829 – 1850.....	33
Immigration in Baltimore, 1825 – 1850.....	38
Parochial Schools of Baltimore, 1825 – 1850.....	49
Colored Schools of Baltimore, 1825 – 1850.....	53
Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1828 – 1850.....	59
Conclusion.....	61
<b>Part III: Religion and the Baltimore Schools: 1850 – 1860.....</b>	<b>63</b>
Immigration and the School Wars, 1840 – 1860.....	64
Baltimore Plenary Council, 1852.....	72
The Kearny Bill and the Baltimore Schools.....	74
The Know-Nothings in Baltimore, 1850 – 1860.....	80
Loyola College, 1852 -1860.....	83
Religion and the Colored Schools of Baltimore, 185- 1860.....	85
Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1850 – 1860.....	89
Conclusion.....	90
<b>Part IV: Race and the Baltimore Schools, 1860 – 1872.....</b>	<b>92</b>
Public Education in Baltimore, 1860 – 1864.....	93
Maryland Constitution, 1864.....	96
Benevolent Associations, 1864 – 1868.....	100
The McJilton Administration, 1866 – 1868.....	104
Constitution of 1867.....	109
The Colored Schools of Baltimore, 1868 – 1872.....	111
Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1860 – 1872.....	115
Religion and the Schools, 1860 – 1872.....	116
Loyola College, 1860 – 1871.....	120
School Administration, 1860 – 1872.....	121
Conclusion.....	122
<b>Part V: Epilogue.....</b>	<b>126</b>
Education in the 1870s.....	126
<b>Part VI: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Woks Cited.....</b>	<b>141</b>

## Part I: Introduction

*Preach, my dear sir, a crusade against ignorance; establish & improve the law for educating the common people. [...] the tax which will be paid for this purpose is not more than the thousandth part of what will be paid to kings, priests and nobles who will rise up among us if we leave the people in ignorance.*

*Thomas Jefferson to George Wythe. August 13, 1786<sup>1</sup>*

In 1824, the Maryland legislature faced a dilemma. The population of the state had grown, especially in the nascent urban areas of Baltimore and Annapolis. In many ways this indicated economic growth, especially around Baltimore Harbor. In other ways, it was deeply troubling, as the economic lives of new citizens followed a different pattern – lifelong wage laborers. Wage laborers, who were dependent on employment for their subsistence, could not afford to send their children to one of the private academies that educated the children Maryland’s landowning class, nor could they afford to hire private tutors. This created a class of poor, uneducated children, who would grow up to be poor, uneducated laborers. The new underprivileged class would only serve to increase the amount of crime in the new cities, and statewide.

But crime was only one concern of the legislature. Of equal importance was the notion that many of these uneducated boys would someday grow up to be men who could be eligible to vote. This was the danger of a republic – that too much power could be put in the hands of those ill-suited to properly manage it. Clearly something had to be done. After all, if no one sought to fill the heads of these children with something moral and useful for society, the devil would.<sup>2</sup>

The answer turned out to be remarkably simple. “Education,” the larger city of New York noted in 1823, could “sap the foundation of pauperism and of course [prevent] the commission of crime in this city.” By establishing state funded free schools and

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<sup>1</sup> Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 10:244. Retrieved from [www.monticello.org](http://www.monticello.org) (Accessed 2/22/2012)

<sup>2</sup> “Bishop Taylor on Education,” in *The Baltimore Mercantile Advertiser*, Vol. XXI No.136, 6/20/1823, 1.

orphanages, New York would educate these poor children in the image of the state, teach them a Protestant Christian moral code which included a strong work ethic as its basis, and by improving the morality of the class as a whole, cut the crime rate and expand productivity. Following their example, the Maryland legislators sought to do the same. Their efforts would be sporadic, and at times contradictory, but by legislating for the establishment of public schools, they would take the first steps towards the creation of an institution that would be central to questions of local and state identity for the next century.<sup>3</sup>

In his book, *American Indians, the Irish and Governmental Schooling*, Michael Coleman observes that colonial powers, like the British, recognized the potential of education as “a cultural and religious weapon.” Formal education was a means of imposing a homogeneous system of religious beliefs and moral understanding. Through state-sponsored education, authorities sought to shape the general population into the form they wished by creating a common individual and group identity. In many ways, such governments perceived education as the ultimate tool of state creation, and the state and local governments of the newly formed United States were no exception.<sup>4</sup>

Education and educational policy in the early republican United States, therefore, was a matter of critical importance. Founding members of the American state and national governments understood that only education could create a homogeneous “American” citizenry in the new nation. However, these thinkers debated on the subject of what, exactly, comprised an “American” citizen, and who qualified for that citizenship.

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<sup>3</sup> “sap the foundation...” “Baltimore” in *The Baltimore Mercantile Advertiser*, Vol. XXII No. 36; 8/14/1823, 2.

<sup>4</sup> “cultural and religious weapon..” Michael C. Coleman, *American Indians, the Irish and Government Schooling: A Comparative Study*, (London, University of Nebraska Press, 2007) 31.

Public education developed in the United States as part of a deliberate attempt by those with political and economic power to create a new “American” identity.<sup>5</sup> The political and economic elite advocated for the establishment of schools to propagate the Protestant values that they considered to be at the core of the new American Republic. Others disagreed, particularly members of religious, racial and cultural groups who found their values and beliefs threatened by an American identity that conflated citizenship with whiteness and Protestantism.

Some members of these marginalized racial and immigrant groups took advantage of the opportunities for economic advancement presented by gaining literacy and skills, such as bookkeeping, while simultaneously attempting to develop and maintain their own community identities. Parochial schools grew out of these communities. When they were unable to shape or access the public schools, minority groups created their own alternative systems of education, and fought to retain those systems when they were threatened. Baltimore, Maryland represents a unique case study on the ways in which the growing educational system helped shape national, racial, and ethnic identity in the United States. Baltimore’s distinctive demographic make-up offers a glimpse into the ways in which various groups sought to gain inclusion into the American citizenry and the rights and privileges that entailed. By arguing for a shared and diverse American

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<sup>5</sup> Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic; Common Schools and American Society, 1790 – 1860* (New York, Hill and Wang, 1983) x. The study of education as a means of shaping a citizenry has been examined frequently, from many different perspectives. Kaestle’s work is a foundational text on the subject of American education. Ira Katznelson and Margaret Weir wrote an excellent study on American education with a concentration on the modern era in *Schooling For All; Race Class and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985). Kim Carey Warren examines the relationship between race, education and citizenship in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Kansas in *The Quest for Citizenship; African American and Native American Education in Kansas, 1880 – 1935* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).



identity, immigrants of dubious racial standing asserted their whiteness and claim to citizenship.

The ways in which stakeholders attempted to shape and develop public schooling, and the choices they made in the creation of parochial schools sheds new light on early understandings of racial identities. The meaning of “American” citizenship remained ill-defined in the early days of the United States, as did the role of the local, state, and national governments in education. The ongoing debates about schools, curricula and textbooks demonstrate ways in which minority groups used dialogue over education to assert their “Americanism” without abandoning fundamental religious or cultural beliefs. For immigrants, the dialogue over education was central to their attempt to assert their “Americanism” while simultaneously promoting the legitimacy of their religious or cultural expression. Catholics and other religious minorities sought to legitimize their religious beliefs and practices through the establishment of their own schools and attempts to gain access to the public school funds for their support. Religion was often at the core of these efforts, and central to ideas of national and racial identities. In the case of the free black community, education allowed individuals to assert not only a claim to citizenship but also their basic human rights.<sup>6</sup>

This work will examine the evolution of institutionalized education in Baltimore, Maryland, in the formative period between 1825 and 1872. The period is bounded by definitive educational legislation – the 1825 law mandating the foundation and funding of schools statewide, and the 1872 act expanding that mandate to include all children, regardless of their racial and religious background. Baltimore was home to large

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<sup>6</sup> Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 17. ; Carl L. Blankstone II and Stephen J. Caldas, *Public Education; America's Civil Religion* (New York: Teacher's College Press, 2009), 27; Warren, *The Quest for Citizenship*, 4

immigrant German and Irish populations, the largest free black community in the United States, and an enslaved population, and these demographics provide a unique insight into the interplay between education, national ties, religion, and race. The nature of and access to state funded education has reflected the evolution of citizenship in the United States. By studying the ways in which various groups gained – or failed to gain – access to state funds for education throughout the period, this paper will demonstrate that education played a central role in shaping notions of religious, national, ethnic and racial identity in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

### **Important Terms and Concepts**

Any study that touches on the evolution of identity in the United States must include an explanation of the term “ethnic” and the concept of “ethnicity.” Ethnicity is a late-twentieth century concept, which differentiates between peoples based on cultural rather than supposed biological traits. The term itself has roots in the idea of the religious “other” that denotes anyone of a non-Christian faith. The word “ethnic” originally denoted “heathen” (i.e., non-Christian), and did not expand to encompass the broader meaning of a sect or group until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While some studies use the idea of “ethnicity” to describe to nineteenth century populations, it must be understood that the term is applied retroactively. Cultural traits, including language and religion, that are now attributed to ethnicity in the modern era were considered to be racial attributes for much of the nineteenth century. Thus, for the purposes of this study, the term “ethnicity,” will be used sparingly. Instead, the historically precise term “dual-nationality” or “dual-

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<sup>7</sup> Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 31; *Ibid.*, 32 - 34; Blankston and Caldas, *Public Education*, 33

nationalism” is used to connote the conglomeration of religion and nationalism retained by a population even as that group came to identify and be identified as “Americans.”<sup>8</sup>

“Race,” as a term commonly used and understood during the first half of the nineteenth century, was at the time inextricably linked with ideas of labor and citizenship. As the economic landscape changed to include a growing population of “white” wage laborers whiteness came to be defined in terms of its opposite – slavery, or unpaid laborers, who were invariably “black.” As a result of this binary understanding, race was a poorly defined and understood concept. The mutability of race allowed many European immigrant groups to shift their identity. While they were initially understood by the descendents of the original colonists to be distinct and inferior “races,” immigrants eventually came to identify, and be identified as “white,” in a black and white United States. Achieving “whiteness” and the benefits of a white identity was a deliberate effort of many immigrant populations. That these communities “became white” while retaining their religious and nationalist beliefs led to the development of identities that are termed “ethnic” in modern scholarship. Use of the term “dual-nationalism” in place of

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<sup>8</sup> The subject of ethnicity, both as a term and as a concept is complex and has been examined from many angles. David Roediger’s *Wages of Whiteness* and Marc Jacobson’s *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* examine the evolution of ethnicity in 19<sup>th</sup> century immigrant groups. Jacobson’s *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* also investigates the meaning of ethnicity as a historical and evolving concept. For a broad study of ethnicity in America, Ronald Takaki’s *A Different Mirror* continues to provide a synthesis of the field. *The Handbook of International Migration* provides a variety of different perspectives on the relationship between immigration and ethnicity.; Matthew Frye Jacobson. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 6.; David R. Roediger. *Working Toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White: the Strange Journey from Ellis Island to the Suburbs*. (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 21.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Frye Jacobson. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 6.; The influence of religious affiliation on the development of “ethnicity” as a concept and means of self definition is discussed in Martin E. Marty “The Skeleton of Religion in America,” in *Church History*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (March 1972), 5 – 21. Marty describes religion as “the skeleton of ethnicity.” For much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was religious affiliation as much as national origin or race (in terms of black or white) that determined one’s status, one’s allegiances and how others perceived one.

“ethnicity” acknowledges these identities in a way more in keeping with how events and practices were understood during the period. Though “nationalism” in its strictest sense, did not exist as a defined concept for most of the period under discussion, the term will be used here to describe allegiance to language, religion, and cultural traditions associated with a specific country or geographic area.<sup>9</sup>

The question of citizenship and “American identity” in the United States grew more complex as changes in the American economic system began to affect the demographic patterns between 1815 and 1860, especially in the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions. Rates of European immigration to growing urban areas began to increase in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued to climb as famine and war in Europe led hundreds of thousands of immigrants to seek shelter in the United States during the 1840s and 1850s. These immigrants - their number, their nationalities, and their religion - complicated the racial landscape of the United States, where “race” could describe national origin, religious affiliation, physical appearance, or any combination of these attributes. Economic changes and the growth of the market economy had complicated the common understanding of freedom and independence. The increase in immigration and the emergence of diverse urban communities contributed to the emergence of an increasingly complex picture of race and citizenship in the United States.<sup>10</sup>

This picture was further complicated by the changing structure of the American economy in the early nineteenth century resulted at least in part from the growth and spread of the capitalist market, fueled by the “transportation revolution” – the invention and expansion of steam power and railroads in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The expansion of

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<sup>9</sup> David R. Roediger *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. (London: Verso, 1991), 12; *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>10</sup> Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, 134; *Ibid.*, 23

the market led to changes in social structure that had deep and lasting effects on American society. The influx of immigrants accelerated these changes. Among these changes were shifts away from traditional interpretations of “independence.” The early Republican understanding of “independence” implied “the ability of individuals to think and act free of the restraints of others.” To early 19<sup>th</sup> century thinkers, independence connoted complete financial independence, ownership of property, and self-sufficiency. In the early American Republic, political and economic independence were prized and idealized. However, a shift in the traditional artisanal path to mastery led to a significant portion of the population’s long-term dependence on wage labor. Fewer people were able to progress past the apprentice stage and even fewer became masters of large workshops or factories. This shift did not occur smoothly or easily. Confusion over the meaning of race, slavery, and independence contributed to racial unrest as “white” laborers sought to redefine independence in racial, rather than economic terms.<sup>11</sup>

As the meaning of “independence” changed throughout the nineteenth century, so did the definitions of liberty and slavery. Where “freedom” in the eighteenth century implied “either political freedom or economic independence,” freedom in the nineteenth century developed explicit racial connotations. The evolution of a “free labor” ideology, which implied “ownership of one’s labor and the right to dispose of it as one saw fit,” forced a reexamination of the opposite state. The opposite state was slavery, which was

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1846*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 43 In his study, Daniel Walker Howe posits that the period between 1815 and 1848 was as much a “communication revolution” as a “transportation revolution.” Regardless of whether innovation in transportation or communication was the most pivotal, the capitalist market expanded and urban areas, such as Baltimore, grew exponentially during the period. Transportation innovations were of crucial importance to the growth of Baltimore, as the construction of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad was key to the expansion of the city and the growth of the immigrant population. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought; the Transformation of America, 1815 – 1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).; Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 43.; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 92.; Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 20.

increasingly an institution defined by race. This definition allowed “freedom” to be understood to be negatively defined: men were free because they were not slaves. By the mid-nineteenth century, it was generally understood that only black men and women could be slaves. In other words, men were free because they were not black. The idea of “whiteness” evolved out of a need to define oneself as not black, and therefore free and independent.<sup>12</sup>

The ideology of free labor placed the responsibility for economic success or failure on the individual. Poverty was blamed on “poor personal habits” of an individual or group. This ideology allowed Americans to develop and maintain animosity for immigrant groups who arrived in America impoverished, and fed the desire to remake those new arrivals in the image of “Protestant America.”<sup>13</sup>

Standing on the border between “slave” and “free,” “black” and “white” were immigrants, who struggled to become identified as white while retaining allegiances – especially religious allegiances – commonly associated with barbarism by Americans. Many Irish and Germanic immigrants practiced a kind of “dual nationalism” in the United States, by defining themselves as Americans while retaining some loyalties to their place of origin. Immigrant populations participated both in the financial and emotional support of political (and military) actions in their countries of origin. This was especially true of Irish immigrants, many of whom actively supported the various armed uprisings against the English throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These groups went to great effort to preserve their cultural heritage by teaching their children the language, religion

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<sup>12</sup> Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 92; Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 33.; Ibid.,; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), xxii.; Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 23, Sellers, *Market Revolution*, 157.

and traditions of their native countries. Simultaneously, immigrant populations consciously became politically and culturally “American” through participation in American political and military institutions, and through integration with American social clubs. Immigrant populations were active participants in public celebrations to both their “Americanness” and of their nationalism. Schools became central to the development of these complex identities, wherein political, religious and cultural understandings could be transmitted to the next generation.<sup>14</sup>

Minority groups formed associations to support each other as they struggled to gain footholds in an often-hostile environment. These clubs further perpetuated the growth of the dual-national and community identities through mutual support. These organizations perpetuated loyalties to national identities and to traditions, language, and religion of the community. Ethnic, racial and religious organizations ran schools that also fueled the growth of dual nationalism. These identities often contained a number of elements: religious affiliation, nationalist sentiments for the United States, support for the groups’ nation of origin, and community affiliation. Associations of individuals of a common national or religious background for mutual aid when combined with the hostility of the larger populations promoted the growth of dual national identities.<sup>15</sup>

African associations served a similar crucial role in the evolution and growth of the free black community in antebellum Baltimore. These organizations, which were often maintained through a religious affiliation, were central to the free black community.

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<sup>14</sup> For the purposes of this discussion “German,” or “Germanic” will be used to describe immigrants whose spoke German as their native language, hailed from one of the territories which would later form Germany or Austria (Prussia, Bavaria, Austrian Empire, etc.) and self-identified as “German” within the United States. “Germany” will be used to describe the various states and kingdoms from whence they came, though Germany, as a modern nation-state, was not founded until 1871 at the end of the Franco-Prussian war.; Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Katznelson and Wier, *Class, Race and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal*, 54.

Church attendance was a way for the free black community to demonstrate their respectability to the population at large, and to each other. Black churches ran schools and provided a sense of community pride. Although the free black community was hardly homogeneous, internal divisions did not prove an obstacle to mutual support during the early republic, antebellum, Civil War and post-war eras. Community and religious organizations gave free blacks a voice and a means to interact with an often hostile white population.<sup>16</sup>

In order to properly interpret how immigrants and Africans understood themselves and how they were viewed by their mainstream contemporaries, one must also understand the contemporary definition of "secularism" and "non-sectarianism." In a modern context, "secularism" and "non-sectarianism" are both used to refer to a complete lack of religious influence. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, usage of the term generally implied a lack of advocacy for a particular denomination. 19<sup>th</sup> century advocates of education valued "non-sectarian" schooling. "Non-sectarian," to the managers of state-sponsored schools meant that a Protestant Bible could be read without comment or interpretation in publicly funded schools. "Non-sectarianism" was, for all practical purposes, "non-denominational Protestantism." These differences in meaning must be kept in mind when reading sources from the period. This is especially true as the links between religion and ethnicity were particularly potent in the public imagination during the period. As Nativist groups emerged, "non-sectarianism" became linked to American

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<sup>16</sup> Rockman, *Scraping By*, 251 - 252; Noah Davis, *Narrative of the Live of the Rev. Noah Davis, Colored Man, at the Age of 54* (Baltimore: John F. Weishample, Jr. 1859), 34. (Electronic edition, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/davisn/davis.html> accessed 3/12/2011)



identity, while “sectarianism” – most commonly associated with Catholicism – was seen as a core value of foreigners.<sup>17</sup>

Education in the United States evolved from the bottom up, rather than the top down. Schooling started as a concern of towns and districts, and gradually became mandated by individual states. Accordingly, systems of schooling and terms employed in the discussion of educational policy varied widely from location to location. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century term “Common school” refers to “an elementary school intended to serve all the children in the area,” generally supported in part by public funds and in part by tuition. By the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, “public school,” had replaced “common school,” in normal discourse. A “public school” was a school that received public funds, where tuition was either free or minimal, and local and state governments informed the curriculum. The term “public school” refers to any school directly and explicitly receiving public funds as the majority of their financial support.<sup>18</sup>

A “parochial school” is a school that relied solely on the financial support of a church and generally incorporated religious instruction or religious partisanship into the curriculum. For much of the period under discussion, this term was not in use, and religious instruction was assumed to be part of the curricula of all schools. For the purposes of this paper “parochial school” will be used in discussion of the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Similar to parochial schools, “free schools,” relied mostly on charitable contributions and minimal state support, and were frequently affiliated with a religious organization. Students attending free or charity schools were not usually expected to pay

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<sup>17</sup> Benjamin, Justice. *The War That Wasn't: Religious Conflict and Compromise in the Common Schools of New York State, 1865-1900*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 37.; Diane Ravitch, *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 9.

<sup>18</sup> Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, xi.

any form of tuition, though some families did make contributions to the schools when they had the means. There was a social stigma attached to attendance in charity and fee schools for much of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup>

The gradual development of a system of public education in the United States is tied to the evolution of what would in the 20<sup>th</sup> century become known as various dual-nationalities or ethnic identities. Schools played a key part in the development of both understandings of what it meant to be “American” and of ways in which the children of immigrants could retain aspects of their parent’s national identities. Those in control of public schools recognized education as a means of creating good citizens. In *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780 – 1860*, Carl Kaestle describes education was the “most robust ‘social policy’ of the early Republic,” constantly changing, and actively used to effect change in society. Schooling became one of the most recognized and most contested means of creating and defining individual and group identity.<sup>20</sup>

Baltimoreans from a variety of groups conceived the role of schools and state authorities in education between 1825 and 1872. The idea of mandatory education and what that education should entail was still evolving. Schooling was optional, generally available only to a limited age group, and students only gradually came to be organized according to grade as educational philosophies evolved. Thus, terms like “common school,” “high school” and even “college” refer to institutions very different to those we understand today, and which served a wide variety of age groups. Educational institutions varied widely, not only across a state, but even across a city. Students were held to a wide

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<sup>19</sup> Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, xii.

<sup>20</sup> “most robust...” Katzen and Wier, *Schooling for All*, xi.

variety of standards, both in terms of academics, in financial commitment, and in attendance. Students who enrolled in schools often attended sporadically and inconsistently, and such behavior was expected and accommodated.<sup>21</sup>

The emergence of education as an American institution came gradually, out of local and state communities. Institutionalized education took root with dual purposes in mind. First, state, local and even federal leaders in the early republic saw education as a way to mold and shape the ideal citizenry for their new republic. Second, immigrants, freed slaves, and other minority groups saw education as a means of advancement for themselves and their communities. Moreover, education was a way in which these communities could strengthen their group national and religious identities through religious and linguistic instruction. As communities converged and diverged around the concept of public education, public schools gradually emerged as an American institution.<sup>22</sup>

### **Education in Colonial America**

The link between general education and religious instruction long predates the 19<sup>th</sup> century school conflicts in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. Governing authorities in the colonial period in North America recognized education was recognized as an important form of community development and control.<sup>23</sup> Protestant denominations prioritized literacy and emphasized Bible reading as fundamental both to the practice of their religion and a way to ensure salvation. Local communities, rather than state governments controlled education in colonial America. It was the responsibility of communities to provide for the education of their children. The religious settlements of

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<sup>21</sup> Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, xi - xii

<sup>22</sup> Blankston and Cladas, *Public Education*, 32; Keastle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 37; *Ibid.*, 75; *Ibid.*, 168

<sup>23</sup> Katznelson and Weir, *Schooling for All*, 11.

New England were more likely to establish common schools than the more secular – and more geographically diffuse – communities in the South.<sup>24</sup>

The emphasis on basic learning – the classic reading, writing and arithmetic – grew and developed through the colonial and revolutionary eras as education became increasingly tied to concepts of citizenship and civic participation. As republicanism became the legitimate governing philosophy of the states and the new nation, education policy grew in political prominence. It was important that the voting population – the children who would grow up to be landowning white men – were sufficiently well educated to make wise political choices.<sup>25</sup>

Education became a form of civic participation in the early United States, 1787 – 1825, and after. Questions about the role of the state and community in education grew more visible throughout the early republican and antebellum periods as the new country's population expanded and changed. Thanks to a flood of immigrants from Western Europe, the demographics of the nation fluctuated rapidly during this time. The changing American economy turned to market capitalism and fueled the growth of urban communities, which in turn contributed to the expansion of a class of urban poor. Leaders in America turned to state-sponsored education as an early form of social control. The role of the federal government in local education was debated, but increasingly state provided funds to localities for the establishment of public schools, and local governments ran those schools with varying degrees of oversight. Through education they would train the lower classes and immigrant groups to be good American citizens, and eliminate urban poverty by teaching them Protestant values. The American

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<sup>24</sup> Kaestle *Pillars of the Republic*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*,6

democratic experiment required an educated citizenry capable of choosing their own leaders.<sup>26</sup>

In the years after the Revolution, education became increasingly important. The curriculum of state-sponsored schools would “unify language and culture” in the fledgling nation.<sup>27</sup> As the question of what exactly, comprised the “American identity” was still very much in flux, this linkage of language and culture was especially important. English was the most common language in the colonies, but it was far from the only one in general use – German, for example, was commonly spoken in parts of New York, Pennsylvania and Baltimore. By the early nineteenth century, the development of public education (and the standard use of English for instruction) had become a priority for many citizens who felt that it would improve social stability.<sup>28</sup>

Early American advocates for education also saw the common school system as a tool for assimilating immigrant and minority populations that were not perceived as being naturally inclined towards or capable of self-government. Before the flood of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, the primary targets for these assimilation tactics were American Indians. American politicians and religious leaders believed that through proper education, American Indians could be “raised” to civilization and Christianity. Education was a cornerstone of the Civilization Fund Act of 1819, formalizing at a federal level the historic widespread belief that education could reshape the American Indian into something that the Anglo-Saxon United States could accept and incorporate. As demographics in the United States shifted and changed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, many

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<sup>26</sup> Kaestle *Pillars of the Republic*, 35; *Ibid.*, 6

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 35; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 32.

hoped to apply a similar model to the children of immigrants. Working off a model advanced by Prussia and informed by their own Indian policies, American leaders consciously understood systematic education as a means of “indoctrinating the masses into a whole and unblemished body politic.” Though it would be years before public education for Americans in general would be subject to the same federal oversight as the education imposed on American Indians, this understanding of education took firm hold in the minds of the politicians of the period.<sup>29</sup>

### **Education in Colonial Maryland**

Legislative efforts to establish a system of state-sponsored education in Maryland date to an act in 1671, less than forty years after the colony was founded. In its 1723/1724 session, the Maryland legislature passed “[an] act for the encouragement of Learning and erecting Schools in the several Counties within this Province.” The assembly hoped that this provision would provide “for the liberal and pious Education of the Youth in this Province.” Legislators required that “one School be erected in some convenient Place in each County,” but ceded control of those schools to the localities, which would also be responsible for funding them. The funds for these common schools would come from “money arising from the additional Duty on Irish Servants being Papists and Negros for Uses & Intent for which the same was raised.” Thus, those responsible for importing undesirable individuals, who may come to be a burden on Maryland society, would provide the funds to educate the children of the state. These “papists” would be defined in later accounts of this legislation to specify that the tax be on “Irish Catholic servants.” The income raised from this tax, and a tax on tobacco,

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<sup>29</sup> Coleman, *American Indians, the Irish, and Government Schooling*, 39.; “raised” *Ibid.*, 41.; “indoctrinating the masses...” *Ibid.*, 39.

would fund both “county and parish schools.” Maryland’s religious antecedents differed significantly from its fellow colonies, as the colony had been founded as a haven for persecuted English Catholics. However, political changes in England and in the colonies had eroded the protections Catholics – especially impoverished Catholics – had previously enjoyed in colonial Maryland.<sup>30</sup>

The importance of religion to the early common schools is evident in this legislation. The Maryland Assembly hoped that the legislation establishing schools passed would provide “for encouraging good School-Masters, that shall be members of the Church of England, and of pious and exemplary Lives and Conversations, and capable of Teaching well the Grammar, good Writing, and the Mathematics.” Religious education is not explicitly mentioned in the legislation. However, that membership in a specified religious denomination was required of teachers strongly implies a religious element in early common schools.<sup>31</sup>

The religious requirement for schoolmasters in 1723 indicates not only a dramatic change in politics both in England and the colonies, but the way in which education could be used to reshape society. This religious qualification combined with the means of funding – a tax on Irish and African laborers – paints a picture of an educational system fundamentally grounded in perceived differences between religious and national identities.

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<sup>30</sup> John Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County, from the earliest period to the present day: including biographical sketches of their representative men*. Digitized ed. (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts, 1881), (Accessed 9/22/2011). 222. ; “an act for the encouragement...” Maryland General Assembly, *Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, October 1720-1723*, Online Edition, Vol. 34, 93 vols. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives). (Accessed 1/21/2012). 740. ; “liberal and pious...” Ibid. ; “one school be erected...” The Upper House, *Proceedings and Acts of the Maryland General Assembly October 1720 - 1723*, Online Edition, Vol. 34, 93 vols. (Annapolis, MD: Maryland State Archives). (Accessed 1/19/2012). 388.; “money arising...” Ibid.; “Irish Catholic...” Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County*, 222.; “county and parish...” Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Maryland General Assembly, *Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, October 1720-1723*, 744.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis will address the complex relationship between race, religion, education and the formation of community identity between 1825 and 1872. These dates are important milestones in the evolution of public education in Maryland. The 1824/1825 legislative session mandated the establishment of a school fund and public schools statewide (with special provision for Baltimore). The state mandated segregated education be instituted in 1872. In the interim, three distinct phases of educational history in Baltimore took place. Each of these phases will be studied in the thesis. Part II will cover 1825 to 1850, the early period of school formation. This section will address the complex evolution of the Baltimore school system from the bottom up. Dual-nationalism, dual-nationalist schools, parochial schools, free black schools and the early public schools will be examined. Part III will address the period between 1850 and 1860 that was dominated by Baltimore's debates over religion in the schools, and the distribution of the school fund. Part IV will cover 1860 to 1872, the period during which the black community was incorporated into the public schools, concluding with the 1872 state mandate for separate but equal education in Maryland. This paper will conclude by the addressing the nationwide schools debates in the 1870s and the relationship between race, religion, education and American identity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In doing so, this paper will demonstrate that national and dual-national identities were deliberately shaped by groups at the top at the social ladder – and by those groups at the bottom.



## **Part II: The Early Days of Education in Baltimore: 1825 – 1850<sup>32</sup>**

*Education – The best guarantee for the perpetuity of our republican institutions.  
Republican Star and General Advertiser. July 12, 1825.<sup>33</sup>*

Education in the United States grew slowly out of a patchwork of laws, traditions and goals. In the early republican and antebellum periods, federal and state involvement in education was limited, but expanding. The period between 1824 and 1850 is significant for the development of education nationally, in the state of Maryland, and locally in Baltimore. This was a period of sporadic, loosely regulated growth in the nascent state sponsored school system, and in free and parochial schools. A growing immigrant population contributed to the establishment of a wide range of charity schools affiliated with specific religious and national groups. The revolution in Saint-Domingue/Haiti had sent a flood of displaced blacks, whites and mulattos to Baltimore, all of whom looked for educational opportunities for education to serve their community and preserve their identities. The rise in immigration, fuelled by famine and revolutions in Europe, also contributed to the growth of parochial schools as the numbers of Catholics, Lutherans and other religious minorities grew. Free blacks also flocked to Baltimore throughout the

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<sup>32</sup> “The study of education in colonial, early republican and antebellum America has been approached from multiple perspectives. Carl Kaestle’s *Pillars of the Republic: common schools and American society, 1780-1860* examines education from the perspectives of citizenship development. Ira Katzen and Margaret Wier’s *Schooling for All: Race Class and the Decline of the Democratic Ideal* also investigates the social history of education in the United States. The schools controversy in New York has been the subject of multiple studies. Studies of the extent of the conflict, such as Diane Ravitch’s *The Great School Wars: A History of the New York City Public Schools* investigate the role of religion in educational policy and the resulting conflicts over public schools. Though the antebellum conflict in New York City was substantive, recent scholarship, such as Benjamin Justice’s *The war that wasn’t: religious conflict and compromise in the common schools of New York State, 1865-1900* suggest that both this and later similar conflicts were much more urban than statewide phenomena. The antebellum riots in Philadelphia have largely been studied from a nativist, rather than an educational perspective. Antebellum education in Baltimore has not been widely studied. Two dissertations, B. Morrison’s *Selected African American educational efforts in Baltimore, Maryland during the nineteenth century* and Dimitri Kastareas’ *The public and private English-German schools of Baltimore: 1836 to 1904* examine the racial and ethnic schools in Baltimore. A brief study of the origins of public education in Baltimore can be found in Tina Sheller’s “The Origins of Public Education in Baltimore, 1825-1829.” A succinct general study of the effects of education on ethnicity and deculturation in America can be found in Joel Spring’s *Deculturation and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*.

<sup>33</sup> “Chester-Town, July 4<sup>th</sup>,” in *Republican Star and General Advertiser*, Vol. XXIV, No. 49, 7/12/1825, 3.

period. This population looked to education both as a means of economic and social advancement and as a way to make a bid for inclusion in the new “American” citizenry. The chaotic nature of this period of development in Baltimore education is reflective of the confusion over what it meant to be “American,” what “American” citizenship entailed, and who was eligible for that citizenship.<sup>34</sup>

### **Baltimore, 1825 - 1850**

From its beginnings, Baltimore was home to one of the most diverse populations in the United States. In 1790, Baltimore was home to twice as many slaves as free blacks, and the total non-white population of the Baltimore area was about a third of the white population. As Baltimore grew from a town to a city, the boundaries between slave and free became increasingly permeable. Metropolitan slaves were afforded a great deal of individual liberty, which many used to pursue education. While some slave owners frowned on this practice, others saw the advantages literate slaves could bring to their workforce. Baltimore became the third largest city in the nation around the same time it gained municipal independence in 1797, and officially became “Baltimore City,” with its own government and internal finances.<sup>35</sup>

The new Baltimore City grew to be one of the major urban centers in the United States, with unique demographics that both reflected the changing face of the new American nation, and set it apart. In 1820, the population of Baltimore was at least a quarter African-American. As of 1830, its population was listed as 80,990 people,

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<sup>34</sup> Though the federal government seized the opportunity to mandate the establishment of schools in the Northwest Territory under the Northwest Ordinance, it had little authority in that area over the existing states.

<sup>35</sup> Bettye Gardner, “Antebellum Black Education in Baltimore,” in *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 71 No. 3 (Fall 1976), 360.; Maryland State Planning Commission, *The Population of Maryland, Baltimore City and Counties; 1790 – 1949* (Maryland State Planning Commission: 1949), 23.; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 3,

including a free black population of 14,783 and 4,124 slaves. The population quintupled between 1820 and 1860. These population figures are indicative of Baltimore's status as "America's first boom town." The continued and sustained growth of the city and its diverse population is representative of the social and economic transformation of the Northern and Mid-Atlantic United States during the period. Early Republican Baltimore was a center of early American capitalism and free labor ideology. The large free black population in the port city added additional layers of complexity to the evolving economic circumstances. Baltimore, as Seth Rockman notes, occupied the unique position of the "southern most city in the North and the northern most city in the South." The educational trajectory of the city reflects its ties to both Northern and Southern ideologies.<sup>36</sup>

The idea of systematized education for the public came early to Baltimore. The Methodist Asbury Society created schools for whites and blacks in 1816. By 1817, the evening school had 300 students. Though the primary goals of this school were religious education and moral enlightenment, it also provided its students with a basic education throughout the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Asbury Society School was well known and respected, and was central to an early effort to establish publically funded schools in Baltimore City. In 1823, a motion to incorporate the Asbury Society and its schools passed the one house of the state legislature. The motion passed in its original form, despite a "motion that the word "white" be inserted before the word "children" so as to

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<sup>36</sup> Rockman, *Scraping By*, 33.; Charles Varle, *A Complete View of Baltimore with a Statistical Sketch of all the Commercial, Mercantile, Manufacturing, Literary, Scientific, and Religious Institutions and Establishments, in the Same, and in its Vicinity for Fifteen Miles Round, Derived from Personal*. (Baltimore: S. Young, 1833), 11.; "first boom town..." Christopher Philips, *Freedom's Port; The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790 – 1860* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 13. ; "Southernmost city..." Rockman, *Scraping By*, 13.

confine the school to the education of white children.” Despite this show of support on the state level, the Asbury society schools had faded out of existence by the antebellum period.<sup>37</sup>

The Asbury model, of churches running schools that not only educated their congregants on the Bible, also provided instruction for the poor both in basic skills and in matter of faith. Charity schools around the city followed its example. Around the same time, that the Asbury Schools gained the attention of the state legislature, the Sunday School teachers in Baltimore expressed a hope that Baltimore would establish a system of public schools. They acknowledged that such a system could not be established without considerable public support, and expressed the hope that such support was forthcoming. Sunday schools and religious associations were precursors to a movement towards education sponsored at the local and state level.<sup>38</sup>

The Early Republican period was one of economic upheaval, as the capitalist market expanded and changed. The growth of the market economy had important implications for Baltimore in terms of physical and economic growth. The increasing class-consciousness and changing attitudes towards the poor shaped the educational decisions made by city officials. Perceived as a way in which to tame or change the lower classes, city leaders considered public and charity education a nascent form of social control remembering “the morality or immorality, the intelligence of ignorance of man depends entirely on the manner he is educated.” Public schools, their early advocates

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<sup>37</sup> Gardner, “Antebellum Black Education in Baltimore,” 362. ; “Constitution and Bylaws of the Asbury Sunday School Association” (Baltimore : J.W. Woods, printer, 1833) booklet in the Records of Baltimore Station. Archives of the Baltimore-Washington Conference United Methodist Church. ; “motion that the word...” “Saturday, January 11,” in *Baltimore Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser* Vol. XXI No. 10, 1/14/1823, 2.

<sup>38</sup> Tina H. Sheller, “The Origins of Public Education in Baltimore, 1825-1829” in *History of Education Quarterly* Vol. 22, No.1 (Spring 1982), 25.; *Ibid.*, 25.

argued, would establish a forum in which students from all levels of society would learn the same values, attitudes and skills. This would not only tame the unruly lower classes, but facilitate the upward mobility of the middle classes.<sup>39</sup>

The unique demographic make up of Baltimore encompassed not only race, but also religious diversity. Maryland was established initially as a Catholic colony with a tradition of religious tolerance. Though this early mission of tolerance did fall victim to changing times, Maryland was unique among the colonies for its historic Catholic gentry class. This class retained influence through the American Revolution and into the early Republican period. The existing Catholic population served as a powerful attraction to new immigrants, especially Germanic Catholics, who were drawn to the city in the early nineteenth century. Baltimore trailed only New York in new immigrant population in the 1830s – at least 55,000 over the course of the decade.<sup>40</sup>

Rates of immigration rose steadily through the antebellum period, and climbed dramatically in the 1840s and 1850s. The Irish potato crop failed in 1845, and began an exodus that would last for nearly a decade, sending tens of thousands of immigrants to the United States. Uprisings around Europe in the late 1840s likewise spurred a growth in immigration to America. At least 408,828 immigrants arrived in Baltimore in 1851, 397,343 in 1852; 400,474 in 1853; and 460,474 in 1854. The majority of these immigrants were Irish and Germanic. Both populations were actively engaged in local and states politics, and their involvement only grew as their populations increased. In response, an increasingly virulent strain of Nativist politics gained a foothold in Maryland throughout the 1840s and 1850s. Along with these threats from Nativists,

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<sup>39</sup> “the morality or immorality...” Clericus, “Education,” in *Baltimore Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser*, Vol. XXVII No. 27, 2/2/1826, 2.; Sheller, “The Origins of Public Education in Baltimore,” 27.

<sup>40</sup> Rockman, *Scraping By*, 31.

immigrants faced the complication of their own disunity. Irish and Germanic immigrants arrived in Baltimore with the same local allegiances and religious differences they nurtured in their homelands. Both nations were divided between Protestants and Catholics, and those divisions deepened in an America that was deeply suspicious of the ritual and Latin of the Catholic Mass, and regarded all non-protestants with trepidation. The Irish in Ireland tended to identify more with their county or town than their country. Similarly, Germanic immigrants held allegiances to their kingdom or territory of origin rather than a monolithic “German” nationality. It took exposure to a hostile native population to form the dual-national identities (especially within the Catholic communities) that would come to define ethnicity in the United States.<sup>41</sup>

Despite their internal differences, immigrants settled in communities with their closest compatriots. Baltimore’s eighth ward was an Irish stronghold by the 1850s, and the Germanic immigrants claimed similar neighborhoods. Enclaves of free blacks were spread throughout the city, and slaves who “worked out” were common. This settlement pattern, where immigrants and free blacks formed communities with others from similar backgrounds was encouraged by immigrant preference for national parishes. The Catholic Church had not always supported this practice, but by the nineteenth century it was encouraged. French Catholics, German Catholics and Irish Catholics worshiped in different ways and in different spaces, and constructed their communities accordingly.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> “all denominations...” Herbert B. Adams, ed. *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science* Vol. XVII, “Economic History – Maryland and the South” (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1899), 190.

<sup>42</sup> Adams, ed. “Economic History – Maryland and the South,” 189. ; “Working out” describes the practice by which slaves worked in factories or homes other than that of their owner. This practice was increasingly common in 19<sup>th</sup> century Baltimore.

Nineteenth century Baltimore's population was religiously diverse, representing "all denominations in Christendom," and a small but growing Jewish community. By 1833, as the rate of immigration began to increase, Baltimore was home to five Catholic churches, five Episcopal churches, six Presbyterian churches, four Baptist congregations, eight Methodist churches, one synagogue and single congregations for a variety of other mostly Protestant denominations. A growing anti-Catholic movement continually undermined religious toleration, a founding principle of the colony, during the early republic and antebellum periods, despite the religious diversity of Baltimore.<sup>43</sup>

The diversity of Baltimore's growing population concerned those governing the city. They turned towards education as means of providing "moral principles" for the masses. Through schools, they would create good Americans, lift children out of poverty, and spread the enlightened ideals of Protestant Christianity to the ignorant immigrants. Education would be the means by which the city assimilated the unruly masses.<sup>44</sup>

### **Goals of Common and Free Schools in Baltimore**

Educational legislation for Maryland in general, and Baltimore in particular was crafted with specific goals in mind. These goals were comparable to those held by other state legislatures at the time. This emphasis on the use of education to develop "good citizens," was far more complex than merely instilling patriotic sentiment and knowledge of the new government. What it meant to be a good citizen in the new Republic was a complex and fluid thing, perceived differently by various factions in a tumultuous

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<sup>43</sup>Weishampel, *The Stranger in Baltimore: A New Hand Book, Containing Sketches of the Early History and Present Condition of Baltimore, with a Description of its Notable Localities and Other Information* (Baltimore: J.F. Weishampel, Jr.: 1866) 68.

<sup>44</sup>"Male Free School of Baltimore," in *Baltimore Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser*, Vol. XXXII, No. 139, 12/09/1828, 1.

society. For many, being a good citizen in the new Republic meant being a Christian – or, more specifically, a Protestant. Thus, there was a common understanding that schools would assume responsibility for guiding their students morally, and that the moral curriculum would center on the Bible. Specifically, moral instruction would revolve around the Protestant version of the Bible, as opposed to the Douay Version approved by the Catholic Church.<sup>45</sup>

Many of those advocating for education in Maryland were interested in creating a informed, moral citizenry. In 1825, an “act to provide for the public instruction of youth in primary schools throughout this state,” was under discussion in the Maryland legislature, state newspapers, and throughout Baltimore. Many expressed concern for the development of good citizens. A “Nashville Whig” argued in *The Maryland Gazette and Political Intelligencer* in favor of public education “including a knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, a general idea of geography and history, some notion of the nature of government in general and especially of our government and of the duty of a good citizen.” Some placed such value on the establishment of a school system that they advocated doing so on a national level, funded by the sale of public lands.<sup>46</sup> These advocates for the expansion of federal power were, however, in the minority.<sup>47</sup>

The establishment of public schools by legislative fiat did not pass without comment. Though the idea seems to have been met with a largely positive response in Baltimore, there were some who were concerned with the implications of public funding

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<sup>45</sup> Justice, *The War That Wasn't*, 23.

<sup>46</sup> “Education and Internal Improvements,” in *Maryland Gazette and Political Intelligencer* Vol. LXXIX No. 52, 12/30/1824, 2.

<sup>47</sup> “Act to provide...” Maryland General Assembly, *Session Laws 1825*, December 26 1825 – March 9, 1826. Online Edition, Vol. 402., 3.; “including a knowledge...” Nash. Whig., “Education.” In *Maryland Gazette and Political Intelligencer*, Vol. LXXIX, No. 50, 12/09/1824, 1.



for education. Many were concerned with the nature of that funding – a new tax levied to fund public schools. The opponents of public schools in Baltimore were outnumbered, but vocal. They were older, and more conservative than school advocates, “almost exclusively native born,” and who would be subject to the new schools tax. This so-called “schools tax” applied to all property-owners, regardless of their access to or satisfaction with the new schools.<sup>48</sup>

Others were concerned with the implications of government expansion of power and influence into so personal and influential a sphere as education. The creation of state mandated and funded schools represented a dramatic expansion of state and local power. Moreover, public schools would interfere in the rights of parents to educate their children as they chose, removing education from the home to the public sphere and public scrutiny.<sup>49</sup>

A small group, from the very beginning, was concerned with the implications of funding institutions that might have religious and moral implications. Some focused their argument on religious grounds, arguing that parents would not be willing to subject their children to instruction by members of different faiths, and thus raising funds for the establishment of schools was an exercise in futility. Baltimore, unlike the rural New England communities that established public schools, was not homogeneous, and this diversity would spell the end of such a system before it started, school opponents argued. Moreover, there was a risk that in hiring public school teachers, those teachers would take the opportunity to influence “the population to one way of thinking” through their new positions. This way of thinking may not be representative of the “morality” schools

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<sup>48</sup> Sheller, “The Origins of Public Education in Baltimore,” 35.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

were intended to propagate. Thus, concerned parents would be forced to send their children to private or parochial schools. State funded public schools would only serve as a source of conflict.<sup>50</sup>

School advocates pointed to public schools as a means of creating social equality and stability, and noted that they were not creating free schools through the establishment of public education, but rather “schools for freemen; such schools as the honest and independent mechanic and merchants of this city will send their children to.” School advocates had a flexible view of social structure, believed in the possibility of social mobility, and the ability of moral education to improve the position of the poor. They were insistent, however, that this moral education be non-sectarian, to minimize conflict and encourage students from a variety of background to attend common schools and create a common society. For this reason, legislation establishing public schools in the state of Maryland and the city of Baltimore specified that schools be “non-sectarian.” While this did not mean that the curricula of these schools were “secular,” it did limit access to the school fund for schools with explicit religious connections.<sup>51</sup>

Though the 1825 schools’ legislation applied to the entire state, localities, including the city of Baltimore, retained control over the school buildings, funds and curricula. The legislation to establish free schools in Maryland made a separate provision for “the establishment and regulations of public or private schools within the city of Baltimore,” which would “be vested in the mayor and the city council of Baltimore.”

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<sup>50</sup>Sheller, “The Origins of Public Education in Baltimore,” 33.; “the population to one way of thinking...” *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, 12 February 1825 quoted in Sheller, “Origins of Public Education in Baltimore,” 33.; Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> “schools for freemen...” *Baltimore American*, 9, 14 February 1825 quoted in Sheller, “Origins of Public Education in Baltimore,” 34.; Sheller, “The Origins of Public Education in Baltimore,” 35.; Maryland General Assembly, *Session Laws 1825*, December 26 1825 – March 9, 1826, 3.

This provision was at least partly due to the status of Baltimore as one of the largest cities in the United States, whose population was not eager to contribute their tax dollars to the rest of the state. Mandating the establishment of public schools in Baltimore by separate legislation set a precedent for the independence of Baltimore schools that would continue through the Civil War and after. Although Baltimore schools were established by a separate provision, these schools were not separated from the general goals of the legislation. But it did give the local authorities considerable discretion in the distribution of funds.<sup>52</sup>

There was a common understanding that schools would assume responsibility for guiding their students morally, and that the moral curriculum would center on the Bible, specifically the Protestant Bible. The Male Free School of Baltimore, the first school established under the provisions of schools legislation, included the Bible as a “school book.” The reasons for this were clear: “we believe our youth cannot too early be made acquainted with a book inculcating principles which are the foundation of our laws and civil institutions.” The Male Free School targeted indigent children, and aimed to change them into productive citizens by providing “instruction in moral and religious principles,” as well as in basic skills.<sup>53</sup>

Educational policy in Baltimore made it clear from the beginning that instruction was to be non-sectarian, and open to children of “all religious denominations.”<sup>54</sup> In Baltimore, as elsewhere in the country, it was common practice for the Bible to be read in schools during the day. In New York, Philadelphia and Boston, Bible reading took place

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<sup>52</sup> “establishment and regulation...” “be vested in the mayor...” Ibid., 3.

<sup>53</sup> “we believe...” “Male Free School of Baltimore,” in *Baltimore Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser*, Vol. XXXII, No. 139, 12/09/1828, 1.; “instruction in moral...” Ibid., 2.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 1.

daily, and passed without comment. Teachers used the Bible as a tool for calming rowdy students, and as the backbone of the moral instruction that was part of the primary mission of the free schools. Leaders in various communities thought that any “sectarianism” in such activities would arise from commentary favoring one denominational interpretation of the Bible over another, rather than the reading of the Bible itself. Thus, reading the Bible without comment was a ‘non-sectarian’ activity that simultaneously provided the moral influence that community leaders saw as the salvation of the poor.<sup>55</sup>

### **Growth of Baltimore Schools, 1829 – 1850**

A nascent system of publicly funded common schools was established throughout Maryland, including Baltimore, by 1829. Early reports by the school committees reflect a belief that the newly established school systems were forming good citizens through the study of American history and government, as well as other subjects, such as math and English. Studying these subjects could not “fail to impress [children] with a due sense of the great privileges they enjoy, and to endear and perpetuate the institutions under which those privileges are held.” Some hoped that these schools would minimize class differences in the new Republic: “general admission of all classes to a common school, will elicit talents and prove in practice a felicitous accommodation to the genius and spirit of our constitutional government.” Despite this idealism, a fundamental characteristic of education in the United States was class distinction. In the early republican period, the school that a family’s children attended – and the fact that the children were attending school - was indicative of the family’s financial position, religion and racial identity. The

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<sup>55</sup> Keastle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 71.

school system emerged haphazardly, with students required to pay tuition and attendance voluntary and sporadic. The first male public schools in the city of Baltimore attracted fewer than 250 students, and the first female school had 34 pupils. These early schools limited their enrollment to free white children whose families could afford the minimal required tuition.<sup>56</sup>

The first schools to receive public money in Baltimore were not “public schools” per se, but rather charitable institutions with an aim of spreading moral enlightenment among the poor. The first public school in Baltimore opened in 1829 and was housed in the basement of a Presbyterian church. Despite this early link between religion and the new public schools, Baltimoreans approached the issue of religion in schools with much the same attitude as the New York Public School Society: “the institution rests on the broad basis of perfect toleration, and while the morality of the Bible is impressed on the young mind, sectarian instruction is utterly prohibited.” Though the Bible – the Protestant Bible – was read in Baltimore public schools, it was to be read without comment, and, therefore, not considered to be religious instruction. Even without Bible reading, it was widely understood that education continued to have an underlying religious purpose: “ignorance must be banished from the head before religion can be successfully planted in the heart; and if he wish religion to flourish around him he must feel the instruction of the ignorant to be among the first of his duties.” Others reiterated the importance of

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<sup>56</sup> “fail to impress...” Littleton Dennis Teackle, “Second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Maryland,” 1828 Accessed 3/20/11. Retrieved from <http://www.msa.md.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/000059/html/m59-0189.html>, 40.; “general admission...” Maryland General Assembly, House of Delegates, Public Documents “Report of the Joint Committee Appointed to Inspect the Seminary of the Primary Schools, in the City of Annapolis,” 1833, Accessed 3/20/11. Retrieved from <http://aomol.net/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/000059/html/m59-0169.html>, 7.; Baltimore City Council, “Report and Progress and Suggestions for Baltimore City Schools” (1829) Baltimore City Archives, No. 1829 – 728; 1829 – 729; 1829 – 730.

education in preserving “the intelligence and morality” of the people. Education was a means of improving the poor through the spread of moral enlightenment.<sup>57</sup>

The private schools system in Baltimore presaged the growth of the publically funded school system in Baltimore. By 1833, Baltimore supported nine private male classical schools (two run by religious organizations), one mathematical school, eight private female schools, four female “lyceums” (including a convent school) and five public schools. Once established, the common school system grew rapidly in Baltimore. This growth was supported by state legislation in 1837, as the state funded schools struggled to meet then needs of a growing population, which increasingly expected access to education. Between 1840 and 1843, “five additional schools were added to the system,” and the first central high school was established in 1844.<sup>58</sup>

The question of public education came before the state legislature again in 1843. This time, the proposals to further centralize the administration of the public schools failed to pass. That the matter was again subject to considerable discussion, however, reflects the increasing importance of education and educational policy in public life. Likewise, the nature of the proposed legislation reflects a push towards the centralization of education that would recur several times in the next several decades. Nine more public primary schools opened in Baltimore between 1849 and 1850 as the common school system expanded statewide. Educational policy was hotly debated at the 1850 - 1851

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<sup>57</sup> “Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County*, 223.; “the institution rests...” “Male and Female School of Baltimore,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. IV, No. 32, 12/24/1839, 3.; “ignorance must be banished...” Ibid.; five additional schools...” “[For the Baltimore Sun] Mental and Moral Cultivation, or, the Duty of Parents,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XVII, No. 78, 8/16/1845, 1.

<sup>58</sup>Varle, *A Complete View of Baltimore*, 30.; State Department of Education, “Maryland Manual,” (1994 – 1995). In 1837 the state set aside its surplus federal revenue to support free schools. The fund was to be split in half, with half to be distributed equally among the counties and Baltimore, and the remainder to be distributed according to the white population of the state.; John Thomas Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore: Being a Complete History of "Baltimore Town" and Baltimore City from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*. (Baltimore: Turnbull Bros, 1874.) 430.

constitutional convention. Increasing regulation and delegates proposed standardization of schools run with state funds for inclusion in the constitution, but that resolution failed to pass. For the time, at least, common schools would continue to be the domain of local governments, and decisions regarding their administration would be reflective of the communities they served.<sup>59</sup>

The expansion of the schools system ran parallel with discussion over what publically funded education should include. By the late 1830s, public schools had moved out of the basements of churches and into their own buildings. Around that time, the subject of religion in schools arose, albeit obliquely, in City Council sessions. In 1839, the City Council also considered authorizing the use of schoolhouses by Sabbath schools for religious instruction. Though this proposal eventually failed, its consideration is indicative of the ongoing push and pull between religion and “secularism” in schools.<sup>60</sup>

Though the Baltimore schools worked to establish a “non-sectarian” curriculum, there was no serious push toward total “secularism” in education in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though the 1830 report on Maryland public schools had argued “science and freedom march hand in hand. Science discloses the blessings of liberty, and freedom encourages reflection and research, whilst ignorance and vice support the rule of intolerance and despotism,” it did not argue that science completely replace faith in the classroom. Ignorance was perceived as the real threat to liberty with “treason its natural offspring.” Mainstream Protestants considered Catholics, especially Irish Catholics, to be blind followers of an archaic faith, an “ignorant” population, and therefore a threat to American liberty. Despite the Catholic heritage of Maryland, suspicion of Catholic traditions grew

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<sup>59</sup> Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 430.; Ibid.; Teackle, “Second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Maryland,” (1828), 35.

<sup>60</sup> Baltimore City Council, “To Permit Public Worship in Schools,” Document No. 1839-1348.

during the early republican period. The importance of religion to the educational worldview of the early republican Maryland legislators is evident in the report of the Committee to Inspect the Seminary of the Primary Schools in the city of Annapolis. This document argued that the purpose of education is to provide students with “the opportunity of acquiring knowledge, and of understanding his obligations as well to men as to God.” Though the common school system developed to further the growth of rational thought in the next generation.<sup>61</sup>

The City Council and the Mayor thought it necessary to make clear that the actions of the city government “shall not be construed as to authorize the commissioners or teachers of public schools to interfere with the religious opinions of the public.” The Mayor, City Councilors and School Commissioners of Baltimore went to great lengths in their attempts to create a school system that would provide moral instruction for the children of the city while respecting the religious traditions of the population. Though the Protestant Bible was read in most public schools, in at least some irregular cases, some allowances were made for Catholic students to read the Douay Version.<sup>62</sup>

Although questions of funding continued to plague the public school system, it quickly became a popular institution, and grew rapidly through the antebellum period. Despite the inauspicious start in the basement of the Presbyterian church, the City Council moved quickly to acquire buildings for stand-alone schools. Questions of educational theory became matters for public concern as the local schools adopted, and

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<sup>61</sup> “science and freedom...” Teackle, “Second Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Maryland,” 35.; “treason...” Maryland General Assembly, “Report of the Joint Committee Appointed to Inspect the Seminary of the Primary Schools, in the City of Annapolis,” 14.; “opportunity of acquiring knowledge...” Maryland General Assembly, “Report of the Joint Committee Appointed to Inspect the Seminary of the Primary Schools, in the City of Annapolis,” 15.

<sup>62</sup>“shall not be...” Baltimore City Council, “Religious Instruction in the Schools” Document No. 1839-1349.; Adams, ed. “Economic History – Maryland and the South” 199.



experimented with different methods of instruction of teaching. Baltimore public schools moved toward multiple rooms and grades in the 1840s and 1850s, and opened a high school for older students and a normal school to train teachers. By 1860, the Baltimore City public schools were an entrenched institution.<sup>63</sup>

### **Immigration in Baltimore, 1825 - 1850**

The number and type of immigrants to Baltimore became a subject of mainstream political and social concern early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first wave of immigrants to cause such unease was the English poor. By the early 1830s Baltimore had firm ties with Liverpool for trading, and that link led to a stream of immigrants. In 1832 a legislative attempt was made to limit the number of English poor being “dumped” on Baltimore. However, despite the early 19<sup>th</sup> century concerns raised by the numbers of the English poor arriving in the city, the two largest immigrant groups arriving in Baltimore before the Civil War were Irish and Germanic. Both groups aroused a degree of hostility, in part due to their size, in part due to their practice of alien cultural traditions, and in large part due to their Catholic faith. Though the Germanic immigrants were subject to Nativist suspicion, American thought highly of Prussia and other German-speaking countries during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and that regard largely carried over to the German immigrant community. The Prussian model was influential on the development of the American system of education.

Baltimore welcomed the second largest number of immigrants to America during the antebellum period. By 1860, over a quarter of Baltimore’s population was foreign born; over fifteen thousand of these were Irish, and twice that number German. This does

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<sup>63</sup> It should be noted that some of those buildings were purchased from various religious congregations. City Council of Baltimore “Ann St. at Canton Ave, Offer Property of German Trustees,” (1854) Baltimore City Archives, No. 1854-528.

not, of course, include the children and descendants of foreign-born citizens. Catholicism was central to the Irish community identity, and played a role the way that the Irish community both self-identified and were identified. This, and the link between Irish immigrants and poverty fueled suspicion of that group nationwide.

Growth in urban communities contributed to diversity of religion and nationalist affiliations. Immigrants arriving in the United States during the early nineteenth century often retained some allegiance to their homelands. Immigrants arriving in the late 1840s and 1850s were fleeing the aftermath of failed uprisings in Europe, or emigrated in the wake of famine. Most considered emigration to be a kind of exile. This was especially true of the Irish, who felt that “migration was [...] something to be undergone, not undertaken.” The growth of immigrant populations and the increasing diversity of Protestant denominations raised questions regarding the role of religion in citizenship and the place of religious instruction in publically funded schools. As the Catholic population of the United States grew, especially in urban centers such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore, Catholic leadership became increasingly confident and confrontational. The new confrontational leadership was willing to fight for the inclusion of their faith in publically funded education.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> The foremost study of Irish immigration to the United States is Kerby Miller’s *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) The study of the Irish famine and its effects on the development of Irish American identity is both complex and well documented. While Miller’s work is the most highly regarded example of modern scholarship on the subject, histories of Irish immigration were written as early as McGee’s *History of the Irish Settlers in North America*, published in 1855, and Byrne’s *Irish Emigration to the United States*, published in 1873. In terms of purely modern scholarship, Irish immigration during and immediately following the Great Famine has often been examined in terms of gender studies. In this, Margaret MacCurtain and Donncha O Corrain blazed a trail with their 1979 publication of *Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension*. Miller is not without his critics: Lawrence McCaffery, makes a case against him in “Irish Comparisons and Irish-American Uniqueness” in *New Perspectives on the Irish Diaspora* ed. Charles Fanning (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2000). In his 1986 review of *Emigrants and Exiles*, McCaffery claims that not only is Miller’s work “too long,” but that it is also “repetitive in theme.” He argues that the book is unbalanced, focusing far more on Ireland than on Irish-America, and that the author’s focus on emigrant letters distorts

The Catholic Church traditionally drew parish lines based largely on geography, but with the arrival of large numbers of immigrants in new urban areas, this practice changed quickly. “National parishes,” began to take the place of geographical ones. “National” or “transplant” parishes represented an attempt by the Irish, Germans and other immigrant groups to retain their national as well as religious identity. Homogeneity of parishioners took precedence. The “national parishes” which predominated during this period provided a sense of familiarity for immigrants in an unfamiliar land. Group preference for churches staffed by pastors of their own national origin, and the Church hierarchy’s willingness to accommodate that desire contributed to the growth of dual-nationalism and the creation of ethnicity in America.<sup>65</sup>

The symbolism of the Catholic Church, both as a spiritual home and as a physical place, became increasingly important for the Irish in the wake of the famine exodus. The Irish, despite often being “strikingly ignorant” of the basic tenants of the Catholic faith, found it “difficult to distinguish between nationality and religion.” The homogeneity of a “national parish” was central to the development of Irish-American culture. In the decades since the Reformation in England, and even more in the years immediately before the famine, “The church in Ireland became a fighting church, [...]

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his view of the American Irish. Moreover, McCaffery claims that Miller fails to offer a clear or comparative standard of alienation” sufficient to prove his thesis regarding Irish emigrant feelings of exile (Lawrence J. McCaffery, review of *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* by Kerby Miller, *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (Dec. 1986) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1864449> [Accessed Feb. 01, 2012]). This criticism, that Miller’s book concentrates far more on the Irish, rather than the Irish-American experience, is reiterated by William S. Egelman, who, in his 1987 review of the book, wrote that “the reader should be aware that while the book does discuss the experiences of the emigrants in the United States, the overall thrust of the work focuses on Ireland itself.” (William S. Egelman,, review of *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* by Kerby Miller, *International Migration Review* 21, no. 1 (Spring 1987) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2546146> [Accessed 2/1/2012].); “undergone...” Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York’s Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1852* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 21.

and during the struggle on behalf of Catholic emancipation, religion and nationalism were united in a common cause.” This association of religion and national identity, combined with an increasing awareness of “whiteness” became pivotal in the creation of dual-national Irish-American identity in the United States.<sup>66</sup>

Evangelical religious fervor fueled by conflicts over social and economic change contributed to a rise in anti-Catholicism, which, by 1852, would culminate in an influential Nativist political movement. The link between politics and religion, especially among the artisan classes is evident in the strength of Nativist movements during the mid-nineteenth century. The nature of the Catholic Church hierarchy, and its presumed direct control over its adherents, led many Protestant Americans to believe the immigrant Catholics lacked “the independence necessary for participation in Republican government.” To become a fully functioning member of American society, Catholics had to be taught “independence.” The growth of public educational systems was part of an effort to create the desired “independent” citizenry – who would use their newfound independence to turn away from the national traditions of their European homelands, and the Catholic Church.<sup>67</sup>

The concentration of Catholic immigrants (particularly Irish Catholic) in the new urban centers of America led to competition between immigrants and Americans for economic opportunity. So-called “economic nativism” existed in fairly constant levels throughout the mid-nineteenth century, and was not restricted to urban or artisanal labor –

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<sup>66</sup> “difficult to distinguish...” Dolan, *Immigrant Church*, 57.; Ibid., 54.; “the church became...” Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, 86. For the purposes of this study “Native American” will be used as it was during the period under discussion, to refer to Anglo-Saxon or “white” men and women, usually Protestant, born in the United States who were anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic. Native Americans were associated with Know-Nothing political movement in the 1840s and 1850s.; Ibid., 85.; “the independence necessary...” Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism & Slavery: The Northern Know-Nothings & the Politics of the 1850s*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), xiii; Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 71.

farmers also feared immigrant competition. Though economic nativism was limited, and far from the only motivation of the Nativist parties, the specter of the Catholic laborer was an influential figure in nineteenth century politics. Economic conflict contributed to anti-immigrant racism, as Catholic laborers competed with free blacks for low wage jobs. These Catholic immigrants consciously set out to distinguish themselves from black laborers – to establish themselves as white.<sup>68</sup>

The largest immigrant group coming to the east coast of the United States in the early nineteenth century consisted of Irish Catholics who arrived before, during and after the Irish Famine (1845-1852). The sheer volume of immigrants in this laborer demographic, combined with their impoverished state and their overwhelmingly Catholic faith made them targets for hostility from the so called “native” Americans. That the racial status of this immigrant group was in doubt only served to further complicate matters. Widespread belief in the “savage” nature of the Irish was expressed in “simian caricatures,” in popular literature and political rhetoric. The Irish immigrants who arrived in the 1840s and 1850s were widely believed to be backward, “preindustrial,” without self-control, prone to drink, and, given their stubborn adherence to Catholicism, unfit to participate in a Republican government.<sup>69</sup>

In Baltimore, hostility towards immigrants and Catholics first spilled into violence in the 1839 Nunnery riots. These riots, which attracted hundreds of participants, were focused on a local Carmelite convent and rumors of unwilling girls trapped within

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<sup>68</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 33-34, *Ibid.*, 36

<sup>69</sup> Though Miller, among others, have argued that the Irish who immigrated to America during the famine were those with means, rather than, as has popularly been characterized, Ireland’s poor, by the time they arrived in the United States their means were depleted. Moreover, the general sickly appearance and limited means of the Famine refugees contributed to a widespread impression that all Irish arrivals were paupers. Miller, *Immigrants and Exiles*, 293; Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, xxiv.; Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 68.; Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 107.

its walls. The Carmelites were not the only religious order to come under suspicion, or to endure threats, but they were the only order subject to violent action during the period. Though Baltimore would, by the 1850s, earn a national reputation as a violent, riot-ridden town, the Nunnery Riots represent one of very few occasions that those riots were explicitly over religion. An undercurrent of anti-Catholicism and anti-immigrant feeling festered in the city, but was largely contained or found other outlets for expression.<sup>70</sup>

American Nativism expressed itself in hostility toward immigrants who were seen as threats to both American jobs and the American Protestant way of life. Americans differentiated extensively between themselves and the Irish as a “race.” Irish immigrants were increasingly perceived as being physically different from Americans, giving “some plausibility to the notion that immigration was introducing a wholly different sort of people into the American social fabric.” The introduction of this new population was not entirely welcome. An increase in nativist hostility came with a growth in upper-class Protestant efforts to assimilate or “improve” the lower classes.<sup>71</sup>

Many of these immigrants valued their religion, linking it with their personal and national identities. Irish immigrants understood being Catholic as not being English. Therefore being Catholic was part of what made them Irish – or, at the very least, being Catholic was part of what made them not English. Therefore, religion was a function not only of spiritual but also national identity. Over time, the importance of Catholicism to

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas W. Spalding, *The Premier See; A History of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 1789 – 1994* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 134.

<sup>71</sup> Dale T. Knobel, “‘Celtic Exodus’: The Famine Irish, Ethnic Stereotypes, and the Cultivation of American Racial Nationalism,” in Margaret M. Mulrooney, ed. *Fleeing the Famine; North America and Irish Refugees, 1845 – 1851*, (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 83.; “some plausibility...” Ibid., 87.

sustaining the development of an Irish identity became even more pronounced, to the point that the two terms – Irish and Catholic – became virtually interchangeable.<sup>72</sup>

Public schools became a focal point in the conflict between immigrant groups, who wished to instill their religion in their children, and, through doing so, pass on their national identities and heritage. American Protestants wished to assimilate (preferably by conversion) those immigrants. American Nativists, who believed in a Catholic conspiracy to undermine Protestant America, viewed any attempt by the immigrants to gain funding for Catholic schools with extreme suspicion. The conflicts over religion in public schools that occurred in the 1840s and 1850s were not only clashes over the roles of church and state, but rather arguments over the immigrant identities and the rights of immigrants to maintain those identities in the United States.

### **Charity Schools in Baltimore, 1825 - 1850**

Baltimore was one of the first urban centers to use education as a way to raise people out of poverty. During the early republican and antebellum periods, Baltimore City was home to several free schools – schools supported by charitable contributions aimed at aiding the poor. The first charity school in Baltimore was established in 1800, with the goal of training women and girls for domestic work. This institution was the first of many, as education became a recognized means of social change and control. As education grew to be institutionalized and recognized as a function of a developing society during the period, charitable schools were gradually absorbed into the religious or public school systems.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 333.; Jacobs, *Special Sorrows*, 74.

<sup>73</sup> Rockman *Scraping By*, 108.

From the first moment public funds were used to support education, that education was explicitly linked to religion and national identity. In 1833, seven charity schools operated in Baltimore. Of the seven, four were attached to religious organizations – two Catholic, one Episcopal, and one Methodist. A fifth, the John Oliver Hibernian School, was not explicitly tied to a religious organization, but had a strong nationalist orientation. The Hibernian Society for the aid of Irish immigrants had been in existence since 1803, and this organization administered the John Oliver Hibernian School. The school’s founding bequest asked that the school be opened to all students of Irish descent, regardless of their faith. A similar organization, St. Patrick’s Benevolent Society was established in 1815, and that organization established and ran St. Patrick’s Free School. Though that organization had ties to a Catholic parish, the school was established for the education of “poor children without distinct creeds.” Several of these institutions were the recipients of public funds, despite their ethnic and religious ties. The city offered public support for immigrant aid societies – including the Hibernian Society, which in turn supported the John Oliver School. The city likewise made contributions to the German society, which included education and nationalist activities, such as parades, fundraising and public support for nationalist causes, among their mission goals.<sup>74</sup>

The John Oliver Hibernian School was at the center of Irish nationalist activity in Baltimore. In addition to being central to the effort to educate the children of Irish immigrants and their descendants, the school was the focus of Irish nationalist activity in Baltimore. The Hibernian school was the meeting place of the “Irish Emancipation Society,” the “Friends of Ireland.” The school was exempted from taxes in 1842 as a

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<sup>74</sup>Varle, *A Complete View of Baltimore*, 32.; Weishampel, *The Stranger in Baltimore*, 49.; “poor children...” Scharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore*, 374.



charitable institution funded by donations, bequests, and public funds for the Hibernian Society's work as "trustees of the poor." The Hibernian Society held its St. Patrick's Day celebrations at the school, displaying nationalist banners, which featured a background of "a Catholic Church." Banners such as these illustrate the evolution of complex dual-national identities. An 1842 banner featured the conjoined symbols of Irish and American nationalism:

In the center the goddess of Justice, with her scales and sword [...] on her right is seen an eagle bearing the American shield with the words "E Pluribus Unum." On her left is the Irish harp, and in the background a freighted ship.<sup>75</sup>

The Hibernian society deliberately constructed its public identity around joined Irish and American national symbols.

Similar confluences of identity can be seen in toasts offered at the annual St. Patrick's Day celebrations following the awarding of premiums at the school – the first toast to Ireland, the second to America. Other toasts offered sought to further the link between Irish and American identities and the shared Irish and American "ardent love of liberty." For years, similar toasts were repeated at the St. Patrick's Day celebrations, echoing a familiar sentiment: Ireland was to be aided, America was to be defended.<sup>76</sup>

Despite the intention of the nationalist schools, such as that Hibernian School and the German Schools, to maintain a non-religious agenda, nationalist affiliations were often intertwined with religious identity, and thus a religious element was inescapable.

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<sup>75</sup> "Irish Emancipation Society," in *The Baltimore Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser*, Vol. XXXIII No. 33, 2/7/1829, 2.; "Friends of Ireland," in *The Baltimore Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser*, Vol. XXXVII No. 112, 5/11/1831, 2.; "trustees of the poor..." "Proceedings of the City Council," in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. X No. 93, 3/4/1842, 1.; "Register's Summary," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XIV, No. 48, 1/17/1844, 1.; "a Catholic Church..." "Local Matters; The Hibernian Society," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. X, No. 103, 2/18/1842, 2.; "in the center..." Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> "Anniversary Festival of the Hibernian Society of Baltimore," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XVIII No. 105, 3/19/1846, 1.; "ardent love..." Ibid.; Ibid.

Despite the best intentions of such schools, they came to be associated with the religious identities of their students. This did not mean that variations on Christianity were not incorporated into the general curriculum of nationalist free schools in Baltimore. The Bible was introduced as a class book at the Hibernian School in 1836, but quickly withdrawn after protests from parents of students. Concerns that its use would be “in direct violation” of the bequest that established the school also came under discussion. The subject arose again in 1840 when a report was made that a Protestant student was denied admittance due to his religion. Investigation by the Society revealed the report to be more rumor than fact, but the strength and pervasiveness of that rumor reveals much about how the community perceived the school. The Hibernian Society denounced sectarianism in general, but reports on the Catholic schools in Baltimore list the Hibernian society. Though these reports acknowledge a lack of ties between the school and the church, the demographics of the school led the Catholic community to consider the Hibernian Free School one of their own. Years later, a historical review of the Catholic schools of Baltimore would include the Oliver Hibernian School, writing, “although the Oliver Hibernian School was not a church school, the fact that nearly all of the children who profited by its educational advantages were Catholics makes it advisable that it should have a place amongst the Catholic Schools of Baltimore.” Irish and Catholic identities were intertwined in the public imagination, and they converged at the Hibernian school.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> “in direct...” Harold Williams, *History of the Hibernian Society of Baltimore*. (Baltimore: Hibernian Society of Baltimore, 1957), 24.; Hibernian Society Papers, Minute Book, (Maryland Historical Society, MS 2029), 2/4/1840.; Hibernian Society Papers, Minute Book, (Maryland Historical Society, MS 2029), 3/2/1840.; Hibernian Society Papers, Minute Book, (Maryland Historical Society, MS 2029), 3/2/1840; Right Rev. OB Corrigan DD, VG, *The Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Baltimore; a Study in Diocesan History*, (Baltimore: St. Mary’s Industrial School Press, 1924), 52.; “although the Oliver...” Ibid.

While the Hibernian Society, and the school it supported, remain excellent examples of the evolution of dual-nationalism in antebellum Baltimore, it is important to remember that they are not representative of the community as a whole. Membership in the Hibernian Society was restricted to gentlemen of class capable of paying dues. The Society predated the famine exodus, and it can safely be assumed that it was years before members of the famine immigrant population – or their descendents – were qualified for membership. That the majority of information regarding the opinions and practices of the immigrant communities in Baltimore is from the upper classes is unfortunate, though not unexpected. However, the Hibernian School serviced the poorest children in the community, and the views espoused by its leaders would have had influence in that community.

The Germanic immigrant community also organized to support itself as rates of immigration increased throughout the antebellum era. The German Society of Maryland organized in 1783 and continued to support the community. The German Society received occasional aid from the Baltimore City Council, and was recognized by the state as a legitimate charitable and ethnic organization. The city imposed a special tax on immigrants in 1830, and a portion of the funds raised by that tax, went to the German Society for the support of their community, as well as to the Hibernian Society.<sup>78</sup>

The Germania Club was established in the 1840s and served as a German cultural center in the city. Impoverished German men founded the club, but the organization quickly expanded to incorporate some of the city's wealthier businessmen. The club organized around the goal of establishing a German-English library and, less explicitly

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<sup>78</sup> Baltimore City Council, "German Society of Maryland for the Importation of Passengers," Baltimore City Archives, 1834-606.

but more importantly, as a social organization. By the outbreak of the Civil War, the Germania Club counted over 150 members, and the roster had evolved skewed from the impoverished men who had founded it, to some of the wealthiest in the city, which in turn put it at odds with the poorer parts of the community. Other German clubs included the Concordia and the Lederkranz, which was affiliated with the one of the city's oldest German schools, the school of Zion Lutheran church.<sup>79</sup>

### **Parochial Schools in Baltimore, 1825 - 1850**

Private and Sabbath schools predated the establishment of systematized religious education in Baltimore. These institutions included a mixed bag of ladies' finishing academies, private classical schools, Sabbath schools, and charitable institutions. The passage of educational legislation in 1829 inspired several of them to petition for a portion of the newly created school fund. Tellingly, St. Peters, a Catholic Church petitioned twice for a portion of the fund, claiming that they were already educating "several hundred" students in the city. In their second petition, made in 1831, they claimed to be educating five hundred students, and argued, "the object which they have in view is so closely allied to the benevolent one which caused the erection of the building as to be sufficient in itself to induce compliance with their prayer."<sup>80</sup> This was not enough to sway the City Council, and the petition for funding was denied. The Presbyterian School had the same idea, and petitioned for a portion of the fund, as did the McKendran Female School. The City Council denied these petitions as well – the public school fund would be limited only to those institutions established by the city.

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<sup>79</sup> Dieter Cunz, *Maryland Germans: A History* (Princeton: New Jersey, 1948), 239.; *Ibid.*, 240.; Cunz, *Maryland Germans*, 240.; *Ibid.*, 244. The Zion Lutheran Church school will be discussed in more detail elsewhere.

<sup>80</sup> Baltimore City Council, "Petition" Baltimore City Archives. No. 1831-622

Even without public financial support, religious schools flourished in Baltimore. Unsatisfied with the “non-sectarian” curriculum of the public schools, large communities of Catholics and Lutherans, and smaller denominations were. Suspicious of the quality of the education they offered, or in an attempt to maintain or strengthen their community identities, they used their religious institutions as the basis for establishing schools of their own. Though these schools were generally open to members of other faiths (and members of other faiths and communities often attended), these schools were intent on propagating their faiths and developing their communities.<sup>81</sup>

Maryland was unique among the states in that it was historically home to an established, well-to-do Catholic gentry class. The Catholic community supported several private, parochial schools not affiliated with specific national groups. Enrollment in these schools was not limited to members of the Catholic Church, and the high standards and reputations of the schools attracted members of Protestant denominations. These non-Catholic students were not subject to the same academic requirements as Catholic students, whose curriculums included religious instruction. Parochial, private and free schools in Baltimore were often, but not always, affiliated with national parishes and ethnic communities. Catholic schools not established by ethnic communities, or explicitly tied to a particular national group often served the parish community explicitly. One such parish was St. Patrick’s Parish in Fell’s Point. By the 1840s, this parish was an Irish stronghold, with an Irish priest, running a charity school for Irish children. The creation

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<sup>81</sup> Spalding, *The Premier See*, 140 – 142; Nicholas Varga, *Baltimore’s Loyola, Loyola’s Baltimore: 1851 - 1986* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1990) 28; Zion Lutheran Church, “The Schieb School of Zion” at [http://www.zionbaltimore.org/vthistory\\_1800s\\_the\\_schieb\\_school.htm](http://www.zionbaltimore.org/vthistory_1800s_the_schieb_school.htm) (Accessed 12/30/2012)

of national parishes and the tendency of national groups to settle in ethnic neighborhoods led the demographics of a student body to be rather homogeneous.<sup>82</sup>

The German community – both Lutheran and Catholic - expended a great deal of energy on the creation and maintenance of schools to propagate German language and religious tradition to the children of immigrants. The German community had maintained schools in Baltimore as early as 1784, when the German Reformed congregation had opened doors to students. The German Reformed Church closed its school in 1827. At that time, it switched from German to English services, and the Reformed community ran no school until 1846, when St. Johannes opened, and the congregation started a German language school for its members.<sup>83</sup>

The traditional German Catholics also maintained schools for the benefit of the community. These schools grew rapidly in number and in size in the 1840s, as the numbers of German Catholic immigrants increased. St. Alphonsus, and German Catholic School run by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, opened in 1847. St. James and St. Michaels, also Catholic and run by the School Sisters, opened the same year. These schools provided instruction in German and in English, to maintain the integrity of the community.<sup>84</sup>

The German Lutheran community maintained some of the best known-and longest lasting schools for the community in Baltimore. Of those, the best know is the school affiliated with the Zion Church (later known as Scheib's School). The school had been in existence since the foundation of the church in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. At that time,

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<sup>82</sup> Loyola College Catalog, 1860 – 1861; “Sesquicentennial St. Patrick’s Parish, Baltimore, Maryland, 1792 – 1942,” courtesy of the Archives of the Baltimore Archdiocese, 72. Ibid., 109.

<sup>83</sup> Cunz, *Maryland Germans*, 233.; Ibid.; Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> “Table of Catholic Schools,” courtesy of the Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.; Cunz, *Maryland Germans*, 223.

the Reverend Mr. Kirchner argued that “it is an undeniable truth that a good education lays the basis for future happiness, leads children in the paths of virtue and wisdom, and teaches them to be useful in the world.” The school was considered unremarkable until Pastor Henirch Scheib took over its administration in 1835. He took a failing, disorganized, institution, rewrote the curriculum and reopened its doors on November 1, 1836 to an enrollment of 71 students. Schieb worked to move the Zion school away from its sectarian tradition, and opened enrollment to students of all faiths and backgrounds. Classes were conducted equally in English and German. Schieb created a secular school that was only loosely affiliated with the church. The school grew rapidly to incorporate 418 pupils by 1839.<sup>85</sup>

As the German speaking population of Baltimore grew, so did the loose network of private and parochial German-English schools in the city. Schieb’s school was one of several German-English Schools that opened in the 1840s. Many of these were more or less secular, and formed around the goals of the 1848 Germanic Revolutions, including pan-Germanism.<sup>86</sup> These schools, which had a secular orientation, gained national acclaim and were fundamental to the rise of German immigrants, the status of the German community, and the inclusion of Germans in the American middle class. Though they were open to students from a diverse range of backgrounds – and a wide variety of students attended the schools – they retained a goal of perpetuating German identity and culture.

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<sup>85</sup> Though many of the original records from the school survive, the majority are in German. Cunz provides translations of many key passages in his book, *Maryland Germans*, and the congregation of the Zion Lutheran Church maintains and excellent history of the church, the congregation and the school on its website at <http://www.zionbaltimore.org/vthistory.htm>. (Accessed 12/30/2012).; “it is understandable...” Reverend Kirchner (1769) quoted in Cunz, *Maryland Germans*, 224. ; Zion Lutheran Church, “The Schieb School of Zion” at [http://www.zionbaltimore.org/vthistory\\_1800s\\_the\\_schieb\\_school.htm](http://www.zionbaltimore.org/vthistory_1800s_the_schieb_school.htm) (Accessed 12/30/2012).; Cunz, *Maryland Germans*, 227.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 232.

The German immigrant community faced significantly less hostility than the Irish immigrant community in Baltimore, and nation wide. The 1848 rebellions in the Germanic states had many sympathizers in the United States, who supported their anti-aristocratic ideology and democratic goals. The Germanic immigrants were quick to use their reputation and the existing community (especially existing Germanic religious orders) to establish themselves and their schools. The Irish immigrants to Baltimore and nation-wide were the subject of more suspicion. Irish immigrants and their children primarily attended free schools, such as the Hibernian School, or public schools, when they attended schools at all. The liberal, democratic goals of the Germanic revolutions were a contributing factor in the development of the English – German schools, which were at least ostensibly open to all. Moreover, the pan-Germanic ideology of the time emphasized the unifying power of the German language, and that too contributed to the growth and development of the schools sponsored by the Germanic community.<sup>87</sup>

### **Colored Schools in Baltimore, 1825 - 1850**

The link between freedom, citizenship and education has a long history in the American colonies and early Republic, and was a driving force in the initial schools legislation in Maryland. To African Americans education was both a means of escaping slavery and a means of establishing oneself and ones family as free. Black schools in Baltimore, like the Catholic Schools and the schools run by the Irish and German immigrant communities, also had a secondary purpose of creating a sense of shared identity and community.

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<sup>87</sup> Zion Lutheran Church, “Zion in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century,” at [http://www.zionbaltimore.org/vthistory\\_1800s\\_nineteenth\\_century\\_main.htm](http://www.zionbaltimore.org/vthistory_1800s_nineteenth_century_main.htm) (Accessed 11/30/2011)



Baltimore represented a unique educational opportunity for slaves and free blacks in the early republican and antebellum periods. African churches functioned as centers of the free and slave African communities. These organizations set up Sabbath schools to instruct their congregants in their faith. These Sunday schools quickly grew from strictly religious institutions to a close equivalent of the other religious schools in the city. Education of African-Americans – free and slave – was not illegal in early Republican and antebellum Maryland, and was, for a time, even encouraged by urban whites. Educated slaves could be “hired out” by their owners for specialized tasks, and free blacks could be hired for less than immigrant whites – a fact that was the source of mob violence during the period.<sup>88</sup>

Skills learned in these schools and similar insitutions were essential to the survival of a free black population in a slave city. That population was growing, while the slave population shrank. By 1820, there were 10,326 free blacks and 4,357 slaves in official residence in the city. This trend continued in Baltimore – by 1850, Baltimore city was home to 25,442 free black men and women (15% of the city’s total population), and only 2,946 slaves. Of those slaves, it is likely that many “worked out,” and were therefore afforded a much greater degree of freedom than slaves on plantations. The large population of free black men and women and mobile slaves in the city contributed to the creation of extensive support networks, often concentrated around churches and their affiliated schools. However, despite their growing numbers, few members of the free black community achieved an economic standing greater than subsistence level.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Rockman, *Scraping By*, 34; Philips, *Freedom’s Port*, 15; *Ibid.*, 27; Rockman, *Scraping By*, 257

<sup>89</sup> B. Morrison.. *Selected African American educational efforts in Baltimore, Maryland during the nineteenth century*. Ph.D. diss., Morgan State University, In *Dissertations & Theses: Full Text* [database

The free black community struggled to support their institutions in addition to their subsistence. The schools tax, which applied to the few members of the free black community who had acquired property, was an additional burden. Race defined what schools children could and did attend in antebellum Baltimore. Black students were explicitly denied entrance to the public schools. Free schools, such as the Hibernian School, often limited their charity to members of their national or immigrant community – and certainly to members of the race to which they belonged (or the race to which they aspired to belong). Left largely on their own, the free black community in Baltimore created a network of support and funded private and parochial schools, even as the growing population and demand for education strained these systems.<sup>90</sup>

The community recognized the schools tax as an unfair imposition, and repeatedly petitioned the City Council to see the tax code altered so they would be exempt. The black community made repeated efforts to gain public funding for their schools prior to the Civil War, with the largest campaigns in 1839, 1844 and 1850. In 1839 they protested being forced to pay the school tax despite being barred from attendance at the public schools that tax supported. This petition noted “the colored people are not interested in the public schools directly or indirectly.” That protest was registered by the City Council – and denied. In 1844 the black community presented to the Baltimore City Council “an ordinance to exempt colored people from paying school tax.” A second petition was also presented, in which “a large number of colored persons” asked that a portion of the funds

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on-line]; available from <http://www.proquest.com> (publication number AAT 3336912; accessed 4/20/2011).; Philips, *Freedom's Port*, 60.; Ibid., 15.; Ibid., 27.

<sup>90</sup> Morgan, *Selected African American*, 34

raised by the school tax be “appropriated to the support of two schools” for the free black population of the city.<sup>91</sup>

When that petition was denied, the free black community petitioned again in 1850, with the support of a number of prominent white citizens. That petition eloquently made the case that they should

not be taxed for the education of the children of others while their own children are excluded from all opportunities of instruction and that the true interest of the white population, as well as of the colored will be preformed by the instruction of the children of the latter, in such elements of learning as may prepare them to fill, which usefulness and respectability those humble stations in the community to which they are confined by the necessities of their condition.

White supporters of the petition made the case that, “it would be unjust to prohibit it [education], unless a better provision for the same object should be made under the sanction of the city authorities.” The white petitioners were favored that education being extended to the free black community.<sup>92</sup>

The free black communities and their supporters did not tax the inequitable taxation when it came to schools, and protested it eloquently over the years. The 1850 petitioners noted that, “the free colored population of Baltimore is not less than twenty thousand, of which a large number are children or youth of a suitable age to be sent to school.” While the petitioners did not argue in favor of compulsory education, they did make a case that “constant care and large annual expense bestowed upon the public schools or this city fully testify the general opinion entertained of is paramount

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<sup>91</sup> “Philips, *Freedom’s Port*, 27.; Ibid. 227.; “the colored people...” Baltimore City Council, “Protest of Taxing Negros for Support of Schools” (1839) Baltimore City Archives No. 1839-706.; “an ordinance...” [Reported for the Sun] Proceedings of the City Council," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XIV, No. 59, 1/30/1844, 4.; a large number..." [Reported for the Sun] Proceedings of the City Council," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XIV, No. 62, 2/2/1844, 1.

<sup>92</sup> “not be taxed...” Baltimore City Archives, “For Appropriation for Colored Schools,” (1850) Baltimore City Archives, No. 1850-457; “it would be unjust...” Ibid.

importance.” Despite the importance the black population as a whole was placing on education, the city government neglected the education of free black children. The free black community could only do so much to support the education of their children, and that support was stretched to its limit. The property tax levied on the free black population, they argued, was inherently unfair. The petitioners asked that “education of some kind will be provided for a portion at least of the rising colored generation, for an impulse has been given to the subject among the colored population, which will be attended with some results.” Not only would it be “unjust” to prohibit education for free blacks, but also making provision for education would have positive benefits for the Baltimore community as a whole. White petitioners who supported this endeavor noted that education would be a way to prepare free blacks for the “humble stations” they were destined to in life. The portion of the white community that supported the extension of public education to the free black community did so for many of the same reasons that the white public schools were established - as a way to shape and control a threatening population.<sup>93</sup>

The City Council heard these petitions and seems to have given them serious consideration before denying them. The City Council’s grounds for denying these petitions was that they were “perfectly convinced that should the council appropriate any portion of the fund for the purpose solicited, the General Assembly would immediately [respond] by withdrawing the City’s portion of the fund.” Though they passed the responsibility for denying the petition on to the state government, they did leave the free Black community room for hope. The denial of the petition made a point of saying that in

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<sup>93</sup> “the free colored population...” Baltimore City Archives, “For Appropriation for Colored Schools,” (1850) Baltimore City Archives, No. 1850-457; “education of some kind...” Ibid.; Ibid.

their opinion, “legislation upon this subject as of present [original emphasis] is unwise.”

The implication that a petition in a different political climate might succeed may have been empty gesture, and quickly became irrelevant as emancipation and the Civil War irrevocably altered the structure and funding of Baltimore schools.<sup>94</sup>

In the wake of Nat Turner’s rebellion in 1831, large congregations of educated black men and women were regarded with suspicion. Though the education of blacks was not banned in Baltimore, the increased hostility towards black education contributed to these schools keeping a low profile. Schools were associated with churches and with their principles, and were commonly known as such. Thus, it is difficult to trace exactly how many such schools were in existence over time, as a single institution could be known in the communities by several names concurrently, and by several names over time. It is likely, for example, that the African Methodist Church School on Sharp Street, The Watkins School, and the Academy of Free Negro Youth were the same institution. The Bethel Methodist School was one of the oldest and largest free black schools in the city, and William Watkins became, for a time, its most prominent educator. This school produced several prestigious alumni, including Watkins’ niece, the noted poet Francis Watkins.<sup>95</sup>

Religion was central to the educational landscape of antebellum Baltimore. As the City Council consistently and persistently refused to fund African American education,

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<sup>94</sup> “perfectly convinced...” Baltimore City Archives, “For Appropriation for Colored Schools,” (1850) Baltimore City Archives, No. 1850-457; “legislation upon...” Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Carter Goodwin Woodson, *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1968), 169. Woodson, Bettye Gardner’s articles and Leroy Graham’s work (*Baltimore; The Nineteenth Century Black Capital*) and Christopher Philip’s study, *Freedom’s Port; The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790 – 1860* represent the most authoritative studies of black Baltimore during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and black education in the antebellum period.; Woodson, *The Education of the Negro*, 141.

schools organized around community institutions. Church members funded schools for their congregants and their children. These schools came to represent far more than the educational aspirations of their attendees – they were the focal point of abolitionist activities, and fundamental to the development of African American leadership nationwide. These schools organized into the Colored Sabbath School Union of Baltimore in 1859, an organization that, in addition to promoting education in the community, was dedicated to anti-slavery.<sup>96</sup>

Despite regulations on the meetings of free black people, and suspicions of educated black men in the wake of slave uprisings, the schools remained open. For the black community, as for immigrant communities, education was a tool for social advancement. Schools were at the center of community development, and conflicts over schools and school funds helped create a community identity.

### **Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1828 - 1850**

Protestants congregations were not the only religious societies that sponsored the education of the free black community in Baltimore. The Oblate Sisters of Providence was founded in 1828, with the explicit purpose of teaching “colored girls [...] to read so they might be able to recite their catechism lessons.” The sisters, mainly refugees from Saint Dominguez, were the first religious order to include African Sisters and cater to the black community in the United States. Their school – eventually schools – occupied an extremely perilous place in antebellum Baltimore, as both Catholic and Black. Thus, their

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<sup>96</sup> Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 288.

history demonstrates the ways in which religious and racial prejudices overlapped and yet, even when combined, were not enough to keep the school from existing.<sup>97</sup>

Nonetheless, it was certainly not smooth sailing. Forced to look for new premises in 1829, less than a year after the school opened, the sisters had great difficulty finding a new location: "several refused absolutely to let them, when they were informed that it was for a school, and still more, a school for colored children." However, by 1830 the number of students had grown to the point that the Sisters judged it necessary that they expand their premises. This growth only served to bring the school to the attention of hostile elements in the community. During the wave of anti-Catholicism that blew through the city in the early 1830s, the school received threats of sufficient credibility to warrant special protections. The Director of the Order "who had been warned the evening before by a good Catholic of the city" found it necessary to approach the Mayor for protection. Though the Mayor promised "to do all that was demanded of him and to use all his authority to prevent this evil and to maintain peace and tranquility in the city," Father Joubert found these promises insufficient and obtained permission from the Archbishop for himself and two other men to spend the night in the convent to protect the sisters and their students. Shortly thereafter, the sisters addressed themselves to the archbishop, eloquently describing the complexity of their position: "As persons of color and religious at the same time, and we wish to conciliate these two qualities in such a manner as not to appear too arrogant on the one hand and on the other, not to miss the respect which is due to the state we have embraced and the holy habit which we have the honor to wear." The sisters wished for the respect due to their status as nuns, but

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<sup>97</sup> Annals of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Vol. 1, 8/27/1827. Archives of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.

acknowledged their lower social status as black women. Requiring the respect due to their status as members of a religious order while appearing subservient as black women presented them with a unique challenge. Though nothing came of the 1834 threat, the fact that it was made at all, given that the Oblates were hardly one of the larger or more prosperous religious houses, demonstrates the danger inherent in their position in the city.<sup>98</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As the United States grew and changed throughout the early republican period, education became a subject of increasing public concern. The rising numbers of poor, often Catholic immigrants concentrated in the nation's new urban centers was a subject of concern for the ruling Protestant classes. The governing classes looked to education as a means of creating an "American" identity in their own image – white, English-speaking, and Protestant.

Education in Baltimore, as in other major urban centers in the United States, grew haphazardly, and as much from the bottom up as the top down. Even as the state legislature and City Council worked to establish a system of common schools run with public money, churches and charities established free and parochial schools to educate the members of their community. All of these efforts had common goals – to provide children with opportunity for economic opportunity, to instill in them moral values, and to shape them into "Americans." The diversity of educational organizations is in many

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<sup>98</sup> "several refused..." Annals of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Vol. 1, 4/9/1829. Archives of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.; Annals of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Vol. 1, 5/22/1830. Archives of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.; "who had been warned..." Annals of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Vol. 1, 10/8/1834. Archives of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.; "to do all that was demanded..." Ibid.; "as persons of color..." Annals of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Vol. 1, 1835. Archives of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.



ways reflective of the diversity of perspectives of “American,” “American values” and “American citizenship.”

Once established, the common school system grew rapidly in Baltimore, and such schools quickly became a fixture in the city. Authority over those schools became increasingly centralized, and attendance grew. However, the curriculums of the schools did not satisfy all members of the diverse Baltimore community. Catholics increasingly felt that the schools were hostile to their children, and black students were barred from admittance in the common schools. Neither of these populations, however, were exempt from payment of the schools tax. This would set the stage for the debates that would surround the common schools in the antebellum period.

### Part III: Religion and the Baltimore Schools; 1850 – 1860<sup>99</sup>

*There is instinctive repugnance to any association of the church and State, on the part of the American people [...] to blend the two in pecuniary relation, for educational purposes, is to present at once an obnoxious proposition to every man of reflection and experience.*

*The Baltimore Sun, May 5, 1852<sup>100</sup>*

By 1850, Baltimore was a thriving port city and one of the largest urban centers in the United States. The city was home to large Irish Catholic, German Catholic and German Lutheran immigrant populations, as well as an increasingly prominent Jewish population. Moreover, the free black population had continued to climb, with 25,680 free black inhabitants listed in 1860. The growth in immigrant population was part of a larger immigrant wave as the Irish fled the Great Famine and Germanic immigrants the fallout of the 1848 revolution. The tide of immigrants arrived in the major American port cities, including Baltimore, and largely stayed there, where they were a visible presence on the city streets.<sup>101</sup>

The immigrant presence did not go unnoticed or uncommented on, and the reactions of Americans to the new populations had substantive effects on the development of educational systems in America's major cities. The Irish, who were initially the subject of considerable sympathy, were increasingly the subject of suspicion

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<sup>99</sup> The question of religion in the Baltimore public schools during the antebellum period has not been the subject of a unique study. The most detailed account can be found in Hillary Moss' *Schooling Citizens; The Struggle for African American Education in Antebellum America*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 121 – 123. For more on nativism during the antebellum period, Anbinder's *Nativism and Slavery*, Foner's *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* and ray Allen Billington's *The Protestant Crusade; a study of the Origins of American Nativism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1938). For Know-Nothings in Baltimore, Tuska's "Know-Nothingism in Baltimore, 1854 – 1860." For more on antebellum Baltimore, see Gardner's "Antebellum Black Education in Baltimore," and Philips' *Freedom's Port*.

<sup>100</sup> "The Public School Bill," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XXX, No. 144, 5/5/1852, 4.

<sup>101</sup> Philips, *Freedom's Port*, 15. The city was also home to 2,218 slaves in 1860. The African population of Baltimore city represented 13.1% of the whole. This was a slight decline from the 1850 population, which represented 16.7% of the whole. The decline, however, is not representative of a decline in the number of freedmen and slaves resident in the city, but rather due to substantive growth in the white population, which grew from 169,054 in 1850 to 212,418 in 1860. Philips, *Freedom's Port*, 27.; "Arrival of Steamer Washington; Important News From Europe," in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. XXII, No. 121, 4/10/1848, 1.

and hostility as their numbers grew. Their poverty and Catholicism caused them to be perceived as increasingly alien. When their numbers grew sufficiently that they were able to flex newfound political muscle, they became the subject of conspiracy theories and the targets of hostile political movements. The Know-Nothings, American's political Nativist party, became active across the nation, especially in urban centers such as Baltimore.<sup>102</sup>

Schools and educational policy became the center of Nativist movements nationwide. Questions over access to the school funds in urban areas and the nature of curriculums in newly diverse communities became key points of contention in a heated political environment. In Baltimore, the concerns of the Catholic community over the curricula of common schools became a major issue. In response to these concerns, the Catholic community demanded access to the school fund. These actions placed educational policy at the heart of Nativist debates and contributed to the Nativist political victories in 1850s Baltimore. Catholics, immigrants and freedmen fought to establish the right for their belief and traditions to be incorporated into the "American" identity and "American" citizenship.

### **Immigration and the Schools Wars, 1840 - 1860**

Though the publically funded schools had been largely under local control – especially in Baltimore – when they were first established, by the mid 1840s, there was a

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<sup>102</sup> In 1845, the year immigration peaked, German emigration to the United States outpaced Irish immigration two to one. However, the Irish emigrant presence was much more visible, do to their poverty and suspicions about their racial identity. Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 7.; Terry Anbinder's *Nativism and Slavery; The Know-Nothings & and the Politics of the 1850s* provides an excellent survey of the evolution of nativism as a political movement in the antebellum United States. Nativism was about more than anti-Catholicism, but Anbinder demonstrates that anti-Catholicism was the driving force of the movement. This anti-Catholicism grew out of Protestant America's belief that Catholicism, with its presumed blind obedience to a religious hierarchy, was fundamentally at odds with republicanism and democracy. Schools, intended as a vehicle for the assimilation of indigents and immigrants, and centers of moral indoctrination, thus became the focus of intense political discussion In the 1840s and 1850s. Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, xiii.

greater move towards centralization. In 1843-1844, state legislators proposed legislation that state level would not only centralize that administration of publically funded schools in the state, but would grant the new state superintendent of education the power to select textbooks. Though this legislation was defeated, the trend towards the standardization of publically funded schools was evident. As selected textbooks often contained anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic biases, the immigrant communities in urban centers increasingly found public free schools to be hostile environments. With the encouragement of their churches, those immigrants (or descendents of recent immigrants) that were in a position to send their children to school looked for other solutions.<sup>103</sup>

Increased public advocacy for centralization and standardization proved troubling to the growing number of Catholics in the community. Maryland in general and Baltimore specifically had traditionally been home to a large Catholic gentry and mercantile class. There existed a financially and politically powerful Catholic group in Baltimore in the 1850s, which was in the position to challenge the existing educational policies, with the support of the new immigrant population. The assimilationist goals of Baltimore common schools had been created to shape a homogenous “American identity,” and the rise in Nativist hostility led Catholic Baltimoreans to see common education as a threat to their religious and dual-nationalist identities. As the Nativist party gained traction, Catholics moved to assert their claim to a portion of the school fund to educate their children in their faith and traditions.<sup>104</sup>

The ties between Catholic parish, and nationalism were widely understood – *The Baltimore Sun* was in the practice of describing churches in terms of their nationalist ties,

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<sup>103</sup> “Public Education, A Plan for a System,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XIV, No. 46, 1/15/1844, 2.

<sup>104</sup> Spalding, *The Premier See*, 172

such as “St. Patrick’s (Irish)” and “St. Alphonsus (German).” The relationship between national identity and religious identity had grown stronger as the rates of immigration, especially of Catholic immigration, increased through the antebellum period. As foreign-born Americans were increasingly Catholic, native-born Americans could identify themselves as “different” due to their religious identity.<sup>105</sup>

The German schools of Baltimore underwent a dramatic expansion during the 1850s, as the number of German immigrants grew. In 1850, 26,936 German immigrants arrived in Baltimore, and that number had jumped to 43,884 by 1860. There were at least four private English-German schools operating in the city in the 1850s. Indicative of this trend was the Schieb’s School, affiliated with the Zion Lutheran Church, which grew from an enrollment of 315 pupils in 1853, to 418 students in 1861. However, by 1850, Schieb’s School was not the only option for the children of German immigrants whose parents were willing to pay. In 1853, Friedrich Knapp opened his Select School down the street from Schieb’s School, and by the mid-1850s it was considered the most prestigious school in the city. The German Protestant and German secular schools were not the targets of the same amount of hostility as the Irish and Catholic schools. German Protestants worked to retain and maintain their nationalist identity through the transmission of their language, as well as the transmission of their faith. Moreover, the students in attendance at Schieb’s School and Knapp’s Select School were the children of parents wealthy enough to afford tuition.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> “Local Matters” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XXX, No. 124, 4/12/1852, 1.

<sup>106</sup> Katsareas, *The Public and Private English and German Schools*, 100.; *Ibid.*, 104.; Zion Lutheran Church, “The Schieb School,” retrieved from [www.vthistory\\_1800s\\_the\\_schieb\\_school](http://www.vthistory_1800s_the_schieb_school) (Accessed 12/30/2012); Katsareas, *The Public and Private English and German Schools*, 116.

The financial means of many German immigrants played an important role in the way they were perceived by Nativists. Nativist ideology linked the poverty of many immigrants not to their circumstances but to innate flaws. These flaws were attributed to their “race” – a combination of national identity, religious differences and cultural traditions. Emerging educational policies were geared at undermining the perceived flaws of immigrant races by replacing them with “American” virtues. The focus on education as a battleground between Nativists and Catholics (especially Irish Catholics) was not without precedent. Controversies over schools, and the place of religion in public schools were at the center of riots that rocked two other major port cities in the 1840s – New York and Philadelphia. Newspapers in Baltimore covered both of these controversies covered extensively. The New York Schools Controversy and the Philadelphia Bible Riots are indicative of the centrality of public education in the struggle to define “American identity,” and who was eligible for inclusion in the American citizenry.<sup>107</sup>

The rapid growth of the Catholic population in East Coast American cities led to conflicts over the funding of education in the cities and the curricula of publically funded schools. One by one, cities with large immigrant populations confronted Catholic demands regarding public educations. The American Catholic Church grew in power and influence (Baltimore was the “American Rome”) thanks to the increase in immigration. The Church attempted to use its new power to obtain access to public funds for parochial schools. The school wars in New York, led by Archbishop Hughes, are the most public example of this conflict. However, the issue was debated throughout the United States,

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<sup>107</sup> “The Catholic Movement in New York,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. IX, No. 145 11/2/1841, 2 and other articles the same year; “Intelligence from Philadelphia [Correspondence of the Baltimore Sun]” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XIV, No. 98, 3/14/1844 2 and other articles the same year. *The Baltimore Sun* covered the school controversies in New York and Philadelphia extensively, and in both cases editorialized in favor of peaceful discussion and “non-sectarianism” in the schools.

especially in urban centers where immigrant populations were concentrated – and growing. The so-called “School Wars” in New York City were a pivotal moment in the history of religion and public education in the United States, and attracted national attention. By 1840, the public schools in New York had been consolidated under the aegis of the Public School Society, an ostensibly non-sectarian organization that was, in actuality, firmly Protestant. The recognized mission of the society and the schools it ran was to “elevate the character as well as the intellects of the indigent and lower classes;” to change these populations by instructing their children in the American Protestant way. The organization had merged with the Manumission Society in 1832, and therefore included schools for African children. The inclusion of a Protestant Bible and anti-Irish/anti-Catholic texts as well as their attempt to “reform” the habits of immigrant children made the Public School Society a target for the Catholic clergy. In 1840, the newly elected Governor Stewart of New York made universal education, facilitated with public funds, for children of all religions a priority in his inauguration speech. Catholics and other religious groups who felt excluded by the Public School Society seized the opportunity to try to gain public funding for their own schools.<sup>108</sup>

The first challenge to “non-sectarian” publically funded education in an East Coast American city came out of New York. Led by the Irish-born Bishop John Hughes, the Catholic Church and its adherents petitioned to gain public funding for Catholic schools. Hughes argued that the anti-Catholic bias of the New York City public schools had placed undue burden on the Catholic poor; “We were obliged, after paying for public education, to withdraw our children, and provide private schools to save them from the

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<sup>108</sup> Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 9.; “elevate the character...” Lucius Fortuna, “Communications,” *The Mercury and Weekly Journal of Commerce (New York City)*, Vol. XII No. 28, 9/17/1840, 3.; Ravitch *The Great School Wars*, 25.; Ibid., 38.

calamity of total ignorance.” His efforts ignited a firestorm of controversy, both with the Protestant upper class, and within the Catholic community itself. Hughes had argued, with some justification that public schools were part of a larger effort to “wean children from the adoption and pursuit of the Roman Catholic religion.” When the initial efforts failed, the Public School Society offered to remove anti-Catholic bias from textbooks. This was not enough to satisfy Hughes and his adherents, who were supported in their position by the American Catholic hierarchy. Catholic clergy from across the region and their supporters convened in Baltimore to make the Catholic position plain: non-sectarian, or secular, education that did not incorporate Catholicism endangered Catholic religious freedom by exposing Catholic children to other faiths.<sup>109</sup>

Bishop Hughes took this instruction to heart and, over the next two years, fought a constant and persistent battle to force the city to fund Catholic schools. He argued that the public schools as they stood were at both infidel and sectarian; they did not practice or advocate a specific faith, while remaining sectarian by requiring the reading of the Protestant Bible. The anti-Catholic bias of these schools was also apparent in the content of many textbooks, including the popular McGuffey Readers. Common schooling required educating all children of all faiths under a unified standard of learning, which would of necessity have a moral if not a specific religious component. Mandating a common school system was a threat not only to Catholics, but to all religious minorities and to the spirit of American liberty, according to Hughes and the Catholic hierarchy.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> “we were obliged. . .” “The Great Bull of Bishop Hughes to the Catholics of New York, 1841,” in *The Weekly Herald (New York City)*, Vol. VI, No. 11, 12/4/1841, 83.; Ravitch *The Great School Wars*, 42.; “wean children. . .” “Important Movement among the Catholics—a Fight for the School Fund; Article Type: News/Opinion,” in *The Weekly Herald (New York City)*, Vol. IV, No. 34, 8/1/1840, 267.; Ravitch *The Great School Wars*, 44.

<sup>110</sup> Ravitch *The Great School Wars*, 47.; *Ibid.*, 49.



The result of this fight was the opposite of what the Church intended. The New York Schools conflict drew to a close in 1842 with the passage of the McClay Bill and the establishment of the ward system of public schools ran by a newly created State Board of Education. The legislation included a provision that explicitly banned the use of public funds for religious schools. The passage of the McClay Bill was a defeat for the Public School Society as well, which was undermined and gradually subsumed by the democratically elected Board of Education, which continued to be dominated by Protestants. The New York School War of the early 1840s succeeded in raising the profile of religion in school, and, ultimately, in undermining both the involved parties. Law in New York City banned funding for religious schools, and the Protestant elites, which had governed the schools, saw their status and power eroded by the elected Board of Education. All of these events were extensively covered in the Baltimore newspapers, and Hughes visited the city in the 1840s and 1850s to advance his views and advocate for a more militant church stance on the subject of education.<sup>111</sup>

New York was not the only city where conflict between Nativists and immigrants came to a head over the subject of education. As the New York schools controversy wound to a close in 1842, the Bishop of Philadelphia prepared to take up the cause.<sup>112</sup> Unlike New York, where the schools conflict mostly raged through heated debate and newspaper articles, in Philadelphia it erupted into violence. An increasingly vocal (mostly Irish) Catholic population had begun demanding that their children be excused when teachers in public schools read from the Protestant Bible. In 1844, the Bishop asked

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<sup>111</sup> Ravitch *The Great School Wars*, 79.; “[For the Baltimore Sun] Third and Last Public of the First National Council of Catholic Bishops, Assembled In Baltimore,” Vol. XXIV No. 149 5/14/1849, 1.

<sup>112</sup> Bruce Dorsey, "Freedom of Religion: Bibles, Public Schools, and Philadelphia's Bloody Riots of 1844 | www.hsp.org." www.hsp.org. <http://www.hsp.org/node/2911> (accessed 4/22/2011).

that Catholic children either be excused during the reading, or be allowed to read from the Catholic version of the Bible. These requests, however contributed to the spread of a Nativist rumor that Catholics were trying to have the Bible removed from schools altogether. After a Nativist meeting (held “against the fence of the Public School house”) was disrupted by angry Irish Catholics, the city erupted into violence and riots for three days.<sup>113</sup>

The controversy over the exclusion of the Bible from the Philadelphia public schools was covered in the Baltimore papers from the beginning. The *Baltimore Sun* noted on February 29, 1844, that “considerable excitement” had been raised in Philadelphia “on account of the reading of the Bible in the public schools having been discontinued by order of the commissioners.”<sup>114</sup> The *Sun* covered a series of meetings held in Philadelphia on the subject, noting that they were “large, respectable, and orderly throughout.” The question of Bible reading in the schools had, however, “raised a good deal of ill-feeling” in the city. Despite the repeated assurances of the Bishop of Philadelphia, Rev. Francis Kenrick, that it was not the reading of the Bible that that the Catholics were objecting to, but the fact that the Catholic students were not given the option of reading the Catholic Bible, the “ill-feeling” quickly grew to outright hostility and violence. Nativists and Irish Catholics clashed violently on May 3, 1844, and that violence spilled into riots that lasted for the next three days. The *Baltimore Sun* covered these riots extensively. Their coverage reveals the centrality of the schools controversy to

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<sup>113</sup> “The Kensington Massacre,” reprinted in *The Republic, A Magazine for the Defense of Civil and Religious Liberty*, No. 1 (August 1845). Retrieved from [http://hsp.org/sites/default/files/legacy\\_files/migrated/thekensingtonmassacrefinal.pdf](http://hsp.org/sites/default/files/legacy_files/migrated/thekensingtonmassacrefinal.pdf) (accessed 1/22/2011)

<sup>114</sup> “Excluding the Bible,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XIV, No. 86 2/29/1944, 2.

sparking the violence – the initial rallying of the Nativists was “against the fence of the Public School house,” and in the subsequent destruction;

A cry was then raised, of “go to the Nunnery” and a crowd proceeded up Second street to Master, at the corner of which is a Roman Catholic school House. A Bonfire was kindled at one corner of the street and the fence of the School house was set on fire.<sup>115</sup>

Schools were at the center of the violence in Philadelphia – both as the site of Nativist rallying and as a target of Nativist anger. The riots were of considerable interest in Baltimore, and the *Sun* put out an extra issue devoted to the events.<sup>116</sup> Though there were other contributing factors to the violence, and other underlying issues that fed Nativist and immigrant Catholic anger, it was understood in Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York that it had been the schools controversy that had been the spark. The *Baltimore Sun* concluded its coverage by publishing in full, Bishop Hughes remarks on the riots and the subject of religion in the schools.<sup>117</sup>

### **Baltimore Plenary Council, 1852**

The climate of rising hostility towards Catholics and immigrants, and increasing focus on schools and education led the Archbishop to call the first Baltimore Plenary Council in 1852, where questions relating to Catholic and public education dominated the agenda. This meeting of American Catholic Church hierarchy put the subject of education on its agenda and gave it a prominent place in the final rulings of that body. In

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<sup>115</sup> “large, respectable.” “Bible Meeting,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. XIV, No. 97, 3/13/1844, 2.; “raised a good deal...” “Intelligence from Philadelphia” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XIV No. 98, 3/14/1844, 2.; Ibid.; A second nativist riot, less explicitly linked to the question of religion in schools broke out in July of 1844 lasted for another three days. David Montgomery, “The Shuttle and the Cross: Weavers and Artisans in the Kensington Riots 1844,” in *Journal of Social History* (Summer 1972) Vol. 5 No.4, 437; “a cry was then raised...” “Intelligence from Philadelphia” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XIV No. 98, 3/14/1844, 2.

<sup>116</sup> “Continuation of the Philadelphia Riots. The Military Successfully Resisted - Complete Destruction of St. Michael's Church” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. XIV No. 146 5/10/1844, 1.

<sup>117</sup> “Bishop Hughes and the Native Americans,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. XV No. 6 5/23/1844, 1.

the 1852 Plenary Council at Baltimore, America's oldest See, the Church hierarchy agreed that the establishment of Catholic schools in every parish should be a priority, and the establishment of catechism classes in every parish should be mandatory. The bodies that governed public schools, as demonstrated in New York and Philadelphia, were willing to tolerate the reading of the Protestant Bible. If necessary they would offer to ban the use of the Bible in schools all together. To the Catholic Church each of these options was equally undesirable. Only a single way path remained to ensure that children received the education necessary to save their souls – ensuring their attendance at schools run by the church or its representatives.<sup>118</sup>

The Baltimore Catholic community emphasized these perspectives by reprinting a portion of a speech on the subject by Reverend E. McMahon, delivered in Cincinnati in 1853. The Rev. McMahon, in a passionate speech, noted Catholic education is the only alternative for Catholic children; “they cannot conscientiously avail themselves of any other, in consequence of the danger to their religious principles from attending such schools.”<sup>119</sup> The attendance of Catholic children at public schools was of serious concern, as “In the first place, either the Bible is used in them, or it is not. And by the Bible, I mean the Protestant Bible,” and neither option was desirable.<sup>120</sup> Sending Catholic children to public schools imperiled their very souls.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Spalding, *The Premier See*, 155.

<sup>119</sup> Very Reverend E. McMahon, “Catholic Education for Catholics, lectures delivered in Cincinnati, May 11, before the Young Men’s Catholic Literary Institute,” in *The Metropolitan Magazine*, Vol. 1 No. 8 (September 1853), 368.

<sup>120</sup> McMahon, “Catholic Education for Catholics, lectures delivered in Cincinnati,” 373.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 376.

In this climate of increasing hostility and partisanship, the Baltimore Catholic community made its own move to gain funding for the already established Catholic schools in the city, by approaching an existing source of funding: the public school fund.

### **The Kearney Bill and the Baltimore Schools**

The schools' controversies in New York and Philadelphia, and the resolutions of the Baltimore Plenary Council in 1852 contributed to the growth of Nativism as a national political movement. The Know-Nothing party, and its associated Native American and Nativist parties, gained strength in the 1850s on a platform of anti-Catholicism and anti-immigration. The Catholic heritage of Maryland, the prominent places held by many Catholics failed to prevent the Know-Nothings from becoming a powerful force in Maryland politics. The party in Maryland presented its platform by framing the enemy as immigrants, rather than as Catholics, though the rhetoric retained strong anti-Catholic overtones. The party grew in strength leading up to the 1856 elections, which culminated in riots throughout the city in Baltimore. Though the schools question played only a small role in these developments, in petitioning for a share for the schools bill, the Catholic community fed Nativist fears. The battles between the Irish Catholic Democrats and supporters of the Know-Nothings over the 1856 election left four dead and fifty injured, and saw the Know-Nothings sweep into political power in the city.<sup>122</sup> The Know-Nothings took control of the city government.

The Kearney Bill, proposed in 1852 by Martin J. Kearney, the Catholic chairman of the Maryland House Committee on Education, proposed changes to the laws governing state and local funding of education be amended to allow those paying the schools tax select the school to which their portion of the fund would be appropriated.

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<sup>122</sup> Richard F. Selcer, *Civil War America, 1850 – 1875*, (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006), 441.

The proposal, and its supporters asked for “either a distribution of funds per capita amongst all the schools of the same grade in the city according to the number of children attending them; or that each person may be permitted to designate the particular school to which he desires his quota of the tax shall be paid.” Though the intent of this proposal was to divert a portion of the schools fund to Catholic institutions, it may have also funded the religious schools of other denominations around the city, and the free black schools as well.<sup>123</sup>

The debates over the Kearney Bill dragged through the spring of 1853, and added fuel to the rising tide of Nativist sentiments in Baltimore. The bill provoked mass meetings throughout the state, and provided a visible rallying point for Nativist sympathizers. Opposition to parochial schools was a fundamental part of their party platform. The visibility of Kearney’s Bill in 1853 provided them with additional ammunition in their electoral struggles, which cumulated in their victories in 1855 and 1856. The question of public education was very much in the public’s eye. In his 1856 inaugural address, Nativist Mayor Thomas Swann swore to ensure “the proper and efficient direction and employment of our efforts in the development of our school system.” These efforts would be focused on aiding the “mechanical and industrial classes,” of the city – those who had voted a Nativist ticket, and had helped elect him.<sup>124</sup>

The conflict over the Kearney Bill raised the visibility of the Catholic community in Baltimore, and in Maryland. It drew attention to the ways in which the goals of the

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<sup>123</sup> Spalding, *The Premier See*, 172; “either a distribution of funds...” Baltimore City Council, “To Reform Law Governing the School Tax,” (1853) Baltimore City Archives No. 1853 - 139, 1853 – 140, 1853 – 141, 1853 – 142, 1853 – 143, 1853 – 144.

<sup>124</sup> James M. McPhearson, *Battle Cry of Freedom; The Civil War Era*, (Oxford: University Press, 1988), 136.; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 194.; “proper and efficient...” “Local Matters; Inauguration of Mayor Swann,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. XXIV No. 150 11/11/1856, 1.; Ibid.

Catholic community differed from those of the Protestant community, and presented those goals as a threat to a Protestant institution – the public schools. As Jean Baker notes, the question of religion in public schools preoccupied Baltimoreans more than any other Nativist issue – “Baltimoreans interpreted Catholic interest in education as a menacing attempt to indoctrinate young Americans.” Nativist attention to the question of public education helped establish public schools as a basic, fundamental American institution, the curricula of which should reflect core “American” values. Though the debates over the Kearney Bill had died down by the time the Nativist party reached the height of its power in 1855 and 1856, questions over religion in education played an important role in laying the groundwork for those victories.<sup>125</sup>

Despite having been vocal in protests against the schools tax in the past, the free black community in antebellum Baltimore remained silent on the question of the Kearney Bill. There could have been several reasons for this. When the intent of the Kearney Bill – to fund Catholic schools – became clear, the legislation became immensely unpopular. The free black community may have wanted to avoid being associated with that group. That community was already experiencing additional constraints due to the Fugitive Slave Act which encouraged kidnappings and constrained the movements of free blacks and slaves who worked out. Some Marylanders made additional attempts to undermine their freedom and rights as free people during the period. Moreover, many Catholics – especially Irish Catholic immigrants – were vocally proslavery. Thus, it would have been especially galling to support legislation that had been designed primarily for Catholic benefit. Whatever the cause, despite their demonstrated willingness to agitate on behalf of

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<sup>125</sup> “Baltimore interpreted...” Baker, *Ambivalent Americans*, 19.; Ibid.

their schools in the past, during the schools controversy the free black community remained silent.<sup>126</sup>

Protestants, secularists, and Nativists all vehemently opposed the Kearney Bill. The Jewish community, after a “free interchange of opinions” resolved that they “were opposed to the school bill on the grounds that it would lead to the destruction of the present school system in the city of Baltimore.” Only two outcomes could arise from the Bill – either the dilution of the school fund until it was all but worthless, or the introduction of religious doctrine into Baltimore’s public schools. Those who opposed the bill argued that it would encourage sectarianism, that it would give public funds to institutions not subject to public scrutiny, and that its purpose was to break up the public school system, which was only just beginning to be regarded as a treasured establishment in Baltimore. Neither possible outcome was desirable, and each would increase sectarian divisions and hostility in the city. These debates clarified the Baltimorean view of religion in the schools: “We want no sectarian in education – the State is Christian and the people are Christian, but the state neither confirms nor denies the doctrine of any sect – it is Christian, not sectarian.”<sup>127</sup>

To these claims, the petitioners argued that they were merely insisting that “if a tax is levied, it shall be fairly distributed” that “it is no part of the State to interfere with the church or the sects – nay, it is the boast of the people of this country that all religious societies are equal before the state,” that they would be willing to submit their schools to

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<sup>126</sup> Moss, *Schooling Citizens*, 121 – 123.

<sup>127</sup> “were opposed...” “The Hebrews and the Public Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XXX No. 142, 4/14/1852, 1.; “[Reported for the Baltimore Sun] Meeting for the Preservation of the Public Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. XXXII No. 126, 4/12/1853, 1.; “we want no...” “[Reported for the Baltimore Sun] Meeting for the Preservation of the Public Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. XXXII No. 126, 4/12/1853, 1.



inspections to ensure that “the school is fairly kept,” and that the public school system could not be broken by their proposal. The Catholic community argued that their attempts to gain access to the school fund were only just, given the “bigotry and prejudice” which they suffered in the common schools. The majority of the Catholic community recognized that “the prospects of the Church hierarchy for getting their fingers on the State is not good,” and neither were their chances of successfully changing the “character of instruction or textbooks.” Nonetheless, the Baltimore Catholic community diligently pursued the effort.<sup>128</sup>

The Kearney Bill provoked controversy and conflict throughout the city, and became a defining political issue. A mass meeting was held at the Maryland Institute to protest the bill, while Archbishop Kendrick, who presented the City Council with a memorial “praying for the reform of the public schools,” moved the Catholic community. The schools issue became the primary issue in the Catholic community, and was discussed at length in the two major Catholic publications in Baltimore – *The Catholic Mirror* and *The Metropolitan Magazine*. The *Metropolitan Magazine* published a series of articles on the subject of education in general, and parochial education in particular. They argued that, fundamentally, the power to tax for the purposes of education was unconstitutional, as it “is essential to liberty of conscience, that parents be allowed to train up their children in the religious belief which they deem essential to salvation.” The state, the Catholic Church argued, had no right to determine what was true and impose that truth on children. *The Catholic Mirror* ran a series of articles in support of the

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<sup>128</sup> “it is no part...” Baltimore City Council, “To Reform the Law Governing the School Tax,” (1853) Baltimore City Archives, No. 1853 – 640.; “bigotry and...” “The Common School System, How it is Defended,” in *The Catholic Mirror*, Vol. IV No.2 (1853), 1.; “character of instruction...” Ibid., 2

Kearney Bill, and against the public schools, both because of the schools' inclusion of religion and their exclusion of it.<sup>129</sup>

The Catholic community petitioned the mayoral candidates to encourage them to reveal their position on the Bill before the election in 1854. When the candidates dodged the question, there was talk of running a third candidate to favor the Kearney Bill. This course would have fed opponents fears that the Catholic community was dragging sectarianism into the political arena as had the actions of Bishop Hughes during the New York schools controversy. Perhaps in recognition of this, a third party candidate never materialized.<sup>130</sup>

The Kearney Bill eventually died in committee, but the controversy over the legislation resulted in some efforts from the public common schools to accommodate Catholic students. In 1856, the annual report of the commissioners of Baltimore public schools noted “the Bible is used in our schools both [...] as an official record and as a class book.” The schools, however, no longer used the King James version alone: “The Protestant version is read to the children of Protestant parents in one of the rooms, while the Douay version is read to the children of Roman Catholic parents in another apartment.” The Baltimore School Commissioners pointed to this concession as a truly “American” gesture: “this respect for varying sentiments in religion is entertained and practiced in view of the enlarged liberty of opinion allowed to every American citizen.” This gesture was not enough for the Catholic Church hierarchy, which continued to advise Catholic parents to send their children to parish schools. However, as the nation

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<sup>129</sup> “praying for...” Adams, ed. “Economic History – Maryland and the South,” 200.; “it is essential to...” “State Education,” *The Metropolitan Magazine*, Vol. 1. No. 2 (March 1853), 80 – 83.;Ibid., 81.

<sup>130</sup> Adams, ed. “Economic History – Maryland and the South,” 200.; Ibid., 201.

drew closer to the brink of Civil War, questions of educational policy, especially as they pertained to religion, faded into the background.<sup>131</sup>

### **The Know-Nothings in Baltimore, 1850 - 1860**

The Baltimore schools controversy provoked by the introduction of the Kearney Bill and supporting petitions affected far more than Baltimore school curricula. Tyler Anbinder noted “voters supported [nativist] tickets only when religious controversies erupted or ethnic violence flared.” In Baltimore, and in Maryland, the Kearney Bill served as one of the sparks. A religious controversy fueled by ethnic tensions, the Baltimore schools controversy laid the groundwork for the Know-Nothing victories in the mid-1850s.<sup>132</sup>

The Irish immigrants who arrived in the 1840 and 1850s were mostly impoverished Catholics, with religious and cultural traditions of alien to Protestant Americans. Though the plight of the Catholics of Ireland during the famine aroused sympathy, as impoverished, diseased men and women by the thousands poured into the cities of the east coast, sentiment took a decidedly different turn. The numbers of the immigrants, their poverty, their alien faith and their habits aroused Nativist ire. Irish immigrants and their descendents formed the Hibernian Society in Baltimore in the early 19th century. Like the German Society, they were the recipients of portions of the immigrant tax of 1834, which they were directed to use in their charitable efforts. The

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<sup>131</sup> “the Bible is...” “Local Matters; The Public Schools, Annual Report,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XL No. 72 2/7/1857, 1.; “the Protestant version...” Ibid. ; “this respect...” Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 14.

City Council periodically appropriated funds for the charity and exempted these organizations from taxes as the volume of immigrants increased.<sup>133</sup>

The Kearney Bill became the focus of both sides as the question of sectarianism in politics became a central question of political discourse in Baltimore. Each side accused the other of dragging religion into politics. Catholics and the political opponents of Nativists denounced Know Nothings for using the Kearney Bill to introduce religion to politics, while the Know Nothings argued that the Kearney Bill itself was what brought religion into political discourse. The question of religion, schools, and the standing of the immigrant community was therefore central to the political discourse of Baltimore in the years leading to the Civil War. The link between education, religion and the citizenship of immigrants reflected the ongoing questions of American identity and American citizenship.

Baltimore had a history of Nativism and Nativist riots. The movement had previously peaked in 1839 and 1844, in both cases with violent results. The new wave of Nativist sentiment was part of a national trend, and was fueled by the newly aggressive stance of the Catholic Church in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. The first Know-Nothing meeting in Baltimore was held in August 1853. This was shortly after Kearney's proposal was put before the legislature, and at the peak of the Catholic community's agitation over the schools tax and school curriculum in Baltimore. The continuing agitation of the Catholic Church on these subjects gave credence to Know-Nothing charges of conspiracy and power-mongering, and fueled a rise in violence and hostilities.

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<sup>133</sup> Baltimore City Council, "German Society of Maryland for the Importation of Passengers," (1834) Baltimore City Archives No. 1834-606.

The city erupted again into mob violence around elections throughout the period – and the Know-Nothings benefited most.<sup>134</sup>

Questions of religion in state-funded education were integral to the Nativist political movement. A founding principal of the “Order of the Star Spangled Banner,” – commonly known as the Know-Nothings – was opposition to Bishop Hughes and his advocacy of public funding for Catholic Schools. In Baltimore, the first Know-Nothing mass meeting was held mere months after the Kearney Bill was debated in the state legislature. The two key talking points of that meeting were “the Public Schools as they are,” and “the eternal separation of Church and State.” Secondary topics were “The Bible in our Public Schools” and “we ought to become more Americanized.” The schools controversies of the 1840s and 1850s had helped solidify a Nativist concept of “Americanness” that was white, Protestant and native-born – and no others need apply.<sup>135</sup>

The Know-Nothing party nominated a complete municipal ticket in 1854. Most initially considered the ticket to be a long shot. However, by cultivating anti-Catholic feeling in the city, fueled in part by the Catholic stance on public schools, they succeeded in electing their candidate to the Mayoralty, and took the majority of the City Council. They lost that majority in 1855, but gained legislative seats on the state level. Violence pervaded the 1856 elections, and the Know-Nothing party succeeded in gaining the majority in the state legislature. Though the question of educational policy and religion in the schools gradually lost prominence in the Know-Nothing Party platform, it had been a fundamental plank on which they built their early successes. The Know-Nothings

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<sup>134</sup> Benjamin Tuska, “Know-Nothingism in Baltimore, 1854 – 1860,” in *The Catholic Historical Review*, retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25012185>, (Accessed 4/20/2012), 220.

<sup>135</sup> “the public schools...” “Local Matters; Mass Meeting in the Square,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XXIII, No. 79 8/19/1853, 1.; “The Bible in...” Ibid.

retained power in the city (and much of the state) through 1859, and the schools debates helped put them there.<sup>136</sup>

The schools question was one of several contributing factors to the rise of Know-Nothings in Baltimore. However, as in New York and Philadelphia, it was one of the more incendiary contributing factors. Local and state authorities shaped the curricula of the public schools to reflect what those governments determined to be true. The truth that they decided to teach was wrapped in questions of American identity and who was eligible for American citizenship. The Know-Nothing party and nativist movements argued that native-born Americans should govern America – preferably white, Protestant, native-born Americans. They successfully barred Catholic educational systems from access to the public school funds in New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia and across the country. The Catholic position was not only about their belief that children should be taught their faith. They also argued that their faith did not render them ineligible for inclusion as American citizens, and that being Catholic did not mean that they lacked a claim to the American identity.<sup>137</sup>

### **Loyola College, 1852 – 1860**

The confrontations between the Catholic Church and the public schools led to changes in the existing Catholic schools. Catholic schools were still far more decentralized than the public schools, which were increasingly part of an organized system. The Catholic schools, were run by a variety of religious orders and administered by the numerous national parishes that made up the city. Nonetheless, when necessary,

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<sup>136</sup> Tuska, “Know-Nothingism in Baltimore, 1854 – 1860,” 223.; Ibid., 224.; Ibid.; For a more complete history of the Know-Nothings in Maryland, see Jean H. Baker, *Ambivalent Americans: The Know Nothing Party in Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

<sup>137</sup> “State Education,” in *The Metropolitan Magazine* (March 1853) Vol. 1 No. 2, 81; Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 81;

Catholic orders cooperated to ensure that a Catholic education would be available for those who wanted it.

Loyola College represents an outstanding example of a Catholic school in transition during the antebellum period. Jesuits founded the College in 1852 when St. Mary's College determined that it would now only educate students interested in pursuing the priesthood. St. Mary's College became St. Mary's Seminary, and Loyola College opened to serve the needs of these secular students. Though Loyola was a "college," its student body ranged in age from young children to young adults. The College accepted students at both the secondary and the collegiate level. Although Loyola admitted students of other faiths, and exempted them from the religious instruction required of its Catholic students, Catholics were not extended similar courtesy in other schools. In 1851, the state legislature had "restricted admission of Catholics at other institutions." That same legislature, however, voted to provide limited state support for Loyola College in 1853. The high quality of education offered by Loyola and similar schools, which provided education in "English, Latin, Greek, arithmetic, geography, history, higher grammar, belles-letters, rhetoric and higher mathematics, rational philosophy and physical sciences," and the class of students in attendance mitigated its affiliation with the Catholic Church.<sup>138</sup>

Loyola College exempted non-Catholic students from religious services and catechism classes, but required all students to take "History of the Bible" as a rudiment of education, and all students competed for the "Christian Doctrine Award." The religious requirements for Catholic students were minimal in the early years of Loyola College,

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<sup>138</sup> Varga, *Baltimore's Loyola*, 26.; Ibid.; "restricted admission..."; Ibid., 26.; "English, Latin, Greek..." Rev. John J. Ryan, S.J. *Historical Sketch of Loyola College, Baltimore* ([N.P.], 1903), 10.

and grew stricter in the face of rising Nativist hostility. The 1856 - 1857 College Catalog indicates that Catholic students were required to attend Mass. The religious affiliation of the school only grew clearer and more defined in the early years of the Civil War and after.<sup>139</sup>

### **Religion and the Colored Schools of Baltimore, 1850 – 1860**

The Catholic immigrant population was not the only Baltimore demographic that was dissatisfied with the public schools. The free black population of the city had grown steadily through the antebellum period. Barred from attending the public schools – and increasingly from the parochial and charity schools as well – free blacks still had to pay the schools tax. Not only did this strike the community as unjust, but the persistent exclusion of the “children of colored parents” from the public schools was a potent symbol of that population’s exclusion from American citizenship and inability to claim successfully to be part of the American citizenry.<sup>140</sup>

Like immigrant Catholics, freedman turned to their churches to compensate for the inadequacies in the educational choices available to them. While the nationalist Catholic schools were the products of the choices of their students and their parents – Catholic students were never banned from public schools – thus, the free black community turned to the churches out of necessity. In 1833 the African American community supported four schools, all of which were affiliated with a religious organization. By 1860, 25,680 free blacks and 2,218 slaves called Baltimore home. This

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<sup>139</sup> “1855 – 1856 Loyola College Catalog,” (1855 – 1856) Loyola University Archives; “1856 – 1857 Loyola College Catalog,” (1856 – 1857) Loyola University Archives, 10.

<sup>140</sup> Baltimore Board of School Commissioners, *39<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Commissioners of the Public Schools*, (Baltimore: John Cox, City Printer., 1868) 69; Throughout the antebellum period and after, it was common for African children to be referred to as “children of colored parents, with as much, if not more, frequency than they employed the phrase “colored children.” Children were identified as “colored” based on the identity of their parents more than on inherent differences.



was the largest population of free Africans in the United States. Before the Civil War, Baltimore's large free black community supported a complex network of mutual aid. This included both Sunday schools and more traditional academic schools. Religions affiliation indicated the racial and social status of individuals and families throughout Baltimore. But in the black community, it was a crucial network of support and means for survival and advancement.<sup>141</sup>

The free black community had historically protested being taxed for the support of schools their children could not attend. They, and their supporters in the white community, petitioned for the establishment of a colored school with public funds, arguing

The free colored population of Baltimore is not less than twenty thousand of which a large number are children or youth of a suitable age to be sent to school. [...] the education of the free colored children has heretofore been neglected, except for so far as the scanty means and limited intelligence of their parents or friends have thrown few opportunities their way.

If such a school could not be established, they went on to argue, that they should be freed from the burden of the schools tax, as they derived no benefit from it. This petition was denied by the City Council on the grounds that diverting a portion of the school fund for the establishment of public schools would upset the Maryland General Assembly. The petitioners were advised that an attempt to grant the petitioners request was “at present, [original emphasis] is unwise.”<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Varle, *A Complete View of Baltimore*, 33.; Wolff, "The Problem of Race in the Age of Freedom," 233.

<sup>142</sup> “the free colored...” Baltimore City Council, “For Appropriation for Colored Schools,” (1850) Baltimore City Archives No. 1850 – 457.; Ibid.; Baltimore City Council, “Establishment of Colored Schools Denied” Baltimore City Archives No. 1850-822.; “at present...” Ibid.

The *Baltimore Sun* indicates that there was some degree of popular support for the petitions of the community and its supporters. In May 1852, the *Sun* published an editorial on the Kearney Bill, which made it a point to vocalize support for the petitions of the colored population. They wrote in support of the freedman's exemption from the school tax, arguing that "the colored people have no right of access to a public school at all; as it is not likely that such institutions will be established for their convenience it is just that they should be exempt from taxation." In the same article, however, the author makes a point of distinguishing the petition of the free black community from the Kearney Bill: "there is no force in the objection that those who choose to send their children to other schools have an equal right to exemption with the colored population." The free black community may not have been publically vocal in support of the Bill, but they had repeatedly made efforts to gain exemption from the schools tax. Their white supporters saw the Kearney Bill as an opportunity to make that case again; however, no action was taken on their proposal.<sup>143</sup>

The most reliable account of the free black schools in antebellum Baltimore comes from the 1859 account of the Reverend Noah Davis, who was the pastor of the Saratoga Street African Baptist Church. His 1859 autobiography lists 2,665 students in attendance at 20 church-run schools in that year. These institutions and the educational system that the Black community had cobbled together in antebellum Baltimore impressed Davis. He found:

that the great mass of colored professors of religion were Methodists, whose piety and zeal seemed to carry all before them. There were, at that time, some ten or eleven colored Methodist churches, one Episcopalian, one Presbyterian;

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<sup>143</sup> "the colored people..." "The Public School Bill," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XXX, No. 144, 5/5/1852, 2.; "there is no force..." Ibid

and one little Baptist church, located upon the outskirts of the city. Most of the Methodist churches were large and influential; and the Presbyterian church had one of the best Sabbath schools for colored children in the city.”

The free black community valued education and their religious organizations provided a vehicle for obtaining it.<sup>144</sup>

The quality of free black education in Baltimore was such that it attracted students from all over Maryland and from much of the Upper South. The Reverend Thomas Henry, an itinerant African Methodist Episcopal preacher, was in Baltimore, dropping his son off at the Watkins School in 1859 when he learned of John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry. Baltimore represented an opportunity for freedom, education, and advancement for free black men and women across the region. Though Baltimore was a slave city, the mobility of urban slaves, the large free black population, and a strong abolitionist sentiment created a unique atmosphere and a unique community.<sup>145</sup>

Education, religion, and abolitionism were tightly intertwined and linked to the collective identity of the free black community in antebellum Baltimore. Religion was at the core of communal activity, including sponsoring the educational efforts. Sunday Schools and church activity often served as the basis for education. Interfaith conflict paled in significance against the bigger struggles of the community to survive. Though social status was attached to several schools – the Watkins school in particular had an impressive reputation – the opportunity to obtain any education superseded other differences.

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<sup>144</sup> Davis, *A Narrative of the Life of Rev. Noah Davis*, 84.; “that the great...” Ibid., 35.

<sup>145</sup> Jean Libby, ed. *From Slavery to Salvation; The Autobiography of Rev. Thomas Henry of the A.M.E. Church* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), 52.

### **Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1850 - 1860**

St. Frances Academy, the school of the Oblate Sisters of Providence followed a different trajectory than many schools run by the black community. That school was again the focus of the Nativist hostilities in the late 1850s. As the Sisters moved to take possession of a new building for the school and convent in October 1857, they came under attack. Two sisters were staying at the new residence when “at one o'clock they were suddenly awoke by a loud knock which was repeated they lit the lamp and descended where on opening the middle door [...] the panel of the front door had been knocked out leaving a place large enough for a person to enter.” The Sisters requested the aid of Father Clark, who appealed to the Mayor for protection. What protection provided – if any – was insufficient, as that night “at about 6 o'clock they made another attempt as the night before and threw in the whole door.” The Sisters fled and took refuge with a nearby Catholic family, and abandoned the property the next day. They were not welcome in that neighborhood, and “by all appearances it was not possible for them to remain and commence a school in a place where they apparently would be continually attacked.” Despite the Oblate Sisters efforts to find a non-controversial place in the complex racial, economic and religious environment of Baltimore, they continued to represent a threat to the existing authority on multiple levels – they were black, free, Catholic and women.<sup>146</sup>

Unlike the black schools associated with protestant denominations, the Oblates emphasized the religious and proselytizing mission of their school, and their trajectory and expansion reflects their ideals. The 1850s was a period of expansion for the Oblate

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<sup>146</sup> “at one o'clock...” “Annals of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Volume 2” 10/11/1857. Archives of the Oblate Sisters of Providence; “at about 6 o'clock...” Ibid.; “by all appearances...” Ibid.

Sisters and the black Catholic community in Baltimore. St. Francis Boy's School was opened in 1852, St. Michael's School in 1857 and St. Joseph's in 1858. Though the Oblates were by no means a wealthy order, they pursued their mission of educating, and converting the free black community diligently, and at serious risk to their own well-being. Although the Oblate Sisters of Providence admitted students of all creeds, their original purpose was to educate "colored girls" for the reading of catechism. The proselytizing core of their mission appeared successful, as a number of students regularly converted. For the parents who sent their students to this school, religion was an important part of the education their children were receiving, but not the only important facet. The same was true of the Protestant schools – religious education was important, and in many ways central to the curriculum of these schools. But of equal or greater importance was the education itself.<sup>147</sup>

### **Conclusion**

By 1860, the total white population in Maryland was 599,860, and of these approximately 11% (77,536) was foreign born. In Baltimore, the total white population was 212,418 by 1860. Of those, the foreign born population was 52,497 (about 24%), and of that group, 32,613 were German and 15,536 were Irish. Each of these groups was invested in the development of the public school system in Baltimore City, and each had its own vision of the direction those schools should take, who should be able to attend, and what subjects should be included in the curriculum. These perspectives were not only

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<sup>147</sup> M. Reginald Gerdes, "To Educate and Evangelize: Black Catholic Schools of the Oblate Sisters of Providence (1828 – 1880) *U.S. Catholic Historian*, Vol. 7 No. 2/3 (Spring – Summer 1988), 190-192; "Annals of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, Volume I" 11/1/1835; 4/1/1839. Archives of the Oblate Sisters of Providence.

indicative of community values, but also of the development of what would eventually become an inclusive “American” citizenship and “American identity.”<sup>148</sup>

As schools in major urban centers grappled with the role of religion in the antebellum period, they were at the front lines of a conscious struggle to define American identity. The general purpose was to provide moral instruction as well as general education. However, the growth in the Catholic, dual-nationalist populations challenged the Protestant view of what moral instruction entailed. Disputes over the place of religion in school, the role of the Bible in the classroom, and the distribution of funds raised for the support of public schools fueled the growth of Nativism. The national political movement, represented by the Know-Nothing party, was fed by a variety of factors arising from the rise in immigration, but the school wars were certainly a contributing factor.

As the nation raced towards Civil War, the larger conflict eventually overshadowed the schools conflicts in New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore. However, the questions they raised- about what, exactly it meant to be American and who was qualified for citizenship – was as central to the school wars as it was to the Civil War. In many ways, the school conflicts raised questions that the Civil War would answer with years of bloodshed. What did it mean to be American? Who was qualified? Was religion a barrier to citizenship? Was race? These questions and more swirled around the schools controversies, and later around the Civil War.

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<sup>148</sup>Adams, ed. “Economic History – Maryland and the South” 190; Ibid., 190-191

#### **Part IV: Race and the Baltimore Schools, 1860 – 1872**

*That he may properly appreciate the new relations to which he is advanced, the colored man should unquestionably possess an education [...] there is nothing to be apprehended from the education of any part of the community. On the contrary, the enlightenment of the least portion, [...] proportionately improves the whole.*

*Address of Lt. Governor Cox, in The Baltimore Sun. January 11, 1866*<sup>149</sup>

The American Civil War and its aftermath were a period of dramatic change for the nation as a whole, and for the African American community more specifically.

Baltimore, as “the southernmost city in the north and the northernmost city in the south” occupied a unique place in the Civil War. Maryland did not secede in the Civil War, however, the decision to remain in the Union came only after the intervention of Union troops. Baltimore, in 1861, was the site of the first fatalities of the Civil War, during the Pratt Street riots, and spent the war under military rule. The suspension of *habeas corpus*, instituted by Lincoln, was broadly applied, and the city was reshaped by the military occupation during the war.<sup>150</sup>

Baltimore’s unique circumstances during the Civil War set it apart from the Southern states in the aftermath of that conflict. Despite the parallels between Baltimore and Confederate cities, such as New Orleans, occupied by Northern soldiers, the trajectory of the city both during and after the war was very different. Because Maryland did not secede, Baltimore was able to continue many of its normal civic operations during the course of the war, albeit under the constraints of occupation. Thus, Republican government willing and able to enact liberal policies, especially in regards to racial

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<sup>149</sup> “Maryland Legislature. Addresses of Lt. Governor Cox and Speaker Frazier,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LVII No. 46, 1/11/1866, 1.

<sup>150</sup> Rockman, *Scraping By*, 232.; Henry Ezratty, *Baltimore in the Civil War; The Pratt Street Riot and a City Occupied*, (Charleston: The History Press, 2010), 28.; *Ibid.*, 96.

matters characterized the war years in Baltimore and in Maryland. The Maryland constitution of 1864 was written under these circumstances.<sup>151</sup>

As the war drew to a close, however, Maryland's status as a Union state exempted it from the Reconstruction policies that went into effect across the South. As Union troops left Maryland and Baltimore, and military rule dissolved, Democrats quickly regained power in the state, and set about undoing the work of their Republican predecessors. In 1867, Maryland passed its' third constitution in eight years, and was effectively "redeemed" years before any other Confederate or southern-sympathizing state.<sup>152</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the preeminent subject preoccupying those concerned with educational matters in Baltimore during the Civil War years was the question of "colored education." Specifically, the role of the public schools in educating the black children of the city as that population was slowly incorporated into the American identity and their claim to American citizenship was legitimized. Debates over the roles of state and local authority in educating the children of colored parents dominated discussions about schools and educational policy between 1860 and 1872, even as the rates of immigration – especially Catholic immigration – began to climb again, drawing attention back to the perennial question of religion in the public schools.

### **Public Education in Baltimore, 1860 - 1864**

Despite the constraints of military rule and the periodic threat of invasion, life went on in Baltimore during the Civil War. Increasingly, the public schools were part of

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<sup>151</sup> Glenn F. Williams, "Under the Despot's Heel," in *American's Civil War* Vol. 13 No. 12 (May 2000), 1. Both the Mayor and the Chief of Police were arrested under the suspension of habeas corpus, as were 29 pro-secession legislators, and 17 newspaper owners and editors. At least 2,094 prisoners were detained under this ruling during the war.

<sup>152</sup> Wolff, "The Problem of Race in the Age of Freedom," 2-5



daily life and public discourse. Education was not mandatory, and attendance rates at the public schools rose and fell with the seasons. By 1860, public schools had become a public institution, with eighty-six schools operating in the city, serving a student body of “almost 13,000.” The schools were fundamental to the maintenance of the secular religion of civic virtue and republican values.<sup>153</sup>

Thus, the schools in Baltimore once again found themselves at the center of discussions of American identity, government-sponsored truth and the meaning of citizenship. Schools were hardly the Baltimore City Council’s priority during the Civil War, and the military occupation of Baltimore went a long way towards minimizing controversies over pro-Union ideology in the schools. Nonetheless, questions of schools and educational policy rose periodically during the war, and the ways in which they were handled reflect both the increasing prominence of the schools as a civic institution and the goals of the Republican City Council.<sup>154</sup>

The primary goal of the Republican City Council during the war years was to remove Confederate sympathizers from all positions of influence in the city. Though the school board stated their intent to “keep [the schools] free from any bias of sect or party—to shut out all outside controversy and excitement, and to distribute their benefits to all alike, without regard to creed, nativity or condition,” it soon became clear that secessionist feeling would not be tolerated in the classroom. In 1862, the City Council issued an order that the loyalty of teachers to the Union should be examined, and that all those who “expressed views inimical to the Federal government” should be dismissed.

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<sup>153</sup> See Barbra Jeanne Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the 19<sup>th</sup> Century*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).; Wolff, “Race in the Age of Freedom,” 233.; Keastle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 61.

<sup>154</sup> Ezratty, *Baltimore in the Civil War*, 96

The Commissioners justified this position on the grounds that “rumors injurious to the teachers of the public schools are afloat in the community.” The President of the school board noted that he was “opposed to the introduction of any outside matter into the public schools” - politics was not part of a “good English education,” and “they should be so conducted as not to offend any shade of opinion, or any case of citizens.” Politics was far too contentious to be included in the curricula of the schools. These teachers should exercise their influence to improve the morals of their students, should not their political views.<sup>155</sup>

Despite a lack of specific incendiary instances, the Republican School Commissioners took the opportunity to remove Confederate sympathizers from the schools. The investigation by the School Commissioners in 1862 revealed “no specific charge against an individual teacher.” This did not mean that the commissioners believed that there had been no disloyal actions by the teachers in the public schools – but rather that “the offense alluded to has been of limited extent and rare occurrence.” The board agreed that any further reports of disloyalty or improper behavior from teachers should be investigated promptly. As an additional measure, at the annual “election” of teachers in June 1862, a resolution to give preference to “candidates [...] with the requisite loyalty to the government” passed. The teachers were hired behind “closed doors.” As these new teachers were hired, a small number of teachers were found to have introduced “improper discussion or sentiments” into their classrooms and were quietly dismissed.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> “to keep...” *Report* (1862) quoted in Wolff, “Race in the Age of Freedom,” 238.; “expressed views...” “Local Matters” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. L, No. 67, 2/5/1862, 1.; “rumors injurious.” Ibid.; “opposed to...” Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> “no specific charge...” “Local Matters, The Public School Board and Disloyal Teachers,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. L No. 109, 3/26/1862, 1.; “the offense alluded...” Ibid.; “candidates with the...” Ibid.; “improper sentiments...” Wolff, “Race in the Age of Freedom,” 239.

Merely giving preference to Unionist candidates was not enough, however. A more explicit declaration of loyalty was soon required from all public servants in the state - including teachers. In Baltimore, they went one step further, and crafted loyalty regulations specifically for teachers. These regulations made grounds for dismissal to “express his or her gratification with the reverse of Federal arms, [...or...] manifested or expressed any sympathy with those engaged in this rebellion or depreciated the cause of the Union.” These procedures were carried out through the war years. By the 1865, Baltimore City had dismissed 26 teachers for refusing to take the loyalty oath.<sup>157</sup>

An unspoken consequence of the loyalty oath and loyalty test administered to teachers in Baltimore during the Civil War was the increasing concentration of power in the hands of the school commissioners and the City Council. In 1864, a proposal passed centralizing the power to hire (and fire) teachers in their hands. The Civil War placed the schools in Baltimore even more firmly on the road to centralization and standardization.<sup>158</sup>

### **Maryland Constitution, 1864**

The Republican Party was determined to take maximum advantage of the power afforded to them during the Union occupation of Maryland during the Civil War. Among

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<sup>157</sup> Wolff, “Race in the Age of Freedom,” 239. The loyalty oath required of public servants indicated that the undersigned individual would “will bear true allegiance to the United States, and support and sustain the Constitution and Laws thereof; that I will maintain the National sovereignty paramount to that of all State, County or Corporate powers; that I will discourage, discountenance and forever oppose Secession, Rebellion, and the disintegration of the Federal Union; that I disclaim and denounce all faith and fellowship with the so-called Confederate States and Confederate armies, and pledge my property and my life to the sacred performance of this my solemn oath of allegiance to the Government of the United States.” copy of oath taken by Michael Lindner, July 6, 186[2?], Item 1770, box 33, ser.2, RG 9, Baltimore City Archives, quoted in Wolff, “Race in the Age of Freedom,” 239.; “express his or her...” “Local Matters, The Test of Loyalty,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LIV, No. 101, 3/12/1864, 1.; Wolff, “Race in the Age of Freedom,” 239.

<sup>158</sup> “Proceedings of the City Council, Second Branch,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LVI, No. 101, 3/16/1865, 4.

other things, they took advantage of their majority in government and the suspension of *habeas corpus*, which silenced their opponents. In the absence of a combative opposing party strong to summon a new Constitutional Convention. The legislative and governmental choices they made during this period further demonstrate the ways in which Maryland's historical trajectory during the Civil War and Reconstruction differ from that of the Confederate South. While the Southern states were operating under the last conservative governments they would have for years, Maryland enjoyed a brief period of Republican liberalism. The legislation passed during this period had powerful implications for the black population of the state and for educational policy at the state and local level. The 1864 Constitution reflects the beliefs and preoccupations of the Republican government – among them slavery, emancipation, and education.<sup>159</sup>

The most important development from the 1864 Constitution was the abolition of slavery in the state of Maryland. In many ways, the Constitutional convention was called for this very purpose. As a Union state, Maryland was not subject to the 1862 Emancipation Proclamation, and the 1851 Constitution had forbidden passage of “any law abolishing the relation of master or slave, as it now exists in this State.” Thus, it was not until the Constitution of 1864 took effect that slavery in Maryland could be, and was, officially abolished. In Article 24 of the 1864 Constitution's Declaration of Rights, the state proclaimed “hereafter, in this State, there shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except in punishment of crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted; and all persons held to service or labor as slaves are hereby declared free.”

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<sup>159</sup> Maryland Constitution, 1864, Declaration of Rights, Article 24. Retrieved from <http://aomol.net/000001/000102/html/am102--723.html> (Accessed 9/10/2011)

This represented a dramatic reversal of the legislative discussions that had dominated the later antebellum years.<sup>160</sup>

In 1860, the position of the free black community in Maryland in general and in Baltimore in particular was especially perilous. The Maryland State Legislature had issued a report that year, arguing

the freedom of the negro goes no farther than the abandonment of property in him by his owner. He does not take, by his freedom, any of the social, civil, or political rights and privileges that belong to the citizen population. He merely ceases to belong to one man, and really becomes the property of the whole State.

The same report goes on to baldly present the states' attempts to keep the free black population subservient and limited to menial labor and agricultural work. That same year, there were several attempts to legislate the re-enslavement of the free black population, by giving ownership of free black people to those who had hired their labor.<sup>161</sup>

Curtis W. Jacobs, a Maryland state legislator and member of the committee on colored population, made several proposals in 1860 that had explicitly tied the enslavement of free black men, women and children to the future of public schools in the state. He proposed that, "any free negro or slave, convicted of an offense which would send a white man to the penitentiary be sold as a slave for life," and that the proceeds of such sales "go to the school fund." In that report, Jacobs and his committee proposed "no person shall keep a school or other place of resort for negroes." The military occupation

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<sup>160</sup> "any law..." Maryland Constitution 1851, Art. 2, Sec. 43.; Declaration of Rights, Maryland Constitution (1864) Art. 24.; "hereafter, in this state..." Maryland Constitution, 1864, Declaration of Rights, Article 24.

<sup>161</sup> "the freedom of..." House of Delegates, *Report of the Committee on Colored Population to the Legislature of Maryland* (1860), retrieved from <http://ia700505.us.archive.org/6/items/repofcomoncolored1860mary/repofcomoncolored1860mary.pdf>, (Accessed 9/10/2011), 4.; Ibid.; Ibid., 6 - 7

of Maryland during the Civil War came not a moment too soon for the free black population.<sup>162</sup>

The 1864 Constitution also represents a shift in the discussion of the role of the state in education. This change was partially a result of the forced silence of the opposing party. However, it also represents the ways in which the general views of the role of the state in enforcing public education and monitoring the school fund had changed. The evolution in the discussion on the subject of education was not nearly as dramatic as that on the subject of emancipation, but it nonetheless is representative of the ways in which the Republicans effectively made use of the political opportunities the military occupation of Maryland provided them.

The change in public perspective on the role of the state in public education is reflected in the 1864 Constitution. In 1864, however, the tide had changed and public education was mandated in two clauses. In the 1864 Maryland Declarations of Rights, education is included in article 43, where the state legislature is directed to “encourage the diffusion of knowledge and virtue, the extension of a judicious system of general education,” and other such subjects. The subject is also covered in its own article in the Constitution itself. Article VIII mandates the establishment of “a State Superintendent of Public Instruction,” and a “State Board of Education” to manage a “uniform system of free public schools.” Article VIII served to centralize power over the public schools at the state level, dictating the local structure of the school administration, the means by which those men would be selected, and uniformity of instruction and curriculum. Crucially, the 1864 Constitution mandated that “school shall be kept open and supported, free of

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<sup>162</sup> “any free negro..” “The Colored Population, Important Bills Before the Maryland State Legislature,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. XLVI, No. 66, 2/2/1860, 1.; “no person shall...” Ibid.

expense for tuition in each school district, for at least six months in each year.” This move was a key step in the gradual disappearance of the free and charity schools in the Baltimore. By making public schools tuition free, the 1864 Constitution removed a level from the educational hierarchy, melding the demographics of free and public schools into one.<sup>163</sup>

The 1864 Constitution also specified that a property tax would fund the public free schools. Nowhere, however, does the document state that the tax was to fund schools for all children. Though it would be applied to all property owners in the state, the proceeds of the schools tax were still earmarked “whites-only.” The 1864 Maryland Constitution emancipated the slaves and made provisions for education statewide. Despite its limitations, it ushered in a brief period of opportunity for freedmen and the expansion of the public school system.<sup>164</sup>

### **Benevolent Associations, 1864 - 1868**

The limitations of the 1864 Constitution for education of black children were balanced by the emancipation of the states’ slaves, and the declaration that all men were free. The free black population of Baltimore had been invested in serving the educational needs of the community for decades before the Civil War. The 1864 emancipation of the slaves in Maryland was merely one more challenge for the community to meet, as

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<sup>163</sup> Education had been proposed for inclusion in the 1851 Constitution, but that proposal; had not been adopted.; “a State Superintendent...” Maryland Constitution, 1864, Article VIII Sections I and II, retrieved from <http://aomol.net/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000102/html/am102--761.html> Maryland State Department of Education, “Origins of the Maryland State Department of Education,” retrieved from <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/13sdoe/html/sdoef.html#public> (Accessed 10/12/2012).; “encourage the diffusion...” Maryland Constitution, 1864, Declaration of Rights, Article 45, retrieved from <http://aomol.net/000001/000102/html/am102--726.html> (Accessed 10/12/2012).; “school shall be kept...” Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Maryland Constitution, 1864, Declaration of Rights, Article 45, retrieved from <http://aomol.net/000001/000102/html/am102--726.html> (Accessed 10/12/2012).

freedmen from all over the South made their way to Baltimore, and as the existing institutions became overwhelmed. As the black population of the city grew, “benevolent societies” established by freedmen and women and their white supporters sprung up all over the city, with the goal of increasing educational opportunities for the “colored.” They took the key first steps towards the establishment of public schools open to black children in Baltimore.<sup>165</sup>

The Freedman’s Bureau (established in 1865 by the federal government to provide aid to freed slaves in the Confederate South) had extremely limited authority in Maryland and could not be relied on to intervene on behalf of freeman’s education. The Douglass Institute and the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People came into existence to serve those needs. Of these two organizations, the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People was formed explicitly to serve in Baltimore the purpose the Freedman’s Bureau would eventually serve across the South - to build schools for “colored” children” and to shape that population into the desired image.<sup>166</sup>

Concerned citizens of Baltimore (mostly white) founded the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People in 1864. Members of the Association felt that “an organized effort must be made to educate that race,” given their impending new responsibilities. To that end, the Association proposed to establish free schools for the express purpose of educating the black population of

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<sup>165</sup> Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, “First Annual Report of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People,” (1865), 3; *Ibid.*, 5

<sup>166</sup> The actions of the Freedman’s Bureau in Maryland were largely focused on undoing the Apprenticeship laws enacted by the Democratic legislature upon their return to power. These laws, which were not-so-subtle attempts to recreate slavery in Maryland, were eventually overturned with the Bureau’s help.



Baltimore. The Association, once established, moved quickly, establishing sixteen schools in the city by November 1865. These schools were often located in churches, or near locations that had housed church run schools for free black children before the Civil War and emancipation. The Methodist Episcopal Church on Sharp Street and the Methodist Episcopal Church on Orchard Street had both run schools prior to the war, and became home to Association schools in 1865. The schools quickly “filled to capacity” and demand only increased. The Association expanded its efforts to serve the counties of Maryland as well as Baltimore City, and opened seventeen additional schools in the surrounding counties by November 1865.<sup>167</sup>

The Association schools were funded with charitable contributions. Many of those contributions came from New York and the New England states. The Association was also the subject of intense interest from the colored population, which “formed Societies to raise funds to assist us in the establishment of schools.” White and colored teachers supplied and funded by New York, New England, Baltimore and Pennsylvania, staffed these schools. The Association was funded by donations, and donations were dependent on public interest in the cause. Once they established schools in the city and throughout the state, the Association immediately went looking for other, more stable sources of funding.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>“an organized effort...” “Baltimore Normal School Account Book,” MS 94, Maryland Historical Society, retrieved from <http://www.mdhs.org/findingaid/baltimore-normal-school-account-book-1870-1908-ms-94>, (Accessed 10/12/2012); Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, “First Annual Report of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People,” (1865), (Accessed 10/13/2012), 4.; “filled to capacity...” Ibid., 4.; Ibid., 5.

<sup>168</sup> Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, “First Annual Report of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People,” (1865), (Accessed 10/13/2012), 4; Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, “First Annual Report of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People,” (1865), 5.

The schools of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Association of the Colored Population listed almost 2,000 students enrolled in Baltimore City 1865, and they were only continuing to grow. The Association's plan for 1866 included a planned expansion to 116 schools statewide. The expense of the enterprise was such that the state superintendent suggested, "if nothing else is done [for the colored children] that the association be allowed to draw from the treasury the amount paid for each colored child." The Association was at the forefront of Baltimore's move towards the establishment of schools for colored children in the City of Baltimore, and in Maryland in general. These schools would not only serve as the groundwork for public education for black children in Baltimore and across the state, they served as the foundation for higher education for black men and women in Baltimore. Bowie State University, formerly the Normal School (teachers' college) for black men and women, was originally an Association School. Morgan State University was formerly the Centenary Biblical Institute, and outgrowth of the Douglass Institute and the Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>169</sup>

The Baltimore Association for the Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored people and similar locally based charities preformed a dual function of providing education to freedmen and discouraging outside intervention. Though they were not the only charitable organization working to expand educational opportunity for colored people, the Baltimore Association was the largest and most prominent. Despite the enthusiastic support of the local black community for the

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<sup>169</sup> Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, "First Annual Report of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People," (1865), 7.; "Maryland Public Schools," in *The Baltimore Sun*, "Vol. LVII No. 53 1/19/1866, 3.; "if nothing else..." Ibid.; Morgan State University, "A Brief History of Morgan State University," retrieved from [http://www.morgan.edu/about\\_msu/university\\_history.html](http://www.morgan.edu/about_msu/university_history.html) (Accessed 2/2/2012).

Association and educational opportunity, and the donations from New York, New England, Pennsylvania and the United Kingdom, the Association was not able to serve the needs of the entire community. Nor would they be able to maintain their efforts indefinitely. And yet, in many ways, the Association and the support it raised had the opposite of the intended effect – the visible presence of an organization tending to the educational needs of the freedmen in Baltimore discouraged the Freedman’s Bureau from attempting to expand its limited authority into that area. The city, and the state, would have to act in the spirit of the 1864 Constitution and open schools for colored children.<sup>170</sup>

### **The McJilton Administration, 1866 - 1868**

Education was at the center of local and national discussions over the future of the black community. Access to education and literacy was a priority for freedmen, and was passionately pursued. The freedman’s demands for education increasingly took on the rhetoric of “rights” – in that people had a “right” to education. The very idea of a right to education was radical in a time when schooling was still optional, and school attendance was sporadic. Access to public education was a prerequisite for citizenship in many ways. Literacy was one of the grounds on which African Americans intended to base their newly granted right to a political voice. Educating colored children, teaching in colored

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<sup>170</sup> Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, “First Annual Report of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People,” (1865), 7; The activities of the Freedman’s Bureau and its associated organizations in Baltimore, and in Maryland are detailed in *Communication from Major General Lew Wallace in Relation to the Freedman’s Bureau to the General Assembly of Maryland* (Annapolis: Richard P. Bayley, 1865). In this report no mention is made of the Bureau attempting to establish schools for freedmen, but rather describes in detail the attempts of Marylanders to recreate slavery through an “apprenticeship” system and the Bureau’s work to combat those attempts.

schools, and attending those schools were “intensely political acts” that redefined the meanings of American citizenship.<sup>171</sup>

The politics of black education had been fought in Baltimore throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and came to the forefront of city and state political discussion in the wake of emancipation and the 1864 Constitution. In Baltimore, the debates over the role of the city and the state in colored education were hotly contested in 1864 and after. However, the most dramatic action to establish public schools for black children in Baltimore took place under the administration of the Reverend John Nelson McJilton as superintendent of the Baltimore City Schools.<sup>172</sup>

The character of the superintendent instated by the Republican School Commissioners reflected their views and goals. Reverend John McJilton had spent many years in the educational system of Baltimore before being promoted to superintendent in June 1866. He was a well-known religious, educational and literary figure who corresponded briefly with Edgar Allen Poe regarding his published work. Prior to his nomination to Superintendent of Public Instruction, he spent many years as Treasure for the Board of School Commissioners, where he was acknowledged as a unionist and liberal. In 1860, he acknowledged the importance of the schools as centers of civic virtue and republican ideology “the safety of our Republic depends upon the education of the people.” He hoped that unity achieved through common education could prevent the Civil War.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Heather Andrea Williams, “Self-Taught; African American Education in Slavery and Freedom,” (University of North Carolina Press; 2005), 71.; *Ibid.*, 68.; *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>172</sup> “Legislative Acts and Legal Proceedings,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LII, No. 8 2/28/1863, 4; “Maryland Legislature,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LIV No. 57 1/21/1864,1; “Circular of the Association for the Improvement of the Colored Race in Maryland,” Vol. LVI No. 46 1/11/1865, 1

<sup>173</sup> “Local Matters; Superintendent of Public Instruction,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LIX No. 37 6/29/1866, 1.; Rev. John N. McJilton *A Sermon Delivered at St. Stephen’s Church, Baltimore* (Baltimore:

Though common education failed to prevent the Civil War, McJilton worked to put his optimistic views of the unifying power of education into practice during his tenure. Nonetheless, in the wake of the 1864 Constitution, McJilton turned towards the cause of black education. The newly created office of State Superintendent of Public Schools supported the establishment of schools exclusively for black children, but little action was taken on the state level. Rather, the state relied on benevolent associations, especially the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, to fill the void left by their inaction. Quickly overburdened by the demands of the community, the Association soon proposed the transfer of their schools to the administration of local governments, particularly in Baltimore City. Though the proposal had been made many times before, it was not until McJilton's term as Superintendent that it was seriously considered.<sup>174</sup>

McJilton worked to bring the city schools into a closer relationship with the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People. In November 1866, a joint committee consisting of members of the Association and the School Board toured the Association's schools. The visit resulted in a favorable report on the schools, the pupils and their teachers, who were "well-trained." It reported that "about 300 pupils" attended a single school daily, and paid the ten cents tuition willingly. The schools established by the Association "bid fair to realize reasonable

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D. Brunner, 1844) 8.; McJilton also served as an officer in the Christian Commission and helped coordinate medical relief after the Battle of Antietam. Wolff, "The Problem of Race in the Age of Freedom," 254.; "the safety of..." [Rev. John N. M'Jilton], Report of the Delegate to the Educational Conventions of Buffalo and Boston to the Commissioners of Public Schools of Baltimore (Baltimore: Bull & Tuttle, 1844), 85 - 87.

<sup>174</sup> Wolff, "Race in the Age of Freedom," 245

expectation in the future,” and the relationship between the Association and the City School Board was off to a good start.<sup>175</sup>

In 1867, he convinced the City Council to authorize \$20,000 to incorporate the Association’s schools into the public school system, in recognition of the taxes paid by the black population of the city. It had been twenty-eight years since the black community had first petitioned the City Council to take this action on the same grounds. The black community publicly supported this move, although many may have been privately dubious of putting control of the schools into the hands of those who had denied them access to education for years. McJilton intended to incorporate these schools into the existing school system while retaining the organization and support of the Association. It appears, however, that the Association quickly withdrew, and the city soon began to run the schools on their own.<sup>176</sup>

In 1867 The City Council, directed the Board of School Commissioners to “at once establish as many separate schools for the education of colored children as may in the judgment of the board be necessary, subject to the same regulations as those now governing the white public schools of the city.” A proposed amendment to the resolution, limited the funding for these schools to only the amount of taxes paid by the colored population and any charitable contribution made, was brought to the table. The

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<sup>175</sup> “Local Matters; Visit to the Colored Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LX No. 10,11/28/1866 , 1.; “Local Matters; The City Council and the Legislature,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LX No. 56, 1/23/1867, 1.; Ibid.; Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> “Local Matters; Education of Colored Children,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LX No. 51 1/17/1867, 1.; Wolff, “Race in the Age of Freedom,” 248. Wolff notes that there appears to have been tension between the black religious community – especially the AME church, and the Association.; Wolff, “Race in the Age of Freedom,” 248.

Constitutional Convention rejected that amendment in 1867 but would not be denied for long.<sup>177</sup>

Between 1866 and early 1868, Baltimore City established a separate system of public education for Black children in the city. Colored schools enrolled 2,800 students in 1868. The City Council, private donations from the other states, England and Ireland, and \$23,371 raised by the “colored population in this state,” supported these students. The colored people had contributed “more than one third of their whole income” to the support of their schools. Superintendent McJilton and the City Council made an effort to sustain the incorporated Association schools into public school system, and, while they were not willing to promote or establish integrated schools, they made great strides in incorporating the black community into the public school system.<sup>178</sup>

The black community was deeply invested in the school system – emotionally and financially – and that would make the coming changes to the schools harder to bear. Opinion within the community was divided on the subject of education. While it was universally agreed that education was a priority, not all agreed that incorporation into the public school system was the best way for quality, accessible education to achieve that goal. The majority of the community was in favor of separate schools, or at least unwilling to publically demand integration. There was, however, an assumption that the voice of the black community would have some say in how the city administrated the schools. In 1868, as the changes made to the educational system by Democratic Party government took effect, the news was good. *The Baltimore Sun* noted that “it is gratifying

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<sup>177</sup> “at once establish...” “Local Matters; The Education of Colored Children,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXI No. 19 6/8/1867, 1.; Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> “colored population...” “The Colored Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXII No. 45, 1/10/1868, 2.; Ibid.

to learn from the report that whatever prejudices may have once existed upon the subject are giving place to more enlightened and comprehensive ideas.” As 1868 moved further on it would quickly become apparent that this was an overly optimistic view of the situation.<sup>179</sup>

### **Constitution of 1867**

The Republican Administration in Baltimore, and in Maryland, did not last long. Even as Radical Republican administrations took power across the Reconstructed South, the end of military rule spelled the end of Republican power in Maryland. Democrats took control of the state government in 1866, and immediately set about undoing much of what had been done by their predecessors. The first item on their agenda was the 1864 Constitution.<sup>180</sup>

The 1867 Constitution made provision for the establishment of public schools in the state - and that was all. In three short sections, the Constitution of 1867 dispensed with the subject. Free public schools were to be established throughout the state, supported by taxation “or otherwise,” and the school fund should be used “only to the purposes of Education.” The 1867 Constitution allowed the public schools as they were constituted at the time the new constitution was passed to continue to exist “until the end of the said First Session of the General Assembly,” at which point they were to be reconstituted under the new laws. The new Constitution effectively undid previous efforts to centralize authority over the public schools at the constitutional level. Though the state legislature would continue the work to standardize school curriculums, it would leave

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<sup>179</sup> “The Colored Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXII No. 45, 1/10/1968, 2.

<sup>180</sup> “Democratic and Conservative County Convention of Baltimore County,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LX No. 116, 4/3/1867, 1; “Maryland State Constitutional Convention,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXI No. 51, 7/16/1867, 1.



many on the decisions relating to the establishment and management of schools to the local authorities. In doing so, the Constitution left the decision of what type of schools for black children should be established, and how those schools should be funded to local governments.<sup>181</sup>

Colored schools had not been received with open arms across the state, and more than one black teacher had been subject to violence or threats of violence. Students had also been threatened on their way to or from school. Even when threats of violence were not forthcoming, schools and their advocates were frequently viewed with hostility. Prominent Baltimore citizens regarded the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of Colored People with suspicion. There was “an expectation that the colored people can be at once elevated to the same social position as the whites,” and this was seen by many as “a great error.” Some were only willing to advocate for the education of the colored population if that education would teach colored children subservience.<sup>182</sup>

The new government renegotiated the definition of citizenship and the role of education in defining that citizenship yet again. The role of race in defining educational opportunities would again come to the fore of public discussion, as a newly empowered Democratic government delved into the questions surrounding how to best administer the schools. The Constitution of 1867 returned a great deal of authority over educational

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<sup>181</sup> “or otherwise...” 1867 Maryland Constitution, Article VIII; Section I and III, retrieved from <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/43const/html/08art8.html> (Accessed 9/10/2011).; “until the end...” 1867 Maryland Constitution, Article VIII; Section II, retrieved from <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/43const/html/08art8.html> (Accessed 9/10/2011).

<sup>182</sup> Wolff, “The Problem of Race in the Age of Freedom,” 245.; Ibid.; “an expectation that...” Willard H. Hinkley, in more Association of the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, “First Annual Report of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People,” (1865), 12.

matters to localities, and, in Baltimore City, the School Commissioners exercised their newfound power to the fullest.

### **The Colored Schools of Baltimore, 1868 – 1872**

The Republican Baltimore City Council attempted to resist the resurgence of Democratic politicians and policies in the state while clinging to their offices. In January 1867, the City Council indicated that they believed the 1867 Constitution to be illegal, as men who had been disloyal to the Union had written it. The City Council resolved to consider it illegal, and unbinding, and simultaneously appropriated \$15,000 for the colored schools of Baltimore. Their resistance, however, was merely symbolic. The Democratic Party regained power in the 1867 election and took office in 1868 and set about remaking post-war Baltimore in its image.<sup>183</sup>

The Democratic powers in Baltimore took control of the School Board and removed McJilton from his position in 1868, tabling his plan for the establishment of grammar schools for African American children. The new school board saw public schools as a bastion of white privilege, and felt that it was “neither advisable nor practicable to provide such grades or schools for this class of people.” Schools for colored children would not accomplish anything; they certainly would not make the colored children more suited for citizenship, especially as the new government intended to curtail that citizenship severely.<sup>184</sup>

Signs of change to the new Baltimore public colored schools came quickly. In 1868, the School Board notified the teachers of those schools that their services would

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<sup>183</sup> “Local Matters; The City Council and the Legislature,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LX No. 56, 1/23/1867, 1.; Ibid.; “Local Matters; Education of the Colored People,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LX No. 56, 1/23/1867, 1.

<sup>184</sup> Wolff, “Race in the Age of Freedom,” 250.

not be needed in the coming year, unless the board chose to rehire them. Though this applied to all teachers in the schools, it was the colored teachers who were the true targets. This represented a dramatic policy change from the Republican School Board resolutions, which ordered “no distinction shall be made in the employment of teachers for the same on account of color.” The new board also decided to limit public funding of black education to grammar schools alone<sup>185</sup>

This was in line with the state legislative policies passed when the Democratic legislature took control of the state school system in 1868. The subject of colored education had aroused considerable debate during the 1868 legislative session over whether colored education should be legislated at all. The legislature proposed, contrary to the Baltimore City Council’s decisions made under the Republican administration, that taxes paid by the colored population - and only those taxes - would be set aside for the colored schools. After weeks of intense debate, during which the Baltimore representatives spoke vehemently in favor of colored education and against the division of the school fund, this resolution passed. Despite the advocacy of a vocal portion of the Baltimore population and *The Baltimore Sun*, it was apparent that the expansion of public education for black children was at an end.<sup>186</sup>

The colored schools in Baltimore and across the state were quickly neglected and found themselves short of funds. Though *The Baltimore Sun* editorialized that “it is evident that we cannot afford to let the colored population among us go uneducated,” it

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 252. ; “no distinction...” “Local Matters; The Colored Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXIII, No. 39, 7/2/1868, 2.

<sup>186</sup> “Letter from Annapolis,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXII No. 101 3/16/1868, 4.; Ibid.; “Free Public School Bill, in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXII, No. 113, 3/30/1868, 1.; “Colored Education,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LII No. 106 3/21/1866, 4.: “They are in our State, they are a part of our population, and we are directly interested in that increased efficiency of labor and that moral elevation which we claim that education imparts to all men [...] can we afford to let them go without education?”

appeared that the new government was prepared to do just that. A succession of proposals regarding the public schools for colored children were made and tabled at the Baltimore City Council through May and June 1868. The prolonged fight over the colored public schools covered ground ranging from the possible enslavement of the free black community to the possibility of dramatically increasing the amount of funding given to the colored schools by the city.<sup>187</sup>

The black community did not let these changes go uncontested. The community protested the “exclusion by the school commissioners of colored teachers from colored schools and limiting the public schools to primary education.” This mass meeting at the Douglas Institute in Baltimore covered not just the decision of the school board to remove the colored teachers from the schools, but whether teachers – and students – should be integrated in the Baltimore schools. Mixed schools movements had taken hold across the Reconstruction South and in Washington DC. Despite the vocal support of some citizens - both white and black citizens - the movement did not get very far in Baltimore. Coverage of the movement, however, contributed to white unease with the decentralized public schools, and to the decision to legislate state school segregation in 1872. The notion was considered too radical for serious discussion, and the meeting resolved only to support the reinstatement of black teachers in the colored schools. The *Sun* supported the community’s position, arguing “it seems evident that where colored teachers are competent and give satisfaction [...] they should not be excluded on account of color.” Despite these protests –and the fact that black teachers had outnumbered white

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<sup>187</sup> “it is evident...” “Schools for Colored Children,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXII, No. 120 4/8/1868, 2.; “Local Matters; Public Schools for Colored Children,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXII, No. 129 4/18/1868, 4.

teachers in the state two to one - the School Commissioners dismissed the colored teachers.<sup>188</sup>

Between 1868 and 1872, Democratic partisans took control of all remaining state and local governments, and set about undoing much of what had been done under the Republican administration. Though they did not close the doors to the newly incorporated public schools for colored children they limited the scope and operation of such schools. The newly constituted school board dismissed both the colored teachers. They also reviewed the positions of the teachers who had been hired during the unionist administration to replace those who had been dismissed for introducing secessionist rhetoric to the classroom and/or refusing to swear loyalty to the Union.<sup>189</sup>

As the Democrats regained control of the School Board, they reevaluated the criteria by which teachers should be hired – and loyalty to the Union was no longer one of those criteria. In January 1868, the School Board made it clear that teachers hired by the previous administration would be removed from their posts within the coming months, and replaced with “the teachers discharged because of their political principles.” These teachers would finish out the academic year, and teachers thereafter would be assured that “their political opinion shall have no bearing on their appointment.” The School Commissioners effectively removed the colored schools of Baltimore from the hands of the community, and given over to those hostile to them.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> “exclusion by the...” “The Colored Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXIII, No. 39, 7/2/1868, 2.; “Local Matters; Colored Mass Meeting,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXIII, No. 38, 7/1/1868, 1.; The Democratic and the Liberals’ Mixed School Movement,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXX No. 127 4/25/1872, 1.; “it seems evident...” “The Colored Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXIII No. 39 7/2/1868, 2.; Williams, *Self Taught*, 99.

<sup>189</sup> “The Colored Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXIII, No. 39, 7/2/1868, 2; “Local Matters; Meeting of the School Board,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXI No. 43 1/8/1868, 1

<sup>190</sup> “the teachers discharged...” “Local Matters; Meeting of the School Board,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXI No. 43 1/8/1868, 1.; “their political opinion...” Ibid.

In 1872, the Maryland legislature mandated segregated schools be opened statewide, marking the official beginning of segregated education in Maryland. That same year, the *Baltimore Sun* reported that the amount of funds raised by taxing the colored population “is so small as to be practically worthless.” The legislation mandating separate schools for colored children in the state did have the effect of returning a nominal amount of control and influence over the colored schools to the black community. Prominent members of the community ran for positions on the “colored board of school trustees.” This limited influence, however, would not be enough to remedy the great disparity in funds, supplies, and opportunities available to the colored schools. Despite support in Baltimore for colored education, and a movement for mixed schools in the early 1870s, the actions of the school board between 1868 and 1872 set the precedent for segregated education in Maryland for the next seventy five years.<sup>191</sup>

The incorporation of colored children to the public schools signaled a slow decline of the protestant church schools in the city. Obligated to pay the schools tax for the support of free public schools. Church schools became an unattractive option. The schools, which had been the backbone of the free black community in Baltimore for years, slowly began to fade away.

### **Oblate Sisters of Providence, 1860 – 1872**

Despite the decline of the Protestant church schools, public schools were not the only education options for the black community, merely the most accessible. As the church schools run by the AME and other protestant denominations were gradually absorbed into the public school system or co-opted by benevolent societies, Catholic

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<sup>191</sup> “is so small as...” “The Maryland Public Schools. Report of the Board of State School Commissioners,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXX No. 55, 1/20/1872, 1.; “colored board...” “Letters,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXXI No. 34 6/25/1868, 4.

schools for colored children remained open. The Oblate Sisters of Providence continued to run their school through the Civil War and into the post war period. The Oblates continued their expansion, opening St. Frances Orphan Asylum in 1865. At that point, the Sisters ran the St. Frances Institute, the Academy, and the Free School, as well as the asylum.<sup>192</sup>

Like the public and Association schools for colored children in Baltimore, the Oblates struggled to meet an overwhelming need. They maintained the Academy for well-to-do students who could afford the tuition, and expanded their scholarship operations to support impoverished Catholic girls. They also expanded their operations to include the education of Catholic boys, who were not part of their original mission.<sup>193</sup>

The Catholic Church also made unprecedented efforts to reach out to the black community in the wake of emancipation. St. Francis Xavier church was opened in 1864 in Baltimore City, the first parish church in the United States founded for the exclusive use of the black community. The church represented the culmination of a prolonged effort by the black Catholic community for recognition and their own parish. The Catholic community may have been slow to recognize emancipation and reluctant to support the Union cause, but once the war was over, they moved quickly to maintain and expand the black Catholic community in Baltimore.<sup>194</sup>

### **Religion and the Schools, 1860 – 1872**

The Civil War preoccupied all religious denominations of all stripes between 1860 and 1865. Catholics, particularly those who had, or were presumed to have, Confederate sympathies, were kept busy with other matters during the military

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<sup>192</sup> Gerdes, "To Educate and Evangelize," 194.

<sup>193</sup> Morrow, *Persons of Color*, 237;

<sup>194</sup> Spalding, *The Premier See*, 166.

occupation of Baltimore, as they navigated their complicated allegiances and tried to avoid the complications that came with being associated with treasonous activity. After the war, however, matters of education returned to the forefront of denomination discussions, and dual-national educational policies experienced resurgence (the Archdiocese summoned a second plenary Council in 1866, with subject of education featuring prominently on the agenda). This resurgence was not limited to the Christian population of the city; the Jewish population had been steadily growing in Baltimore throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1867, the Hebrew Educational Association was incorporated with 800 members.<sup>195</sup>

A contributing factor to the resurgence of the debates over religion and nationalism in education was the movement towards the statewide standardization of textbooks. Though the 1867 Constitution had made a point of unraveling much of the previous centralization of the school system, the movement to introduce statewide curriculum standards continued unabated. The Baltimore City School Board had fought against the imposition of uniform textbooks as mandated by the state legislature. Nonetheless, after a protracted legal struggle, the state legislature ordered that such a system be implemented statewide.<sup>196</sup>

This uniform system mandated the statewide use of identical textbooks in public schools. Though these textbooks were to “contain nothing of a sectarian character calculated to exclude from the schools the child of any religious denomination,” the negotiable definition of “sectarian” raised eyebrows in the Catholic community. Though

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<sup>195</sup> “Local Matters; The Hebrew Educational Association,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LX No. 51 1/17/1867 pg 1.

<sup>196</sup> “Local Matters; Meeting of the Board of School Commissioners,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LVIII No. 57 1/24/1866, 1.; “Free Public School Bill, in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXII, No. 113, 3/30/1868, 1.



the state legislature eventually relented, and returned control of textbook selection to the city and counties, the books could only be used with the approval of the State School Board.<sup>197</sup>

The 1866 Plenary Council addressed several pressing issues for the Catholic Church. Education was one such matter. The fundamental position of the Catholic Church had not changed much in the decade since the Baltimore schools controversy. The Church continued to maintain that a Catholic education was the only kind suitable for a Catholic child, and that secular education was just as harmful to their well-being as a Protestant education. In the 1866 Plenary Council, the Church hierarchy took the opportunity to reiterate both their position and the fundamental importance of parochial schools to the Catholic community.<sup>198</sup>

Catholic officials considered making a second application to the Maryland General Assembly for a portion of the school fund for their own use, but ultimately decided against risking another wave of anti-Catholicism. The parochial Catholic schools were serving 7,089 pupils in 1866, and had an average enrollment of 5,744 over the past decade. The significant enrollment of students was due to several factors, but at least one of them was the willingness of the clergy to use their pulpits for the cause. The vehemence with which the Catholic Church had advocated parochial education before the Civil War did not return to dominate public discussion. The Church would continue to advocate its position in education and to expand the parochial school system, but that

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<sup>197</sup> “contain nothing of...” “Letter from Annapolis,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXII, No. 101, 3/16/1868, 4.; “Free Public School Bill, in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXII, No. 113, 3/30/1868, 1.

<sup>198</sup> Spalding, *The Premier See*, 191.

expansion was overshadowed by the debates surrounding colored education in Baltimore and in Maryland.<sup>199</sup>

The 1870s saw another upswing in immigration in Baltimore and across the United States. The numbers of Irish immigrants were again beginning to rise, and a wave of Eastern European immigration was beginning. The majority of these immigrants were Catholic, and the Church set out to ensure that their children did not stray from the faith. The Civil War seemed to have settled one question of race. Irish and other Catholic immigrants were now more likely to be considered to be “white” than they had been in the years before the war. This did not mean that immigrants, especially newly arriving Eastern European Catholic immigrants, were still subject to suspicion. Immigrant claims to “whiteness” were still in doubt, and their religion still made them subject to suspicion.<sup>200</sup>

Though religion in the schools was not the issue dominating discussion in Baltimore between 1860 and 1872, events elsewhere foretold its return to the center of public discourse. The Cincinnati Public Schools had removed the Bible from their curriculum in 1869, sparking a school war of their own. The decision was challenged, and the case wound its way through the Ohio courts until it reached the Ohio Supreme court in 1872. The Ohio Supreme Court sided with the School Board’s decision to remove the King James Bible from the public schools. The Cincinnati Bible War as the first shot in a debate over religion in schools that would dominate the national political discourse in the mid-1870s.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 192.; Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Spalding, *The Premier See*, 196.

<sup>201</sup> Ward M. McAfee, *Religion, Race and Reconstruction; The Public School in the Politics of the 1870s* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998), 73.

The Baltimore Archdiocese prioritized the expansion of the Baltimore parochial schools in the wake of the Civil War, but did not make a second attempt to gain public funds for their maintenance during that period. The Baltimore schools debates of the 1850s were sufficiently recent to leave them wary of courting public disapproval. The late 1860s and early 1870s saw a rise in immigration rates nationwide, and especially in urban areas, such as Baltimore. This corresponded with a rise in Nativism on a national scale. The extremely public and hostile schools controversies in Cincinnati and New York, combined with the legacy of the Kearney Bill schools fight, contributed to the reticence of the Baltimore parochial schools between 1860 and 1872.<sup>202</sup>

### **Loyola College, 1860 - 1872**

This evolution in church attitude towards education is evident in the trajectory of Loyola College. In 1860, the school revised its curriculum to emphasize the religious aspects of the college's requirements for the Catholic students. Beginning in 1860, the curriculum of the college mandated that "Catholic students are carefully and frequently instructed in their holy religion and are required to practice it. [...] they are constantly under the watchful eye of one of their teachers or prefects." Catholic students were required by the school to recite a portion of the Rosary.<sup>203</sup>

Loyola College established deeper Catholic roots in the mid-1860s, expanding its religious curriculum and publically sanctioning religious societies for the students. In 1864, the school authorized the Sodality of the Immaculate Conception, and the Sodality of the Holy Angels in 1865, as a junior partner. As the Catholic community at large

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 180 – 1818; Ibid., 69 - 70

<sup>203</sup> Loyola University Archives. Loyola College Catalog, 1860, 1.; Ibid., 9.

worked to better define itself and prioritize Catholic education, Loyola College better defined and emphasized its own Catholic heritage.<sup>204</sup>

The school continued to accept non-Catholic students, as it had for the whole of its existence. The new requirements of religious observance applied to Catholic students only. However, Loyola emphasized its Catholic heritage during the 1860s and early 1870s. This focus on Catholic doctrine was in keeping with the Diocesan mandates to expand Catholic educational opportunities for the community at large and the immigrant community in particular. Loyola burnished its Catholic credentials in the face of political opposition during the Civil War. Immigration rose and religion in education began to move to the forefront of political debate in the mid 1870s.<sup>205</sup>

### **Schools Administration, 1860 – 1872**

Education may not have been encoded in the 1867 constitution, but the Maryland state government was happy to legislate on the subject. Though their 1868 legislation returned control of the public schools to the counties and the city of Baltimore, only two years later the trend towards centralization reasserted itself when the 1868 legislation was amended in 1870. By 1872, the state of education was again a subject of contention, and the discussion of mixed schools led to anxiety on the part of the Maryland legislature, and a sweeping schools bill was passed in 1872.<sup>206</sup>

The 1872 legislation stated that textbooks should “contain nothing of a sectarian or partisan character,” and that the city and the counties would select textbooks for the use in those schools. The legislation required a better accounting of funds spent by the

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<sup>204</sup> Loyola University Archives. Loyola College Catalog, 1864 – 1865, 11 and 12.

<sup>205</sup> Loyola University Archives. Loyola College Catalog, 1860, 1.

<sup>206</sup> Maryland State Department of Education, “Origins of the Maryland State Department of Education,” retrieved from <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/13sdoe/html/sdoef.html#public> (Accessed 9/13/2011).; Ibid.

schools and the teachers. Though the 1872 legislation was the first legislation to mandate the establishment of public schools for colored children statewide, it simultaneously instituted segregation, and specifically banned integration in the public schools. The 1872 school bill was in large part passed to make clear the status of education for the “children of colored parents.” Furthermore, it made clear that they should be established, and how they should be funded. And in the way it did so, it made clear that any claims to American citizenship and a part of the American identity made by freedmen and women were second tier.<sup>207</sup>

Events in Maryland reflected a national trend towards the centralization of education funding and administration. The federal government had a hand in education for years. In 1862, the Morrill Act had created land grant colleges, and through the mandate of the Freedman’s Bureau in 1864 the national government was active in establishing schools for colored children throughout the Reconstruction South. The federal government expanded that mandate by establishing the Department of Education in 1867. In 1872, the House of Representatives passed national education legislation for the territories and the District of Columbia. This legislation mandated that proceeds from the sale of public lands be used for the “education of the people,” and demanded accountability from educational programs in the territories and the District.<sup>208</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Between 1860 and 1872, the dominant question in discussions of education in Baltimore was that of race. Politicians and citizens debated how best to treat the newly freed black children, who could now legitimately claim a portion of the school fund to

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<sup>207</sup> *The Public School Laws of Maryland, 1900* (Baltimore: William JC Dulany Company, 1900), 37.

<sup>208</sup> “The National Education Bill,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXX, No. 72 2/9/1872, 1.

develop their own educational opportunities. Though some political figures attempted to deny colored children access to public education even after emancipation in 1864, the majority of Baltimoreans agreed that some education for colored children was both the morally and economically correct thing to do. How much education should be offered, and how it should be funded was consistently debated during the period.

Under the 1864 Constitution, the Republican School Board and City Council worked to incorporate the schools of the Benevolent Associations into the public school system. They appropriated funds for these schools, and made efforts to expand the system. Though these schools were explicitly for colored children only, both white and colored teachers staffed them. In 1868, however, the provisions of the 1867 Constitution took effect and a new government took power. Under the new Democratic School Board and City Council, funding for colored schools was restricted. The grades of education offered were limited to grammar schools, and the teaching staff was changed. White administrators removed colored teachers from their positions, fired Unionist teaching staff and reinstated the Confederate sympathizers removed from their positions during the war.<sup>209</sup>

Between 1868 and 1872, educational policy in Baltimore and Maryland set the stage for years of segregated education, culminating in the statewide legislating of segregation that went into effect in 1872. The black community fought for its schools, but its efforts were ultimately thwarted. Black teachers did eventually return to colored

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<sup>209</sup> Maryland Constitution, 1864, Declaration of Rights, Article 24. Retrieved from <http://aomol.net/000001/000102/html/am102--723.html> (Accessed 9/10/2011); Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, "First Annual Report of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People," (1865), 4; 1867 Maryland Constitution, Article VIII; Section I and III, retrieved from <http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdmanual/43const/html/08art8.html> (Accessed 9/10/2011).; Williams, *Self Taught*, 99.; "Local Matters; Meeting of the School Board," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXI No. 43 1/8/1868, 1.

schools in Baltimore. Despite a brief advocacy for mixed schools by a portion of the population, segregation went into effect and was the official policy of the schools for another three quarters of a century.<sup>210</sup>

While race was the dominant force in discussions of the educational system in Baltimore and in Maryland between 1860 and 1872, the question of religion in the schools was far from settled. The Catholic community had sympathized with the Confederate cause during the war, and had thus been preoccupied with matters other than education during the early 1860s. However, by 1866, the community was sufficiently recovered to convene a second Plenary Council in Baltimore, which prioritized questions of education. Rather than court more public disapproval and suspicion by petitioning for a portion of the public school fund, the Catholic Church presented a report of its activities to the General Assembly, in the hope that they would decide to fund these schools based on their records and high enrollments. When they failed to do so, the Archdiocese turned its attention inward, and focused on emphasizing the importance of Catholic education to its members. The number of Catholic schools in Baltimore grew throughout the period.<sup>211</sup>

Public education was a foundation of nation building; a means of defining who was considered a citizen in the United States, and who wasn't. Union forces recognized the power of education to reshape the defeated South, and the Freedman's Bureau made the establishment of schools for freedmen a priority. Freedmen and women also recognized the importance of education, but as a means of gaining recognition of their

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<sup>210</sup> "The Colored Schools," in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXIII, No. 39, 7/2/1868, 2.; "Local Matters; Colored Mass Meeting," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXIII, No. 38, 7/8/1868, 1.; "The Democratic and the Liberals' Mixed School Movement," in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXX No. 127 4/25/1872, 1.

<sup>211</sup> James Hennessy, SJ "Baltimore Council of 1866," (September 1965) in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, Vol. LXXVI, No. 3, 166.

new rights and privileges, and a way to ensure that their political voice was heard. The Civil War had redefined who could be an American citizen, and by incorporating the black community into the public schools Baltimoreans acknowledged that fact, however reluctantly. But, by limiting them to segregated facilities, they sent a clear signal that that colored citizenship was second tier.



## **Part V: Epilogue**

*Children should be educated and instructed on the principles of freedom.*

*John Adams, Defense of the Constitution, 1787.*<sup>212</sup>

The new wave of immigration in the 1870s fueled the growth of dual national schools in the city of Baltimore. The German–English private schools of the city had reached a new high point in their enrollment during the Civil War. Their success and the strength of the German-American presence in Baltimore had grown to such an extent that in 1873 the Baltimore City government agreed to fund a public German-English language school. This school opened in 1874, and was so successful that two more such schools opened the following year. By using public funds to support German-English schools, Baltimore established a precedent for bilingual public education. Public German-English schools also represented an early example of bilingual instruction in public schools. The incorporation of German culture, which continued to be much admired by Americans, into public education, was not a stretch. However, by funding bilingual schools, the city set an important precedent that would continue into the twentieth century and grow to incorporate other languages and other cultures.<sup>213</sup>

### **Education in the 1870s**

Public education was at the center of national politics in the 1870s. The establishment of schools for freedmen across the Reconstruction South had been the focus of federal, national, and even worldwide attention. Moreover, in attempting to find a new issue around which to rally their constituents in the wake of emancipation, the Republican Party had hit on the question of sectarianism in the schools. The 1870s saw a resurgence of Nativism across the United States. As the numbers of Catholic immigrants

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<sup>212</sup> John Adams, *Defense of the Constitution of the United States*. Retrieved from [http://www.constitution.org/jadams/ja1\\_00.htm](http://www.constitution.org/jadams/ja1_00.htm) (Accessed 2/2/2012)

<sup>213</sup> Katsareas, *The Public and Private English-German Schools of Baltimore*, 111.; *Ibid.*,125.; *Ibid.*,126.

to the United States began to rise and the economy faltered the question of religious instruction in the schools again came to the forefront of public discussion.<sup>214</sup>

A resurgence of Nativist sentiment and anti-Catholicism centered on questions of religion and citizenship in the post-war period. Nativist protests drew national attention to the schools controversies. The Republican Party made “non-sectarian education” a central plank of their party platform in the 1870s. There had been a resurgence of schools controversies in the late 1860s – Boss Tweed attempted to “steal” the New York schools by allowing Catholics schools access to the public funds in 1869, and in the same year the Cincinnati School Board attempted to remove the Bible from the curricula of public schools in the city. Republican politicians seized on these issues, and on the question of “mixed schools” as key political planks in the early 1870s. The Republicans had tried to forge national and political unity through a campaign for mixed schools in 1874. However, as is evident by the reaction of the Maryland legislature to the subject of mixed schools, the question of race and public education was not beneficial to Republican political ends.<sup>215</sup>

Religion and the schools was a much more promising political talking point. Republican politicians could position themselves as defenders of homogeneity and traditional American cultural values. By 1875–1876, the question of mixed schools had faded from Republican political discourse, and the question of sectarian schools had taken its place. The issue became increasingly relevant as Rutherford B. Hayes became a rising star in the Republican Party. Hayes, as Governor of Ohio, was directly involved in the Cincinnati Bible Wars, and had made sectarianism one of his key political issues. He

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<sup>214</sup> McAfee, *Religion, Race and Reconstruction*, 48.

<sup>215</sup> Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 271.; McAfee, *Religion, Race, and Reconstruction*, 62.

warned that Catholics were part of a vast international conspiracy to undermine the unified American national identity by dividing the schools on sectarian lines. Thus, he argued, it was imperative that not only should the protestant Bible remain part of the public school curricula, but that the state should provide no funds to the Catholic schools. The King James Bible represented cultural homogeneity, and removing it from the schools was a threat to the very fabric of the nation.<sup>216</sup>

The nation, led by the Republican Party, responded to this threat by attempting to pass a Constitutional amendment to ban the use of public funds for religious schools. The Blain Amendment, introduced in 1875 and endorsed by President Grant, reflects a resurgence of Nativism and the association of religious activity with national identity – both American and foreign. The proposed amendment also reflects a greater sense of entitlement by the federal government regarding their role in education. The amendment would guarantee public education nationwide, prevent the use of public funds in religious schools, tax churches, and enforce a nationwide literacy test. Although the amendment was never incorporated into the Constitution, several states – including Maryland – passed similar legislation at the state level during the period.<sup>217</sup>

As educational policy increasingly preoccupied the federal government, attention returned to questions of Indian Education in the United States. Education – specifically religious education – had been a cornerstone of missionary efforts to “civilize” American Indians for years. By 1860, forty-eight Indian day schools were operating in the United States. In 1869, President Grant’s “Peace Policy” allocated federal funds for the establishment of Indian schools (which would be under the administration of religious

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<sup>216</sup> McAfee, *Religion, Race, and Reconstruction*, 162.; *Ibid.*, 173. *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

communities). In 1873, the Bureau of Indian Affairs began establishing boarding schools for Indian children. These schools were intended to “civilize” Indian children by making them more “white” through education in Christian values. These efforts involved removing Native American children from their families and the reservations, and forbidding them from speaking in their native tongues. Bilingual education for the children of German immigrants could be legitimately supported with public funds, as perpetuating the values of an admired nation. Indian languages, however, were representatives of barbarian threats to American civilization, and were therefore to be eliminated.<sup>218</sup>

The federal government’s expanded role in education is made evident by the establishment of the Bureau of Education in 1867. Established primarily as an information agency, the Bureau of Education collected information relating to schools and educational policy across the United States and especially in the Reconstruction South. The Bureau was created with the specific intent of *not* attempting to nationalize education. However, as the Blaine amendments, expansion of Indian education, and the educational focus of national politics throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century indicate, that role was, in fact, growing. Education was one of many aspects of public policy into which the federal government expanded during Reconstruction.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction; American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875 – 1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995) 28. See also Coleman, *American Indians, the Irish and Public Education* and Jacqueline Fear-Segal, *White Man’s Club; Schools, Race and Acculturation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.; Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 7.; *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>219</sup> McAfee, *Religion, Race and Reconstruction*, 19.; *Ibid.*

## **Part VI: Conclusion**

*My sentiments are perfectly in unison with yours sir, that the best means of forming a manly, virtuous and happy people, will be found in the right education of youth.*

*-George Washington to George Chapman, December 15, 1784<sup>220</sup>*

Institutionalized education evolved from a bottom-up community movement to a top-down state institution over the course of the 19th century. Schools, which were originally small, locally run operations serving the needs of specific community, gradually became state sponsored institutions, serving diverse populations. The stated-purpose of these schools in the 19th century was to assimilate unruly immigrants into a new “American” identity that was based on a protestant religious morality and work ethic. As education became increasingly institutionalized, minority religious, national, and ethnic stakeholders fought to incorporate aspects of their traditional identities into the curricula. Their successes and failures at this endeavor reflect the ways in which the nascent “American” identity could be shaped, and where it remained inflexible. Access to public education was access to citizenship, and the ways that groups and their beliefs were included and excluded from the public schools tracks the development of an inclusive American identity.<sup>221</sup>

Public, state-sponsored education was understood to be means of shaping children into American citizens. Inclusion or exclusion of a group from the public schools was reflective of their status as members of the American nation. The inclusion or exclusion of curriculum elements was indicative of the type of American identity controlling parties were trying to create. Though they were, at their inception, small, disorganized

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<sup>220</sup> George Washington to George Chapman, “Letter” retrieved from [http://www.pbs.org/georgewashington/collection/other\\_1784dec15.html](http://www.pbs.org/georgewashington/collection/other_1784dec15.html) (Accessed 3/31/2012).

<sup>221</sup> Blankston, and Caldas, *Public Education*, 117; McAfee, *Religion, Race and Reconstruction*, 76.

organizations, public schools quickly became central to debates over American identity and American citizenship.<sup>222</sup>

This was especially true in the cities of the Mid-Atlantic – New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore – where large numbers of immigrants arrived throughout the 19th century. They brought with them religions and values that challenged early ideals of a homogeneous “non-sectarian” Anglo-Saxon America. Irish and German Catholic immigrants fought to be recognized as white citizens in their new nation while retaining their religious beliefs and ties to nationalist movements in their homelands. Some of their most visible fights centered on the new institution of public education. In visibly striving to gain access to public funds for the Catholic schools, and working to incorporate German language into the public school curriculums, immigrants and their descendents asserted a dual-national identity that would come to define ethnicity in the United States.<sup>223</sup>

Moreover, the response to their efforts played a large part in defining American identity as it is understood today. The public backlash against Catholic efforts to obtain access to the school fund (or exemption from the school tax) resulted in a gradual movement towards the secularization of the public schools. Though the Bible (King James version) and religious morality continued to play a part in public education for years, the Bible wars and schools controversies of the 19th century set an important precedent. When faced with a choice between funding schools for all religion and funding no religious education at all, states and localities preferred no religion at all. Of course, to the majority of American Protestants, the use of the Bible, the singing of

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<sup>222</sup> Keastle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 61.; McAfree, *Religion, Race and Reconstruction*, 10.

<sup>223</sup> Ravitch, *The Great School Wars*, 103.

hymns, and recitation of the Lord's Prayer were fundamental aspects of the "non-sectarian" American education. The Bible was determined that the American identity would be "non-sectarian." As "non-sectarian continued to be redefined, it has redefined the American identity. However, the basic principle – that the state will put no religion above another – has remained, in principle, a core part of the American identity.<sup>224</sup>

The success of the German movement for bilingual education in public schools is also indicative of the evolution of American values, and set an important precedent; it was intolerable that immigrants bring their religion into public institutions. It was equally offensive that they would expect public funds for their schools. However, language, and some vestige of national culture could be retained, especially if the population at large admired that culture. German immigrants and their descendents were viewed in a more positive light than their Irish counterparts, and this undoubtedly helped them incorporate German language instruction into the public schools in Baltimore. Nonetheless, it is important to note what kind of inclusion Baltimoreans were willing to tolerate – language, yes; Catholicism, no.<sup>225</sup>

Despite their failure to gain access to the school fund in Baltimore, the Catholic Church and the immigrant communities it supported was in many ways a victor in the 19th century school controversies. The vehemence with which Catholics were denied access to the fund, and the general Nativism in Baltimore and Maryland, which had led to the election of a Know-Nothing government, drove Catholic children out of the public schools and into the Catholic parochial schools. By the late 19th century, the Baltimore Archdiocese was home to a large number of well-established Catholic schools. The stated

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<sup>224</sup> McAfee, *Religion, Race, and Reconstruction*, 197.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, 70

position of the Church – that the only proper education for a Catholic child was a Catholic education – was on its way to being a reality. Moreover, the Catholic Church played a fundamental role in shaping dual-national identities, both in encouraging their parishioners to maintain their native religious allegiances and by establishing national parishes. The establishment of national parishes and the support of church hierarchy for each parish supporting a school led to the establishment of Catholic schools with national orientation which was, for a time at least, attended by the children of immigrants with the same national origins.

The schools controversies of the mid-19th century played fundamental roles both in the development of ethnic identity in the United States and in the linkage of religion with those identities. School and Bible controversies played a key role in establishing a “non-sectarian” American identity. Even as understandings of “non-sectarian” have evolved, the idea of an America that never places one religion above another (legally) has remained. Catholic and immigrant communities, energized these school conflicts, furthering the development of Catholic parochial schools and deepening the ties between immigrant national identities and the Church.

The schools debates also had an impact on the question of immigrant’s racial identity. Despite widespread rhetoric surrounding the “Irish race” and racial otherness of Catholics, there was never a question of whether immigrants and their children should be admitted to the public schools. In part, this was due to the intent of public school administrators to use education to create a homogeneous “white” American identity. Stripped of their superstitious Catholic relation and nationalist identities, Irish and German immigrants could be made white.



This was not true for the children of colored parents in Baltimore. In excluding these children from public schools before emancipation in 1864, white Baltimoreans excluded these children and their parents from full American citizenship and denied their claim to an American identity. In the wake of emancipation, their citizenship was reluctantly acknowledged, as public schools were founded for their use. However, by mandating a policy of separate education for colored children, Baltimoreans relegated that citizenship to second tier status, and continued to limit black American claims to a full American identity.

The free black community in Baltimore had a long history, and was the largest of its kind before the Civil War. This tradition had included an extensive network of church-supported schools for their children. Though white support and tolerance for these schools waxed and waned over the years, their existence was a community constant. Antebellum free black people had made repeated attempts to have these schools acknowledged by the community at large, often with the support of some whites. But these attempts ultimately met with failure.<sup>226</sup>

In the wake of the Civil War and emancipation, the parochial schools that had supported the free black community were unable or unwilling to meet the increased demand for education. A number of benevolent societies sprang up to meet this gap, most notably the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People. Though the relationship between the church schools and the Baltimore Association was an uneasy one, the services rendered by the association remained needed. Between 1867 and 1868, the Association schools were taken over by the City

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<sup>226</sup> “The Colored Schools,” in *The Baltimore Sun* Vol. LXIII, No. 39, 7/2/1868, 2.; “Local Matters; Colored Mass Meeting,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXIII, No. 38, 7/1/1868, 1.

Council, and the Association faded away. It briefly appeared that the City would take responsibility for providing an equal – if separate – education for freedmen, the change of administration in 1868 spelled the end of the expansion of the colored schools. Under the new administration, the number of schools open and grades available to colored children decreased, and control of the schools and the classrooms were turned over to white men and women. The 1872 schools legislation mandated the establishment of separate schools for colored children, to be “subject to the same laws, and furnished instruction in the same branches as the schools for the white children.” The legislation limited the funding of these schools to the “taxes paid for school purposes by the colored population,” a small appropriated sum, and whatever charitable contributions were raised to fund these schools. This state legislation was the final blow to a system in decline - the schools in Baltimore and Maryland would certainly be separate, but by no means would they be equal.<sup>227</sup>

Public schools increasingly dominated the educational landscape. Because the schools tax applied to all, regardless of color, and to a population living on the economic margins, even the nominal fees charged by the church schools were often too burdensome. St. Frances Academy and St. Francis Xavier’s School run by the Oblate Sisters of Providence and, later the Josephite Brothers continued to serve the more well-to-do members of the black Catholic community, and used the tuition paid by these

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<sup>227</sup> “subject to the same...” “Chapter 377; Chapter XVIII, Section 1,” in *Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, 1872*, retrieved from <http://aomol.net/megafile/msa/speccol/sc2900/sc2908/000001/000190/html/am190--3229.html> (Accessed 9/12/2011).; Ibid.; Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People, “First Annual Report of the Baltimore Association for the Moral and Educational Improvement of the Colored People,” (1865), (Accessed 10/13/2012), 4; The Democratic and the Liberals’ Mixed School Movement,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXX No. 127 4/25/1872, 1

students to extend aid to lower-income students. The Protestant church schools were gradually overtaken by public education and began to fade away.<sup>228</sup>

Emancipation increased the opportunity for education by mandating the establishment of public schools for the children of colored parents across the state but the white government curtailed this opportunity. The separate schools for colored children were a visible sign that their claims to citizenship were dubious and their assertion of an American identity was suspect. By the late 1860s, a portion of the population, black and white, realized this, and agitated in favor of integrated education. Their radical position, and their agitation for it, had the opposite of the intended effect and contributed to the legislation, mandating separate schools based on race.<sup>229</sup>

Any study of the American identity and American citizenship must begin in the schools. Public education polices illustrate in practical terms the ways in which both the governing class and minority stakeholders conceived of their own identity and of a broader American identity. American identity was in many ways consciously constructed though the implementation of standardized educational policy. A study of what was and was not included in public school curriculums in a particular time and place reveals a great deal about both what the population was like, and what their governments hoped they would be.

The fundamental ways in which education helps define Americans and American citizenship continues to play out on a national stage. Questions of bilingual education, the role of the federal government in public education and the role of religion in the public

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<sup>228</sup> Morrow, *Persons of Color*, 237.

<sup>229</sup> “Local Matters; Colored Mass Meeting,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXIII, No. 38, 7/8/1868, 1.; The Democratic and the Liberals’ Mixed School Movement,” in *The Baltimore Sun*, Vol. LXX No. 127 4/25/1872, 1.

schools continue to be at the forefront of political debates. Private and parochial schools continue to lobby for portions of state and federal funding. Recently, in Virginia, legislators have debated and voted down a law that would have given homeschoolers the opportunity to participate in sports programs run by local high schools (“Tebow Law”). The case of homeschooled students was based on the fact that as taxpayers, they should have an equal right to access the benefits and opportunities provide by public schools. Over 150 years ago, the free black community of Baltimore made the same argument – that they should be exempted from paying the schools tax as they were not able to attend the schools it funded - hoping to gain funding for or access to public education for their children.<sup>230</sup>

Debates over the role of the federal government in education have also continued to this day. In 2012, Presidential hopeful Rick Perry made eliminating the Department of Education a cornerstone of his campaign. Another Republican candidate, Rick Santorum has called the Department of Education “unnecessary,” and indicated that he does not believe that it is the government’s responsibility to educate children. Likewise, Republican Presidential Candidate Newt Gingrich, has recently come under fire for remarks he made on bilingual education. Gingrich has publically stated that bilingual education should not be included in schools – the language of these new immigrants, he argued, is “the language of the ghettos,” – and only through learning English can immigrants become Americans. Educational policies, the role of the federal government

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<sup>230</sup> Anita Kumar, “Tebow Bill to Let Home Schoolers Play High School Sports Passes Va. House,” In *The Washington Post* 2/8/2012. Retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/virginia-politics/post/tebow-bill-to-let-home-schoolers-play-sports-passes-va-house/2012/02/07/gIQAb5KIzQ\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/virginia-politics/post/tebow-bill-to-let-home-schoolers-play-sports-passes-va-house/2012/02/07/gIQAb5KIzQ_blog.html) (Accessed 2/10/2012).

in education and the place of bilingual education have been prominent issues in the run up to the 2012 Presidential election.<sup>231</sup>

Rick Santorum, one of the leading contenders for the Republican presidential nomination has also indicated that he would consider eliminating the Department of Education.<sup>232</sup> His positions on the subject of public education generally recently came under fire. Santorum has indicated that he wishes to return the state of American education to “pre-industrial 19<sup>th</sup> century” standards. He has criticized the uniformity of public education, and complained that the point of modern education is to “indoctrinate” children. This, he posits, is a move away from the traditional values of education in America.<sup>233</sup>

In fact, this “indoctrination” is a return to traditional educational values. Public education grew out of a desire to create a homogeneous American identity. Though “common schools” were local institutions, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, “public schools” were city and state institutions. Centralization was well underway. In the wake of the Civil War, the federal government’s role in education dramatically expanded. The late 19<sup>th</sup> century saw a rise in immigration and a consequent rise in Nativism. As a result, there was a nationwide political movement to restore public education to its traditional social

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<sup>231</sup> Kumar, “Tebow Bill,”; Jonathan Capehart, “Gingrich Falls into Romney’s ‘Ghetto’ Trap,” in *The Washington Post* 1/27/2012 retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/post/gingrich-falls-into-romneys-ghetto-trap/2011/03/04/gIQA1m1sVQ\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-partisan/post/gingrich-falls-into-romneys-ghetto-trap/2011/03/04/gIQA1m1sVQ_blog.html) (Accessed 2/10/2012); Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Valerie Strauss, “Santorum: “I Shouldn’t Have’ Voted for No Child Left Behind,” in *The Washington Post* 1/16/2012 retrieved from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/santorum-i-shouldnt-have-voted-for-no-child-left-behind/2012/01/16/gIQAJ5LL4P\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/santorum-i-shouldnt-have-voted-for-no-child-left-behind/2012/01/16/gIQAJ5LL4P_blog.html) (Accessed 2/10/2012).

<sup>233</sup> Trip Gabriel, “Santorum Defends Remarks on Obama and Education,” in *The New York Times* 2/19/2012, retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/20/us/politics/santorum-defends-remarks-on-obama-and-public-schools.html?\\_r=2&ref=politics](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/20/us/politics/santorum-defends-remarks-on-obama-and-public-schools.html?_r=2&ref=politics) (Accessed 2/23/2012); Strauss, “Santorum: “I Shouldn’t Have’ Voted for No Child Left Behind,”

role – to create and shape an “American” citizenry with a common “American” identity.<sup>234</sup>

The difficulty has been in reaching a common understanding of what an “American” identity entails. Throughout the history of education in America, certain groups – defined by racial or religious affiliation – have had their claim to “American” identity limited. When this was the case, these groups have advocated for inclusion in the public schools, and when that advocacy failed, established their own school systems. Education in the United States grew out of a desire by communities to transmit moral, religious, and national values to the coming generation. Public education emerged as a tool for creating educated citizens for the new republic. Parochial education – especially Catholic education – took root when it became clear that the “American” identity being shaped in the public schools had no space for their values or the transmission of their nationalist beliefs.

As long as there is debate over what, exactly, it means to be an “American,” there will be debates over public education in the United States. Baltimore, with its unique demographic history, is an exemplary case study of the ways in which groups were included in the “American identity” or excluded from it. The conception of “American” citizenship and “American” identity grew out of the foundation of state-funded schools. From their scattered and disorganized beginnings, public schools grew to be state and national institutions, and it was widely understood that their curricula were representative of “American” values and “American” identity. Access to these schools was emblematic of claims to American citizenship, and the denial of access – or the relegation of a population to separate school – was equally symbolic. Systems of public and private

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<sup>234</sup> McAfee, *Race Religion and Reconstruction*, 69

education reflect the conscious attempts of the state and religious communities to create group identity. A study of the origins of public and private education in the United States sheds light on the construction and evolution identity in the nation.

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