THE COCKLE AND THE CHAFF: MISSISSIPPI CATHOLICS AND SCHOOL DESEGREGATION

By

Ryan Christopher Starrett

A THESIS

Submitted to

Adams State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

"M.A. in United States History"

December 2014

ADAMS STATE UNIVERSITY
COLORADO
Great Stories Begin Here

Adams State University
History, Government, and Philosophy
Signed Title Page
Signifying Completion of Thesis

The Cockle and The Chaff: Mississippi Catholics and School Desegregation
(Title)

A thesis prepared by: **Ryan Christopher Starrett**
(Student's Name)

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree,
Masters of Arts in Humanities: United States History,
has been approved and accepted by the following:

Dr. Frank Novotny
Vice President for Academic Affairs

Dr. Edward R. Crowther
Chairperson of Thesis Committee

12-15-14
Date

Thesis Committee Members:

Edward R. Crowther, Ph.D.

Charles Nicholas Saenz, Ph.D.

Richard D. Loosbrock, Ph.D.

Abstract

In 1970, Mississippi's Catholic schools began to actively desegregate. The decision to integrate came sixteen years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* federal mandate that American schools desegregate with all deliberate speed. The following thesis will examine why it took the Catholic Church in Mississippi so long to adhere to the Supreme Court's decision.

This thesis will argue that Mississippi's two bishops during the Civil Rights era were enlightened, socially-progressive bishops who desired integration. Yet, swift change requires a strong grassroots movement. No such movement existed in Mississippi. Mississippi Catholics were not ready to follow their bishops for two reasons: they feared the consequences of violating a rigid caste system, and they enjoyed the benefits of cultural assimilation with their white, Protestant, and often racist, brethren.

Despite the lack of grassroots support, the two bishops could have used their ecclesial authority to demand integration. Why did they not use their authority and insist on immediate integration? This thesis provides two answers, both centering on the second Vatican Council. The pre-Vatican II Church was primarily concerned with the soteriological Gospel. The Church emphasized the salvation of individual souls, not the transformation of unjust societies. The Post-Vatican II Church declared herself to be a member of the world community. She accepted her role as an institution *in* the world, and the responsibility that would entail. Henceforth, Mississippi's bishops would take stronger and stronger stances on civil rights, specifically when it came to school integration. Nevertheless, Vatican II made it clear that a bishop was the shepherd of his entire flock—including those Catholics who supported segregation.

Mississippi's bishops would have to find ways to persuade rather than dictate to their socially conservative flock who accepted Jim Crow as the Mississippi Way.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

"He proposed another parable to them. 'The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everyone was asleep his enemy came and sowed weeds all through the wheat, and then went off. When the crop grew and bore fruit, the weeds appeared as well. The slaves of the householder came to him and said, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where have the weeds come from?' He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' His slaves said to him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' He replied, 'No, if you pull up the weeds you might uproot the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest; then at harvest time I will say to the harvesters, 'First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning; but gather the wheat into my barn.'' '"

Matthew 13:24-30[1]

Jesus' parable of the wheat and the cockle is timeless. It foreshadows the betrayal of Jesus and also tells the story of the civil rights movement in Mississippi. The vineyard was lovingly cultivated and left in the care of able gardeners. Yet while the good men slept, one evil enemy crept in and poisoned the field. While good men slept, evil ones acted. While good men remained silent, evil ones destroyed. While good men did nothing, evil ones succeeded.

Within two years of delivering this parable, Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. His eleven good and loyal apostles slept as he prayed. Meanwhile, one evil apostle led the Temple priests to the garden to betray his teacher and friend. Within fifteen hours Jesus would be dead by crucifixion.

Rabbi Charles Mantinband wrote in 1962, that white, Christian Mississippians were silent during the civil rights movement. He claimed:

> Life can be very placid and gracious in this part of the country—if one runs with the herd. The South is turbulent and sullen and sometimes noisy, but there is a conspiracy of silence in respectable middle-class society. Sensitive souls, with vision and the courage of the Hebrew prophets, are drowned out. Timid souls, complacent and indifferent, seldom articulate their protests.[2]

The Catholic Church in Mississippi, too, was silent and slept while her black members were metaphorically crucified. The Church was blessed with an abundance of good-willed and generous persons. But the majority of these persons remained silent throughout the 1950s and

1960s. Warped theologies and sick minds of a deformed culture infiltrated the Church. The good, unaffected Catholics were silenced by intimidation. As a result, segregation survived inside Mississippi Catholic schools long after it had perished elsewhere.

All Christian churches inside Mississippi must bear responsibility for the atrocities of the civil rights movement. The Catholic Church in Mississippi, however, must accept a disproportionate amount of the blame. Protestant James Silver writes: "In the past year or two, many individual preachers and a few ministerial groups have made courageous stands, but the church as a whole has placed its banner with the status quo." He goes on to say it was "an echo from the pew" that convinced ministers to accept racist laws.[3] Silver's argument makes sense when it is understood that Protestant ministers received their livelihood from their congregants. Catholic leaders, on the other hand, were under a higher authority. The priest, and even the bishop, had to answer not to their congregations, but to their superiors, and these superiors resided outside the Jim Crow South. Therefore, Catholic leaders possessed far more flexibility in choosing which moral stands to take. They were answerable to a bishop who answered to an authority outside the Deep South; they could always be transferred without an impact on their own quality of life. And yet, most of Mississippi's Catholic leaders waited more than a decade to take a definitive stand for desegregation.

The reluctance to combat Mississippi's status quo is a black mark on the Catholic Church inside the state. Yet it is important to keep in mind that the mission of the Catholic clergy was to care for souls in perpetuity. The here-and-now matters, but infinitely less than eternity. The failure of the clergy to fight for social justice must be balanced with the importance of pasturing a racist flock that lived in a racist system. If it was wrong to accept the status quo, it would have been equally wrong to abandon wayward sinners. Whereas Jesus himself claimed, "Those who

are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners,"[4] so too was the Catholic Church in Mississippi responsible for internal sinners.

The majority of Mississippi Catholics living in the era of Jim Crow were precisely that, *Mississippi* Catholics. They were Mississippians first, and Catholics second. Proof of these disordered priorities lies in the fact that it took more than a decade after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision for the Church to desegregate her schools.

One disturbing question emerges regarding the role of the Catholic Church in Mississippi during the Civil Rights Movement: what took so long? In the words of the Psalmist: "How long, LORD? Will you utterly forget me? How long will you hide your face from me?"[5] Why did the universal, Catholic Church which preaches the inherent dignity of all God's children take so long to take a definitive and public stand against segregation? Why did the Church who was commanded by her Master to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of *all* nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit,"[6] turn a collective blind eye to the injustices enacted upon members of her own flock?

The following paper proposes that the two civil rights era bishops in Mississippi, Richard Gerow and Joseph Brunini, were moral, socially-progressive leaders. They understood the evils of the Jim Crow system and lamented its hold upon their parishioners. Both bishops understood the system to be morally flawed and incompatible with Catholic social teaching. In short, Gerow and Brunini were good men who strongly desired social and legal equality for all Mississippians.

This paper will then explain the evolving role of a Catholic bishop. The Second Vatican Council helped to redefine the role of a bishop as primarily pastoral. He is a shepherd and must lead and protect his flock. A recalcitrant, disruptive sheep is not simply discarded. Rather, he is reared, taught, admonished and disciplined, but always in a pastoral, loving manner. Despite

personal distastes for social policies, the shepherd cannot walk away from and abandon his flock. He must lead them toward the green pastures. Gerow and Brunini's sheep were not ready to be lead away from the segregationist wolves. Most of the sheep were poorly trained and poorly catechized. Thus, the two bishops endured decades of vigilant and patient shepherding.

This thesis will then proceed to answer why it was that the Catholic flock was unprepared and unwilling to fight Jim Crow. Granted, many Catholics were simply racists, but what about the enlightened, progressive Catholics? Why did they remain silent? The answer boils down to one word: fear. Mississippi Catholics were slow to join the fray for social justice because they feared social ostracism, economic and physical reprisals, and they feared that the implications of adhering to the social gospel would adversely affect their culturally assimilated status in a heavily Protestant state. Each of these fears will be addressed in turn.

Once this paper has established the fact that Mississippi Catholics, like all Mississippians, lived in a perpetual state of fear in their inquisition-like, closed society, it will address one final question: why did the Church that is supposed to transcend culture and society allow fear to dictate her school policies? Why did it take over a decade to actively pursue a policy of integrated schools? Why did Bishops Gerow and Brunini not use their ecclesial power to force integration? Three possible answers arise: the Church was cowardly; the Church was overly cautious; or the Church was simply practicing her age-old custom of subsidiarity—rule from the grassroots level. Each of these theories will be dealt with at the conclusion of the thesis.

A number of scholars have contributed to the study of southern religion, particularly Mississippi religions during the civil rights movement. Amongst the leaders of such scholarship are Charles Marsh, Michael Namorato, Carolyn DuPont and John Lee Eighmy. Each, with the exception of Namorato, who wrote of Mississippi Catholics, has written valuable tomes on the

relationship of the Fundamentalist, Evangelical and Baptist faiths with Mississippi civil rights. Few have delved into the role of the Catholic Church. Yet these authors have made valuable contributions in helping understand the white, Protestant majority's response towards civil rights. Their work makes clear the similarities of white Protestantism with white Catholicism in Mississippi. John Lee Eighmy explained:

> Churchmen and social historians who hope to understand the interrelationships of religion and culture would do well to consider Southern Baptist social thought not as a variant in Protestant behavior so much as a norm that approximates the social consciousness of most white, middle-class, church-going Americans.[7]

Namorato's work, published in 1998, is an excellent survey of the Church in Mississippi from 1911-1984. Naturally, Namorato devotes a good deal of ink to civil rights as well as the episcopacies of Richard Gerow and Joseph Brunini. Yet, Namorato's historiography pays little attention to the role of the Second Vatican Council and its effects on Gerow and Brunini. His intent is a general survey of seventy-three years of Mississippi Catholicity, not an explanation of the reason why desegregation occurred so late in the Natchez-Jackson diocese. The following thesis is an attempt to explain the reasons behind the Diocese of Natchez-Jackson's delayed response to the integration crisis.

Chapter I

A Social Necessity: Mississippi Catholics and the Dual-Parish System

Mississippi's Catholic Churches and schools developed in compliance with the segregation laws of the state. Separate churches and separate schools were developed as a result of a strict racial caste system. Such a system was accepted, at least until 1954, by the majority of both black and white Catholics. After all, the dual system was established out of sensitivity to both races. It would be a system inherited, and then challenged, by Bishops Richard Gerow and Joseph Brunini.

Mississippi, which became a state in 1817, has been racially-divided since the coming of the first Europeans four hundred years ago. Slavery, and then segregation, was the norm. The Catholic Church in Mississippi consequently has operated inside a white supremacist culture for hundreds of years. The powerful, white majority insisted on a racial caste system, and the Church acquiesced. Separate churches, and later, separate schools arose across the state.

Until the Civil War and Reconstruction, white and black Catholics worshipped together. Once inside the church, they were segregated by race, but still worshipped in the same building. One of Mississippi's earliest and well-regarded bishops, William Henry Elder, understood that he was the pastor of a mixed flock. Historian James Pillar has done extensive work with the diaries of Bishop Elder, and he notes that Elder was always mindful of his black parishioners. In fact, he never distinguished between Catholic and Protestant slaves—he was concerned with the well-being of all 400,000 blacks who resided in his diocese.[8] Pillar explains that prior to the Civil War: "Negroes who lived in town or who were able to come to town in the company of their owners on Sundays worshipped together with the white members of the congregation."[9] Pillar uses old church announcement books to demonstrate that both black and white congregants were prayed for in sickness and death.[10]

Such clerical racial tolerance would not continue. During the episcopacy of Bishop Thomas Heslin, Mississippi's Catholic churches would become entirely segregated.[11] The failure of the South to emancipate herself from the Union led to a bitterness of spirit among whites and a desire to find a scapegoat. The blame was placed on blacks. Henceforth black and white Catholics would worship in separate buildings. The caste system that existed before the war would become a fixture throughout the South until the Second Reconstruction one hundred years later.[12]

Fearing the consequences of violating the state's strict racial taboos and worried about tensions inside her own parishes, the Church elected to erect separate black parishes. The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in1884 stated:

> After all aspects of the matter have been thoroughly considered and it seems good in the Lord to the bishops that the salvation of the blacks is benefited best by the erection of separate churches for them, then that priest who undertakes this work with proper permission is duly to be praised. But if in another place it is decided that it is better to invite the blacks to churches that have already been built and to worship in them simultaneously with the whites, then let the ordinary take care that this be done in such a manner that the church later on be not subjected to any accusation or become the pretext of such an accusation. This whole matter weighs heavily on our consciences that to everyone who wants to come to Christ the door is open.[13]

The Council opted to leave the segregated or desegregated decision up to local bishops, just as they had before the Civil War. The decision by southern bishops to build dual-parishes based on race was made in order to preserve peace inside the Church's own congregations, and also out of sensitivity to blacks who resented their second class status in the back pews of the white churches.[14]

The bitterness and dejection of white southerners during and after the Civil War convinced southern bishops to promote segregated churches. James Pillar tells the story of black Union troops who entered a Catholic Church during the Federal occupation of Vicksburg. The

recently-recruited black officers marched past the back pews and took their place at the front of the church. Fr. Heuze proceeded to deliver a homily comparing the black soldiers with the Scribes and Pharisees who sought the best places at banquets and in synagogue. His message was clear: the uppity black officers would be punished for their haughtiness. After the homily the black soldiers stormed out of the church and later demanded an apology from Fr. Heuze.[15] No apology was forthcoming and the practice of segregated churches continued. Black Catholics with their newly acquired freedom and *de jure* equality felt they had the right to equal treatment within their traditional churches. White Catholics felt their black coreligionists sought pews and positions within the church out of malice; after hundreds of years in slavery, blacks were now sticking it to the whites.

Racial tensions in the churches led to the creation of a dual-parish system throughout the state. By 1913 the three centers of Mississippi Catholicism—Vicksburg, Natchez, and Jackson, all had segregated parishes. Such segregation reflected a white supremacist social order, but also had the approval of Mississippi's bishops, and ultimately, the approval of the universal Church herself, as evidenced by the decision of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. Mary Best writes an anecdote that demonstrates the extreme caution with which the Church moved in the first decades of the twentieth century. The Apostolic delegate Msgr. Giovanni Bonzano tells Msgr. John Burke at the First American Missionary Congress in 1919 that:

> a committee of blacks had visited him earlier and requested that blacks be admitted to the priesthood and that he had sought out the opinions of the bishops, who assured him almost unanimously that it wasn't time, basing their reasons on the deep-seated prejudice and bias that such a move would arouse, especially in the South, and the innate fear of failure. All without exception said they would not accept black priests into their diocese.[16]

If black Catholics could not achieve just representation in priestly ordinations in a mission diocese begging for priests, then they had little hope of achieving equality in white-

dominated parishes. The advisory councils, school boards, acolytes and seminarians would all be white. Thus, blacks requested, and received, their own parishes. Black Catholics were no different than black Baptists in this respect. John Lee Eighmy explained: "Blacks wanted to escape white control, and a segregated church offered an inoffensive way for them to express their freedom."[17]

Although most blacks were happy with their own churches, a dangerous question now plagued the American Catholic Church: was she really an all-encompassing, universal Church if she insisted on segregated parishes? If the Catholic Church was to fulfill her mission as a universal Church; if she was to evangelize to all races as her founder had when he went to the Samaritans[18], Romans[19], and Gentiles[20]; if she was to obey her master's command to "Go, therefore and make disciples of *all* nations…"[21], why did she segregate her churches, and later, her schools?

Two factors led to the Church's decision to segregate her parishes: fear and the wishes of blacks. The white leadership worried about inner-church tensions and blacks preferred to not worship alongside avowed Jim Crow supporters. The black desire to worship as first class parishioners, to sit where they pleased, have their children be acolytes, and to exercise positions of leadership, cemented the white Church hierarchy's decision to segregate.[22]

From a merely pragmatic point-of-view, segregated churches were a wise decision. Mississippi had only recently emerged from the days of Reconstruction. Power had reverted exclusively to the Democratic Party which was controlled by white supremacists. Thus, race relations stood on a razor's edge. Any hint of racial integration was frowned upon by the majority of Mississippians. Even in the Catholic Church, devoted segregationists filled the pews. To maintain the segregated status quo, many white Mississippians resorted to intimidation and

violence. A number of violent acts erupted across the state when Federal forces withdrew at the conclusion of Reconstruction. Racial violence would continue for a century, making Church leaders think twice about integrating.[23] Being a minority herself, the Church was in no position to challenge the racial caste system, even if her leaders had the inclination to fight social injustice.

Intimidation and violence often occurred in the immediate vicinity of the black parishes. The effect of such violence encouraged Mississippi's Catholic leaders to maintain a dual-parish and school system. A series of murders illustrates the fears with which blacks lived, even in cities with a Catholic presence. Gruesome killings of black men in Vicksburg, Natchez and Jackson sent the message that the pre-Civil War caste system was still alive in Mississippi.[24]

In 1907, Lloyd Clay, of Vicksburg, was lynched just a few blocks from St. Mary's Catholic Church. Lloyd was an eighteen year-old black man accused of attempted rape. The victim failed to identify Lloyd in a police line-up, but when a crowd of several hundred heard rumors of a black-on-white rape, they congregated outside the cell. Whipped into a furor at the very idea of a black man raping a white woman, the crowd stormed the cell and brought Lloyd outside. They threw him down the jail steps and dragged him along the street until some men brought forth the victim. Now, she recalled that Lloyd, indeed, had tried to rape her. Her word was enough to instigate the lynching. The mob hustled him to a nearby elm tree and hung him without first breaking his neck. Lloyd hung squirming on the end of the rope while the crowd lit a gasoline bonfire beneath him. Still alive, he felt his legs burn to his knees and then the mob began firing bullets from pistols and rifles into his fiery body. A stream of passersby witnessed the lynching; some hurried on their way, while others eagerly partook of the evening's entertainment. By the next day the entire black community knew of the lynching. Blacks at St.

Mary's Church and school were served notice that they lived a precarious life; a mob or Klan-induced death could arrive at any moment.[25]

The parishioners of Holy Family, Natchez also lost one of their own to a grisly murder. On February 27, 1967, Wharlest Jackson was killed by a car bomb. In the previous weeks, Jackson had been promoted at the overwhelmingly white Armstrong Tire and Rubber plant. A black man receiving a promotion that carried with it prestige and a generous pay raise did not sit well with his white co-workers. The danger of accepting this promotion was evident to his wife and she urged him to turn it down. Jackson, however, accepted it so that his lupus-suffering wife could stay at home and raise their five children. Jackson soon paid for his decision. A bomb was placed underneath his car seat and exploded as he drove home after one of his shifts. One of his shoes was found near the site of the explosion; the other was later found in a house yard by his nine-year old son, Wharlest Jr., who brought the shoe home to his mother.[26] The bombing of Wharlest Jackson let the Natchez community know that race relations had not improved in the sixty years since the lynching of Lloyd Clay.

Neither was the capital immune to the terror of lynching. Blacks in Jackson also lived in constant fear of a racially-motivated murder. Between 1957 and 1964, four black Jacksonians were lynched or assassinated.[27] The slaying of Medgar Evers and the subsequent mistrials made national headlines. But the brutal beating and drowning of Henry Dee and Charles Moore were equally potent reminders to the black community of their dehumanized status. Dee and Moore were hitchhiking in early May 1964. Klan members mistook them for Black Muslims planning an uprising, forced them into their car, and took them deep into a forest where the two nineteen year-old black youths were tied to a tree. The Klansmen took turns savagely beating them and then drove the living, mangled bodies to the Mississippi River where they were tied to an engine

block, taped across the mouth and thrown into the river. The murderers were arrested but never charged. Knowing of the Klan's involvement, witnesses refused to come forward. Marge Baroni said, "these two young people had been cut in half with a saw, mortar blocks tied to them, their hands were tied behind their backs. Pieces of their bodies were picked out of that river."[28] Baroni goes on to explain that everyone knew who killed the boys, but the "Sheriff…said they must have committed suicide. And they had their hands tied behind their backs."[29] The case would go unprosecuted for forty-three years as prosecutors felt they would be unable to win a guilty verdict.

The murders of Clay, Jackson, Dee, and Moore made it clear to Mississippi blacks that they were expendable. Mississippi black Catholics were in an exceptionally vulnerable position. De Witt Webster notes: "There was a saying in Mississippi that to be born a Catholic was bad; to be born a black was worse; but to be both black and Catholic was to really have the odds stacked against one."[30] Black Catholics experienced the same fear as their Protestant brethren. Yet, they carried the additional burden of isolation. Before segregated parishes, it was particularly difficult on the black Catholics because they had no religious community to commiserate with. Sundays for a black Catholic in the middle of the nineteenth century meant sitting in the back of a white man's church, listening to a white man expostulate and surrounded by a number of unsympathetic white parishioners. In many cases these fellow worshippers prayed alongside (or in front) of their black co-religionists, and Monday through Saturday actively enforced Jim Crow laws. Black Catholics found themselves in the position of Jesus preaching to people who wanted to kill him[31], or the tax collector praying alongside a Pharisee who ostracized him.[32] Once blacks were given their own, separate parishes, they prayed the same liturgy on Sunday as the town's

white, Catholic Church, and yet the same racist mentality persisted. Thus, black Catholics lived in constant fear, even from their own fellow white Catholics.

The majority of black Catholics wanted their own parishes. Sitting in the back of Church, receiving Communion last, having no members on the parish board and having to sit near known enemies of the black race led many black Catholics to desire their own separate parishes.

The dual parish system served the Catholic Church in Mississippi well for several generations. Because they kept their parishes segregated, white Catholics—an often detested minority in their own right—did not face repercussions from their white, Protestant counterparts. White Catholics assimilated into mainstream Mississippi life and avoided the socially damaging epithet, "nigger-lovers." On the other hand, black Catholics enjoyed the liturgy and sacraments in their own safe parishes. Mary Best writes of the segregated churches, "those [blacks] who had stopped going to church began attending Mass again, happy to see their sons serving at the altar and their daughters singing in the choir."[33]

Because church schools often accompanied the establishment of a parish, a segregated Catholic school system emerged. Not wishing to turn their backs on prospective converts, the Church put a great amount of time, money, and manpower into black Catholic schools. Few blacks were born Catholic, but an increasing number were being converted in the schools. The kindness and concern shown by the white nuns who ran the schools made a deep impression on a number of the black students who then petitioned their families to join the Church. Black parents quickly realized that a Catholic school education was superior to the Jim Crow separate-and-entirely-unequal black public schools. Consequently, black enrollment increased, and inevitably the number of converts also rose. From a practical standpoint, the Church wisely invested in black education. From a moral standpoint, she *had* to pastor to her entire flock.[34]

The Church maintained a high reputation in the Mississippi black community, yet her churches and schools adhered to the Jim Crow law of the land. Mississippi public schools maintained strict segregation, and so did the Catholic schools. Mississippi public schools retained their segregated system long after the *Brown* decision, and so did the Catholic schools. Mississippi's public schools operated under an egregiously imbalanced dual system, and so did the Catholic schools. In short, the Catholic schools, despite their rhetoric about the equality of all God's children, operated under the same racist model as the state schools.[35]

Each Mississippi city with a sizeable Catholic population, operated dual parishes and dual schools—one for whites and one for blacks. In many cases, this segregated system was accepted and even preferred by blacks. However, the obvious inequalities in the schools fertilized seeds of discontent. By the 1950s, black Catholics began to clamor for integrated schools. After all, both federal law and their Church's moral teaching gave them the right to the best possible education for their children.[36]

The dual parish and school system was inherited by Bishops Gerow and Brunini. It had historical roots in a rigid racial caste system and was accepted as the Mississippi Way. The aforementioned bishops would first question, then cautiously challenge, and finally reject the segregated system.

Chapter II

The Shepherds

Richard Gerow and Joseph Brunini were two enlightened Mississippi bishops during the 1950s and 1960s. Their episcopacies witnessed the darkest days, and eventual fall, of Jim Crow. Both Gerow and Brunini found segregation to be incompatible with their own Catholicism. However, both bishops operated inside a rigid and racist caste system not of their making. Their parishioners adhered to both the law and culture of Mississippi. The great question facing the two bishops was how best to fight Jim Crow, and at the same time pastor their own often racist flock. Both bishops initially adopted a gradualist approach to change. Yet, like any great leader, they evolved—both their strategy for pursuing social justice and the level of their own commitment.

Richard Gerow served as Mississippi's bishop for forty-two years, from 1924-1966. Consequently, he operated under the stringent Jim Crow system of the time, and was a witness to its unraveling in the fifties and sixties. His episcopacy oversaw the key events of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi. He was bishop during the *Brown* decision, sit-ins, the Emmett Till slaying, freedom rides and school integration. Bishop Gerow led his fellow Catholics during the state's greatest period of transition.[1]

Gerow was a native Southerner living in Mississippi, and also a Catholic. He believed in the inherent rights of all men, irrespective of race, but also in stability and the law. Inwardly, he struggled with the contradiction of being a Mississippi Catholic. Michael Namorato writes: "A cautious man by nature, Gerow had a terrible fear of violence. He was always afraid that going too fast or not acting prudently on the race issue could cause more harm than good. For these reasons, he frequently told his priests not to speak publically about race and/or civil rights."[2]

Gerow's long-time helper, pupil and friend, Joseph Brunini later explained his Bishop's cautious nature. Brunini wrote:

> The attitude on race in Bishop Gerow's thinking was typical of southern Catholic Bishops. Bishop Gerow was a man of peace and personally had a great love for everyone. All these bishops worked diligently for the welfare of those of Afro-American heritage, but felt that the time was not ripe for the elimination of segregation.[3]

Brunini went on to explain that the Church under Gerow simply followed the laws of Mississippi. He attributes Gerow's adherence to un-Catholic laws to fear of violence and a desire to protect his flock, both white and black. In other words, he desired change, and was willing to fight for it, but at his own, cautious pace.[4]

One story in particular illustrates Bishop Gerow's attitude toward white supremacists. His journal entry on August 27, 1957, tells the story of a black man who attempted to attend Mass at the Catholic church in Anguilla. Resenting a black man in a white church, three self-designated race watchmen demanded that the black man leave; he quickly did. When the priest heard what had happened, he refused to say Mass, and soon a rumor began circulating that the three white men had been excommunicated. Upset, the three vigilantes went to Bishop Gerow to question the veracity of the rumor. The bishop writes:

> I said that in the first place when they appear before the judgment seat of Almighty God, he is going to hold them accountable for the missing of Mass by this colored boy. This is a grave responsibility....if they didn't like the attendance of a colored person at the Anguilla church, the best thing for them to do would be to go to Mass somewhere else, because these people were bound, as Catholics, to hear Mass....This boy was a Catholic, and had a right to attend Mass, and that any other colored Catholic person visiting round would have a right to attend Mass also in the Anguilla church.[5]

The racism at Anguilla was not atypical, and whenever Gerow encountered such racism, his response was the same. Black Catholics were sons of the same Father as were white Catholics, and thus were to be treated so. The Bishop even went so far as to threaten to place

violating parishes under interdict—a most serious punishment in the Catholic Church, in which all sacraments are denied a parish until it repented and entered again into communion with the Church's teaching.[6] Although Bishop Gerow preached patience in bringing down the Jim Crow culture (and many do indeed accuse him of acting with an excess of patience), the Bishop was simply looking to protect his black parishioners and at the same time assure the continued attendance of his white congregants in an increasingly racist and violent society.

Namorato argues that Gerow's abhorrence of violence continued throughout his life, but his cautious approach

> was more seriously challenged by the early 1960s. There is no doubt Gerow saw it coming. The *Brown* decision ending segregation in schools, the Meredith crisis at the University of Mississippi in 1962, and the Freedom Riders in Mississippi and Jackson itself all contributed to an atmosphere that Gerow described as tense.[7]

There is little doubt that the Bishop saw the writing on the wall and was finally ready to commit his diocese to desegregation by the mid-1960s.

On May 17, 1963, Gerow, a number of Protestant clergy, and black pastors met with Jackson Mayor Allen Thompson. The religious feared the bloody demonstrations in Alabama would be repeated in Mississippi, and in Jackson, specifically. They expressed their worries to the Mayor who admitted he was likewise worried. Yet, unlike Gerow who believed that it was time to recognize the grievances of the black community, Mayor Thompson blamed outside agitators for the recent disturbances. It was, according to the Mayor, the NAACP and northern meddlers who were threatening racial trouble in the capital city. Disappointed, Gerow and company took leave of the Mayor and shortly after addressed their concerns to the Jackson Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber expressed the same sentiments as Mayor Thompson and the meeting went nowhere.[8] A week later violence erupted in Jackson as sit-in demonstrations

were held downtown. Two weeks after the sit-ins began, Medgar Evers was assassinated. Gerow's efforts to forestall violence had failed.

Medgar Evers' assassination on June 12, 1963, was a turning point for Gerow. Within thirty-six hours, the Bishop had extended his sympathies to the Evers family, and went on to say:

> As a loyal son of Mississippi and a man of God, I feel in conscience compelled to speak out in the face of the grave racial situation in which we now find ourselves. This problem is unmistakably a moral one. We frankly need to admit that the guilt for the murder of Mr. Evers and the other instances of violence in our community tragically must be shared by all of us. Responsible leadership in some instances has been singularly lacking.[9]

Gerow was determined to provide that leadership. At the urging of Father Bernard Law, Bishop Gerow attended the Evers funeral. His presence at the potentially-volatile services placed the Catholic Church publically on the side of Evers.[10] The service did, indeed, turn violent. Journalist Bill Minor claims that Bishop Gerow and Fr. Law were the only two whites at Medgar's funeral to approach and speak personally with Myrlie, Medgar's wife. Minor was there to witness the breakdown of law and order. He recalled the story of John Salter, a civil rights activist and professor at Tougaloo College, fleeing the white mob. Salter was run down by a white vigilante and hit on the head with a baseball bat. Minor said the blow sounded like Joe DiMaggio hitting a homerun at Yankee stadium. Minor, a Catholic himself, shortly thereafter walked over to St. Peter's, the downtown cathedral, and prayed for the sins of his fellow Mississippians.[11] Minor's sympathetic reporting resulted in his building being shot at and a cross burned just outside the entrance.[12] The violence accompanying Evers' funeral was regrettable. Nevertheless, it signaled a dramatic shift in the Church's stance on civil rights. The singular head of the Mississippi Catholic Church had taken a firm stand, if not against Jim Crow, then at least against senseless violence against black Mississippians.

An anonymous and concerned citizen wrote to Jackson's daily newspaper regarding the recent eruption of violence in the state. She wrote of her disgust at:

> the picture of grinning white spectators standing idly by while one of their cohorts stomps on the head of a bleeding Negro. Surely you know that there are thousands of us who are sickened by a policy that has brought this about. We yearn for a spokesman who will let the world know that there are many Jacksonians who feel degraded and disgraced by this unyielding adherence to segregation at any cost.[13]

Gerow was determined to provide the leadership that was so noticeably lacking.

On June 17, at the invitation of President Kennedy, Gerow and other ministers flew to Washington D.C. to meet with the President. The Bishop and his companions urged Kennedy to contact Mayor Thompson and various civil rights leaders personally and use his leverage to restore peace. Kennedy accepted the recommendation of the ministers, called Thompson and asked the Mayor to work with Gerow's group to put an end to disturbances in Jackson. The Mayor agreed, Gerow returned home, and peace was restored.

The meeting with President Kennedy was a clear indication of Gerow's priorities. First and foremost, the Bishop desired peace. The oppressive racial situation in Mississippi made peace unlikely, and so Gerow campaigned for a relaxing of the Jim Crow system that created the tension in the first place. But once peace was restored and assured, the Bishop was content to return to his gradualist approach to social justice. In mid-1963 Gerow was not seeking to overturn existing social structures.

When President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, Bishop Gerow, like the rest of the nation, was stunned. The death of a personal acquaintance, as well as a senseless act of violence on the national scale pushed Gerow more firmly into the camp of civil rights. In a move sure to antagonize many Mississippians, a large number of whom had cheered the news

of the President's death, he held a public requiem Mass for the murdered President. He then began actively supporting civil rights candidates and legislation.[14]

The year 1964 tested Gerow's new-found resolve. Arsonists across the state burned or bombed forty-one black churches. Many white Mississippians blamed the church burnings and bombings on liberal and black agitators trying to bring attention to their cause. Yet, the majority of Mississippians were able to draw a line of distinction between attacking civil rights workers and bombing a house of God. Joseph Crespino captures this dichotomy in the story of Jimmy Wilson. In July 1964, Wilson went along with two fellow Klansmen to bomb a black Baptist church in southeast McComb. The attempted arson failed because Wilson secretly and knowingly sabotaged the fuse. His brave act saved Sweethome Missionary Baptist Church.[15] Two months later, on September 20, 1964, Jimmy Wilson hurled more than a dozen sticks of dynamite at the house of civil rights activist Aylene Quin. Quin's four-year old son and nine-year old daughter were in the house and miraculously survived with few injuries.[16] Wilson's conscience obviously did not extend to black activists.

In the midst of the numerous church bombings, Bishop Gerow and twenty-three Mississippi clergy met and formed the Committee of Concern. The Committee's mission was to publically condemn the destruction of places of worship and to raise money to rebuild the burned churches. Thus, the Committee of Concern initially treaded in dangerous waters. Its members were accused of threatening to undermine the racial status quo and of playing into the hands of outside agitators. Nevertheless, Gerow and his fellow Christian clerics saw their committee grow. Their goal was "to make it possible for men, women and children of good will to respond to the violence, hatred and destruction, with concern, compassion and construction."[17] William P. Davis, a Baptist minister, spoke from the ashes of a burned-out church on August 14, and

promised the weeping black congregants that things would soon change in Mississippi. He quoted the prophet Isaiah: "And they shall build the old wastes, they shall rise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations."[18] Thus did Davis give to the Committee of Concern its tangible mission: rebuild the ruined black churches. Working together, Davis, Gerow and the other Christian ministers raised nearly $130,000 and rebuilt forty-one churches. It is worth noting that while the rebuilding of black churches that had been burned was commendable and a step in the right direction, it did little to change the social climate that burned the churches in the first place. Charles Marsh argues: "Even the few initiatives to rebuild black churches and parsonages destroyed by Klan firebombs failed to address the sources of anti-black violence—and often even failed to acknowledge that the churches had been bombed, rather than accidentally burned."[19]

With each passing year, Gerow leaned more and more on his most trusted and esteemed assistant, Joseph Brunini. When the burden of running a diocese that encompassed an entire state became too great, Gerow asked that Brunini be named his apostolic administrator. His wish was granted on August 5, 1966. However, such a division of powers would inevitably lead to legal issues within Mississippi and nine months later Gerow offered his resignation and strongly recommended that Brunini replace him. Again, Gerow's request was granted. On December 2, 1967, Gerow officially stepped down and was replaced by his spiritual son, Joseph Brunini.[20]

Joseph Brunini was the sixth child born to a prominent Vicksburg family on July 24, 1909. His father was John Brunini, a powerful lawyer and devout Catholic. His mother, Blanche Stein Brunini, was a convert from Judaism. Joseph's parents enrolled him at St. Aloysius, the local Catholic school run by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. He was an active, athletic, and disciplined student who excelled at nearly everything he attempted. After high

school, he enrolled, at his father's behest, at Jesuit-run Georgetown University. Again, Joseph engaged in a variety of extra-curricular activities, most notably debate, and became the editor of the university paper, *The Hoya*. He also developed a keen interest in politics, racial issues and, above all, religion. During his junior year, after much anguished reflection, he decided to enter the priesthood. Despite his sheltered upbringing—his family and friends had all been Catholic, and he had attended Catholic schools his entire life—Joseph understood that being a priest in Mississippi would be a difficult calling. Nevertheless, he fortified his will and informed his parents in a letter to his mother. He explained:

> I realize the difficulties I will face in returning to Mississippi as a priest, but what is the happiness of a lifetime to the happiness of eternity?...No one has tapped me on the shoulder and told me to be a priest, but I feel I am temperamentally fit for that life, and that I will be happy in it, that I can aid in the spread of the Church, and finally that there is not a single reason for not adopting the priestly life.[21]

Later, while writing his memoirs, Brunini reflected, "the need for priests in Mississippi kept haunting me and I could not justify the thought of rejecting what I believed [was] God's invitation to the service of His Church and to my fellow Mississippians."[22]

After overcoming their initial shock, the Brunini clan rallied around their brother and son. He was given their blessing, and henceforth, unconditional support. Of equal importance was the support offered by Bishop Gerow. Joseph had written to inform Mississippi's acting Bishop that he would heed God's call and enter the priesthood. In a missionary diocese starved for priests, Gerow was ecstatic to know that he would one day soon receive into the ranks of his clergy a native son, and a well-connected one at that.[23]

At Bishop Gerow's request, Joseph Brunini attended the North American College in Rome. Joseph enjoyed his time in Rome, but this time his schooling was a struggle. The intensity of seminary courses—conducted in Latin—weighed on him, as did his homesickness

for Mississippi. The young Brunini experienced acute bouts of homesickness. It was the policy of the college to require all seminarians to stay on site the entire four to six years. The idea was to promote camaraderie among the seminarians by making them take all their vacations together. Joseph Brunini persevered and was ordained a priest by Cardinal Selvaggiani on December 5, 1933.[24] Even though Bishop Gerow wanted and encouraged Father Brunini to pursue an advanced degree in Rome, the newly-ordained priest longed to return to his birthplace. In 1931 he had written a letter to his mother expressing his desire to return home. He wrote:

> There are many men who could surpass me easily in the study of Canon Law but I don't think that Mississippi has many priests available who know the people as one raised among them should and who are able to apply that knowledge in securing the maximum results. I trust that I don't say this from a spirit of pride but from the accident that Mississippi has few native priests and from God's gift to me of you and Dad who have afforded me a good Catholic raising and education.[25]

The two—bishop and priest—agreed that he would return to Mississippi via Georgetown, where he would study an additional three years for a degree in canon law.[26]

Father Brunini finally returned home in 1937. The twenty-eight year-old priest fulfilled the duties typical of a Catholic priest for the next twenty years. He said Mass, heard innumerable confessions, taught Catechism classes and shepherded his flock. With each passing year, Father Brunini assumed more and more responsibility in the diocese. He very quickly became Bishop Gerow's must trusted cleric. When the chancery moved from Natchez to Jackson, Father Brunini was appointed pastor at St. Peter's, the new headquarters of the Church in Mississippi.[27]

In 1957, Brunini was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Natchez-Jackson. The appointment was intended to relieve the aging Gerow of the burden of shepherding such a large diocese, and to give Brunini valuable experience in an administrative role. Brunini assisted Gerow and implemented the Bishop's policies, but he also quickly began to put his own mark on the

episcopacy. Brunini had been and remained a member of the Mississippi Council on Human Relations, a Council that had been established in the 1930s to "improve race relations." In the 1950s Brunini served as co-chairman of the Council of Interracial Cooperation.[28] These experiences with race relations would prove invaluable to his Church as he took on more and more responsibility.

In order to understand Joseph Brunini, it is important to realize that first and foremost he was a Catholic *and* a Mississippian. The latter fact is as important as the first. Edward Hallett Carr argues that "[a]s soon as we are born, the world gets to work on us and transforms us from merely biological into social units. Every human being at every stage of history or pre-history is born into a society and from his earliest years is moulded by that society."[29] Brunini was certainly a product of his environment. He was exceptionally close to his family and his Church, but he was also proud of his heritage. He was, in all respects, a Mississippi patriot who cared deeply for his state. Yet as he aged and matured, he attempted to transform his environment and bring it into conformity with his Catholicism.

The year 1954 greatly affected Joseph Brunini, as it did all Mississippians. The *Brown* decision changed the state forever, the Catholic hierarchy included. Brunini later reflected:

> The full text of the Supreme Court's decision was printed in the *New York Times* and I was able to read it during the three-hour flight to Jackson. Naturally, as a Catholic priest and a citizen of Mississippi, I was deeply interested in social justice in all its forms. I was elated to see this reversal.[30]

From this moment onward, Brunini sought ways to integrate the diocese. He began by addressing the *Brown* decision at Mass the following Sunday. He gave a homily praising the Supreme Court's decision. At the time, he was a regular parish priest, and in his audience that Sunday were the typical Catholic attendees. His homily was frowned upon by many. Brunini explained: "I could readily understand the puzzlement and the negative reactions as I chatted

with some members of the congregation. So our Mississippi Catholics, along with the two million people living in the state, were launched on a long journey."[31]

He continued to work with Gerow's interracial and inter-faith group. A diary entry on February 5, 1962, states: "This morning I attended a meeting and luncheon at Tougaloo College along with the interracial group here in Jackson. We are trying to do what we can to improve race conditions in Mississippi."[32] Two weeks later, his diary records another such inter-faith and interracial meeting, this time a dinner party organized by the Bishop. His dinner party hosted twenty-two guests, among whom were Jews, Protestants, members of the Society of the Divine Word, and Fr. Perry, the black rector at St. Augustine's, who gave the talk.[33] Despite his work with social activists on behalf of Mississippi's blacks, Brunini remained a respected figure in the state. There are no accounts of death threats and the intimidation experienced by other socially active Mississippi ministers. In fact, the Bishop delivered the opening prayer at the Mississippi Legislature House of Representatives on March 12, 1962.[34]

Joseph Brunini was ordained bishop of the Diocese of Natchez-Jackson in 1967. Two years later, on December 24, 1969, he delivered one of his most important speeches. He spoke at Christmas Eve Mass and called for Christians and Jews to work together for racial reconciliation. In an article published in *The New York Times* the following day, Bill Minor introduced Bishop Brunini to the nation. The sixty year-old had only been bishop for two years and was thus relatively unknown nationally. Minor pointed out that Brunini had been harassed and abused by his fellow Mississippians in the fifties when it was revealed that he was a member of the pro-integrationist Southern Regional Council. Afterwards, Brunini kept a lower profile through the tumultuous early and mid sixties when he was being groomed to replace Bishop Richard Gerow. According to Minor, it was not until the very end of the sixties that Brunini finally took a

definitive stand for racial equality. Nevertheless, Minor attempted to portray a kindly and sympathetic bishop who was a product of his times. He writes: "A mild, easy-to-approach figure, Bishop Brunini is neither imposing nor brilliant. Basically he is a Mississippian, because he feels great sympathy for his native state. To many situations, therefore, he responds conservatively, but he is not in a box and he can be swayed by liberal arguments."[35] He concluded his article by quoting Brunini himself: "Perhaps we have expected too much from our politicians. We as religious leaders can't blame politicians if we don't do our job first."[36]

One of Brunini's boldest moves as Bishop was appointing Joseph Howze as his auxiliary bishop. Howze became the first black bishop of the twentieth century to shepherd an American diocese. The fact that this appointment occurred in Mississippi is a testament to the courage of both Bishop Howze and Bishop Brunini. Brunini had asked for a black bishop while at the same time "recognizing the deep-seated prejudices of my fellow Mississippians, which I knew was also prevalent among our Catholics of Euro-American descent."[37] Howze was appointed auxiliary bishop to the Diocese of Natchez-Jackson on November 8, 1972. He was ordained on January 20, 1973, in the Jackson City Auditorium. Brunini later wrote: "Basically he was well received by the clergy of the diocese. There was some trepidation on the part of the laity. However, as Bishop Howze himself testifies, he was well received when he visited the various parishes, particularly for conferring the Sacrament of Confirmation."[38] When Mississippi was divided into two separate dioceses in 1977, Bishop Howze served as sole bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Biloxi until his retirement in 2001.

By January 1970, Bishop Brunini made explicitly clear the Church's stance on integration. He wrote a Pastoral Letter on January 9, to be read to all his parishes. It read:

> There should be no mistake concerning the Catholic Church's attitude towards school integration. Every Catholic school in Mississippi is obligated to admit applicants without

> regard to race. In our policy and in our teaching, including our school curriculum, we proclaim that racial segregation is an affront to the informed conscience. While this should be obvious to all with any knowledge of the Catholic Church, we repeat it now in order to make it perfectly clear that the Catholic school system does not offer a refuge from integration.[39]

Over the next decade, the Catholic schools of Brunini's diocese would struggle to implement *de facto* desegregation. White-majority and black-majority Catholic schools would continue to exist for the remainder of Brunini's episcopacy, but progress did occur and Catholic school diversity made significant steps toward representing the racial make-up of their respective cities.

Mississippi Today printed an article on August 19, 1983, entitled "Bishop Brunini: Drum Major For God." The article is a recap of a speech given by Joseph Francis, the black auxiliary bishop of Newark, New Jersey. Francis' ode to Brunini praises the Mississippi bishop for his work with and for the black community. Francis began by pointing out the significant contributions blacks had made to Catholicity in Mississippi. "But we needed more. We needed a Catholic person who had the credibility, the power, the courage and most of all, the love which would galvanize all of us—someone who would make it all happen."[40] The New Jersey bishop then spoke of the influence of Martin Luther King, Jr. upon himself and the black community as a whole. He quoted King's final speech before he was assassinated in which he asked to be remembered as the "Drum Major For God." Bishop Francis proclaimed: "I read over these words of Dr. King over and over again and I thought of many persons to whom I could apply them—more or less—but here in Mississippi none more than to Bishop Joseph Brunini."[41] Brunini was never a man of pomp and rhetoric. Rather, like his Master, Jesus, the Mississippi Bishop was a man of action, a thinker and a doer. "Bishop Brunini had thought the unthinkable and had done the undoable! The drum major for justice was stepping high."[42] Bishop Francis concluded his tribute with the following words:

> Bishop Brunini, need you wonder at all why we your black sisters and brothers honor you this day? God has placed you in our midsts and you have not been found wanting in the tests—tests to which your black brothers and sisters have designed for you, tests to which your white sisters and brothers have subjected you....
>
> Believe me—we honor you as no other bishop living or deceased has been honored by his black sisters and brothers. You have a claim on what is most precious of us to give—because you have given first—we Love you—for you have loved us—first and well.[43]

Both bishops, Gerow and Brunini, were exemplars of Catholic social and moral teachings. They both desired peace and social justice. They both prayed for an end to Jim Crow. And yet, both were products of their environment and times. The 1950s and 1960s were decades of swift and revolutionary change. An entire way of life was asked to evolve almost overnight. Americans, even Catholic Americans, were not ready for such rapid change. Most northerners were ambivalent as to the social structure of the south and the overwhelming majority of southerners, even the just-minded ones, were skeptical of the consequences of granting civil rights to a people who had been oppressed since they first arrived in the South. How would blacks react to their new-found freedom? What would happen to social relationships? The economy? Sexual relations? These questions plagued Mississippians and all Americans.

The Catholic Church herself was swept up in the maelstrom of change. An epoch-altering council had begun in Rome that would catapult the Church into the forefront of social issues—but not yet. Gerow and Brunini, both of whom were observers and participants in Vatican II, eagerly awaited the outcome of the Council. What was to be the role of a bishop as the Church entered into a new, more socially conscious era? What was to be expected of them as shepherds, and how fast ought they to move in matters of social justice?

While the Church in Mississippi struggled with change, so too did the universal Church. Vatican II affected not only the liturgy of the Catholic Church, but also her stances on various issues of social justice. Previously, the Church encouraged her bishops to be patient observers

and not interfere with local customs. A bishop's primary responsibility was to guard doctrine. The bishop, therefore, was cast in the role of spiritual judge. What mattered was not the political organization of a particular society, but the fate of individual souls residing in that society. A bishop was expected to exert his near dictatorial powers to defend Church dogma, not right the wrongs of society. However, Vatican II would redefine the role of a bishop. Now, the bishop was expected to be far more pastoral. He was to become first and foremost a teacher and shepherd. The bishop ought not hand down dictatorial damnings of society, but rather instruct and persuade his congregants in matters of social justice. John W. O'Malley explains:

> To engage in persuasion is to some extent to put oneself on the same level as those being persuaded. Persuaders do not command from on high. Otherwise, they would not be persuading but dictating. Persuasion works from the inside out. To be successful, persuaders need to establish an identity between themselves and their audience and make clear that they share the same concerns and even the same sentiments....[44]

As the determinations of Vatican II became clear, bishops across the world were faced with difficult reevaluations of their roles in their respective societies. Gerow and Brunini likewise faced a period of self-reflection. It was clear that the Church had undergone an *aggiornamento*, a catching-up-with the times. Now it would be up to Mississippi's bishops to embrace the role of teacher and persuade their white congregants to accept an *aggiornamento* inside their own state.

Whether or not Gerow and Brunini succeeded in ushering in a new era in Catholic Mississippi has been debated. It is very difficult to find fault with their personal lives and honor. But did they do enough for their fellow man, especially their black neighbor? Michael Namorato, the leading authority on the episcopacies of Gerow and Brunini, offers the following evaluation of their time as bishop:

> [Of Bishop Gerow]: Gerow gradually began to challenge the views he had adhered to in spite of his fears of violence. His actions in joining the Interfaith Group, his statement on

> the Evers' murder, his participation in the meetings with Mayor Thompson and President Kennedy, and his 1964 and 1965 school integration announcements attest to this change. However, just as with Vatican II and the changes they entailed, what Gerow did demonstrates that the world he was used to was disappearing, and his adjustment to this new environment was taking its toll him. Nevertheless, in retrospect, what does seem quite clear is that Bishop Gerow was setting the stage for his successor to act, and he would.[45]
>
> [Of Bishop Brunini]: Whether one agreed with his approach or not, there is no question that Bishop Brunini was consistent in his adherence and commitment to full integration in his diocese....Throughout it all, especially in the school situation, he never lost control, nor did he ever let emotionalism dictate his actions....His was a persevering, methodical, and consistent approach to the problems of relations between whites and African Americans.
>
> Always acting deliberately, he was sometimes perceived by his critics as being too slow in fully integrating the school system. To those who knew him and what he believed in, nothing was further from the truth. In assessing his handling of the integration of the Catholic schools, there can be no question that he was the right man at the right time at the right place with the right philosophy, temperament, and sense of determination.[46]
>
> Gerow and Brunini were progressive men placed in charge of a diocese of reactionaries.

At first, they worked within the framework of their society. Gradually, they came out publically on the side of social justice and desegregation. Much of the criticism and praise for Gerow and Brunini is a result of their handling of the school desegregation crisis. A number of factors went into their decision to integrate when, how, and why they finally did.

Chapter III

The Decision

Bishops Gerow and Brunini came to the decision to desegregate Mississippi's Catholic schools after a painstaking process of discernment. With little grassroots support, integration was a difficult sell to many of Mississippi's white Catholics. The bishops could not force integration on purely moral grounds without risking the well-being of the Catholic schools themselves. They were in the unenviable position of promoting integration to tuition-paying segregationists. Gerow and Brunini made several attempts to introduce piecemeal integration before a definitive 1969 decision that made segregation and Catholic education mutually exclusive. A gradualist approach and a strong economic pitch made integration more palatable to many of Mississippi's white Catholics.

The decision to finally integrate Mississippi's Catholic schools was made for both moral and practical reasons. As religious vocations began to decrease in the Church, the availability of cheap labor in the form of teachers eroded. Operating two separate Catholic schools in the same city used up valuable and diminishing resources. The problem that plagued the Mississippi public school system now wreaked havoc on the Catholic schools. Simply put, desegregation was too expensive to maintain itself.

Bishop Gerow's black Catholic schools were at the mercy of missionary orders. Religious groups such as the Society of the Divine Word and the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters had staffed black schools for seventy years. With their own vocations dwindling, these Orders reluctantly withdrew their services. Their superiors saw the writing on the wall, realized Mississippi would have to soon adhere to the law of the land, and concluded that all Mississippi schools would soon be integrated. One principal at an all black Catholic school wrote: "We have fulfilled our purpose in giving secondary education to the blacks when no one else cared to do

so. Our purpose has been accomplished. It is up to us to realize that we are no longer needed and make a graceful departure."[1] Most missionary religious orders followed suit. Expecting official desegregation to occur momentarily, the Orders no longer saw the need to educate the underserved black community—blacks would soon be able to receive a quality high school education at the hands of the state. The religious orders therefore could better fulfill their evangelical mission in other ways.

One high-ranking Catholic Mississippi cleric also foresaw the imminent death of segregation. Father Bernard Law authored a letter on March 13, 1964, in which he called on all Mississippians to see the evolving nature of southern race relations and to adapt to the times, in short, to live not like Don Quixote chasing windmills, but to live in the contemporary world.[2] He wrote, "legal segregation is all but dead. In a very short time, the public schools of Mississippi will be desegregated. To think otherwise is to avoid reality."[3]

Law blamed the continual system of segregation on Mississippi's leaders. The state still ran an unprofitable, morally corrupt, insane dual school system because of a dearth of leadership. Mississippi's politicians played the role of Pontius Pilate and sold their state and their integrity for votes. To be anything but an ardent segregationist would be political suicide for the potential candidate. The good-hearted leaders of the state, at least the capable ones, were forced to live a schizophrenic existence. To win votes and effect change, a politician had to appeal to die-hard segregationists. At the same time, a modicum of intelligence was sufficient to tell a politician that segregation was doomed. Law called upon Mississippians to allow their leaders to lead. He wrote:

> The time has come to emancipate our politicians. The time has come to allow them the right to exercise their ability as statesmen. The time has come to allow them to function as leaders. Mississippi has the leadership, if it can be freed, to push the state forward on

> many fronts. For too long we have been wasting time, talent, effort and money in a senseless, doomed struggle to maintain the corpse of enforced segregation.[4]

Father Law proceeded to offer a series of suggestions for confronting the turbulent times that would inevitably accompany desegregation. While Law's letter was directed specifically to the Governor, he also called upon all civic leaders, including religious leaders, to work to effectively and peacefully end segregation. Such leadership had been lacking, but the time had come to make things right.[5] Law's letter would shortly thereafter be awarded letter of the year by the Catholic Press Association.[6]

Twenty years after his letter, "Legal Segregation Is Dying," Father Law was appointed archbishop of Boston. Curtis Wilkie of the Boston Globe wrote a column on January 27, 1984, in which he introduced his fellow Bostonians to their new archbishop. Wilkie entitled his article, "Bishop Law: A calming factor in tense Mississippi of the '60s." Wilkie's article was a character sketch of a Catholic, Mississippi priest. Law, in fact, typified the successes, suspicions, and shortcomings of many Catholic ministers during the Civil Rights era.

Upon his ordination, Father Bernard Law had been immediately embraced by his Catholic community in Mississippi. One Jackson, Mississippi parishioner told Wilkie, "Bernie was ours, just like Bishop Brunini was ours."[7] Law, in fact, was not a native Mississippian, but he was white, American, and, most notably, in a missionary diocese who sought her priests abroad, he was not a foreigner. In the words of one of Wilkie's interviewees, he was considered "a bright star among native born guys."[8] Thus, Law's success initially came from his ability to "fit in" to the Jim Crow community to which he had been assigned. Wilkie claimed: "Certainly Bishop Law was no Berrigan at the barricades in Mississippi. He moved comfortably among the moderate establishment, a course that sometimes put him in conflict with poor blacks and leftist whites who were pushing for more radical solutions."[9] Nevertheless, Law's devotion to ending

Jim Crow in Mississippi was genuine. In 1964, Bishop Gerow moved Law from rural Rankin County to the city. The move occurred, according to a fellow priest, "because there was reason to believe he might be harmed."[10] All of Law's visible politicking on behalf of oppressed blacks had irked many in the white establishment.

Although Bernard Law was more eloquent, charismatic, and well-known than his priestly counterparts, he adopted the same attitude towards Jim Crow as most of his fellow priests. By the mid-1960s, he was decidedly and openly opposed to Jim Crow. His opposition, however, was a cautious opposition. Racist priests certainly existed. Leftist priests greatly influenced by the Social Gospel, such as Father Morrissey of Natchez, were also working inside the Diocese. Yet, the majority of Catholic priests in Mississippi adopted the attitude of Bernard Law, who in turn followed his bishops, Gerow and Brunini. Their willingness to take a dangerous and unpopular social stand has been commended. Their slowness in doing so has been questioned.

The decision to desegregate the Catholic schools of Mississippi at the first grade level came in 1964. The following year all grade levels in the Catholic schools were officially desegregated. Just as the Supreme Court had tried to soften the inevitable backlash of its *Brown* decision by setting a lax timetable, so too did the Catholic Church in Mississippi attempt to gradually acclimate its angry white parishioners to the winds of change. Integration would not happen all at once. Instead, the youngest grades would be desegregated year-by-year. The plan was to have fully integrated schools in just over a decade. By admitting a few blacks in the younger grades each year, the Church hoped to retain her white supremacist congregants, and, at the same time, nurture a modicum of racial tolerance in her students.

A second diocesan policy required blacks to be Catholic in order to enroll in a post-*Brown* Catholic school. Marge Baroni explains: "When the decision was made to integrate the Catholic school, they, in order not to integrate it too fully, and not to make it too open, and not to do the job thoroughly, the rule was that only Blacks who were Catholic could go there."[11] The intent was clearly to keep the tuition-paying white Catholics enrolled. The Church did not want a white-flight from her schools.

Nevertheless, a number of Catholic parents did indeed flee the recently integrated Catholic schools. From 1966-67, those Catholic parents who did not want their children mingling with black classmates took their children to the still segregated public schools. When the public schools were integrated the following year, they enrolled in their last resort—the private Christian academies that sprang up all over the state.

Four years later, the Catholic schools had seen very little change in the way of integration. Superintendent James Gilbert felt the need to remind one of his wavering principals that "the policy of the Mississippi Catholic School Office is full integration of student bodies and full integration of faculties."[12] His letter, dated November 21, 1969, goes on to explain that Catholic school integration must occur quickly, and he made it clear that the principal must begin looking for black teachers who would join the faculty the following school year. Gilbert also warned against accepting students who were fleeing the public schools because of desegregation. He wrote: "I hope that no Principal will accept students during the year who are running from integration....We should use the policy of not accepting any students into the parochial schools this school year unless they have moved in from out-of-town or state."[13] Gilbert's refusal to accept transfer students was based on principle. Catholic schools generally sought ways to attract students. The bills and salaries were paid via tuition; the more enrolled students, the

greater the operating budget. And yet, the Superintendent was authorizing his principals to turn away potential students. Gilbert explained his position: "I am well aware that parochial schools are suffering financially but I would rather suffer that way than from operating on un-Christian principles. So, don't accept students who are running from integration."[14]

On December 6, 1969, the principals and school board of the Catholic Diocese of Jackson agreed unilaterally to actively integrate all Catholic schools. Henceforth Mississippi's Catholic schools would accept students regardless of race. The second resolution of this momentous meeting stated: "Be it resolved that the Diocesan School Board and the Principals of the parochial schools in Mississippi go on record as reaffirming completely and totally the diocesan policy of full integration of student bodies and of faculties in the Mississippi Catholic schools."[15] The Diocese of Jackson had previously encouraged integration, now she would require it.

Six days after the decision to actively integrate, Father Gilbert wrote a letter to his principals, pastors, and presidents of school boards offering suggestions for integrating the schools. Gilbert told his recipients that some practical plan to integrate was necessary and that they ought not to take his suggestions lightly.[16] He mandated that "[e]ach school must be integrated. This cannot be pure tokenism."[17] He suggested that cities with a dual school system—a separate black and white Catholic school—consider consolidating. He asked the individual parishes to first meet among themselves and discuss ways to actively integrate. He concluded his letter by asking, "[c]an you in conscience run a segregated school?"[18]

Gilbert attached to his December 12 letter an addendum with more explicit suggestions for each individual school. He made it clear that it ought not to be the black school in each city that is shut down for the sake of consolidation. In the attachment he stated that "it would be wrong…to pull out of every all black school [*sic*]."[19] He made the point that the easy way to

financially stabilize the Catholic schools would be to shut down the black ones. Black Catholic schools charged less tuition out of necessity. Because Gilbert believed some black schools ought to be maintained, the burden of supporting them must be shared by the wealthier white schools. He wrote, "[o]ne of the basic Christian principles lacking among white Catholics in Mississippi is the sharing of goods with poor blacks."[20]

By the 1970-71 school year, Brunini expected all his diocese's Catholic schools to be fully integrated. In compliance with Brunini's request, the School Board of the Diocese of Natchez-Jackson publically required local pastors and school boards to "make the strongest effort to implement"[21] a series of policy guidelines in conformity with Brunini's wishes. The highlights of this pivotal letter to pastors and school board members follow.

"1—There should be full integration of all Catholic schools in both student bodies and faculties."[22]

In order to avoid the charge of paternalism, and in order to attract black, Catholic students, Brunini thought it wise to desegregate the schools' faculties as well. One of the common objections of blacks to integration was the desire to have their black children taught by black teachers who doubled as role models. In addition, many black parents were worried that when schools integrated, the black teachers would be the first to be laid off. Brunini anticipated these objections and required integrated faculties.

"2—No new Catholic schools should be established for the school year of 1970-1971."[23]

Many white Mississippians sought to avoid integration by creating a plethora of private or religious academies. The historical success of the Catholic schools in Mississippi made many whites eye the schools as potential segregation academies. If the Church would oversee the

erection of more schools, the buildings and student bodies could remain white-only and not violate federal law. Brunini dashed these hopes and took it a step further with his third request:

"3—The construction or procuring of new or additional facilities to accommodate transferees from the public school system is strictly prohibited."[24]

Brunini's fourth request made it absolutely clear that Mississippi's Catholic schools would not be used by segregationists by declaring that only previous Catholic students, whether white or black, would be admitted into Catholic schools in the 1970-71 school year. Twenty years later, Brunini remarked: "We had to turn down our own Catholic people. It was very painful."[25] The Bishop did, however, allow three exceptions to his Catholic-only policy. First, a non-Catholic family who had been attending Catholic schools before the proliferation of segregation academies would be invited to remain enrolled. Brunini reasoned that such students were not fleeing integration, but had previously decided for one reason or another to receive a Catholic education. The Bishop found a precedent here in the case of Presbyterian Christian School in Hattiesburg. In addition, Brunini allowed schools with a mission status to continue to accept non-Catholic students. After all, these mission schools were directed toward the black apostolate and obviously were not being used to keep blacks out. Finally, Brunini decided to allow black non-Catholics to transfer into predominately white Catholic schools and vice versa. He explains, "[t]he purpose of this exception is to give Christian witness."[26]

"5—In those areas where there exists but one Catholic school whose student body is either predominately white or predominately black every effort should be made to achieve a significant level of de-facto integration."[27]

The *de facto* versus *de jure* segregation argument existed across the nation. Brunini recognized this when he claimed in a January 2, 1970 pastoral letter that "[w]e have an

opportunity in Mississippi to turn a historic corner and to become pace-setters in public education for the rest of the nation."[28] The Bishop did not want the token desegregation as practiced in the North. Here Brunini shows his Mississippi colors. Most Mississippians resented the fact that the national spotlight revealed the negative aspects of segregation in their state while the North was given a free pass. In a 1957 interview with Mike Wallace, Senator James Eastland expressed the frustration of his fellow Mississippians with northern hypocrisy. Eastland cited numerous statistics showing that Mississippi was actually more desegregated than the North.[29] Brunini wanted to be sure his Catholic schools practiced true, *de facto* integration and thereby teach northerners a lesson.

"6—In those areas where there exists a predominately black and a predominately white school a representative group of black and white people should be established to work towards a meaningful level of integration."[30]

Brunini adhered to the time-tested Catholic practice of subsidiarity—government from the bottom-up. Of course, the Catholic Church is a hierarchical institution, pastured by a Pontiff with the power of making infallible statements with regards to faith and morals. Yet, for nearly two thousand years, the Church has taught that the family is the cornerstone of civilization. Families come together and form communities and communities join for mutual benefit to form states and societies. Thus, the family creates the state; the state derives its rights from the family. Consequently, the Church maintains that local decisions are best handled at the local level, namely by the families who created the community. Brunini's sixth request is a perfect demonstration of subsidiarity. The Bishop as the hierarchical head of the Catholic community pronounced a decision regarding faith and morals: you cannot be a Catholic and a segregationist, therefore, desegregate. Yet, the Bishop left the details of practical integration in the hands of

local communities. The Bishop made his pronouncement and now local leaders were expected to enforce it as best they saw fit.

"7—No school is to add additional grades without explicit permission of the Diocesan School Board."[31]

A number of Catholic schools who stopped at the elementary or middle school level attempted to add an additional grade. The intent was to allow white students to continue in the Catholic school system all the way through high school so as not to mix with black students in the local public school. Some cities such as Clarksdale did not have a large enough or an affluent enough Catholic population to justify a kindergarten through high school. Consequently, they simply opened an elementary or a K-8 school. Suddenly, after the federal government made it clear that desegregation would occur, the demand for K-12 Catholic schools arose. The reason for the recent loyalty to Catholic schools was clear—better to cough up the extra building fees and tuition and remain in an all-white school than to pocket the money but have one's children attend a free school with black children. Brunini saw through the pseudo-attachment to Catholic education and put a halt to future expansion.

"8—We recognize that guidelines by their very nature do not exactly fit every situation. In those situations where there are doubts and/or excessive difficulties, the matter in question should be referred to the Diocesan School Board for consideration."[32]

Again, Bishop Brunini demonstrated his preference for the principle of subsidiarity. He recognized that a top-down mandate could not address all concerns with such a volatile issue as desegregation. Further concerns would inevitably arise, and Brunini intended to address them as they became evident, and he intended to address them in consultation with his pastors and education specialists.

The decision to desegregate had been germinating in the minds of Bishops Gerow and Brunini since the *Brown* decision. Brunini finally devised a concrete integration plan for the 1970-71 school year. His plan is a testament to both his moral convictions and his practical nature. His campaign to desegregate had finally gained enough momentum to be effective and assure that the state's Catholic schools retain a significant amount of their tuition-paying whites. His letter to the school board made it clear that the Catholic Church would no longer lag in the rear of school integration.

Chapter IV

Reactions

The desegregation of Mississippi's Catholic schools was met with mixed reactions. Integration had been attempted piecemeal since the early 1960s and was officially required at the beginning of the 1970-71 school year. The mixed reactions help to show the lack of a strong grassroots movement in support of Brunini's policy. Many Catholics, both black and white reacted negatively to desegregation. Yet the persistence of Brunini, other members of the clergy and school boards, and enough laity enabled Mississippi's Catholic schools to survive the tumult caused by desegregation.

All Catholics are taught that it is their duty, as far as possible, to send their children to a Catholic school. Once their children graduated elementary school, black parents assumed that they would send them on to the local Catholic high school. Yet, as late as the 1960s, black Catholics were being turned away from parish schools. Greenville, Mississippi's, all-white St. Joseph High School, refused to admit students from the black Sacred Heart School whose building had been condemned by the city. Unable to raise funds for a new, black Catholic high school, Sacred Heart parents were not too concerned, as they expected to simply move their children to St. Joseph. Citing the lack of physical space, St. Joseph refused to admit any black student, and the bishop accepted their decision.[1] The black school in Vicksburg, St. Mary, was also forced to shut its doors in 1964, and the sad story in Greenville was repeated. Black students were forced to attend a black Catholic school in Yazoo City, fifty miles away, rather than the all white boys' and girls' school in their own hometown. "Some parents made this trip twice a day, morning and evening, for several years, determined to give their children a Catholic education at all costs."[2]

The few black students who did attend a white Catholic school initially faced persecution. Mamie Mazique tells the story of her son's experiences at Cathedral School in Natchez the first year it integrated. At first, she had not wanted to send her son, Herman, to the newly-integrated school. She finally did so when Herman's good friend Kenneth enrolled. Not wanting Kenneth to have to face the pressures of integration alone, Ms. Mazique and Herman agreed to enroll with him. Ms. Mazique laments:

> It was a mistake I made for him. I sent him over there trying to help, and, then, when he got over there, they mistreated him. They isolated him, and he had a hard time over there. It caused his grades to fall, and he had a problem getting books, and it just wasn't good for him over there....Finally, people started calling me, telling me that if I didn't get him out of there , they was going to kill him. I was going to find him out by the old barbeque pit there.[3]

Ms. Mazique decided to pull Herman out of Cathedral. Unfortunately, she could not re-enroll him at Holy Family, the black Catholic school. So, Herman began attending the local public school. The constant harassment and movement took its toll on the young student and he began causing problems. Ms. Mazique insists that, had he stayed in the all black Catholic school, he would have turned out fine. His drinking and drug usage, insists Ms. Mazique, was a direct result of the suffering he underwent at Cathedral. She explains: "I don't fault the children at Cathedral for what happened to Herman. I fault the parents. But, you know, they helped to destroy my child. I was trying to help others, and I paid a big cost."[4]

Further evidence of white dissatisfaction with integration is the phenomenon known as the "white flight" in which white parents who could afford to simply moved their children from the newly integrated Catholic school to the still segregated private academy. But the "white flight" worked the other way as well. Many angry white parents fled the public schools and enrolled their children in the nearly all-white Catholic schools. The diocesan superintendent in 1970, Father James Gilbert, resigned after only one year of service, claiming that the Jackson

elementary school, St. Richard's, had become "a haven for segregationists."[5] He also accused Brunini of allowing the white Clarksdale school to add a seventh and eighth grade, presumably so white parents would not have to send their children to the integrated public school just yet.[6]

Bishop Brunini was disappointed that a number of the Catholic schools were becoming havens for segregationists. He later stated in his memoirs that he had expected a number of his flock to oppose *Brown*. He wrote: "I knew there would be much resistance on the part of most Caucasians and this resistance would also be demonstrated among many of our Catholics."[7] Thus Brunini was disappointed, but prepared, when a number of Catholics attempted to use his own schools in an effort to ignore *Brown*. Because most Catholics were white, the all-white and nearly-all-white schools became an attractive alternative to the racially mixed public schools. Brunini made the policy of his diocesan schools clear in a January 2, 1970 Pastoral Letter. He wrote:

> There should be no mistake concerning the Catholic Church's attitude towards school integration. Every Catholic school in Mississippi is obliged to admit Catholic applicants without regard to race. In our policy and in our teaching, including our school curricula, we proclaim that racial segregation is an affront to the informed conscience. While this should be obvious to all with any knowledge of the Catholic Church, we repeat it now in order to make it perfectly clear that the Catholic School System does not offer refuge from integration.[8]

Brunini's letter explains that the Catholic Schools of Mississippi were not in competition with the public schools. In fact, both school systems ought to work for the same end—the betterment of Mississippi's citizens. He urged his fellow Mississippians, Catholic and non-Catholic, to accept integration and work together to improve the faltering public schools. Brunini expressed to his parishioners the importance of supporting the state's public schools. It was the public schools which served the educational needs of the overwhelming majority of young Mississippians. He wrote: "Make-shift schools, hasty schemes designed to avoid court

orders, and emotional appeals to the social patterns of a dead past will do nothing but defraud young Mississippians of their rightful place in tomorrow's world."[9] The Bishop called upon "Catholics of Mississippi to exercise a responsible citizenship in this matter."[10] He concluded his letter by appealing directly to Catholics enrolled in the public schools. He reminded them of their duty not only as Catholics, but as citizens of a state living in historic and pivotal times. If they flee the public schools to avoid desegregation, they further damage the reputation of their state and Church. On the other hand, should they stay in order to take a moral stand, they would be serving their Church and state. He wrote: "Any decisions they make in these days should be made realizing our common responsibility for the public schools of Mississippi."[11]

The fact that a bishop would encourage Catholics to remain enrolled in the public schools is a testament to the seriousness with which Bishop Brunini took school desegregation. The Catholic schools, especially in Mississippi, had a history of financial instability. Her teachers were paid, not by the state, but through tuition. By encouraging potential enrollees to remain in the public school system, Brunini placed an additional burden on his own schools. Yet Brunini decided it would be better to be poor and justified than wealthy but on the wrong side of history.

The black community in Mississippi, Catholic and otherwise, was divided over the question of desegregation. Black Catholics learned from their Protestant counterparts that integration of any sort would be a long, grueling, and dangerous undertaking.

With limited laborers and funds, most civil rights groups in Mississippi focused not on school desegregation, but on attaining the ballot. Only two percent of Mississippi blacks were registered to vote as late as 1964.[12] The prevailing philosophy was first the ballot, then lasting change. John Dittmer explains: "Desegregation of public facilities, including schools, was not as compelling an issue in Mississippi as in other southern states....Although the desegregation

movement later took hold in larger cities, the appeal of the ballot was statewide."[13] With the focus of the Mississippi civil rights movement on attaining the ballot, few black parents worried themselves with integrating the schools.

The teachers and principals of the black community prior to 1966, more often than not, opposed desegregation. Such black employees were leaders of the black community but at the mercy of white school boards. Their steady pay and middle-class status assured them respect and leadership roles in their community. But, if these educators did anything to upset their white employers, they would be subsequently fired. Thus, most black middle-class teachers refused to take a stand that would be opposed by the white hierarchy. In addition, as Dittmer explains: "A number of black educators, especially administrators, had an economic interest in maintaining the status quo. The segregated environment had provided them with a livelihood....They feared—in many cases appropriately, as it turned out—that they would not fare well in an integrated system."[14] Charles Myers Asch adds: "Across the state, desegregation led not to integration and black empowerment but to white flight (in majority-black areas), token integration (in majority-white districts), and segregated tracking (within integrated schools), and often the firing of black teachers and administrators."[15]

In the immediate aftermath of *Brown*, a number of black parents filed suits against their local school boards demanding integration. Under the prodding of the Mississippi NAACP, desegregation suits were filed in Jackson, Clarksdale, Vicksburg, Natchez, and Yazoo City.[16] White retaliation was swift and effective. Whites in each of the five cities used economic leverage to bury the suits. The names of the petitioners were printed in newspapers, placed on store windows and made available to every white employee. The petitioners were summarily fired. Unable to find work, many were forced to leave the state entirely. The first fight to

desegregate Mississippi's schools had failed. Membership in each of the five cities' NAACP declined, while the Citizens' Council grew, in some cases, like Yazoo County, one hundred fold, from sixteen to over fifteen hundred members.[17]

The attempt to desegregate Mississippi's public schools in 1955 failed because the NAACP had vastly underestimated white resistance to integration.[18] White fear was stoked by men like Ellis Wright, president of Jackson's Citizens' Council, who claimed that miscegenation would be the fruit of desegregation. He exclaimed: "If the NAACP thinks we have the slightest idea of surrendering our southland to a mulatto race, the NAACP had better think again."[19]

The economic pressure and the tactics of intimidation employed by the Citizens' Council shocked both local blacks and the national NAACP. Jasper Mims of Yazoo City explained: "We expected pressure, but not this much."[20] The defeat of the first desegregation suits was shocking and total. "The national NAACP office responded to this defeat by dropping Mississippi like a hot potato. Eight years passed before the NAACP filed its first desegregation suit against Mississippi's public schools."[21]

Not all parents thought desegregation was good a good thing for their black children. In fact, many lamented desegregation because it meant the closing of the black schools. If a Mississippi city integrated, the students would meet in the previously white school and be taught by white teachers. Michael Namorato points out: "As Catholic schools integrated, the southern black parish and black school began to disappear, much to the disappointment of African-Americans."[22] Even though Mississippi claimed to adhere to the separate-but-equal mantra of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the facts proved otherwise. White Catholics, like all white students, enjoyed far better facilities, and in most cases, better trained teachers. Thus, when Bishop Brunini mandated that Catholic schools be desegregated, it was inevitable that the white and black

schools in the same cities merge. When the merger took place, it was the black principals and many black teachers who were laid off. Black parents appreciated the quality of education their children would receive, but worried about the cultural impact on their children. Charles Harris of Natchez explained: "We missed a lot basically by... bein' taught by white nuns and priests. We missed a lot of our heritage by not, you know, bein' taught by black teachers."[23] Parents like the Harris' feared that their children would not learn about their history and heritage at the hands of exclusively white teachers.

Many black families fought hard to keep their black Catholic schools open. They were willing to tolerate the dilapidated buildings as long as they could retain their black teachers. Charles Harris, speaking of the black Catholic school in Natchez, explained:

> ...it may be this school could actually be a school to help turn the black community around in this town, hopefully, because the kids will, again, return to bein' taught by black men and women about themselves, about their history, and what they can be and what they cannot be. We've lost a lot of that, and it's very that important we get that again because that's what actually made us the black race move forward in the past, and I'm not a segregationist, but I do believe that, for us to regain our self-respect and esteem, it's gonna have to come from us, and it's gonna have to come from our black men and women and teachers.... we fought so hard for integration, but it was integration in the sense that I want the same job, I wanna be able to go to the same place, but not integration to take away all our teachers.[24]

Echoing the philosophy of Booker T. Washington, and heavily influenced by Black Power, as preached by SNCC, many in the black community felt the need for self-determination—the black community needed black leadership. With few authority figures, and even fewer with adequate education, black teachers became natural leaders in the community. When integration threatened the position of these black teachers, many blacks began to have second thoughts about the desirability of desegregation.[25]

While most whites, even Catholic whites, vehemently opposed *Brown*, the hypocrisy of segregated parish schools was not lost on all white Catholics. Many lamented that the Church remained silent on racial injustice. Entire generations of Catholic students were not taught that the Catholic Church was a *catholic*, that is, universal, Church. Her mission was to preach to and serve all persons because all persons are created by God, possessed of inherent dignity, and destined for heaven. In an interview with Father William Morrissey, Natchez native and St. Mary parishioner, Marge Baroni, lamented that when her son was at the white Catholic school:

> [y]ou were not allowed to discuss anything. They wouldn't even teach those children during that time. Even at that time, up until 1960, they would not teach them the Church's position on race. And the children never heard it mentioned. …He had never heard a Bishop, or priest, or nun, or anybody say anything about racism being wrong.[26]

Louis Baroni, the husband of Marge Baroni, also saw through the hypocrisy of Catholic racism, both in her schools and in society. Because of his wife's activity in the civil rights movement and the social gospel, Mr. Baroni was ostracized. He explains that he was a member of the lay Catholic organization, the Knights of Columbus. On account of his wife, his fellow Knights shunned him. "I grew up with these people, went to school with them—and I would be going in the church, and they would be right beside me, and they wouldn't speak. They'd just pretend they didn't see me."[27]

Not many white Catholics shared the Baronis' sentiments, at least not publically. Dialogue over the merits of desegregation was limited. While the Catholic schools were struggling with their own race issues, the public schools upped the ante with a controversial new law.

In 1964, Mississippi officials implemented a freedom of choice program. In theory both black and white parents would be able to choose which school district to send their child. This

new tactic was an attempt at *de jure* desegregation but *de facto* segregation. The overwhelming majority of black students remained in black schools and whites in white schools. State-sponsored, as well as private, terror ensured the continuation of segregation. Charles Bolton explains:

> But the freedom-of-choice strategy for achieving school desegregation implied that people actually had the freedom to choose. In much of the South, most black people did not. In Mississippi between 1964 and 1969, black parents who chose white schools for their children were regularly intimidated in myriad ways, and the handful of black students who actually entered white schools under the freedom-of-choice system often faced the wrath of generally unsympathetic white teachers and students.[28]

Neither black Mississippians nor the Supreme Court was satisfied with this obvious skirting of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Two court cases, *Green vs. County School Board* and *Alexander vs. Holmes*, mandated that Mississippi retract its freedom of choice program and by 1970, establish a unitary school system that sponsored true integration. In effect, the Supreme Court was requiring Mississippi to produce evidence of racially balanced classrooms.[29]

Again, as in the immediate aftermath of the *Brown* decision, white Mississippians resisted. Senator James Eastland warned that now "there will be total segregation, because all of the white children will go to the private schools, which are open to any white child, and hence the destruction of public education in that area."[30] Eastland's warnings were realized. Many fled the public schools altogether and began enrolling in Catholic schools or creating new private academies. The number of private academies after the *Alexander* decision jumped from 121 to 236, and the number of students attending such academies tripled, mostly in majority black school districts.[31] Public school officials claimed to have lost 41,000 students in October 1970. Nearly all of these students enrolled in the new private academies.[32] Isabel Lee of Indianola explained: "The decision came down on a Friday, and by Monday all the whites were over at the academy."[33]

The story of the Holmes County school district was typical. After the *Alexander* decision, three new private academies sprang up in Holmes County. Each of these academies was granted tax-exempt status, and immediately whites, and only whites, began filling these new schools. White enrollment in the public schools dropped from 771 to 28 to 0 in two years. At first, Mississippi awarded a tuition grant for students enrolled in the private academies. When the federal government declared such grants to be in violation of the Civil Rights Act, one of the academies, Central Holmes Academy, requested financial assistance from the community. Otherwise, "many, many students whose minds and bodies are just as pure as those of any of their classmates and playmates…for financial reasons alone will be forced into one of the intolerable and repugnant 'other schools.'"[34]

Carthage, Mississippi, attempted to nullify the *Alexander* decision as well. The city's school board required the black schools to start two weeks earlier than the white schools. The school board claimed to be accommodating the black students who needed school to close during cotton season so the black children could help their families bring in needed income. Yet, when the children of nine black families did not show up at the all-black school, it became clear that they were waiting until the start of classes at the all-white school. These nine families were quickly contacted and pressured to immediately begin attending the black school.[35]

Kemper County disregarded the spirit of *Alexander* by integrating the school building, but not the classes. Blacks and whites attended classes, ate their food, rode buses, and socialized only with members of their own race. In effect the "desegregated" school building was divided into white-only and black-only sections. Even the integrated faculty taught members of their own race only. Joseph Crespino explained: "In places like Kemper County, the only

desegregation plan that could keep whites in the public school system was no desegregation plan at all."[36]

Clarksdale, Mississippi, fought desegregation using tactics practiced in the *de facto* segregated north. Its school board simply developed a district zoning plan in which school districts were gerrymandered according to the segregated residential sections of town. Thus, a dual school system continued in Clarksdale into the 1970s.[37]

No story better expresses Mississippi's stance on desegregation as late as 1966, than the attempt to integrate the Grenada public school system. The events that would bring national attention to Grenada in the summer of 1966 began with James Meredith's decision to walk from Memphis to Jackson. On June 4, 1966, James Meredith began his "Freedom from Fear" walk. On June 6, Meredith was shot with sixty to seventy pellets from a shotgun. The man who had first integrated Ole Miss in 1962, had planned to walk the two hundred-plus miles through Mississippi to show blacks that it was now safe to register to vote, that the civil rights acts recently passed in Congress would indeed protect them. Meredith had miscalculated both the willingness of the federal government to involve itself in the struggle for civil rights and the resolve of the segregationists to preserve their culture. Although Meredith would soon recover and finish the last leg of his march, his attempted assassination demonstrated that the white supremacists still controlled Mississippi.[38]

The attack on Meredith frightened and galvanized the black community. Outraged over the senseless violence, black civil rights organizations flocked to Memphis to carry on Meredith's march. The CORE (Congress on Racial Equality), SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee), the Deacons for Defense, MFDP (Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party), and Martin Luther King's SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), all

demonstrated their solidarity with the loner Meredith and began their ascent on Jackson. Their march was one of the most eventful of the movement, rivaling King's march in Selma the previous year.[39] After a number of speeches, rallies, gassings, and brutal attacks by the Mississippi Highway Patrol, the marchers, including Meredith, made it to the state capitol. King declared that the march "will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom ever held in the state of Mississippi."[40] Unfortunately for the movement, the march also revealed ripples of discontent and distrust amongst the various civil rights groups. In the end, King's SCLC decided to distance itself from the more militant (and poorly funded) groups it had just marched with. SCLC opted to establish its own presence in Mississippi in the town of Grenada. When rival groups attempted to move in SCLC told them to get out of town, that "SCLC was running the show."[41]

Under the leadership of Hosea Williams, one of King's trusted lieutenants, SCLC decided to integrate the public schools in September 1966. As of the summer of 1966, Grenada's schools had remained entirely segregated. At Williams' urging, black parents decided to try and enroll their children. The city of Grenada had decided to abide by the state's "freedom of choice plan." Thus, the two public schools officially desegregated grades one through twelve. White prognosticators estimated that only about one hundred blacks would dare enroll in the white schools.[42] When three hundred enrolled, white parents and administrators panicked and delayed the start of school ten days. Finally, when classes began on September 12, one hundred and fifty blacks entered the building for their first day of school in an integrated environment. The day was uneventful until noon when school dismissed. White students left the building first and made their way through a large mob outdoors. As soon as the black students began pouring onto the front lawn, an angry mob armed with ax handles, pipes and chains greeted them.[43]

The ensuing riot was bloody, even by Mississippi standards. The young students were brutally assaulted in the presence of reporters, photographers and police. One little girl was whipped by grown men who chased after her laughing. A thirteen-year-old boy was assaulted by a white woman who jammed her umbrella into his crotch; he hit the ground and was subsequently beaten by a group of men wielding clubs. A twelve-year-old boy ran through a gauntlet of armed white men and emerged out the other end with his clothes torn and head bloodied. A ten-year-old child was caught by five men who knocked him to the ground and beat him. In all, thirty children were assaulted that day, some badly enough to be hospitalized.[44] Police and FBI agents simply watched the carnage unfold. Dittmer concluded: "The violence in Grenada appeared to be a premeditated assault on black children approved by local law officials, not a spontaneous outburst by an uncontrolled mob."[45]

The following day only about twenty blacks showed up for school. The attacks the day before had apparently done their job. SCLC's Hosea Williams led a protest march; Martin Luther King made a visit to Grenada to support the students; and the black students were granted protection at the behest of Federal Judge Claude Clayton, who issued an injunction to city officials demanding that they protect the black students. The black students did indeed continue with their classes, but the harassment was so bad that they staged a two-week boycott before their first semester was over. The FBI obtained indicts against eight white men for their constant harassment, but all were soon thereafter acquitted.

John Dittmer argued that the violence in Grenada over desegregation "was the worst in the twelve years since the Supreme Court had handed down the *Brown* decision, surpassing in ferocity the harassment of students in Little Rock in 1957 and in New Orleans in 1960."[46] The American public was outraged. Grenada and Mississippi were both condemned. And yet the

assault on black school children had achieved its objective. The state was shamed, but remained *de facto* segregated. Two years after "one of the vilest displays of hideous prejudice, hatred and sheer bestiality ever produced in this nation's history of racial strife,"[47] only 3.9 percent of Mississippi's black children attended an integrated school.[48] In Grenada, where blacks had paid so dearly for the right to integrate, a miniscule percentage of blacks attended school with white children. Joseph Crespino explained: "School desegregation would ebb as a source of political activism for black Grenadans after local whites started a private school that drained large numbers of white students out of the public schools. Whites did not fight over the public schools any longer, they just left."[49]

Many of these white parents who abandoned the public schools would try and send their children to nearby Catholic schools. From 1966 on, Mississippi's Catholic bishops would be forced to confront the crisis head-on. Whites who shared the sentiments of the Grenada mob would look to the Catholic schools for protection from integrated schools.

The battle for public school desegregation would extend, albeit with less violence, to the Catholic schools. White Mississippi Catholics would alternately flee to and from the Catholic schools to avoid integration. The unwillingness of a concentrated number of Catholic parents to take a firm stand in favor of integrated Catholic schools demonstrates the lack of a strong grassroots movement that Gerow and Brunini could have utilized. Instead, the bishops felt they had to gradually persuade their flock of the merits of desegregation. The lack of such a grassroots movement was the result of fear: fear of ostracism, economic and physical retaliation, and fear of the social gospel.

Chapter V

Fear of Ostracism

White Catholics in Mississippi valued their assimilation into the mainstream culture of their state. Consequently, they accepted the status quo because to do otherwise would compromise their acceptance as white, God-fearing Mississippians. Such acceptance led to inevitable contradictions, for Catholics were called to respect the dignity inherent in all persons. The Church's two bishops encouraged their schools to integrate early, but when the schools did so, a startlingly similar Jim Crow system continued to exist inside the classrooms. The story of black Herman Mazique's experience in a Catholic school in Natchez, Mississippi is typical of the ostracism faced by blacks enrolled in Catholic schools in the mid-1960s. The story of white, Catholic silence demonstrates their fear of social ostracism.

James Michener once wrote: "When the mind refuses to engorge a horror of national magnitude, it can still accept the limited story of one man."[1] In other words, the story of an identifiable individual can help shed light on a societal injustice. Any parent, or any student, can empathize with Herman Mazique. He was a normal child whose time in a Natchez Catholic school helps to shed light on the consequences of the Church's silence during the integration crisis.

Herman Mazique's parents enrolled him in a Catholic school in the hope that he would receive a better education than he would have received in a Mississippi public school.[2] Herman was a student set apart. He neither socialized nor talked much. He had no friends. His classmates viewed him with either indifference or contempt as his experience at Natchez Cathedral would demonstrate. One day, one of his classmates brought to school a cake celebrating his birthday. The students flocked to the front of the room to receive their allotted

portions. Soon the cake was distributed and the students delighted in this rare and happy treat. All of a sudden one of the little girls glanced at the back of the room and exclaimed: "Herman doesn't have any cake! Hey you guys, Herman doesn't have any cake!" The other students saw Herman sitting alone in the back of the room, the only student without a slice of cake. They immediately and unconcernedly returned to eating their own treats. The teacher also saw Herman alone and without any cake. She, too, returned to her work. Herman sat quietly in the back of the room and waited while his classmates laughed and finished their deserts.[3]

Herman finished the 1966 Fall semester in the same seat in the back of the room. He remained an oddity, out of place and alone. His classmates mocked and ostracized Herman, and his teachers and administrators ignored him. Herman was not a bad student. Nor was he a particularly slow student, or a handicapped student. Worse, Herman was black.[4]

Two elements stand out in Herman's story. First, the date was 1966. Mississippi did not integrate her public schools until 1970. Yet the above story told by Marge Baroni and confirmed by Herman's mother, Mamie Mazique, occurred four years before public school desegregation. Herman at the time was enrolled in a white Catholic school because the diocese of Jackson, under the guidance of Bishop Joseph Brunini, had forced the Catholic schools in his jurisdiction to accept black elementary students before his state's public schools did. This mandate of Brunini's was a bold move. Catholics in Mississippi were themselves an often persecuted minority. The climate, even in 1968, was decidedly anti-integration, and yet the native Mississippi Catholic bishop chose to risk further alienating his fellow statesmen by integrating his schools ahead of schedule. And yet, his decision came more than a decade after the *Brown* decision.

Second, the cruelty directed at Herman Mazique occurred in a Catholic school. Herman's story is not atypical. In fact, black students in Catholic schools faced routine persecution when the schools were integrated. The same Church who boldly desegregated ahead of schedule also overlooked blatant racism on her own campuses. Such a contradiction is difficult to reconcile—the enlightened, progressive Catholic Church was at the same time endorsing a separate-but-unequal caste system *inside* her schools.

The story of Herman Mazique is indicative of the complex relationship of the Mississippi Catholic Church with the civil rights movement. While responsible for commendable advances in race relations, and led by two enlightened bishops, the Church, and her leaders, has been accused of slowly and reluctantly promoting civil rights. The Catholic Church in 1950s and 1960s Mississippi offers proof that the Church is not a museum of saints, but a hospital for sinners.[5]

The primary motivating factor in the Church's slow response was fear. Both rational and irrational fear led to a hyper-cautious approach to change. On an ecclesial and a personal level, Mississippi Catholics deemed it better to move slowly than to risk the social, economic, sexual, and theological consequences that would accompany swift and dramatic changes in the field of civil rights. Protestant Minister Ed King recognized that there were many whites who favored change, but that they were paralyzed by fear. King said: "I know many Mississippians in the last several years, over one hundred ministers and college teachers, [who] have been forced to leave the state. This nation is being populated with refugees from the closed society in Mississippi."[6] Charles Marsh goes on to argue that "[t]hose white men and women courageous enough to speak against the day could expect relentless intimidation by the Citizens' Council or

the Ku Klux Klan; and ultimately they could expect to lose their jobs and become exiles in their own country."[7]

The Catholic Church in Mississippi operated under the same Jim Crow system that set Emmett Till's murderers free. The Church was in a particularly difficult position as Catholics themselves constituted an often persecuted minority in Mississippi. Many Catholics, wanting to assimilate, held the same racial views as their Protestant counterparts. In fact, a number of Catholics held membership in the Ku Klux Klan. In an interview with Father Tim Murphy in 1994, Natchez resident and St. Mary parishioner, Louis Baroni claimed, "though the Klan were anti-Catholic, there were Catholics in the Klan."[8] When questioned as to how common was a Catholic Klansman, Baroni replied: "Well, it's kinda hard to say....we had a list of the Klan members, and these people were listed. I'd say twelve, fifteen, something like that."[9]

Historian Randall Miller lends validity to Baroni's claims. He argues that the Church was accomadationist until the eruption of the civil rights movement in the 1960s. The Church, being a minority herself, adopted the culture and traditions around her, even slavery and segregation.[10] Miller also believed that "hostility toward Catholics in the South diminished as southern Catholics and southern Protestants shared similar positions on social issues."[11] It is important to remember that Mississippi Catholics were exactly that—*Mississippi* Catholics, both before and after the *Brown* decision. They inhabited and adapted themselves to a Jim Crow culture. Michael Namorato explains: "In the case of the Mississippi Catholic Church, one of the characteristics of its history is just how much it interacted with the state of Mississippi. The church, in short, did not grow in a vacuum. It affected, was affected by, and lived within a changing environment known as Mississippi."[12]

The ante-bellum period demonstrates the degree to which Mississippi Catholics accepted the local culture. James Pillar points out that in 1859, the state contained roughly 10,000 Catholics of whom 1,000 were slaves.[13] Nor were Catholic masters any better than their Protestant counterparts when it came to the treatment of their chattel. Once Union troops arrived and made freedom a tangible reality, slaves on Catholic plantations immediately left their masters. There was little sense of loyalty to slave masters, whether Catholic or Protestant. One group of slaves on a plantation near Vicksburg even returned to kill their Catholic mistress.[14] Mississippi Catholics were well represented in the Confederate army when war finally erupted. About three hundred and fifty Catholics would serve in the 16th Mississippi Regiment, and two distinctively Catholic companies, the "Sarsfield Southrons" and "Jeff Davis Guards," joined many fellow Catholics who were scattered throughout the Confederate Army.[15] Bishop Elder, despite a severe shortage of priests in his diocese, released eleven of his priests for military service.[16] Pillar explains the enthusiasm of Mississippi Catholics for the Confederacy: "Catholic response to the formation of the Confederacy and later to the outbreak of war would appear to have been no more and no less enthusiastic than that of the State's Protestant majority. In other words, Catholic Mississippians acted no differently from their fellow citizens."[17]

White Protestant and Catholic solidarity continued over the course of the next century. Few whites, regardless of denomination, accepted the equality of blacks. The overwhelming majority of whites openly supported, or at least adhered to, Jim Crow laws. John F. Baggett and Philip M. Dripps visited Jackson in 1963, and recorded their observations on the Methodist church. Their observation could just as well apply to any of Mississippi's white churches. They claim: "What has happened in Jackson, Mississippi not only dramatizes the segregated nature of the church and its false unity, but also reveals that the church has capitulated to the culture in

which it dwells....The church, like a chameleon, blends in with its background so that it loses its identity."[18] Baggett and Dripps wrote their scathing report of the hypocrisy of the Methodist church after visiting with civil rights activist Ed King. King believed that the accomadationist spirit was not a uniquely Methodist problem. The Catholic Church, too, was guilty of sitting idly on the sidelines. When Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney went missing in June 1964, King contacted leading churchmen in the state hoping to get a condemnation of what King believed to be a triple homicide. Charles Marsh explains: "But no one wanted to hear from King—not the Methodist bishop, not even the liberal editor of the Roman Catholic newspaper in Mississippi, Father Bernard Law."[19] According to King and many activists, white church leaders were unwilling to compromise the social standing of their churches. To openly defy Jim Crow would be ecclesial suicide. It would pit one church family against all the other denominations in the state.

All Mississippians lived in fear of the closed society. Whites and blacks both lived in fear of a society that had proven time and again that it was capable of exacting cruel and violent punishment on those who challenged the status quo. In 1956, Mississippi enacted a law that made it illegal "to incite a riot, or breach of the peace, or public disturbance, or disorderly assembly, by soliciting, or advocating, or urging, or encouraging disobedience to any law of the state of Mississippi, and nonconformance with the established traditions, customs and usages of the State of Mississippi."[20] The state's segregationist leaders ensured that the above law would be followed by supporting a segregationist intelligence agency and police force. James Silver points out that "[e]very lawmaking body and every law enforcing agency is completely in the hands of those whites who are faithful to the orthodoxy."[21] Anyone suspected of pro-integrationist sympathies was immediately placed under surveillance. Charles Myers Asch

argues that the FBI itself was indirectly involved in undermining the efficacy of desegregationists. Senator Eastland would provide Earle Johnston, the head of the Sovereignty Commission, with FBI files and Johnston in turn provided Eastland with evidence of communist infiltration which Eastland used to frighten his congressional colleagues and increase his own power. Asch writes: "This mutual enhancing, publically funded investigative cycle gave Eastland important information on movement activities."[22] Journalist Bill Minor noted with irony that the practices of Mississippi's Sovereignty Commission, whose stated goal was to root out communism, made it the "KGB of the cotton patches."[23] Silver added: "Within its own borders the closed society of Mississippi comes as near to approximating a police state as anything we have yet seen in America."[24]

White Catholics in Mississippi lived under the same social taboos as their Protestant brethren. Those who opposed those taboos generally remained silent. The story of Herman Mazique demonstrates that at least elements of Jim Crowism occurred even inside Mississippi's Catholic schools. Most Catholics accepted the social status quo, and the silence of so many white Mississippi Catholics can be attributed to fear of social ostracism.

Chapter VI

Economic and Physical Retaliation

All Mississippians, black and white, Catholic and Protestant, lived in a state of fear throughout the civil rights era. Their fear was very real and very justified. Fear of ostracism kept many white Catholics from fighting Jim Crow laws. Fear of not being able to feed their families because they were fired, or fear of being hospitalized or killed kept many others from joining the fray. A brief review of Mississippi during the 1950s and 1960s will demonstrate the ever present fear that haunted all Mississippians. The violence of these two decades convinced many black Catholics that integration was not worth the effort, and it frightened the majority of white Catholics into silent complicity.

While Jim Crow laws were certainly enforced, race relations in 1950s Mississippi had made modest gains. NAACP membership was increasing, a modest number of blacks had registered to vote, a few served on juries for the first time since Reconstruction, and the elected white politicians professed moderate racial views.[1] A Supreme Court decision on May 17, 1954, disrupted the false sense of calm and dramatically changed race relations in "the closed society."

The Supreme Court's 1954, *Brown v. Board of Education* decision mandated that America's public school desegregate with "all deliberate speed." Many Mississippi politicians, seeing the proverbial writing on the wall, correctly guessed that the glaring inequality in white and black Mississippi schools would bring down the wrath of Washington upon their state. Consequently, in a frenzied effort to finally implement *Plessey v. Ferguson's* "separate-but-equal" doctrine, Mississippi legislators devoted a significant amount of the state treasury into bringing black public schools up to par. It was a last-ditch, desperate effort to prevent the inevitable—wholesale integration.[2]

It would be difficult to remedy the inequalities in the two school systems. In 1950, the state spent $122.93 per white student but only $32.55 per black student. Teacher salaries ranged from $711 for black teachers to $1861 for white teachers. White supremacist Fred Sullens wrote in 1949: "Negro schools are poorly equipped, shabby, dilapidated, and unsightly...Almost without exception they are one-room structures, rickety stoves are propped up on brickbats, blackboards are absent or worn to the point of uselessness, sanitation is sadly lacking."[3] The black Reverend H.H. Humes exclaimed:

> Gentlemen, you all should not be mad at us. Those were nine white men that rendered that decision. Not one colored man had anything to do with it. The real trouble is that you have given us schools too long in which we could study the earth through the floor and the stars through the roof.[4]

The only chance Mississippi had to maintain her segregated schools would be to rectify these obvious differences.

By 1954, an ever increasing number of Americans were ready to accept the *Brown* decision. As James T. Patterson notes, "so many larger postwar forces—rising expectations and restlessness among blacks; slowly changing white attitudes about racial segregation; the Cold War, which left Jim Crow America vulnerable to the charge of hypocrisy when it claimed to lead the Free World—were impelling the nation toward liberalization of its racial practices."[5] Yet, in Mississippi, *Brown* only intensified the people's opposition to racial integration. Mississippi legislators would rather bankrupt their state than mix the races. A resolution threatening to close down Mississippi's schools quickly gained momentum. The Mississippi legislature declared in a 136-0 vote that the *Brown* decision was "invalid, unconstitutional, and of not lawful effect."[6]

Anticipating strong Southern resistance, the Supreme Court attempted to soften the blow *Brown* was sure to cause. A number of the judges were southerners themselves and understood the unpopularity of their ruling. Instead of calling for a swift end to segregation, the Court

ordered that desegregation occur "with all deliberate speed." The vagueness of this timeframe gave Mississippians hope that the mandate could be skirted. Hence, the sudden rush to equalize the two separate school systems. Yet, time was running out for Mississippi's segregationists. James Patterson suggests that, had they been more accommodating in the aftermath of *Plessey*, had they been more willing to negotiate and compromise, many blacks would have gladly accepted a separate-but-equal school system. "(They did not yearn to mix with whites.) But most southern whites fought back, sometimes violently. Their refusal to compromise...not only led to the chain of events leading to *Brown v. Board of Education*, but also to the more militant civil rights movement of later years."[7] Whether Mississippians accepted it or not, and despite attempts to delay the inevitable, the uncompromising segregationists of the *Plessey* era would soon be forced to integrate. And most Mississippians understood the days of segregation were numbered.

While blacks were understandably initially excited by the *Brown* decision, this enthusiasm quickly dissipated when it became clear that the Court did not have the power to enforce its ruling. Rather, it relied heavily on the executive branch. Depending on the political leanings of the President, *Brown* may or may not be enforced. Furthermore, with such a vague timetable, southerners sought ways to skirt *Brown*. With a combination of well-placed politicians and grassroots organizations like the Citizens' Council, whites found creative ways to negate the ruling of the Supreme Court. Most white Mississippians rejected desegregation, and those who did not were cowed by intimidation and threats. When words failed to discourage integration, mob violence proved more effective. As Joseph Crespino explained:

> practical segregation, then, required the presence of violence-prone hard-liners in order to be effective. [Mississippi leaders] were able publically to maintain the canard that the black community was content with the racial status quo exactly because hard-line

> resisters like the Citizens' Council stoked the fires of white resentment, using economic repression to suppress civil rights activism.[8]

Brown heightened racial tensions and a sudden rise in lynchings and extralegal violence erupted across the state. Senator James Eastland urged his fellow Mississippians to resist the *Brown* decision. He exclaimed: "To do the things which the Court is attempting to do is beyond the power of government. It will justly cause evasion and violation of law and contempt for law, and will do this country great harm."[9]

In response to *Brown*, Judge Tom Brady wrote a pamphlet entitled *Black Monday* in which he predicted a deterioration of the seemingly calm race relations that had existed in Mississippi prior to the Supreme Court ruling. In an address made to the Indianola Citizens' Council on October 28, 1954, Judge Brady reviewed his pamphlet. He claimed school integration would lead to miscegenation:

> You can't put little boys and little girls together—negroes and whites, and have them sing together, and eat together out of the same pail, sit side by side, and walk arm in arm, and expect for the sensitivity of those white children not to be broken down. You can't do it. The old adage of 'First we pity, then we pardon, then we embrace,' applies.[10]

: Brady went on to proclaim that the *Brown* decision was tolerable to northerners only because they could absorb a four to six percent black population. But in Mississippi, the ratio was about one-to-one, black-to-white. This ratio would inevitably dilute the quality of Mississippi schools. After all, according to Brady, "the negro has, in certain instances, elliptical blood cells, which cause disease. We do know that his skull is one-eighth inch thicker."[11] The comingling of the races would only make all Mississippians look like the black man, with "his flat nose, his round head, his slightly kinky hair, his slightly thick lips and his colored skin."[12]

Judge Brady's address to the citizens of Indianola only summarized his *Black Monday* prophecies. In a pamphlet in which he likened blacks to chimpanzees and argued that their

social and mental development had been retarded, he also prophesied that this monkey-race would bring great violence upon the white community. And the *Brown* decision would hasten this violence. He predicted, "The fulminate which will discharge the blast will be the young negro schoolboy....The supercilious, glib young negro, who has sojourned in Chicago or New York, and who considers the counsel of his elders archaic, will perform an obscene act, or make an obscene remark, or a vile overture or an assault upon some white girl."[13] Judge Brady played off the greatest fear of his fellow Mississippians—that desegregating the schools would lead to miscegenation.

White Mississippians feared that the overthrow of Jim Crow would lead to a sexual revolution. Although it was a common enough practice for a white man to have a black mistress, the inverse was unthinkable. In many Mississippi cities, including those with successful Catholic schools, the black population equaled or surpassed the white. If integration became the norm, white children would be outnumbered in these districts. White parents worried about a significant number of blacks in a previously all-white school would lead to race-mixing or miscegenation. One parent expressed the concerns of the majority of white Mississippians when he wrote to Senator James Eastland: "If we don't fight to the finish now, we may as well arrange for our mulatto grandchildren."[14] President Eisenhower himself sympathized with these white fears. He claimed: "These are not bad people. All they are concerned about is to see that their sweet little girls are not required to sit in school alongside some big overgrown bucks."[15]

The fear of interracial sex was reinforced by ardent segregationists. The closed society fed on the fear of black men ravishing white, southern belles. The state even banned a children's book in which light and dark-skinned rabbits interbred.[16]

The prophecies of *Black Monday* were fulfilled just sixteen months after the *Brown* decision. A young black schoolboy from Chicago traveled to Money, Mississippi, to visit his great-uncle, ignored the advice of his elders and performed a sexually suggestive act that broke Southern taboos. The child was tortured, shot, and dumped into the Tallahatchie River with a heavy fan tied to his neck. The badly decomposed body of Emmett Till was found days later. His murderers, J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant, were quickly arrested and indicted.[17]

Five days later they were free. The acquittal of the murderers of Emmett Till only sixteen months after the *Brown* decision demonstrated the extent to which white Mississippians would go to protect their culture. The evidence against Milam and Bryant was overwhelming. They themselves had admitted to abducting Till the night he was murdered. Initially, it appeared as if the two men would serve time in prison. As news of the brutal lynching spread over the Delta, most whites were shocked and disgusted. The two murderers were viewed as ignorant "peckerwoods" and were instantly chastised. Swift justice was promised. Meanwhile, in Chicago, Till's mother insisted on an open casket funeral so the world could see what they did to her child. An outraged northern (and international) press descended on Mississippi in droves. All the negative publicity that Mississippi received created a startling change in her citizens. Public opinion turned in favor of Bryant and Milam. Not that Mississippians believed what they had done was right, but most believed that the meddling northerners must be sent a message. Till, therefore became collateral damage. In order to keep blacks and northerners in their place, many Mississippians saw a not-guilty verdict as necessary. Bryant and Milam's lawyer pointedly told the jury that their forefathers would turn over in their graves if they convicted white men for defending a white woman's honor. The jury would not. After only sixty-seven minutes of deliberation, Milam and Bryant were set free.[18]

The Till case served notice that desegregating the schools would not happen "with all deliberate speed." The message sent by the twelve jurors in Sumner was clear: A black boy made a sexual advance on a white woman, and her white husband simply exacted justified revenge. Ironically, after the not-guilty verdict, Bryant and Milam were economically and socially ostracized to the extent that they were forced to leave the state. Once the message had been sent to blacks and the northern press that Mississippi's race relations would remain inviolate, the people of the state turned their backs on the detested murderers. Again, the message was clear: Bryant and Milam were wrong, but preserving segregation was more important than bringing justice to a murdered black boy. The battle for desegregated schools promised to be nasty, brutish and extended.[19]

Emmett Till was not the only lynching to occur in the immediate aftermath of *Brown*. A rash of other murders erupted across the state. In 1955, black activist George Lee was driving in Belzoni where he had been encouraging blacks to register to vote. A car pulled up beside him and shots were fired at his head. Lee's jawbone was blown away and his car crashed into a shack. Nevertheless, he was able to pull himself from the wreck. Two passersby rushed him to the hospital but Lee died before they arrived. With his lower face and jaw missing, Lee was unable to identify his murderers. The Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* reported: "Negro Leader Dies in Odd Accident."[20]

A sixty-three year old black farmer named Lamar Smith was also murdered in 1955. He was shot to death in broad daylight in front of the crowded courthouse in Brookhaven. Despite the crowds and a bloodied gunman fleeing the scene, no arrest was made.[21] Later, three men were arrested and charged with Smith's murder, but all three were acquitted. A reign of terror

had settled over Mississippi. The message was clear: a white man would not be convicted of "keeping the Negro in his place." John Dittmer explains:

> As the Red Scare of the fifties was abating in the rest of the country, a homegrown McCarthyism took hold in the Magnolia State. Books were banned, speakers censored, and network television programs cut off in midsentence. To be certain that subversives did not operate underground, the legislature created the State Sovereignty Commission, a secret police force that owed its primary allegiance to the Citizens' Council.[22]

Mississippi's reign of terror affected primarily blacks, but whites also experienced the fear of a "closed society." Erle Johnston, the public relations director for the Sovereignty Commission wrote in 1962, that the Citizens' Councils' purpose "now appears to be making white people hate each other."[23] Clyde Kennard, one of the black martyrs of the movement, claimed just before he died: "I still think there are a few white people of good will in the state and we have to do something to bring this out."[24] However, white Mississippians lived in constant fear of being labeled an integrationist. Such a label would inevitably hurt business and possibly result in violence to their house or person.

McComb natives Red and Malva Heffner's story is typical. As two middle-class whites, the Heffners made the mistake of inviting a Freedom Summer volunteer to their house for dinner. That same night, the Heffners began receiving threatening phone calls. The calls continued for six months, all unanimous and many accusing Malva Heffner and her daughter of performing sexual obscenities with black men.[25] The Heffners estimated that more than three hundred such calls were made from the time of their taboo dinner and their leaving McComb.[26] John Dittmer reports: "Within two months Red's insurance business was a shambles, his wife and children were ostracized, and the family's pet dog was poisoned. Finally…they moved away from McComb."[27]

Oliver Emmerich, also of McComb, was editor of the *Enterprise-Journal*. He wrote a series of editorials in which he pointed out that a peaceful society requires mutual respect, especially respect for the Constitution and the rights of others.[28] Shortly thereafter his office was fired upon, a stink bomb thrown into the circulation room and cross burned on his front yard.[29] James Silver noted: "Criticism of the reigning orthodoxy has resulted in expulsion of the critic and the imposition of the smothering hand of conformity on the society."[30]

Two more stories illustrate the fear with which white Mississippians lived. Ralph and Julia King, the parents of preacher and civil rights activist Ed King, were forced to flee the state. Ralph King was fortunate to possess a federal job and was thus immune to the economic pressure the Citizen's Council placed on many moderates. However, the Council had other ways of enforcing conformity. Its members began approaching friends and acquaintances of the Kings with the following message: what kind of parents would allow their son to mingle with and fight on behalf of blacks? The pressure worked and the Kings lost the majority of their friends. Asch explains: "Ralph and Julia were embarrassed and ashamed, and they were also frightened for their son. But they were also frightened of him, of what he'd become, of the company he kept, of what good white townspeople continued to say about him."[31]

William L. Higgs was a white, integrationist lawyer. He had helped Meredith enroll at Ole Miss and worked on several other civil rights cases. He was arrested at the end of 1962, and charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor. While awaiting his trial, Higgs left the state and refused to return. He was convicted *in absentia*, nevertheless, and given the maximum sentence. Later the boy involved in the case swore before two Pennsylvania detention center officers that Higgs had been set up. The boy was asked what the Mississippi detective asked him. The boy replied:

> Did you ever have unnatural relations with him. He asked me if Mr. Higgs ever messed around me or used me as a girl. The first two times I said NO. Then they said they could put me up in reform school for four or five years on different charges. Then the detective asked me again what went on at night and about unnatural relations. THAT IS WHEN I TOLD THEM THAT HE HAD UNNATURAL RELATIONS.[32]

The Citizens Council would go to any extent to demonstrate that integrationists, both white and black, lacked "good moral character" and therefore deserved whatever retaliation that came their way.[33]

Even Mississippi legislators voted out of fear. One such legislator explained his predicament to historian James Silver: "When the bill came up in the house to give cities and counties authority to make donations to the Citizens Councils, I thought it was unconstitutional. But I voted for it because if I had voted against the Councils, [Council leader] Bill Simmons would brand me as an integrationist."[34] As John Dittmer explains, whites developed "a siege mentality so pervasive it encompassed virtually every citizen and institution.... [A] homegrown McCarthyism took hold in the Magnolia State. Books were banned, speakers censored, and network television programs cut off in midsentence."[35]

Pike County was a particularly violent area of Mississippi in the mid-1960s. But it was by no means atypical. Numerous urban and rural areas of the state experienced similar racially-motivated violence. A list of the crimes committed in one year, 1964, in Pike County illustrates the extent to which segregationists would go to preserve their culture. The following incidents occurred between January 25 and November 1, 1964, and were reported to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in February 1965. Cross burned at the home of Curtis Bryant and others; crosses burned; firebomb thrown into Curtis Bryant's barber shop; Louis Asekoff and Rene Jones beaten; Ivey Gutter beaten; Wilbert Lewis beaten; dynamite thrown at home of Curtis Bryant; bomb thrown at home of Freddie Bates; bomb thrown at home of Mrs. Corine Andrews; shots fired at two African-American policemen; bomb thrown at Freedom House; Zion Hill Baptist

Church burned; attempted arson at Sweet Home Baptist Church; Mendy Samstein assaulted; Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church burned; shots fired at home of Curtis Bryant; dynamite thrown at home of Charles Bryant; Mt. Canaan Baptist Church burned; cross burned at home of Dr. W.T. Mayer; cross burned at home of G.T. Vaccarella, Jr.; Burgland market bombed; Pat Cleborn Martin beaten; bomb thrown at home of Willie Dillon, Dillon arrested; Robert V. Stone assaulted; Rev. Russell Bennett assaulted; bomb thrown on roof of home of Hugh Washington; bomb thrown into cookout building of Allen Coney; Booker T. Gutter store bombed; bomb thrown at home of Rev. James Baker; Mrs. Aylene Quinn's home bombed; Society Hill Baptist Church bombed; bomb thrown at home of Matthew Jackson; bomb thrown at home of Artis Garner; J.K. Wallace assaulted (ammonia in face); Malcolm Campbell threatened with pistol; shots fired at Charles J. Hughs; shots fired at home of G.T. Vaccarella; Shop-Rite store (owned by Vaccarella) shot at.[36]

The list above contains only recorded events in one sector of Mississippi. The events of April 24, 1964, show the breadth of racial violence and intimidation. A Department of Justice report reads: "Crosses were burned across the state. The Highway Patrol received reports of 71 crosses being burned in 61 areas of Mississippi including Jackson, Hattiesburg, Vicksburg, Utica, Crystal Springs, Greenwood, Natchez, Greenville, Meridian, Fayette, and Winona."[37] The violence and subsequent fear had become a state-wide epidemic. One of the popular freedom songs of the era, "In the Mississippi River," demonstrates the extent of the racial violence of the 1960s. During the search for Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney, numerous black bodies were reclaimed from the Mississippi River. Most had been the victim of racial violence.[38]

The most recognizable element of white supremacy in Mississippi was the Ku Klux Klan, who, insists Natchez resident Louis Baroni, accepted Catholic members.[39] Yet the most

powerful white supremacist group was the Citizens' Council. Formed in the Delta, by Robert Patterson, the Council's objective was to maintain the racial status quo. The Council consisted of mostly wealthy and middle-class Protestants, but they were not averse to accepting the aid of white Catholics. Jesuit sociologist Joseph Fichter spent many years fighting segregation, and compiled an excellent study in which he lamented that many of his fellow Catholics in neighboring Louisiana were members of the Citizens' Council. He wrote, "the White Citizen's Councils had spread from Mississippi to Louisiana where some of its organizers and many of its members were Roman Catholics."[40] R. Bentley Anderson continued the work of Fichter and explained that many white Catholics sided with and even joined the White Citizens' Councils. A group of Catholic university students even formed the Association of Catholic Laymen to assist the Council in its mission. The Association of Catholic Laymen claimed as its goal, "to foster, promote and protect the moral, physical, cultural and educational welfare…[against] integration of the black and white races…."[41] Although Anderson's study was in Louisiana, it demonstrated the racial attitudes of a significant number of southern Catholics.

The Citizens' Council would become the most potent anti-integration force in 1960s Mississippi. Its founder, Robert Patterson explained that while the opposition "has a right to say what he thinks, he also has a responsibility to accept the results of what he says."[42] Its members foreswore violence but would use any other means necessary to keep blacks in their place. James Silver observes: "The plain fact is that no forthright challenge of the society is tolerated for long and that repercussions are quick and sure."[43] The most popular tactic was economic pressure. Any black who signed a petition to vote or desegregate the schools would find their name printed in the local paper so that the whites of his community would know who to fire. A

Council member from Alabama explained: "We intend to make it difficult, if not impossible, for a Negro who advocates desegregation to find and hold a job, get credit, or renew a mortgage."[44]

Although the Council officially opposed the Klan, its members were prepared to move beyond mere economic threats. Intimidation remained a viable option. Within a year of the *Brown* decision, a pamphlet began circulating around Sunflower county—the home of Citizens' Council stalwart James Eastland—that read:

> When in the course of human events it becomes necessary to abolish the Negro race, proper methods should be used. Among these are guns, bows and arrows, sling shots and knives: We hold these truths to be self-evident that all whites are created with certain rights, among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of dead niggers.[45]

The subsequent increase in extra-legal violence demonstrates the tolerance of terrorist tactics by the Council. If economic sanctions failed to work, they would turn a blind-eye to men like Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam. After all, the Klan and the Council professed the same ends; only the means differed.

The Citizens' Council also attacked moderate whites who advocated liberalizing race relations. These attacks came in the familiar idiom of red-baiting. Mississippi segregationists took advantage of the age of McCarthyism and the Red Scare. Those who were not attuned to the Councils' ideology were inevitably labeled communists. Editor Hazel Brannon Smith explained that the Council demanded a strict adherence to its racial platform; failure to comply meant economic ruin, even for whites. As a result, few Mississippians would denounce the Council. Smith wrote: "It finally got to the point where bank presidents and leading physicians were afraid to speak their honest opinions, because of this monster among us."[46]

The Citizens' Council's greatest and most lasting success occurred in Mississippi's classrooms. The Council controlled the textbooks to be used in Mississippi classrooms. A few chapters from the Council's officially recommended textbooks proclaimed:

> YOU CAN'T BELIEVE RACE-MIXERS; GEORGE WASHINGTON WOULDN'T LIKE RACE-MIXERS; RACE-MIXERS HELP COMMUNISTS; MIXING THE RACES WILL MAKE AMERICA WEAK; GOD SEPARATED THE RACES; SEGREGATION IS CHRISTIAN; RACE-MIXERS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW ANYTHING; RACE-MIXERS MADE INDIA WEAK; WHITE PEOPLE BUILT GREECE; SOUTHERNERS WON'T LET RACE-MIXERS RUIN THEIR COUNTRY.[47]

It is thus that Mississippi's children were being prepared to carry on Jim Crow *ad infinitum.*

Those Mississippians who were not properly indoctrinated in the tenets of Jim Crowism either remained silent or left the state. Mississippi's "brain drain" of the 1960s was significant. James Silver argues: "The exiles are among the most adaptable to change of all Mississippians. Such constant attrition of potential leadership is generally regarded as one of Mississippi's great unsolved problems and must be a major cause for the state's unwillingness to give up its ancient folkways."[48] Silver goes on to suggest that the state had driven away its most intelligent and most needed leadership for over a century.[49] Fortunately, for the Catholic Church in Mississippi, Bishop Brunini was not a victim of the brain drain.

The violence and subsequent fear outlined above was perpetuated on and committed by mostly Protestant Mississippians. Nevertheless, the same culture of violence and fear permeated the entire state and affected all persons therein. Black Catholics who defied the social taboos of Mississippi received the same treatment as any other "uppity" black, as evidenced by the murders of black Catholics James Chaney and Wharlest Jackson. Likewise, a white Catholic could expect the same treatment that was doled out to white Catholics like Bill Minor or even Protestant whites like the Heffners.

Chapter VII

The Social Gospel

Ten years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, many Catholics, especially in Mississippi, still took an adversarial stance towards any challenge to the status quo. On a broader scale, the Church herself was suspicious of radical social change. The anti-modernity policy of the Church, however, would evolve throughout the course of the Second Vatican Council. The Church would gradually begin to engage the world and its social institutions. She would begin to challenge injustice. The *aggiornamento* encouraged by Vatican II, however, would be questioned and sometimes challenged by Mississippi Catholics who were suspicious of social change. Vatican II paved the way for the introduction of the social gospel into the decidedly anti-social gospel culture that permeated Mississippi. Most Mississippi Catholics, like most Mississippi Protestants, made a sharp distinction between personal salvation and social justice.

Until Vatican II, the Catholic Church was primarily soteriological in nature. She was primarily concerned with the salvation of souls, and issues of social justice took a back seat. The Church contended that governments come and go, nations rise and fall, and social systems evolve. Yet, the human soul lives forever. According to Catholic teaching, each individual person will still be alive long after the earth has ceased to exist. When planet earth is destroyed by a meteor or swallowed by a black hole, the individual soul will continue living—in heaven or in hell. Thus, the chief duty of the Church is to ensure that the soul is saved. Such a duty is a heavy burden. Consequently, the Church's focus centered on four things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell.[1]

Fighting for social justice simply was not a priority for the Catholic Church in Mississippi. After all, Jesus himself operated in a society that endorsed slavery and accepted a radically unequal distribution of wealth. Jesus campaigned to change neither of these injustices. In fact, he advised his followers to "[r]epay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar."[2] He also told them "[t]he poor you will always have with you."[3] Later, St. Paul would insist that a runaway slave return to his master,[4] and he famously wrote, "[s]laves, be obedient to your human masters."[5] If the founder of the Catholic Church, and one of her first and greatest evangelists accepted unjust societies, how could the Church justify a campaign to overthrow an existing social institution like Jim Crow?

Vatican II changed the Church's worldview. Whereas, before the Council of the 1960s, the Church took an adversarial role towards the world, the Church post-1965 would actively engage the modern world and its institutions. Before the Council, the Church was viewed as an alternative or an antithesis to the modern world. In other words, the world was to be rejected and the laity was called to reside in the Church's fortress and raise the drawbridge. This Augustinian understanding of the relationship between Church and world dominated Catholic social teaching at the time the Council was called. Vatican II would radically alter the Church/world dichotomy. Church historian John W. O'Malley explains: "The church, [Vatican II] made clear, is *in* the modern world—not above it, not below it, not for it, not against it. Therefore, like everybody else *in* the world, the church must assume its share of responsibility for the well-being of the world, not simply denounce what it finds wrong."[6] Both clerics and laity understood Vatican II to be an invitation to embrace issues of social justice. It is no coincidence that from 1965 (the conclusion of the Council) onwards, the Catholic Church in Mississippi began to more openly oppose Jim Crow and actively pursue desegregation.

One of the key documents of Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*, explained: "Just as Christ carried out the work of redemption in poverty and oppression, so the Church is called to follow the same path if she is to communicate the fruits of salvation to men."[7] *Ad gentes divinitus* added, "the church on earth is by its very nature missionary."[8] The Church, therefore, and her shepherds, would henceforth be expected to engage, correct and assist the modern world. Richard Gaillardetz and Catherine Clifford point out the significance of the title of the constitution "On the Church in the Modern World." A previous draft entitled "The Church and the Modern World" was rejected because it erroneously implied that the two were mutually exclusive. The revised title demonstrated that the Church stood in solidarity with mankind.[9] Gaillardetz and Clifford explain: "If Christians are to be faithful to the church's mission, they must resist the temptation to stand on the sidelines of the worldly arena."[10] *Gaudium et spes* explained that it was the duty of leaders to "combat injustice and oppression, arbitrary domination and intolerance by individuals or political parties."[11]

The Catholic Church in Mississippi was not alone in her belated acceptance of the social gospel. Mississippi Christians in general, even black Christians, adopted an eschatological view of suffering. Take for instance a typical sharecropper. Sharecroppers worked from sunup to sundown, from "can to can't."[12] Their work was grueling and at times inhuman. Worst of all, their lives contained little hope, and man cannot live without hope. The great poet Dante understood the necessity of hope when he placed the following sign above the gate to hell: "Abandon every hope, all you who enter."[13] Thus, out of psychological necessity, black Christians in Mississippi embraced a theology that promised freedom from toil and suffering in the afterlife. Social conditions existed in the state to take away hope of an earthly paradise, so blacks looked forward to an other-worldly paradise, one that would be realized only after death.

The Gospel preached to blacks in Mississippi, by both white and black preachers, was one of patient acceptance. True, their lives were miserable and filled with injustice, but by offering up their suffering and patiently bearing injustice, they would be rewarded in heaven.

John Lee Eighmy has written an excellent study of the Baptist church's relationship with various social causes in Mississippi. Because the Baptist church was by far the largest denomination in Mississippi, Eighmy's study is invaluable to the field of Mississippi religiosity. Eighmy argued that: "Southern Baptists often justified their lack of social activism by insisting that the church's rightful mission was to save souls, not society; and that genuine social progress could result only from individual, rather than collective, redemption."[14] If Eighmy is correct, and he certainly makes a convincing argument, then the Southern Baptists of Mississippi differed little in their soteriological outlook from Mississippi's Catholics. Eighmy explained: "When Southern Baptists looked at the social disadvantages of the [black] race, they favored improvements, but always in conformity with white supremacy."[15]

The acceptance of the soteriological gospel and the consequent rejection of the social gospel did not sit well with a number of black Christians. Fannie Lou Hamer in particular was frustrated with black preachers who endorsed the status quo. She claimed that she was tired "of chicken-eating preachers,"[16] and that too many people talked about being Christian but didn't *do* anything with their faith.[17] Ed King was even more vocal about his disdain for the indifference of white churchmen. During the funeral for James Chaney, the slain Catholic civil rights worker, King berated the white Christian churches of Mississippi for their implicit compliance with the tactics necessary to maintain Jim Crow. King proclaimed from the pulpit: "The white Christians of the city of Meridian, tonight, need your prayers because God almighty sees them and knows in his eyes that *every white Christian that did not come to this church is no* Christian."[18] Charles

Marsh pointed out that at this time a burning cross had become the symbol of white Mississippi. He asked: "What graphic expression of its own death could be imagined?"[19] Nevertheless, Hamer and King were in the minority of Mississippi Christians. Throughout the civil rights movement, most Mississippians would remain soteriologically-oriented—saving souls was more important than social justice.

The refusal to examine the here-and-now held most of Mississippi's Christian churches in what John Lee Eighmy called "cultural captivity."[20] Nineteen hundred years before the civil rights movement, Jesus told his followers the parable of the Good Samaritan, and how two able-bodied clerics passed by their presumed-to-be-dead neighbor.[21] Not wanting to violate a Levitical law that forbade contact with a dead man,[22] the Scribe and Pharisee blindly continued on their way. Such blindness to suffering humanity occurred in Mississippi throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

One story in particular demonstrates the pharisaical attitude toward injustice. Rabbi Perry Nussbaum was a Jewish civil rights advocate who headed the influential Beth Israel synagogue in Jackson, Mississippi. Because of his civil rights work, Nussbaum's synagogue and house were both bombed. The house bombing was particularly devastating and the Nussbaums were lucky to survive. Standing in the rubble, the Rabbi told all who would listen that the bombing was the work of the Klan, but they had been enabled and empowered by the Christian churches. Christian leaders did nothing to discourage the atmosphere of violence. When Mississippi's most popular minister, Douglas Hudgins, arrived to express his condolences, Rabbi Nussbaum pointed a finger in his face and wailed: "If you had spoken from your pulpit after the synagogue was bombed and told your people it was wrong to have done that, this wouldn't have happened!"[23] Nussbaum begged Hudgins to use his pulpit the next Sunday to condemn the

attacks. He told Hudgins to "[t]alk to those segregationists that fill up your church."[24] The next Sunday, Hudgins delivered a homily saying only that it was wrong to bomb another man's house. He neither mentioned Nussbaum by name, nor did he ask his followers to be tolerant of other viewpoints.[25] Hudgins' condemnation was too weak for the Rabbi, and he continued to blame Christian churches for turning a blind eye to the plight of their stricken black brethren.[26]

Nussbaum's frustration with Douglas Hudgins was indicative of many civil rights workers' attitude toward Mississippi churches. The Ku Klux Klan, Sovereignty Commission, and the Citizens' Council were known and unabashed supporters of Jim Crow. Yet each of these organizations relied on the indifference, if not outright support, of the white churches. Charles Marsh explained:

> the success of [Klansman Sam] Bowers's violent mission depended largely on the kind of Gospel Hudgins eloquently preached to white Christians in the spacious sanctuary of the First Baptist Church and over the airwaves of the state and throughout the South. If you were a Klan militant searching the nights for the civil rights heretics, you would count it fortunate that the pure souls had turned their sight inward.[27]

If Mississippi's churches had been more vocal in their opposition to Jim Crow, that caste system might have fallen far earlier than it did. The fact that no church did renounce Jim Crow early, publically, and emphatically is a testament to the overwhelming majority of Christians adherence to the soteriological (soul-saving) rather than the social (justice-seeking) gospel.

Mississippi Catholics were little different from their Protestant kin when it came to their understanding of the relationship between religion and society. Most white Christians in Mississippi, as well as a large number of black Christians, believed the primary, if not only, function of religion was to save souls. A religious message that preached an obligation to fight for social justice was a threat to the more conservative, soteriological understanding of Christ's gospel. In short, the social gospel threatened the continued existence of Jim Crow laws, whereas

a gospel that preached meek acceptance of the status quo could perpetuate those laws for generations to come.

Conclusion

Why was the Catholic Church in Mississippi, despite being blessed with two progressive and honorable bishops, so reluctant to enter the civil rights fray? In searching for the answer to this question, it is important to understand that the Catholic Church was primarily concerned with saving souls. Fighting for social justice was of secondary importance. Whereas black ministers, generally outside the state, took the lead in the fight for civil rights, the Catholic hierarchy lagged behind. The Social Gospel of black ministers like Martin Luther King, Jr. was subordinated to social stability. An unstable, chaotic society simply was not conducive to the business of saving souls. Thus, the Catholic Church moved slowly and cautiously.

The Second Vatican Council ushered in an *aggiornamento*, or updating of the Catholic Church. The Church and her bishops began to seek the proper balance between soteriology and social justice. Nevertheless, the changes promoted by Vatican II occurred slowly, especially in socially conservative places like Mississippi. Bishops Gerow and Brunini understood the direction of Vatican II, but hoped to persuade rather than coerce their congregants into accepting the radically new teachings of the Council

The Catholic Church has frequently been accused of excessive caution. The Church was slow to speak against slavery and slow to denounce Jim Crow. During the antebellum period, many Catholic clergy in the South expressed reluctance to embrace outright emancipation. James Pillar explained: "Many of the Catholic clergy anticipated social chaos as the inevitable accompaniment of any sudden emancipation of the Negroes."[1] Bishop Spalding of Louisville, and then Baltimore, wrote to Rome that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation would lead to "more than three million Negroes…to begin servile insurrection, and to massacre the whites—men, women, and children—in the example of the horrible massacre of the whites by the

Negroes which took place on the island of San Domingo."[2] These same sentiments and fears of social unrest would accompany many Southern Catholics into the Civil Rights movement.

Of course there were Catholic exceptions to the overly-cautious approach. Clerics like Father Nathaniel Machesky, who worked with the oppressed blacks of Greenwood, and Father William Morrissey of Natchez, as well as lay folk like Marge Baroni, also of Natchez, fought valiantly at the grassroots level for civil rights. But they were the exception, not the norm.

The first hypothesis explaining the slowness of the Mississippi Catholic Church to embrace civil rights is that her leaders were cowardly. However, the Mississippi Catholic Church was blessed with strong leadership from 1924 to 1984. Bishops Gerow and Brunini each enjoyed unusually long episcopacies. The two bishops led their flocks for forty-three and seventeen years respectively. Each man's life is littered with examples of their personal courage and strong leadership. It is a matter of historical record that neither of these bishops behaved in a cowardly way.

The second hypothesis—that the Church was overly cautious in regards to the desegregation question—carries more weight. The Church, in the words of Mary Best, "hovered in the sidelines, two wings covering its eyes, two wings covering its ears, and two wings covering its feet. Once in a while, it peeked out to see which group was winning the battle."[3] Many Catholics, black and white, became frustrated and bitter with the Church's refusal to take a firm and definitive stand against racism. In the age of Dorothy Day and the Social Gospel, it seems inexplicable nowadays that the Church remained silent for so long. Social activists like Natchez's Marge Baroni blamed the Church herself for the racial tensions inside the Catholic community. She insisted that the failure to integrate sooner was a failure of the Catholic hierarchy, starting with the priests and nuns in the classroom.[4] Yet the problem extended beyond

the Catholic schools. The Catholic Church itself was filled with avowed supporters of Jim Crow. Mrs. Baroni pointed out that the popular but racist *Natchez Democrat* newspaper was run by a prominent Catholic family.[5] With so many parishioners professing support for Jim Crow, the Church treaded on thin ice. As St. Augustine noted sixteen hundred years ago, the Church has always been a hospital for sinners and not a museum for saints. From the days of Reconstruction, through the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the Church had an abundance of racially intolerant sinners. It was her mission to evangelize to these culprits and at the same time reach out to her black congregants. It was an unenviable task, and Bishop Brunini lamented his predicament: "I know a lot of my priests are affected with racism. But how much pressure do you use and how do you bring people along? Am I supposed to call a Catholic in, give him a rigorous examination, and, if he doesn't measure up, throw him out of the Church? I'm affected, too."[6]

While the Catholic Church was moving ever so slowly toward a more equitable worldly society, numerous leaders in other churches were calling for crusades to immediately establish earthly utopias of freedom and equality. The Social Gospel had a strong pull, especially among black ministers whose congregations would be first to see the fruits of the Social Gospel. Fannie Lou Hamer saw a parallel in the story of the Good Samaritan and the plight of her own impoverished people in the Mississippi Delta. White churchmen imitated the Levite and self-righteous priest who callously passed by the wounded man. Likewise, white church leaders had ignored the sufferings of their black brethren.[7] After two hundred years of slavery and another one hundred of Jim Crowism, surely now, by the 1960s, according to Hamer and other Social Gospelites, it was time for Mississippi's white churches to openly and actively support civil rights.

The third hypothesis is that the Church was instituting her time-tested policy of subsidiarity. This philosophy argues for decentralization. Ironically, it is the highly centralized Catholic Church who argues that decisions ought to be made on the lowest possible, grassroots level. Pope Pius XI wrote in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*: "It is a fundamental principle of social philosophy, fixed and unchangeable, that one should not withdraw from individuals and commit to the community what they can accomplish by their own enterprise and industry."[8] The Catholic Church in Mississippi decided to let her local bishops and priests determine the proper course of action in regards to standing up to or submitting to Jim Crow. Bishops Gerow and Brunini both practiced subsidiarity and allowed the local priests to shepherd their own parishes. Bishop Brunini in particular faced the wrath of both those who refused to associate in any manner with blacks and those who were turned off by his seeming inaction. Brunini explained his conundrum:

> If by unitary, you mean that there are, in fact, predominately black schools and predominately white schools, you must recognize that these have their origin in history, sociology, and freedom, rather than Church teaching or Church law. I have inherited this situation. I have not imposed it. I do not feel that I can start closing down parishes and schools contrary to the wishes of the people involved when faith and morality are not being violated. Neither can I impose busing or pairing when there are obvious moral alternatives.[9]

Bishop Brunini believed he had to accept the fact that his Catholic schools would take a generation or so in order to fully integrate. He ordered desegregation *before* the Mississippi public schools, but he could not force a change of heart amongst his flock. Only time could unlearn centuries of racial bigotry.

Introduction

[1] Mt 13:24-30 (NAB)
[2] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 57.
[3] Ibid., 50.
[4] Mk 2:17 (NAB)
[5] Ps 13:1 (NAB)
[6] Mt 28:19-20 (NAB)
[7] John Lee Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A History of the Social Attitudes of Southern Baptists* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), xxi.

Chapter I

[1] James Pillar, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi, 1837-1865*(New Orleans: Hauser Press, 1964), 115.
[2] Ibid., 115.
[3] Ibid., 119.
[4] Ibid, 119.
[5] Steven F. Lawson. *Running For Freedom: Civil Rights And Black Politics In America Since 1941* (MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 84.
[6] Mary E. Best, *Seventy Septembers* (U.S.A.: Holy Missionary Sisters, 1988), 82-83.
[7] Ibid., 13.
[8] Michael Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi, 1911-1984* (West Port, CN: Greenwood Press, 1998), 274.
[9] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 169.
[10] Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 31.
[11] Jn 4:1-42 (NAB)
[12] Mt 8:5-13 (NAB)
[13] Mk 7:24-30 (NAB)
[14] Mt 28:19-20 (NAB)
[15] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 169.
[16] Ibid., 160.
[17] Ibid., 155-160.
[18] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 155-160. See also the *Vicksburg Evening Post*, May 14, 1919.
[19] Nelson, Stanley. "Cold Case: The night Wharlest Jackson was murdered—Feb. 27, 1967." *The Ouachita Citizen*, June 5, 2008.
[20] http://www.autopsis.org/foot/lynchdates3.html (accessed June 22, 2014).
[21] Hogan, Peter E. Interview with Marge Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, February 11, 1977.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 57.
[24] Jn 7:19-25 (NAB)
[25] Lk 18:10-14 (NAB)
[26] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 196.
[27] Ibid., 127-140.
[28] Ibid., 312.
[29] James T. Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone And Its Troubled Legacy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 66-69.

Chapter II

[1] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi, 1911-1984*, 87-92.
[2] Ibid., 87.
[3] *Memoirs of a Sothern Bishop*, 37-38: original in Diocese of Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.

[4] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi, 1911-1984*, 93.
[5] *Gerow Diary* August 27, 1957 ; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[6] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi 1911-1984*, 87.
[7] Ibid., 89.
[8] Ibid., 90.
[9] Ibid., 90.
[10] Wilkie, Curtis. "Bishop Law: A calming influence in tense Mississippi of '60s." *The Boston Globe*, January 27, 1984.
[11] Minor, Bill. "Remembering Freedom Summer." Lecture, St. Richard's Catholic Church, Jackson, MS, July 20, 2014.
[12] Minor, "Remembering Freedom Summer" July 20, 2014.
[13] James Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed* Society. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), 144.
[14] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi 1911-1984*, 91.
[15] Joseph Crespino, *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2009), 144-145.
[16] Ibid., 123-124.
[17] *Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference*. http://www.msrlc.org/history/?view=mobile (accessed May 20, 2014).
[18] Crespino, *In Search of Another* Country, 148.
[19] Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories Of Faith And Civil Rights* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 142.
[20] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi 1911-1984*, 92.
[21] Ibid., 104.
[22] *Memoirs of a Southern Bishop*, 8.
[23] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi 1911-1984*, 105.
[24] Ibid., 105.
[25] Ibid., 105.
[26] Ibid., 105.
[27] Ibid., 106.
[28] Ibid., 135.
[29] David Hallett Carr, *What Is History?* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 36.
[30] *Memoirs of a Southern Bishop*, 35.
[31] Ibid., 36.
[32] *Brunini Diary* February 5, 1962 ; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[33] *Brunini Diary* February 19, 1962 ; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[34] *Brunini Diary* March 12, 1962 ; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[35] Minor, Bill. "Risk-Taking Bishop: Joseph Bernard Brunini." *New York Times*, December 25, 1969.
[36] Ibid.
[37] *Memoirs of a Southern Bishop*, 41.
[38] Ibid., 42.
[39] Joseph Brunini, Pastoral Letter January 9, 1970; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives. Jackson, Mississippi.
[40] "Bishop Brunini: Drum Major For God." *Mississippi Today*, August 19, 1983.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] John W. O'Malley, *What Happened At Vatican II?* (Cambridge, MA: First Harvard University Press, 2010), 48.
[45] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi 1911-1984*, 93.
[46] Ibid., 145.

Chapter III
[1] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 320.
[2] Law, Bernard. "Legal Segregation is Dying." *Mississippi Register*, March 13, 1964.

[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Curtis Wilkie, "Bishop Law: A calming influence in tense Mississippi of '60s," *Boston Globe,* 1/27/1984 http://www.boston.com/globe/spotlight/abuse/archives/012784_law_miss.htm (last accessed 6/22/14)
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Hogan, Peter E. Interview with Marge Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, February 11, 1977.
[12] James Gilbert letter to Diocesan principal November 21, 1969; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Resolutions before the Principals and Diocesan School Board on December 6, 1969; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives. Jackson, Mississippi.
[16] James Gilbert letter to Diocesan Principals, Pastors, and School Boards, December 12, 1969; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] James Gilbert, Considerations and Suggestions For Consolidation And Integration Of Schools In The Diocese Of Natchez-Jackson; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Enrollment Policies For 1970-1971 School Year; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Wilkie, Curtis. "Bishop Law: A calming influence in tense Mississippi of '60s." *The Boston Globe*, January 27, 1984.
[26] Enrollment Policies For 1970-1971 School Year; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Joseph Brunini, Pastoral Letter January 2, 1970; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives. Jackson, Mississippi.
[29] Wallace, Mike, interview with Senator James Eastland. Television. July 28, 1957. http://www.c-span.org/video/?288932-1/mike-wallace-interview-senator-james-eastland (last accessed October 23, 2014.)
[30] Enrollment Policies For 1970-1971 School Year; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

Chapter IV

[1] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 325-325.
[2] Ibid., 326.
[3] Danny Duncan Collum, *Black And Catholic In The Jim Crow South* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), 146.
[4] Ibid., 147.
[5] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi 1911-1984*, 140.
[6] Ibid., 140.
[7] Brunini, *Memoirs of a Southern Bishop*, 36.
[8] Joseph Brunini, Pastoral Letter January 2, 1970; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives. Jackson, Mississippi.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Lawson. *Running For Freedom: Civil Rights And Black Politics In America Since 1941*, 89.

[13] John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 24-25.
[14] Ibid., 37.
[15] Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper*, 283.
[16] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 50.
[17] Ibid., 50-51.
[18] Ibid., 51-52.
[19] Ibid., 51.
[20] Ibid., 51.
[21] Ibid., 52.
[22] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi 1911-1984*, 245.
[23] Hogan, Peter E. Interview with Charles Harris. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, February 11, 1977.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone And Its Troubled Legacy*, xxvi.
[26] Hogan, Peter E. Interview with Marge Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, February 11, 1977.
[27] Collum, *Black And Catholic In The Jim Crow South*, 121.
[28] Bolton, Charles. "The Last Stand of Massive Resistance: Mississippi Public School Integration, 1970." Accessed October 23, 2014. http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/305/the-last-stand-of-massive-resistance-1970
[29] Ibid.
[30] Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper*, 274.
[31] Bolton, Charles. "The Last Stand of Massive Resistance: Mississippi Public School Integration, 1970." Accessed October 23, 2014. http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/305/the-last-stand-of-massive-resistance-1970
[32] Crespino, *In Search of Another* Country, 200.
[33] Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper*, 274.
[34] Crespino, *In Search of Another* Country, 228.
[35] Ibid., 133.
[36] Ibid., 201.
[37] Ibid., 180.
[38] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 391-392.
[39] Ibid., 400.
[40] Ibid., 402.
[41] Ibid., 403.
[42] Ibid., 404.
[43] Ibid., 404.
[44] Ibid., 405.
[45] Ibid., 405.
[46] Ibid., 406.
[47] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 406. See also *Christian Century* editorial October 5, 1966.
[48] Ibid., 406.
[49] Crespino, *In Search of Another* Country, 140.

Chapter V

[1] James Michener, *A Michener Miscellany 1950-1970* (New York: Random House, 1973), 382.
[2] Collum, *Black And Catholic In The Jim Crow South*, 144-147.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Hogan, Peter E. Interview with Marge Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, February 11, 1977.
[5] Peter Kreeft, *Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Beliefs based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 112.
[6] Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories Of Faith And Civil Rights*, 37.
[7] Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories Of Faith And Civil Rights*, 37.

[8] Murphy, Fr. Tim. Interview with Marge and Louis Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, May 5, 1994.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Namorato, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi 1911-1984*, xi.
[11] Ibid., xi.
[12] Ibid., 1.
[13] Pillar, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi, 1837-1865*, 122.
[14] Ibid., 268-269.
[15] Ibid., 189.
[16] Ibid., 237.
[17] Ibid., 187.
[18] Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories Of Faith And Civil Rights*, 146.
[19] Ibid., 141.
[20] Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper*, 56.
[21] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 151.
[22] Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper*, 185.
[23] Ibid., 185.
[24] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 151.

Chapter VI

[1] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 34.
[2] Ibid., 36.
[3] Ibid., 35.
[4] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 88.
[5] Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone And Its Troubled Legacy*, 56.
[6] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 59.
[7] Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone And Its Troubled Legacy*, 37.
[8] Crespino, *In Search of Another* Country, 29-30.
[9] Chris Myers Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper* (New York: The New Press, 2008), 47.
[10] Brady, Tom. "Black Monday." Speech to the Indianola Citizens' Council, Indianola, Mississippi, October 28, 1954.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Whitfield, Stephen J. *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1988), vii.
[14] Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper*, 162.
[15] Ibid., 147.
[16] Ibid., 173.
[17] Whitfield, *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett* Till, 23.
[18] Ibid., 42.
[19] Ibid., 142.
[20] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 53-54.
[21] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 54. See also the *Delta-Democrat Times*, August 16, 1955.
[22] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 58.
[23] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 42.
[24] Ibid., 95.
[25] Crespino, *In Search of Another Country*, 156.
[26] Ibid., 120.
[27] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 305.
[28] Ibid., 305. See also *Enterprise* Journal, October 20, 1964.
[29] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 312.
[30] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 141.

[31] Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper*, 125.
[32] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 97-98.
[33] Ibid., 96-98.
[34] Ibid., 42.
[35] Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*, 58.
[36] Crespino, *In Search of Another* Country, 121.
[37] Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories Of Faith And Civil Rights*, 59.
[38] Watkins, Grouchy Greg and Rare Soul Staff. "Three Civil Rights Activists Murdered Today: SNCC Singers Inspired To Write 'In The Mississippi River.'" Raresoul.com. http://raresoul.com/2012/06/21/three-civil-rights-activists-murdered-today-sncc-singers-inspired-to-write-in-the-mississippi-river/ (accessed October 23, 2014).
[39] Murphy, Fr. Tim. Interview with Marge and Louis Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, May 5, 1994.
[40] Fichter, Joseph H. *One-Man Research* (John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1973), 83. See also *Catholic Action of the* South, October 14, 1954.
[41] Davis, Cyprian. "A Stormy Path to Integration." review of *Black, White, And Catholic*, by R. Bentley Anderson. *America: The National Catholic Review*, May 8, 2006, http://americamagazine.org/issue/culture/stormy-path-integration (last accessed October 23, 2014.)
[42] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 61.
[43] Ibid., 61.
[44] James C. Cobb, *The South And America Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 36-37.
[45] Ibid., 39.
[46] Ibid., 35.
[47] Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, 69.
[48] Ibid., 82.
[49] Ibid., 82.

Chapter VII
[1] Kreeft, *Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Beliefs based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 143.
[2] Mk 12:17 (NAB)
[3] Mt 26:11 (NAB)
[4] Phlm 1:8-19 (NAB)
[5] Eph 6:5 (NAB)
[6] James W. O'Malley, *What Happened At Vatican II?* (Cambridge, MA: First Harvard University Press, 2010), 297.
[7] *Lumen Gentium 8c.* "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, on November 21, 1964."
[8] *Ad gentes divinitus 2.* "Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, on December 7, 1965."
[9] Richard R. Gaillardetz and Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys To The Council: Unlocking The Teachings Of Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 91.
[10] Gaillardetz and Clifford, *Keys To The Council: Unlocking The Teachings Of Vatican II*, 91.
[11] *Gaudium et spes 75f.* "Pastoral Constitution on the Churc in the Modern World, Gaudium et spes, Solemnly Promulgated by His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, on December 7, 1965."
[12] Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper*, 54.
[13] Alighieri, Dante ed. by Mark Musa, *The Divine Comedy* (New York: Penguin Group, 1995), 14
[14] Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 52.
[15] Ibid., 101.
[16] Asch, *The Senator & The Sharecropper*, 61.
[17] Charles M. Payne, *I've Got The Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition And The Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 258-259.
[18] Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories Of Faith And Civil Rights*, 145.
[19] Ibid., 145.
[20] Eighmy, *Churches in Cultural Captivity*, 1.
[21] Lk 10:29-37 (NAB)

[22] Num 19:11 (NAB)
[23] Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories Of Faith And Civil Rights*, 104-105.
[24] Ibid., 105.
[25] Ibid., 105.
[26] Ibid., 105.
[27] Ibid., 105.

Conclusion

[1] Pillar, *The Catholic Church in Mississippi, 1837-1865*, 171.
[2] Ibid., 171.
[3] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 312.
[4] Murphy, Fr. Tim. Interview with Marge Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, May 5, 1994.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 373.
[7] Marsh, God's Long Summer: Stories Of Faith And Civil Rights, 45.
[8] *Lumen Gentium, 8: ragesimo Anno, 79: Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Pius XI, On Reconstruction of the Social Order.* May 15, 1931.
[9] Best, *Seventy Septembers*, 372.

Bibliography

Alighieri, Dante. *The Portable Dante*. Penguin Group: New York, 1995.

Archives of the Diocese of Jackson, 237 E. Amite Street, Jackson, Mississippi.
Brunini Diaries
Memoirs of a Southern Bishop
Gerow Diary
Joseph Brunini, Pastoral Letter January 9, 1970
James Gilbert letter to Diocesan principal November 21, 1969.
Resolutions before the Principals and Diocesan School Board on December 6, 1969.
James Gilbert letter to Diocesan Principals, Pastors, and School Boards, December 12, 1969.
James Gilbert, Considerations and Suggestions For Consolidation And Integration Of Schools In The Diocese Of Natchez-Jackson.
Enrollment Policies For 1970-1971 School Year; original in Diocese of Jackson Archives, Jackson, Mississippi.
Joseph Brunini, Pastoral Letter January 2, 1970.

Asch, Chris Myers. *The Senator & The Sharecropper*. The New Press: New York, 2008.

Best, Mary E. *Seventy Septembers*. Holy Missionary Sisters: USA, 1988.

Bolton, Charles. "The Last Stand of Massive Resistance: Mississippi Public School Integration, 1970."

Bowman, Thea Sr. *Sister Thea Bowman: Shooting Star*. Celestine Cepress (Ed.). Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration: La Crosse, WI, 1999.

Carr, David Hallett. *What Is History?* Vintage Books: New York, 1961.

Cobb, James C. *The South And America Since World War II*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2012.

Collum, Danny Duncan. *Black And Catholic In The Jim Crow South*. Paulist Press: New Jersey, 2006.

Crespino, Joseph. *In Search of Another Country: Mississippi and the Conservative Counterrevolution*. Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 2009.

Davis, Cyprian. "A Stormy Path to Integration." review of *Black, White, And Catholic*, by R. Bentley Anderson. *America: The National Catholic Review*, May 8, 2006.

Dittmer, John. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*. University of Illinois Press: Champaign, IL, 1995.

Eighmy, John Lee. *Churches in Cultural Captivity: A Historyof the Social Attitudes of Souther Baptists*. The University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, TN, 1987.

Ellington, Cleta. *Christ: The Living Water The Catholic Church in Mississippi*. Mississippi Today: Jackson, MS, 1989.

Fichter, Joseph H. *One-Man Research* (John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1973), 83.

Gaillardetz, Richard R. and Catherine E. Clifford. *Keys To The Council: Unlocking The Teachings Of Vatican II*. Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN, 2012.

Hogan, Peter E. Interview with Marge Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, February 11, 1977.

Hogan, Peter E. Interview with Charles Harris. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, February 11, 1977.

Kreeft, Peter. *Catholic Christianity: A Complete Catechism of Catholic Beliefs based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2001.

Lawson, Steven F. *Running For Freedom: Civil Rights And Black Politics In America Since 1941*. Wiley-Blackwell: Malden, MA, 2009.

Marsh, Charles. *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 1997.

Michener, James A. *A Michener Miscellany 1950-1970*. Random House: New York, 1973.

Minor, Bill. "Remembering Freedom Summer." Lecture, St. Richard's Catholic Church, Jackson, MS, July 20, 2014.

Mississippi Register. Law, Bernard. "Legal Segregation is Dying." *Mississippi Register*, March 13, 1964.

Mississippi Today. "Bishop Brunini: Drum Major For God." *Mississippi Today*, August 19, 1983.

Murphy, Fr. Tim. Interview with Marge and Louis Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, May 5, 1994.

Murphy, Fr. Tim. Interview with Marge Baroni. Tape Recording. Natchez, Mississippi, May 5, 1994.

Namorato, Michael. *The Catholic Church in Mississippi, 1911-1984*. Greenwood Press: Westport, CT, 1998.

Nelson, Stanley. "Cold Case: The night Wharlest Jackson was murdered—Feb. 27, 1967." *The Ouachita Citizen*, June 5, 2008.

O'Malley, James W. *What Happened At Vatican II?* First Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 2010.

Patterson, James T. *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone And Its Troubled Legacy*. Oxford University Press: New York, 2002.

Paul VI. *Ad gentes divinitus* (Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church.) December 7, 1965. *Vatican Council II: Volume I The Conciliar And Post Conciliar Documents*. Edited by Austin Flannery, O.P.New York: Costello Publishing Company, 2004.

_____. *Gaudium et spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.) December 7, 1965. *Vatican Council II: Volume I The Conciliar And Post Conciliar Documents*. Edited by Austin Flannery, O.P.New York: Costello Publishing Company, 2004.

_____. *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.) November 21, 1964. *Vatican Council II: Volume I The Conciliar And Post Conciliar Documents*. Edited by Austin Flannery, O.P.New York: Costello Publishing Company, 2004.

Payne, Charles M. *I've Got The Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition And The Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995.

Pillar, James J. *The Catholic Church in Mississippi, 1837-65*. The Hauser Press: New Orleans, 1964.

Pius XI. *Quadragesimo Anno, 79: Encyclical Letter of His Holiness Pope Pius XI, On Reconstruction of the Social Order*. May 15, 1931.

Silver, James. *Mississippi: The Closed Society*. Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.: New York, 1964.

Wallace, Mike, interview with Senator James Eastland. Television. July 28, 1957.

Watkins, Grouchy Greg and Rare Soul Staff. "Three Civil Rights Activists Murdered Today: SNCC Singers Inspired To Write 'In The Mississippi River.'"

Whitfield, Stephen J. *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till*. John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1988.

Wilkie, Curtis. "Bishop Law: A calming influence in tense Mississippi of '60s." *The Boston Globe*, January 27, 1984.