

The Catholic Church vs. The Public Schools



JESUIT PAUL L. BLAKELY "Our first duty to the public school is not to pay taxes for its maintenance." –from his booklet: "May An American Oppose the Public School?"

By J.J. Murphy

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"And every parish school in the land is a protest . . . and an active, energetic opposition to the damnable doctrine that

on which it is grounded. It finds that illiterate people are most subject to its commands, and to this end makes it a prime point of policy to keep them illiterate. It is no accident that people dominated by Roman Catholicism for centuries are illiterate. Over 60% of the Portuguese cannot read. This same is true of Spain, Poland, Croatia, Slov-

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CATHOLIC INFILTRATION

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I think J.J. Murphy may have been a former Roman Catholic priest because he's the author of many articles in the Converted Catholic Magazine. Unfortunately I can't find his bio. Maybe one of the visitors of this website can lead me to a resource about him?

This article was written sometime in the first half of the 20th century when the level of literacy in Catholic educated children was low. It improved in the second half of the 20th century. I went to Catholic school and learned to read by 7 years old. Was that because of government pressure on Catholic parochial schools?

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC church authorities apply to themselves in the most literal sense the words of Jesus Christ, "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth." They claim supreme and unquestionable power over the intellectual, social and moral lives of all men both as individuals and as nations. This

authoritarian rule is centered primarily in the Pope. It is exercised in every field of thought and action, including first and foremost the field of education. Pope Pius XI in his encyclical on education, issued December 31, 1929, categorically declared:

"In the first place, education belongs preeminently to the [Catholic] Church for two supernatural reasons . . . AS for the scope of the Church's educative mission, it extends over all peoples without any limitation, according to Christ's command: 'Teach ye all nations.' Nor is there a civil power which can oppose or prevent it... And the Church has been able to do so much because her educative mission extends also to the non-faithful . . ."

The Catholic church's contempt for the prerogatives of the State and its sovereign people is matched by its arrogant claim to be the *only educator of the world*. In its opinion the State's sole right and duty in regard to education is to collect taxes for the establishment and maintenance of Catholic schools. Even in the past century the Catholic church did not hesitate to make this claim openly in this Protestant, democratic country. Orestes Brownson, well-known Catholic author and publisher, wrote at that time as follows:

"We deny, of course, as Catholics, the right of the civil government to educate; for education is a function of the spiritual society [the Roman Catholic church] much as preaching and the administration of the sacraments ... We deny the competency of the State to educate even for its own order, or its right to establish purely secular schools." (Orestes A. Brownson's Views, page 64.)

ATTACK ON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

To the mind of the Catholic church everything is black or white. What the church condemns is absolute evil, what it approves is absolute good. How this applies to education can be seen from the words of Jesuit Father Paul L. Blakely in an article bitterly castigating the public schools in the Sept. 20, 1930, issue of *America* (a Jesuit publication):

"'The school, if not a temple' quotes Pope Pius XI, 'is a den.' The public school has never claimed to be a temple. Whatever its pretensions in this respect, it is, most assuredly, something which Catholics must oppose . . . If Catholics do not oppose public schools, what is the meaning of the Encyclical of 1929?"

How Catholics are taught to fight tooth and nail against public-school education is illustrated in the pamphlet by the above-mentioned Jesuit, published by the America press, *May An American Oppose the Public School?* There the following orders are laid down:

"Our first duty to the public school is not to pay taxes for its maintenance." "The first duty of every Catholic father to the public school is to keep his children out of it."

"But for the Catholic father, who, without episcopal sanction, sends his child to the public school when he could enter him at a Catholic institution, there is no excuse in heaven or on earth. He has begun the career of a Herod; it will be no fault of his if he is not guilty of soul-murder."

"And every parish school in the land is a protest ... and an active, energetic opposition to the damnable doctrine that a Catholic may approve of that system in which religion is dissociated from education."

The truth of the matter is that the Catholic church as an international authoritarian system is essentially opposed not only to democracy but also to the principle of free public education on which it is grounded. It finds that illiterate people are most subject to its commands, and to this end makes it a prime point of policy to keep them illiterate. It is no accident that people dominated by Roman Catholicism for centuries are illiterate. Over 60% of the Portuguese cannot read. This same is true of Spain, Poland, Croatia, Slovakia, Mexico, and the nations of Latin America. Quebec has always been the most illiterate province in Canada and till 1943, education there was not compulsory. In a Protestant country like the United States, where competition forces Catholicism to use make-up, it seldom reveals its underlying contempt for mass education, even for mere literacy. But occasionally its bitterness boils over. Such was the self-revelation in the following lines quoted from the Jesuit magazine *America* (October 31, 1931):

"This business of teaching every child indiscriminately how to read and write results in nothing more than mass illiteracy. The man who reads and writes badly, as the great majority do today, is more illiterate than the man who does not read at all . . . One heresy breeds another. This indiscriminate 'education' applied to all alike under State systems is the result of the heresy of the equality of man.

The bulwark of American democracy is the public school. To undermine the public school, America's living object lesson in equality and tolerance, the Catholic church has incessantly defamed it. First it objected to it because it read verses from the Bible. Once it succeeded in banishing from many state school systems this symbolic token of religious belief, it started denouncing the system as Godless and pagan. It continues to denounce it as socialistic, Communistic, atheistic, criminal, immoral and un-American in an effort to prejudice people against it. The excerpts from Catholic sources that follow will serve to implement this point.

Jesuit Father Francis P. Le Buffe's speech at a communion breakfast of New York City employees was quoted in the N. Y. Times of May 17, 1943, as

follows:

"Thanks to our Godless American public school system, which is un-American, we have a generation that does not know God."

Jesuit Father Robert I. Gannon, President of Fordham University, at the 172nd annual banquet of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, ridiculed the public schools as breeders of unbalanced criminals. The Catholic Brooklyn Tablet of Dec. 14, 1940, quoted him as saying that "now every time we put in an order for a classroom, we have to include an order for two sanitary cells and a chromium gibbet."

Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen in an attack on the fundamentals of democracy in his Catholic Hour radio broadcast of Sunday, Jan. 18, 1942, declared his opposition to our public schools as follows:

"A system of education which ignores, sometimes repudiates religion and morality, which trains the intellect but ignores the will, which teaches that there is no such thing as right and wrong ... is not worth preserving. Let it perish!"

In their fierce hatred of the public school system of America some propagandists stoop to vilest calumnies:

"The object then of these Godless irreligious Public Schools is to spread among the people the worst of religions, the no-religion, the religion which pleases the most hardened adulterers and criminals—the religion of irrational animals. The moral character of the Public Schools in many of our cities has sunk so low, that even courtesans have disguised themselves as school girls in order the more surely to ply their foul vocation."

CATHOLIC INFILTRATION

In their plan to overthrow the American public-school system and substitute in its place a sectarian system of education supported by the State, a sort of union of Church and State, the Catholic hierarchy is following a carefully laid strategy. It aims at driving a wedge into the present public-school system by securing 'released time' for sectarian religious instruction. It is interesting to note that as early as 1940 Dr. George Shuster, leading Catholic propagandist, admitted in the winter edition of The American Scholar that Catholic strategists were the real originators of the 'released time' movement:

"Realizing that segregation was impossible, wide awake Catholic leaders started a movement to foster religious instruction in the public schools."

Several other wedges were forced into the system at every possible opportunity by obtaining for private parish schools various forms of government support. The Jesuit monthly, The Catholic Mind, in December, 1948, argued the case this way:

"Extra-curricular services such as free transportation, books, food, etc. and subsidies such as Federal grants-in-aid are based on needs that are shared equally by the pupils of government and voluntary schools. To deny them to the pupils of one group of schools only, allowing them to the pupils of the other group, violates justice and the right of the parent to direct the education of the child, That is not the American way."

Catholics have frequently secured public funds from the Federal government for the building, maintenance and repair of parochial schools. The following account from the Press Herald Bureau of Washington, D. C., on September 10, 1943, is a sample of what is being done in many dioceses but without press notices:

"The Federal Works Agency has allocated \$33,457 to rebuild the two-story school at Brunswick, which was recently burned down. This includes re-equipping the school. The applicant is the Roman Catholic Bishop of Portland, Maine."

Whenever the opportunity arises Catholics proceed to take over public school buildings for their purposes. Oftener than not they can find guileless Protestant ministers to pull their chestnuts out of the fire. In Milltown, N. J., according to *The Christian Science Monitor* of July 6, 1943, the pupils of Milltown's only public school "are dismissed as pupils of a secular school at 11:10 a.m. and immediately, with some exceptions, the same pupils become members of a religious school." After this went on for a while, Dr. Charles H. Elliot, New Jersey Commissioner of Education, intervened declaring the use of a public school for sectarian purposes to be contrary to the law of the State, even though sanctioned by the local Board of Education.

The *Brockton Daily Enterprise* of Brockton, Massachusetts, in its issue of Dec. 16, 1943, carried a news article under the headline, "Asks Franklin Public School Space For Use By Parochial Pupils." The paper went on to tell how the local pastor of St. Rocco's Roman Catholic church had requested the use of a public-school building as a parochial school for his parish. The priest seemed so certain of getting his request that he didn't bother appearing in person before the school board. The Catholic mayor appointed a committee to consider the matter.

Last year a bill was introduced into the legislature of the state of Alabama to appropriate \$5,000 a year toward the maintenance of a parochial school in Mobile.

In some Catholic sections of the country the Catholic church virtually takes over the public schools without any legal transfer. Father J. A. Burns of Catholic University, Washington, D. C., in a book entitled *Growth and Development of the Catholic School System in the United States* (p. 329) speaks of this as follows:

"But in many districts throughout the Southwest in which the population

is entirely or almost entirely Catholic, the public schools naturally reflect the attitude of the people toward religion and assume more or less of a Catholic tone."

PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS

Catholics often pretend that their parochial schools are in every respect the same as public schools, except that at short specified periods the Catholic religion is taught. The facts are quite the contrary. The parochial school aims at giving its young impressionable pupils a Catholic class-consciousness, at giving them a one-sided Catholic view on all social, political and religious problems. For this reason the textbooks used in public-school classes do not suit their sectarian purpose; the Second Council of Baltimore, in 1833, insisted on Catholic textbooks whenever possible and on the revision of public-school textbooks whenever there was no alternative but to use them.

Father Edward McGlynn, who was excommunicated because of his defense of the public-school system, rightly said of parochial schools that they "*are, promoted by those who, educated in foreign lands, are but half democratic.*" It might also be added that many teachers in these schools for generations were able to speak only broken English. Father Burns in the above-quoted book (p. 130) gives us the following picture:

"Catholics were eager to have the Brothers and Sisters in their schools, even though fresh from Germany or France . . . Often, indeed, they took up the work of teaching in English-speaking schools after being in the country only a few weeks. The Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur, for instance, reached Cincinnati October 30, 1840, and on the 18th of the January following when they opened school only one of the band was able to speak English fluently. The case was typical... The Sister who could speak English went from class to class in order to help until the teachers had acquired enough English to talk with their pupils. Sometimes a Sister would leave the room and returning with a slate, read from it what she wished to say."

Even today there are several hundred parochial schools in this country where fully half of the course is taught in a foreign language, and English itself takes a secondary place. The Roman Catholic church conducts parochial schools in the following languages: French, German, Italian, Polish, Slovak, Bohemian, Lithuanian, Hungarian, and Ruthenian. A picture of one of these Catholic foreign schools was drawn by a Roman Catholic priest in the *Catholic Standard and Times*, official organ of the Philadelphia archdiocese, in its issue of Jan. 29, 1910:

"A girl enters the convent; she is perhaps possessed of an elementary education, and perhaps she is not. If she has advanced to the threshold of high school she has done well. . . Three years later, perhaps but two later, little Wladislawa, whom you prepared for First Holy Communion four or five years ago, is hurried out to your neighbor's parish, where she is doing a work that will soon wear the life out of her, for it is beyond her power. There has been no time for training her along

educational lines, certainly not along pedagogical lines ..."

The Catholic people themselves as a matter of fact never wanted the parochial school. They felt no need for it. Even today after over a hundred years of effort, backed by threats of excommunication, 57 percent of the Catholic youth attends public schools. This is confirmed by Thomas F. Byron, a Roman Catholic of Lowell, Massachusetts:

"For the parochial school was never desired by the American Catholic people, neither were they even so much as asked to say whether they wanted it or not, nor do they for the most part regard it with any feeling but that of irksomeness now. The thinking class of Catholics would be glad to get rid of it, if this could only be done quietly and without public scandal. To the minds of nine Catholics out of every ten, the parochial school was no more needed in this country than a fifth wheel for a coach."

It is not only Catholic laymen who resent the zeal of school-boasting prelates who have an eye set on higher ecclesiastical honors. Many Catholic priests resent the narrow, un-American atmosphere of parochial schools. Few of them have the courage to express their opinions in public as did the anonymous priest who wrote "*The Heresy of the Parochial School*" in the February, 1928, issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. However he expressed their deep conviction when he said:

"We are a people self-ostracized. Our children may not sit in the classroom with the children of the unorthodox. We must have our own schools, our own charities, our own graveyards . . . When the Catholic child is six years old, he is taken to an inquisition as relentless as that over which presided the notorious Torquemada. More violence is done to tender souls by the intellectual lack of the parochial schoolroom than was done to the bodies of other victims in the past... There is but one quality that proves the excellence of a religion. It is the excellence of the lives lived by its devotees. When the American bishops cease their school-building crusade and begin the work of developing Christian character there will be hope for the Catholic church in America."

Catholics should attend public schools to learn racial and religious tolerance. With this instruction in secular knowledge they could unite as much outside Catholic instruction as they pleased in their own schools. What is preventing them from instituting a system of religious instruction similar to that of the Jewish religion which is outlined by Morris Fine, as quoted in Bishop Noll's scurrilous attack on the public school system in a book called, *Public Enemy No. 1*? Mr. Fine says:

"In New York City, for example, there exists a system of weekday schools maintained by the Jewish community which provides not one but five to twelve hours of instruction each week. In addition there are Sabbath

schools, Sunday schools and Yiddish schools.”

When the Catholic church is unable to impose its rulings on its so-called communicants, it invariably attempts to get the State to act as its agent. Most Catholics disregard the rules and threats of the Catholic church in regard to birth control, so the church is attempting to make its birth control regulations a matter of State law. Likewise with parochial school attendance. Half the Catholics ignore the parochial schools, so the church is trying desperately to make the State support these schools so that the attendance of Catholics will become a matter of State law.

This discussion of public and parochial schools was clearly synopsised in the words written in an editorial of the N. Y. Times on January 13, 1930, in criticism of Pope Pius XI's attack on the public-school system:

“The Pope's encyclical sounds a note that will startle Americans, for it assails an institution dearest to them— the public school—without which it is hardly conceivable that democracy could long exist. As was said only yesterday by a critical authority, despite its shortcomings and mistakes, the public school has ‘already contributed to society more than all the other agencies combined.’ Under its tuitions not only are the elemental lessons which the race has learned taught to children of diverse traditions, racial qualities and religious faiths, but these children have been prepared to live together as citizens in a self-governing state . . . If other churches were to make like claim—that is, that ‘the educative mission belongs preéminently’ to them for their children, and were to lay like inhibitions, the very foundations of this Republic would be disturbed.”

THE AMERICAN WAY

Many Protestant ministers have been led by Catholic propaganda into opposing the public-school system on the grounds that it does not teach religion. They fail to realize that the Catholic church opposes public schools, not because they fail to teach religion as such, but because they do not teach Roman Catholicism. **Rome's aim and ideal is to dominate education to the exclusion of all other religions**, as it does under Catholic dictatorships in Spain, Portugal and Argentina. Its first step in this direction within the United States is to undermine the public-school system as it now stands by making its parochial schools State supported. From then on its aggressiveness, working through Catholic public school teachers and otherwise, will gradually seize control of the entire school system. Those who think such designs fantastic have only to reflect on how our small Catholic minority has already obtained the balance of political power in our predominantly Protestant country.

Religious education is a good thing, and everyone favors it. But it has nothing in common with sectarian religious control of our public schools, which would strike at the root of our democratic government. It would lead

here, as in Argentina, to segregation of Jew from Gentile, of Protestant from Catholic. It would departmentalize our American school system into a 'ghetto' for Jews, an heretical section for Protestants, a schismatic division for Orthodox Greek Catholics, and various limbos for Mohammedans, agnostics and other classes of unbelievers and religious dissidents. This is not the American way which teaches that various creeds must learn to work and live together in mutual tolerance. Our American way is against sectarianism in public schools, not because it opposes religion, but because it wishes to preserve religious freedom from the inroads of any politically powerful religious sect.

ILLITERACY IN CATHOLIC COUNTRIES

Countries that Roman Catholicism has dominated for centuries, like Spain, Portugal, Central and South America, and the Philippines are largely illiterate. The pitifully inarticulate and voiceless millions of these Catholic countries, imprisoned in mind and soul, remain helpless victims of superstition and ignorance. Dr. Frank C. Laubach, author of *The Silent Billion Speak* and a devout Protestant, has organized a world movement that is meeting with remarkable success in combating illiteracy. He has well earned the title, "Apostle of the Illiterates." Last year he left for Latin America, under the joint auspices of two Protestant missionary organizations, 'The Committee on Co-operation in Latin America,' and 'The Committee on World Literacy and Christian Literature.' Illiteracy in Latin America varies between 60 and 80 per cent, depending on the locality.

It is no mere accident that Catholic countries are kept ignorant. Catholicism demands a docility and blind obedience that can be obtained with the least difficulty only from the illiterate. What happens in a Catholic country is illustrated in Spain. Gerald Brenan in his scholarly new work, *The Spanish Labyrinth*, (pp. 49-51) says:

"Until 1836 education had been entirely in the hands of the higher clergy and the religious orders . . . In the elementary schools the children of the poor were deliberately not taught to read, but only to sew and to recite catechism."

This condition extended down to 1910, when, as the author tells us:

... the Catholic religion and catechism were compulsorily taught in all the schools and the parish priest had a right to supervise this. So far did this sometimes go that parents used to complain that in State Schools the children passed half their class hours in saying the rosary and in absorbing sacred history and never learned to read."

Educational conditions in modern Italy are described in an article by Peter Wilson, published in the Italian edition of Union Jack, British Army paper:

"The educational system in Italy is divided into four sections. The elementary which begins at five years of age and goes on until a child is 10... But the only free education is the elementary one. If you're too poor to pay school fees—well, you just don't go to school after you're 10."

Here in America one does not have to go south of the border to find that Catholic disapproval of education has left its mark. Quebec, dominated by Roman Catholicism, has been the only province in Canada where education was not compulsory. At this late date measures are now being taken to remedy this lamentable condition, following an exposé of conditions in Quebec in the October 19, 1942, issue of *Life*. An official publication of the Canadian government based on the census of 1931, *Illiteracy and School Attendance, Census monograph No. 5*, shows that in the male population over ten years of age the percentage of illiteracy for Roman Catholic French Canadians is 6.18 percent as contrasted with 0.88 percent for the British races of Canada, who are overwhelmingly Protestant.

The hierarchy of Quebec never took any steps to urge or oblige Catholic parents to educate their children, except in Catholic doctrine. It did, however, forbid them, under penalty of non-forgiveness of sins to send their children to any school except a Catholic school. In an official communication of August 31, 1942, Cardinal Villeneuve declared :

"To parents, who, having been duly warned, continue to send their children to a non-Catholic school without the permission of the bishop, confessors must refuse absolution."

(*Diocesan Discipline*, art. 454, b.)

In refusing such elementary rights as that of education to children, Cardinal Villeneuve is only living up to the condemnation of all modern liberties contained in the encyclicals of Pope Pius IX and Pope Leo XIII. Cardinal Villeneuve is officially on record as having publicly condemned these same liberties in practically the same words as those used by the Popes. *Life* magazine in its issue of October 19, 1942, quoted him as follows:

"It is never permitted . . . to grant freedom of thought, writing or teaching, and the undifferentiated freedom of religions, as so many rights which nature has given to man."

(End of article.)

I wonder how this happened?! [She graduated from high school with honors but can't read or write.](#)