

# ANNUAL SCHOOL REPORT

Its weakness lay in the that once deprived of office, it fell apart. The soldiers the line fled in fear and confusion when there was no one to issue orders. The American hero was not so perfectly made, not as precise and made like, but he had initiative courage. Let all the officers be shot down or captured, let him be carried on. He had the rage and the stamina to go ahead, placing one foot ward at a time, facing the crown, knee deep in mud, in strange land, fighting sweaty flies, buzzing insects, and ring bullets. It was not so much his military training as it was his high idealism, his initiative, his courage that made him a victor.

**The Remedy**  
These boys were just out of school, not as yet swayed up by the seamy environment of adult life already defined. They were fighting a high resolve for the Democratic ideals they had learned in the classrooms. What happens to this spirit after graduation cannot be blamed on the schools. Business leaders, big little, political leaders, on leaders, an economy of nopoly and greed and self-interest, a press, radio, and entertainment world careless of its responsibility for the common good, an adult environment, sordid by materialism, and consequently productive of dishonesty, indecency, and untruthfulness, these are the forces that destroy the efforts of the schools to produce good citizens for American society. The Remedy—it will be found only in the supernatural the democratic way of life the supernatural way of—a return to God, the knowledge of whom the American people deny to the vast majority of their school children.

It is difficult to see how any foundation for democratic society can evolve out of a philosophy, which does not admit a supernatural destiny man, and does not admit eternal supernatural law. Let us take the question of child's responsibility. Public speakers are also accustomed to extol the importance of teaching our children responsibility. One cannot teach responsibility without terminals. A human being must be responsible for something to somebody. He must be responsible for his human acts. To whom all he be responsible? To himself alone? Then every man is a law unto himself, and no basis is established for anything other than democracy. Could he be responsible to the longest and thus is dictatorship created. Many openly admit that pupils be taught responsibility to some ephemeral thing called society. The end either no responsibility at all or at best, some form of international socialism.

Finally should our own United States become the terminus of responsibility, and American Democracy our religion? This is National Socialism. It allows for no criticism of the man who made Germany god and Nazism his religion, or today Stalin his God and Communism his religion. There is no way to teach responsibility for human acts, if still preserve the essential unity of man as the foundation of democracy, unless a permanent God is admitted the terminus of responsibility. This is the only true foundation for the preservation of democracy. It is at once the ancient Jewish philosophy of

education and the Christian philosophy of education. Considering the education of the child in relation to society, we find that the work of education based on this principle is to help the child to live or better still to provide the child with all those experiences so that he may learn to live as God would have him live in American democratic society. This would be a tremendous help toward the solution of our American social problems, to the chaos in American life.

#### Challenge of Child

In the face of all this, the American school child may well hurl a challenge at the adult public and ask the question *when do I learn about my God?* If we are to accept the totalitarian concept of education, and the term as used here is in its good sense meaning to educate the whole child, we are bound to surround the child with every opportunity according to his ability whereby he will become acquainted with his total environment; in other words, how he can establish the best relationships with his neighbor and society with his physical environment, with his spiritual environment, that is, with his God who made him and all creation for him. God is not just another phase of his environment to which he must be educated but here lies the explanation and the cause of the child's entire physical and human world, for it is in God, and in religion which binds him to God, that the child finds the answers to those personal questions, where do I come from, why am I here, where am I going?

Religion is a philosophy of life, it is the synthesis of one's knowledge of the universe and of man's place in the universe, the summary of all principles regulating life and conduct. If all other knowledges in the school are divorced from religion then the child's education becomes merely an empty gesture—words and nothing more. Why is it that our nation alone of all the inheritors of Christian civilization denies religious education to its children, when England, Belgium, Holland, Scotland and our neighbor to the North, Canada all support the religious school? Some light is shed on this question in a brief review of its historical background.

#### Religious Heritage

From the dawn of Christianity till quite modern times all education in the western world was conducted by the Church. Previous to the Reformation it was the Catholic Church only which administered education. After the Reformation, the several Protestant denominations also took up this task as a matter of course. Until the issuance of the Prussian School Code of 1763 civil authority as such had taken little active interest in the administration of schools. Indeed, it was not until after the Napoleonic Wars that secularization in the same sense of full State control, really began.

This was the heritage which America received from Europe. Hence, throughout the colonial period and for a full half century after the promulgation of the Constitution of the United States, practically all schools in our land were placed under the auspices of the churches. The financial support came from public taxation, state subsidies, church contributions, and tuition. This was the system under which the Fathers of the Republic and their children, were educated. No one



POPE PIUS XI: "Catholics will never feel, whatever may have been the sacrifices already made, that they have done enough for the support and defense of their schools and for the securing of laws that will do them justice."—Encyclical on the Christian Education of Youth.

was conscious of any inconsistency in training a child to be at once a good citizen and a good Christian.

The change from Church control to State control was brought about mainly through two circumstances. After 1800 the religious homogeneity of some areas, notably in New England, began to disintegrate. Two or more sects might occupy the territory formerly occupied by one. Disputes arose as to which of the several churches should be entrusted with the management of the single school frequented by differing faiths. This ultimately gave birth to the thought to remove the schools from any church control and place them exclusively in the hands of the State as a presumably neutral party.

After 1800, too, began the flow of immigration from many countries of Europe. The educational reformers were not slow to turn this to their purpose. The example of Prussia, which was employing the schools to weld together a powerful unified nation, strongly appealed to the American leaders. To create here, also a State system of schools for a like national objective, to fuse all racial strains pouring into America into one mould, to impart to the younger generations an enthusiastic loyalty to our young Republic—this fitted well in the new educational plan. Moreover, it had a striking value in controversy. The argument employed for the necessity of a State-controlled school was, namely, that only by such a measure could religious neutrality be maintained in schools. Secondly, the average American of colonial stock could not but be alarmed over the possibility of the new types of foreigners alienating the country. So far as the religious argument went, the common man only wanted to be assured that his children should receive in the public school the traditional principles of Christianity. He was given solemn assurance that this would be done.

#### The Secular School

Thus was born the secularized public school in America. Political forces were put into operation. Appropriate legislation was quickly passed in state after state whereby tax support was withdrawn from all schools not completely controlled by civil government. It was thought, and not unreasonably, that, deprived of state finances, those Church groups which showed reluctance to discontinue their work of education would soon be starved into submission. While this has not been verified in the case of Catholics it has been verified in fairly complete fashion in the case of all other denominations. The secularizing tide swept everything before it. Beginning in Massachusetts and New York State in 1825, it covered all states by 1850. Since this date, it is fair to say that the great mass of the American people have received an elementary education from which religion has been eliminated.

#### Both Sides Suffer

Such is the situation as viewed historically, a situation thoroughly damaging to the cause of Christian civilization. On the one hand, it has eliminated religion from the education of public-school children whose parents are Christian and desire their children to be brought up as Christians. On the other hand, it has caused Catholics to construct and maintain at vast sacrifice a separate system of schools which, despite all effort is not adequate to care for all their children.

It has entailed heavy sacrifice from Catholic people. It has prevented at least 50 per cent of our Catholic children from receiving the Christian education which is their right. It has so called upon our resources of men and material that, having built and garrisoned our educational fortress, we have been forced to curtail many other charity services which the Church in other lands has developed to a very high degree. It has placed Catholics on the defensive, deeply

irritated them in the past by compelling them to vindicate their patriotism, and has rendered access to positions of high public trust difficult and at times impossible. On the other side, it has completely taken religion from the public schools. It has prevented these schools from conveying to their children the Christian (Protestant or Catholic) or Jewish heritage of their parents. It has forced the thousands of public school teachers and administrators who are sincere, religious-minded people to conduct an education which is entirely out of harmony with their inward convictions. It has compelled them to try to compensate for the lack of religion by developing a system of character formation which they themselves recognize as largely futile.

Is such a situation inevitable? The answer depends on whether the arguments advanced a century ago to justify such a system still command conviction. Let us review the chief of these in order.

The secularized public school of America was conceived from the idea that a least common denominator of religion can be formulated which shall exclude all matters of sectarian variation and which shall include all essential doctrines of revealed religion. This was certainly the professed objective of the educational reformers; and it is a historical fact that, had not the American people been convinced of its possibility, they would never have endorsed the innovation of a State-controlled school. After all, this government was founded by men who believed in Christianity. The expression of this belief is found in the Federal Constitution and in every State Constitution, despite the fact that many of these latter have been written in relatively recent years when the religious attitude of the nation as a whole admittedly has not been so pronounced as in the earlier days. Christianity has had too strong a hold on the American people to be lightly shaken off. It is a fact that not a single State constitution prohibits the teaching of religion in a public school. But all, either expressly or by implication, forbid the teaching of "sectarianism." This distinction between "religion" and "sectarianism" we owe to the founders of the public school.

#### Misguided Reformers

There is no reason to impugn the sincerity of the educational reformers of the 19th century. Yet, sincere though they were and undoubtedly zealous, they were men of slight intelligence, narrow outlook, and woefully limited learning. Otherwise, how could they have failed to see that they were creating a new religion of secularism and using the public school as its church? And how could they have made so colossal a blunder as to attempt to construct a religious code which was deprived of all intellectual principles? What religion is that which can be accepted by Congregationalists who believe in the Trinity and Unitarians who deny the Trinity; by Christians who accept the leadership of Christ and Jews who reject the leadership; by Theists who follow a divine revelation and atheists who spurn such revelation? It surely needed no acumen to foresee the result—the total extinction not merely of sectarianism but of all religion from the public school, this horrible vacuum that exists today.

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