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Textbooks on a String

If a youngster of yours in a Catholic school has a state-paid textbook, you better frame it. It might be the last one like it.

Pupils in New York State's Catholic schools began classes in somewhat of an April Fool's Day atmosphere this week. Like the proverbial April First wallet with a string attached, the tax-paid textbooks have a string tied to them too.

They're dangling on the thread of an appeal to overturn a state Supreme Court decision which ruled them unconstitutional.

The appeal made by the state's attorney general Louis Lefkowitz opened the door for the state to provide textbooks this year.

Most public school districts already had the books and delivered them to the Catholic schools in their districts this week.

Some districts hadn't ordered the books, however, like the Penfield district, so pupils in Catholic schools there will begin classes without books.

If the appeal fails to overturn Supreme Court Judge T. Paul Kane's ruling then more than textbooks are likely to be yanked back.

Governor Rockefeller's "Scholar Incentive Program" faces the axe for the same reasons the textbooks are in jeopardy.

This warning was issued by Reuben E. Gross, state vice president of Citizens for Educational Freedom. An attorney, he is the father of six children attending Hebrew day schools.

He said an Appellate Court ruling in agreement with Judge Kane's decision "would deprive 40,000 students of state grants toward their tuition fees at Protestant, Catholic and Jewish colleges throughout the state."

Gross pinpointed the blame for the present turmoil — "The textbook law was struck down by a judge who is out of step with the times on the basis of a state constitution which is out of step with the times." He called for "modernizing the constitution and removing the overly restrictive Blaine amendment."

The amendment prohibits the state to aid

"directly or indirectly" any church-related institution.

At least one Catholic parish organization has taken up the cudgels to scuttle the 1894 Blaine amendment.

Dr. Joseph A. Sergent, vice president of the Holy Cross Parish Board of Education, Rochester, proposed at the Republican convention this week that "a plank be included in the platforms of the several parties to seek and support changes in the so-called Blaine amendment of the New York State constitution." He told the Republican platform committee that state funds for textbooks is "aid to the individual . . . not to the institution."

Citizens for Educational Freedom are currently trying to poll candidates up for election this November for next spring's constitutional convention and to publicize their position for or against the Blaine amendment.

Believed to be the first candidate to take a public stand against it is Democratic candidate Andrew G. Celli of Rochester. He told the Courier this week he considers the amendment "wholly discriminatory to approximately 25 per cent of the students attending non-public elementary and secondary schools of the state of New York." He also said, "The time has come to erase from the Constitution of New York State the law, which from its inception in 1894, has been rooted in bigotry and discrimination."

Other politically prominent spokesmen also voiced their opposition to the Kane decision.

State Senator Thomas Laverne said because of the decision "the entire spectrum of state support of education falls into the shadow of doubt" and he pledged he'd try to revise the state constitution "to wipe away the existing uncertainties in the educational futures of our children."

Assemblyman Charles F. Stockmeister of the town of Greece voiced disagreement with the Kane decision and said he was confident the ruling will be reversed because the textbook law, he said, "will be proved constitutional because, like the school bus law, it is aid to the children and not to the school."

—Father Henry A. Atwell

Clergy Celibacy too Great a Burden?

(By Religious News Service)

Will the Roman Catholic Church eventually change its 15-centuries-old tradition of clerical celibacy and permit its priests to be married?

The question has been cropping up so persistently in recent years that an influential Jesuit weekly published in Rome felt constrained to assert flatly that there was no valid reason for so believing.

This despite the fact that the Church is experiencing a grave clergy shortage in many areas, and suggestions have been made in some quarters that while celibacy might remain a condition for priests of religious orders, diocesan priests might be permitted to marry.

An article in Civiltà Cattolica said that the Church of the Latin Rite not only had "too many serious motives for maintaining its law on ecclesiastical celibacy," but that it was "useless and dangerous to expect at this stage changes or mitigations, even if in the future there may be more dispensations from celibacy in certain well determined cases, all made with due caution."

In New York, however, America, another Jesuit-sponsored publication, noting that many Catholics had been disturbed by reports of priests withdrawing from the exercise of their sacred office called last March for a full and frank study of the problem under the authority of the American bishops.

The issue of clerical celibacy had meanwhile become a topic of lively discussion in both the secular and religious press as an increasing number of cases of priestly defections came to light. One secular magazine, claiming Vatican sources as its authority, reported that about one priest in every 42 had sought laicization since 1956, celibacy being involved in most of the requests.

Clerical celibacy has become a topic of interest not only to Catholics but also to Protestants. Attacks on celibacy have been common at all periods, especially among Protestants. However, contemporary Protestantism, according to religious experts, is beginning to have a better appreciation of the evangelical and biblical character of the state of continence or virginity.

The Oxford Movement brought to Anglicanism some renewal of monastic life, and there are Anglican ministers today who prefer to remain celibate. In France, the Protestant monastic community of Taizé observes celibacy.

Priestly celibacy is not a dogma of Catholicism, but simply an obligatory law of the Western Church, imposed in the fifth century with a view to the dignity and duties of the priesthood. In the Catholic eastern Rites, married men can still be ordained as priests, but priests cannot marry after ordination.

In the Latin Rite, exceptions have been made during the past 20 years for Protestant ministers converted to Catholicism to become Catholic

priests. But these exceptions are very few.

Pope John XXIII, who summoned the Second Vatican Council, conceded on several occasions that celibacy was difficult. However, he said that even though it would only require a stroke of the pen to allow Latin Rite priests to marry, he would never take that step.

And the ecumenical Council agreed with him by ruling in its decree on the clergy promulgated by Pope Paul VI on

Dec. 8, 1965, that there was nothing dogmatic about celibacy for the priesthood, but that it was a good custom which should be retained.

There remains, however, an apparently solid body of opinion opposed to celibacy as a prime condition for ordination. During the Vatican Council, a frequent assertion was that celibacy of the clergy was and would remain a main problem of the Church. Last January, a group of priests in Italy sent the Pope a letter urging him to "accord to those priests who

do not find in grace the necessary strength to live in celibacy" the right to contract marriage.

The Vatican Council approved the ordination of married men as deacons, but insisted that only those prepared for a life of celibacy should proceed to the fullness of the priesthood. In doing so it implicitly upheld the findings of the Council of Trent in the 16th Century that celibacy was not an impossible condition.

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A boy participating in a summer recreational program run by seminarians in an underprivileged section of New Orleans receives help from Larry Greco of St. Mary's College, St. Mary, Ky. (left), and John Doohar of St. John Seminary, Boston. The seminarians' social and spiritual apostolate is centered in Patterson House, established by Archbishop Philip M. Hannan of New Orleans, in memory of the late Father Roy B. Patterson, a young priest whose work among the poor was terminated by death from cancer last year.

Seminarians on 'Streetcar'

New Orleans, (RNS) — The setting for Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire" is the supposedly glamorous old French Quarter of New Orleans.

But at the other end of the streetcar (now bus) line is the Desire district, named for a street. Its glamor is nil.

This summer, however, hope came to the despoiled, despairing and impoverished residents housed in isolated Desire.

Twenty Roman Catholic seminarians arrived on the neglected

scene to spearhead a program of youth and adult recreation and to survey the situation.

They formed the backbone of a program centered in Patterson House, a small frame cottage purchased by the Archdiocese of New Orleans at the behest of Archbishop Philip M. Hannan. It is named for the Rev. Roy B. Patterson, a young apostolic priest who died of cancer last year.

The seminarians, aided by Ursuline nuns, youthful volun-

teers, and community agencies, were astounded, appalled and excited by what they found in recreation-starved Desire, an area hemmed in by a city dump, a canal and railroad tracks.

"We're still learning how to help people help themselves," commented Peter Calamari, a student from Notre Dame Seminary here. "But we're excited. The future is wide open."

Mr. Calamari was one of two seminarians from Notre Dame. Others were 10 from St. John Seminary, Boston, Mass., and eight from St. Mary's College, St. Mary, Ky.

The program initiated at Patterson House by Archbishop Hannan is to be a permanent center where seminarians can have "realistic" pastoral training and where college and high school volunteers can involve themselves in community projects.

The seminarians, assisted by the New Orleans police department and area groups of Total Community Action (a federal anti-poverty fund agency), organized the first district-wide baseball league involving 20 teams.

The response of youngsters was ecstatic.

"When they play ball, they put everything into it," observed Frank Evans, of Massillon, Ohio, who attends St. Mary's College.

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Cardinal Ottaviani Starts Hunt for Errors

Vatican City (RNS) — National episcopal conferences throughout the world have been invited by the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith to express their views regarding errors or misinterpretations arising from post-Vatican discussions.

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A letter distributed by Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani, Pro-Prefect of the Congregation, said that subjects regarding which there is a danger of "inexact opinions" include the inspiration of the Bible and the values of historical texts.

Others, he said, "concern a certain humanism of a Christological character which involve the risk of reducing Christ to a simple, human level, ignoring or even denying His divine origin."

Cardinal Ottaviani also cited as evidence of a need for a deeper study of Vatican II decrees "erroneous interpretations or underestimation of the doctrine of Original Sin," as well as "errors in the field of moral theology, particularly in regard to marriage."

The cardinal called upon the bishops of the world to be especially alert to erroneous interpretations stemming from a subjective rather than an objective evaluation of the Vatican Council's decree on ecumenism.

The Revolution of the Three Un's

Dallas -- (RNS) — The Catholic Church in the U.S. faces a "triple revolution of unbelief, unfreedom and un-Catholicism," the publisher of the National Catholic Reporter told the National Newman Congress here.

Donald J. Thorman of Kansas City, Mo., asserted that unless these related problems are resolved, the Church will lose its intellectuals and other leading laymen, and cannot expect the modern world to listen to its message.

The "unbelief in the Church," said Thorman, "is a new experience not created by the Vatican Council, but certainly unleashed by it. At least the Council created the conditions which have encouraged men to re-examine many of their beliefs. . . no longer are many willing to accept their religious values and beliefs unthinkingly and uncritically."

Today, he continued, American Catholics "are seriously questioning their most basic and most cherished beliefs. And because their religious education in the past taught them primarily rote answers to rote questions they are face-to-face with the possibility of unbelief in their lives."

Observing that the problem of "unbelief" can be solved only within "an atmosphere of understanding freedom," Thorman charged that the Church was reacting to changing attitudes by instituting "an age of freedom."

"In the face of increasing freedom," he said, "the insecure Church officials fall back on the familiar theme of 'you must be obedient . . . you must obey legitimate authority' (as if that were in question)."

Laymen do not wish to "flout authority," he said. "But they do ask that those in authority regard authority as a service, that . . . they get followers freely by leading and persuasion. Free lay people (and clergy) will simply ignore a Church which does not practice what it preaches or which believes its adherents will follow blindly when they are told to do so."

The editor emphasized that the danger facing Church authority is that the laity will "ignore authorities who habitually allow a gap to exist between idealism and practice."

He said that as a result of Vatican II, the laity expects a great deal of openness and freedom in the Church, as well as renewal and reform. "If authorities believe they can simply return to a business-as-usual, pre-conciliar attitude, they must be prepared for significant segments of the laity to ignore them," he warned.

Failure to resolve the problems of "unbelief and unfreedom," Thorman said, results in an "age of un-Catholicism in which large numbers of the faithful will live their religious lives apart from the official Church, creating their own brand of Catholicism."

"Make no mistake about it," he continued, "there are many already living in this state of un-Catholicism. The loss to the official Church is inestimable, for among these people are some of our finest minds . . ."

"These people have not abandoned their religion. In

many cases, they care more about the Church than some of our highly visible, prominent Catholics. Often it is because they care that they can no longer stand an atmosphere they find intolerable."

In speaking of authority, Thorman also contended that "many Church leaders have lost the confidence of the people" and that they "often seem unaware of the fundamental changes which have taken place and which continue to take place within the Church."

He also claimed that "probably no single class of people, as a group, understand less of what is going on in the Church today than the bishops. And the reason is simply that for the better part of four years, during the time of greatest change in the American Church, the bishops were in Rome, out of touch with the daily reality of what was going on here."

Attending the meeting were some 1,000 representatives of Newman Clubs around the country—spiritual centers for Catholic students attending non-Catholic colleges. The congress was sponsored by the National Newman Club Federation.