

EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY

Now that America's manhood is being sent away, it is not at all surprising that for the sake of her youth the cry at home has been raised: Don't close the schools; use them! It comes from Secretary Lane and cannot be misunderstood; it is the wisdom of Wilson in the face of Europe's mistake; it is another of his timely war measures for the safety, the life and the growth of Democracy. The first duty of an American citizen is to become a real American; but in this he must be schooled. Americans are not made in a day. Americanism requires a process, a special training; it means a re-creation of the foreigner, a lifetime study for the native-born. The education of a nation is a gigantic task, and never before in the history of our country was there such an urgent need of schools—of good schools.

The School Garden Army, War Savings Stamp Drive and Junior Red Cross are doing splendid work in the cause of victory; the classroom is an excellent means of reaching the nation's homes; but at best these movements are and must necessarily be secondary to implanting in the youthful heart the red-blood qualities of genuine citizenship.

What makes the citizen? is the question that vitally concerns the schools of today. Is it possible for thorough American men and women to be the product of a school which has disfranchised the teaching of religion? "In my opinion," say Vice-president Marshall, "no man is educated for citizenship unless trained in mind and body and heart to reverence the omnipotent God. He must know that God reigns and that Jesus Christ is the Supreme Ruler of mankind." Many learned divines in this country, without self-indictment for disloyalty to the flag, have expressed their opinions on the public schools, and do not hesitate to call them godless. "No room for Christ," one asks, "is this the verdict of our educational institutions? There is grave danger that our State institutions of learning are giving to our youth what is practically a pagan education."¹ "We pride ourselves," another writes, "on our successful separation of Church and State; but the attempt is the worst kind of failure. No such separation is possible as long as the State has almost a monopoly

¹Rev. C. E. Granger (Presbyterian), Chronicle, Nashville, Tenn., Feb., 14.

in educating the children. The truth is we have an established religion for the support of which the people are heavily taxed. Our richly endowed established religion is agnosticism running down into atheism.”² Dr. James Henry Leuba of Bryn Mawr has produced some astounding figures on this point: More than fifty per cent of the most distinguished professors in American colleges are atheists—do not believe in God. In fact, only twenty-seven per cent of the more eminent believe in God. Moreover, pushing still further his investigation, he finds that only thirty-five percent of the more eminent professors believe in the immortality of the soul.³ It would seem this is not a Christian nation after all. And to make matters worse we have the results of Professor Fred Newton Scott’s examination of a Michigan public school class on the familiar painting of da Vinci’s “Last Supper.” One child thought it was a “party”; another noticed they had “long hair”; still another thought the central figure was “George Washington.”⁴ Think of the ignorance on the part of Christian children concerning the loving character of Christ breaking the bread of life to starving man! What ideals can one have of kindness, forgiveness, brotherly-love, if one has not copied them from the living Model of all virtues? If there is a religion in the schools of today, it would seem that men are burning incense “to the unknown God.” The ancients of Greece were virtuous; their cold studies in lifeless stone gave some criterion of virtue to their stalwart race; but their cult of marble lasted but a day, and the true lovers of goodness turned to Jerusalem or died of grief. The only code of morality that will endure is that one based on Calvary; all others are false. Religion is the expression of man’s relation to his Maker; it is the tie that binds our nature—so prone to love the lower things of this world—to the Living God who is Lord of all yet always gentle and forgiving toward the weak erring creature He knows so well. Religion bridges the void between earth and heaven; there can be no religion without Christ; and if there is no room for Christ in the training of our youth, that which men call religion is “not a torch for light, but for conflagration.”⁵

² Rev. W. Montague Geer, Vicar of St. Paul’s (P. E.) Chapel, N. Y. C., Sun., ’02.

³ Cardinal O’Connell at a recent banquet.

⁴ Literary Digest, June 8, 1918.

⁵ J. R. Wilson, D. D., Presbyterian Quarterly, August, ’89.

Yet who will dare to say we are not Christians? Only recently Secretary Daniels said: "This is a Christian nation; to deny it means to be ignorant of the fundamental principle underlying our entire political structure."⁶ If we are a Christian people, we need a Christian education, one that draws its life from the highest, immutable Truth. Fads and fancies come and go; styles in education change with styles in divine worship; but on the sea of doctrine there is one society, founded on the Rock of Truth, which has stood the test of time, while the winds of heresy and the rains of falsehood for nineteen hundred years have beaten upon her in vain. And the attitude of the Catholic Church toward our country's public school, we cannot say too often, is purely a negative one. Being constituted guardian of truth, treasurer of Heaven's deposit of faith, and mother of the children of Eve, how could she have other than a kindly attitude toward those who are striving for what she confidently and securely possesses? Her stand before a world of rivals is one of the purest good will. Seeing the shallowness of many waters, she would gladly rescue the foundering crafts that pulled away from her on the high seas of time; but they will have none of her aid; they rather seem purposely to misunderstand her signals and go their own way to perdition.

What this Church holds for man, woman and child, from January to December, is that in matters of religion there is no vacation. Religion is the warp and woof of her educational system. She makes citizens for country and for heaven. In her opinion, one day a week is not enough for God. Sunday may have something special, over and above the other days' routine of worship, a sort of finishing off, if you will, or, better, a fit beginning for the coming week of service; but of itself Sunday is not enough. Mother's Day is the expression of a noble conception of exalted motherhood; but who would say it is sufficient, or deny that it is only an extra pretty blossom in the year's bouquet of filial devotion? And the Fourth of July, with its old-time celebration, could it ever suffice to pay to the nation a man's whole debt of loyalty? The carnation and the flag are but symbols of heart affection, the outward show of the inward feeling. Love of mother is the fibre of the child; love of country, the bone of the soldier; love of God, the soul of the citizen. The Cath-

⁶ Pittsburgh Catholic, June 27, '18.

olic position was fairly stated by President Hadley, of Yale University, when he said: "I do not believe that you are going to make the right kind of a citizen by a godless education and then add on religion afterwards."

The Catholic principle in education has been too long a stumbling-block to honest seekers after truth. They ought to know more; they ought to see more; they ought to ask more; and Catholics should prepare to answer more. Ninety-nine per cent of the misconceptions in the Protestant mind are due to ignorance. If non-Catholics understood, they would be the first to imitate. They cannot get away from the idea that the habit and cassock are symbols of craftiness. How many stop to ask their meaning? Too few realize that the cassock of the Jesuit Father and Christian Brother, the habit of the Benedictine monk and Dominican friar, have a deep significance and a wonderful history. The question, "What is the meaning of your white habit, Father?" was asked of a Friar Preacher on a train some years ago; and, equal to the occasion, the Dominican replied: "It means that we take the evangelical counsels of Jesus Christ seriously." The religious habit is associated with the greatest events in the world's education. When Attila overran Europe in the fifth century, setting a precedent for the War-Lord of today, the monks plied the quill in their rude scriptoriums and preserved for succeeding ages the classic learning of Greece and Rome. "It was they who first practiced scientific farming," says Dr. R. Fulton Cutting, of New York, a non-Catholic, one of the latest and most advanced sociologists of our country. "They were the road-builders of the Dark Ages, the drainers of swamps and fens, the patrons of architecture and painting, and they supplied at the same time, in their own organizations, the object lesson of a model society." Later, in the century when ecclesiastical art reached the height of its glory, and when the universities were scattered over the then known world numbering their students by thousands, the twin Orders of Francis and Dominic rose up for the honor of the Church and the advancement of learning and put their followers' names on the books of discoveries and inventions that today are nothing less than marvelous. The men of those days were students in that word's deepest import; they laid down principles which by reason of their accuracy

¹ "The Church and Society," pp. 5, 6, 7, Macmillan Co., New York.

startle modern scholars. The age of Thomas Aquinas and Roger Bacon was not only one of original research, but also the time when liberty in the modern sense took its rise; for we go back to the thirteenth century for the first enfranchisement of the laboring man, the famous Magna Charta, which is the nearest thing to our great modern Declaration of Independence.

I recall in this connection the remark of a business man in a city which has a Catholic college named after the patron of Catholic scholars; and it shows the man's ignorance in splendid relief. In a scoffing way he simply made reference to "that school that teaches thirteenth-century stuff." The thing is, what did he mean? He could not point the finger of scorn at its teaching efficiency; for if successful students are any standard for judging a school, that one must have been far and away the best in the city—and it happened to be the only Catholic high school in the city—seeing that it was then leading in athletic prowess, had been for years admitting to graduation students who covered themselves with glory in State University examinations, and could point with pride to an alumnus sitting in the State Legislature. As a matter of fact, while intending to brand the institution as not being abreast the times, he unwittingly hit upon the ever ancient, ever new in referring to the century that gave birth to the Order whose motto is "Truth," and to whose founder the Vicar of Christ himself addressed the memorable words: "We, considering that the brethren of the Order will be the champions of Faith and true Lights of the World," etc.⁸ It is but a step from the age of Dominic to that of Christ when He gathered His little band for the last time and charged them: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."⁹ "Go . . . teach" is the message His Church has treasured down through the centuries; it is her license to preach "in season, out of season"¹⁰ the answer Christ's silent person presented to Pilate when he asked: "What is Truth?" it is her divine commission to make known the good-will of God to men according to the Saviour's own words: "For this reason was I

⁸ Bull of Honorius III confirming the Order of Preachers.

⁹ Matthew xxviii, 19.

¹⁰ II Timothy, iv, 2.

born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the Truth."¹¹ Her reason for existence is summed up in the definition of a Catholic University given by His Eminence Cardinal Gibbons, namely: "To teach the whole truth—that which God has revealed and that which man has discovered—to teach it not simply as an abstract theory, but as a practical guide and standard of action, as a law, and, indeed, the supreme law of human conduct for individual, society and nation."¹²

In these days, when men and movements are measured in relation to the ideals of Americanism, we need not be surprised that the enemies of the Truth have seized the flag as a cloak for their bigotry. A remnant of the so-called "Guardians of Liberty," calling themselves the "Wayne County Civic League," tried to have a bill put through the Michigan State Legislature, compelling attendance in public schools of all primary and grammar grade pupils. But they received a jolt in the unexpected defense of Detroit's parochial schools by Dr. Charles S. Chadsey, superintendent of public schools. The Detroit Free Press, the largest and most influential newspaper in that city, says: "Parochial schools of Detroit not only take care of the education of 50,000 children, half as many as are provided for by the public educational system of Detroit, but are efficient." . . . In opposing the movement of the Wayne County Civic League, Dr. Chadsey declared he does not see how any considerable element could support the plan of the League. In the first place, he pointed out, if the children were turned over to the public schools, the system of public education in the city would be paralyzed. . . . "Catholics and Lutherans," he concludes, "pay taxes both for the support of their own and public schools, lightening the burden of other tax-payers. It would be un-American to close their schools on religious grounds." And right here we ask, on what other but religious grounds could they possibly close them? There must be solid reasons for giving to the State the monopoly of education. In Europe such a thing failed; and, since true education of head, hand and heart is so intimately bound up with religion, it is sure to be a failure in this country, constitutionally set against religious interference.

¹¹ John xviii, 37.

¹² Discourse at Catholic University Jubilee Celebration, Bulletin, April, 1915.

The parochial school system is not on trial; its fruits are known. Look at the wonderful assembly of men that has left our shores to battle for Democracy; read the names of the honored dead as they are recorded in the daily press; recall that in the most conservative estimate from thirty-five to fifty per cent of the Army, and from forty-five to sixty per cent of the Navy are members of the Catholic Faith, whose census makes up only a little more than sixteen per cent of our whole population! Our fighting men are the wonder of the Old World, which was long of the opinion that we were a money-mad people with no time for the things of God. That Catholicity should go forth to fight for Democracy is not to be marvelled at by men who know that Jack Barry was the Father of the American Navy; that the first marine to die at Vera Cruz was a Catholic; that the first man to fire a gun in France against the Hun was a Catholic; that the first private and the first officer to die in France for the safety of Democracy were Catholics; that sixty-eight members of the 165th Infantry—the old “Fighting 69th” of New York—of which ninety-nine per cent are Catholics, we awarded the French War Cross for bravery on the field of battle, and, finally, that Archbishop Mundelein is the head of the greatest Americanization agency in Chicago, having under him one thousand priests in touch with one million people, forty per cent of whom were former subjects of powers now at war with the United States, and not one case of disloyalty has yet come to light. In the face of these facts it is not at all strange that Catholic America should give her life-blood for the sake of Democracy. Catholics love their native land because of their Faith, and they love her for her very self. “It must follow,” says ex-Attorney-General Bonaparte, “that the ideal country for a Catholic is one whose form of government, whose laws, whose customs, whose standards of thought and life, are such as to render this attitude on his part easy and congenial, to awaken his gratitude, to arouse his admiration, to engage his affections, and to make the full and cheerful discharge of his duties as a citizen, and, if need be, as a soldier, for him a labor of love; and I ask with confidence: Where in the whole world of today will you find a country and a political institution so nearly in accord with this model as are our country and American liberty?”¹³

¹³ From address before Archdiocesan Union H. N. S., Balto., Md., 1918.

Catholic schools are doing their share—more cannot be asked. They value the American's heritage of freedom, and are helping to pay its price. They are turning out men who are physically, intellectually and morally fit to win the war, and they are preparing those still too young for actual fighting to serve their country during the period of reconstruction that will follow on the declaration of peace; for they realize that ours is a nation founded under God to be a refuge for the oppressed of militarism, the saviour of France, and the teacher of all countries, and that our destiny from on high is not only to make the world safe for, but to educate it in the true principles of Democracy.

—Constantius Werner, O. P.

SALVE CRUX SANCTA

(Hail Holy Cross)

"Salve Crux sancta, salve mundi gloria,"

Thy beams through the darkness of ages of old
Shone down on the peoples that sat in the shades of death,
Waiting Thy coming, as prophets foretold.

"Vera spes nostra," high upon Calvary's hill
Thine arms wide outspread to embrace humankind,
Sinners as holy men. "Vera ferens gaudia,"
Our hope and our joy in Thee do we find.

"Signum salutis," in Thee still our hope is set,
Longing, we look to Thee, to Thee we call,
Lift us, oh, lead us, "salus in periculis,"
Lend us Thine aid in our way lest we fall.

"Vitale lignum vitam ferens omnium,"
Life to all lovers of Thine Holy Rood.
At Judgment this sign of our time-lasting Holocaust
Shall shine in the heavens, oh, life-giving Wood!

—Gabriel Knauff, O. P.