

# THE GREAT EDUCATION DEBATE



One reason for the growth of parochial schools has been discontent with the increased secularization which is manifested in many public school textbooks

## The "Divisive" Charge

By RUSSELL KIRK\*

According to some eminent "professional educators," among them Dr. James Bryant Conant, parochial and private schools are opposed to the democratic American way of life; and so something unpleasant ought to be done about them. The hostile critics of private schools—that is, of all schools not supported by public school boards—are strong in the federal Office of Education, most state departments of public instruction, the big schools of education,

and many state teachers' colleges. Private schools are divisive, these critics declare. They mean that parochial and private schools create division and discord in American society; that they prevent a national "togetherness." These charges, I think, need a searching examination.

By the end of 1961, about one child out of every six, in this country, will be attending a church-connected or private school. (If we were to include colleges and universities, the proportion of attendance at private establishments would be even higher.) There are some 36,000,000 pupils in public elementary and secondary schools; and there are nearly 5,500,000 in Catholic schools, about 350,000 in Protestant schools, and perhaps 300,000 in other private schools. (In the South, private schools spring up rapidly now, what with the looming integration of public institutions.) Of Protestant schools, the most numerous are Lutheran; after them follow the Christian and Dutch Reformed, who in some regions have an even higher percentage of their children in parochial schools than do Catholics.

The proportion of young Americans in these "private" schools has been growing rapidly in recent years, despite the increasing heavy burden of taxation to support public schools. (In colleges and universities, however, the proportion has been shifting the other way: until about six years ago, half of the total number of American college students attended private institutions, but now at least 55 per cent go to state universities and colleges.) In 1900, only 8 per cent of elementary and secondary pupils attended parochial and private schools. By 1940, about 9.4 per cent went to these private schools. In the past twenty years, non-public schools have

\*Russell Kirk is education editor of the *National Review*, and edits *The University Bookman*.

grown more than four times as rapidly as have public schools! In certain communities, this change is particularly striking. In and about Grand Rapids, for instance, at the beginning of this century, nearly all children attended public schools. But nowadays nearly half of them go to parochial schools—the majority of these to Protestant and Dutch Reformed institutions, and nearly all the rest to Catholic schools.

This remarkable alteration is not caused primarily by the increase of Catholics in the American population: although the Catholics have been increasing slowly in relation to the number of Protestants, their total growth is tiny when compared with the swelling of parochial school enrollments these past two decades. The causes deserve analysis.

It is not that the people who send their children to parochial and private schools have money to burn.



Dr. James B. Conant typifies many of the "professional educators" who are opposed to parochial and private schools on the basis that they are "divisive" in American life

Although the increase of national income has helped to pay for these schools, this recent private prosperity has been nearly cancelled by the mounting tax-load to support public schools. Even in price-adjusted dollars (that is, not allowing for inflation of the dollar), taxes to pay for public schooling increased 185 per cent between 1940 and 1960. And the people who send their children to private schools must help to pay these taxes, too: they labor under a double burden.

The real causes of growth in private schools are two: first, the increasing secularization of public instruction; second, the growing discontent with the quality of the public schools.

In part because of recent Supreme Court decisions, even the vestiges of religious understanding have been eliminated from nearly all public schools. One has only to examine public-school textbooks to find

how thoroughgoing this secularization has become; and sometimes this ignoring of religious teaching amounts to positive hostility. In the typical textbook in world history, for instance, the life of Christ is dismissed in two or three paragraphs, and sometimes the history of the Jews is given only one curt sentence. To ignore religious knowledge is to cut away the foundations of right reason and imagination.

At the same time, under the influence of John Dewey's disciples and what Professor Harold Clapp calls "the stranglehold on American education," the leaders of the National Education Association (which claims to speak for public-school teachers) and their allies have changed the nature of the public schools. Instead of teaching recognized intellectual disciplines, the typical public school nowadays emphasizes "adjustment to society," "permissive" notions of educational method, and a woolly "togetherness." As Dr. Will Herberg of Drew University writes, "Actually, the most serious threat to the public school is not the private or parochial school, but its own double failure in education and religion. Parents are deeply disturbed about why Johnny can't read, or write, or do almost anything else that used to be regarded as schooling."

So, hoping to secure a Christian education and sound intellectual disciplines for his children, the more perceptive American parent turns, when he can, to parochial and private schools. Alarmed at this tendency, some leaders of what Mr. David Riseman calls "the patronage network of Teachers College, Columbia" are seeking to impede the growth of private institutions.

About a year ago, for instance, a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, sent to all public-school superintendents in the State of New York a questionnaire clearly intended to elicit complaints against the growth of parochial and private schools. Some questions implied that these institutions were "divisive;" others, that parochial-school influence made it difficult to raise taxes for the support of public schools.

This latter charge is baseless. Church members and others connected with private schools have been remarkably self-sacrificing in their general readiness to pay for the increased costs of public institutions, through taxation. And the elimination of private schools would not make the financial problems of public schools simpler: on the contrary, taxes would be higher than now, for all the children who at present attend private schools would thus crowd into the public institutions. And, from necessity, private schools generally are operated at lower cost than public.

Similarly, much of the lobbying for federal subsidies for the public schools has behind it a hostility toward parochial and private foundations. President

Kennedy has refused to endorse federal aid for non-public schools; and even if a bill including aid for such schools could get through Congress—which it cannot—still, almost certainly, the present Supreme Court would declare aid to parochial and private schools unconstitutional. Several years ago, when there was an excellent chance that a school-aid bill including help for parochial schools might pass both Senate and House, the National Education Association's lobbyists failed to back the measure: the NEA preferred no federal aid at all to federal aid which included assistance to parochial schools. One reason why many leaders in NEA are enthusiastic at the possibility of passing a federal-aid bill in 1961 is this: since non-public schools would be excluded from such help, the federal income tax would be employed to subsidize only public schools, and the increased tax-load (amounting, ultimately, to several billion dollars a year) might succeed in forcing church-connected and private schools out of existence. Thus there would come an end to "divisiveness."

But is this alleged divisiveness in education really evil? Surely diversity, not uniformity, has been characteristic of American institutions since colonial times. We have prided ourselves on the great freedom and variety, the proliferating diversity, in this republic. We Americans have believed in a healthy competition, under moral and statutory law. One of the principal objects of our federal and state constitutions is to guarantee variety and freedom of

choice—actually to protect that "diverseness" which the disciples of John Dewey denounce. A deadening uniformity, an enforced conformity to some secular abstraction of "equality" and "socialization," is not the mark of American politics or American thought. On the contrary, just this fanatic lust for compulsory unity in the state, this passion for monolithic education, is a conspicuous characteristic of the totalitarian state.

Church-founded schools existed throughout the United States before the tax-supported schools began to appear in the 1830's. Our church-connected colleges nurtured the higher learning in America, and still set the tone more than do the state institutions. And the revived popularity of parochial and private schools, during these two past decades, demonstrates that non-public schooling has not lost its purpose: it is more important than it has been since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

To economic free enterprise this country still gives a great deal of lip-service, at least. Educational free enterprise is no less important. If our parochial and private schools are taxed or regulated out of existence, we will have lost one of the chief bulwarks of freedom and justice and order in America. A hundred and thirty years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out that American institutions are free only because they are supported by widespread religious sanctions. If the Christian school is supplanted by the unitary secularized state school, the end of American freedoms in general may not be long delayed.

And along with that loss of constitutional freedom, we may expect a decay of intellectual attainment. The competition which the non-public schools offer to tax-supported schools still provides a test of whether the public schools are doing their work. Diversity, I suggest, is life-giving; uniformity in a nation's schooling brings boredom, slackness, and the triumph of mediocrity.

## Is Aid Constitutional?

By LEONARD F. MANNING\*

Homer had an easy way of turning an epithet, For him the Achaians did not simply sail the sea. They sailed the "loud-resounding" sea. And it was the well-greaved Achaians who, while the long-haired, fleet-footed Achilles sulked, went to rescue the white-armed, long-robed Helen. Not even the gods escaped his descriptive phrase—neither Apollo, the far-darter, nor Hera, the ox-eyed queen, nor the far-seeing Zeus.

Since ancient times man has used the epithet to describe his fellow man. We too in our way have a fetish for appellations. We use them not to describe



Rep. Cleveland M. Bailey, (right), Democrat from West Virginia, Chairman of the House Education subcommittee, discusses the controversial \$2,300,000,000 school aid bill with Secretary Ribicoff

but to characterize. We lack the great imagination of Homer. We talk the way we paint—in abstractions, and under the drumming influence of Madison Avenue, we think and talk in terms of catch-phrases and slogans and put everyone and everything in little abstract categories. A man may be a radical, a liberal, too conservative, too orthodox but he is never an individual. Our epithets simply describe an attitude, as it were, or a point of view. Years ago the liberal we knew, as we knew Achilles, by his trailing locks. And nowadays, I suppose, we would recognize him by the shape of his head, or his intellectual brow or the ivy cut of his suit. But the conservative just about defies physical description because he comes in various shapes and from various sections. We have the Southern conservative, the western conservative and the conservative of the northeast regions of the United States. We have come to know the northeast conservative, so it seems, by his two inescapable characteristics, his orthodoxy and his rigid adherence to tradition. And it is somewhat fashionable to damn them both.

The conservative has other abhorrent habits. He abides too much by the letter of the law and lacks the imagination to appreciate any interpretations of law not dictated by his own rigid orthodoxy. He allows for no play at the joints of government because he has lingered too long with tradition. He is always among the last if not the very "last to lay the old aside." So we have been told.

The liberal, though, stands unfettered. He stands for grand and sweeping accomplishments in a grand and sweeping manner. He stands for the free and expedient construction of statutes and of law generally. He is for more play at the joints. His method is to determine first what must be done, to decide what is just and equitable and for the common good and then let the law find the ways to accomplish it. He stands for the escape from tradition and, above all, for freedom from a closed and narrow view of the law, freedom to reexamine every phase of every issue no matter how long the issue may have been considered closed.

It was valid to assume that when Mr. Kennedy undertook to take us to the new frontiers we would move with liberal strides. It was valid to assume that, in the manner of Franklin Roosevelt, he would fix his social and economic goals and move full speed ahead, leaving it to the courts to construe the Constitution. And he was also the debater. It was also valid to assume that there would always be room for debate.

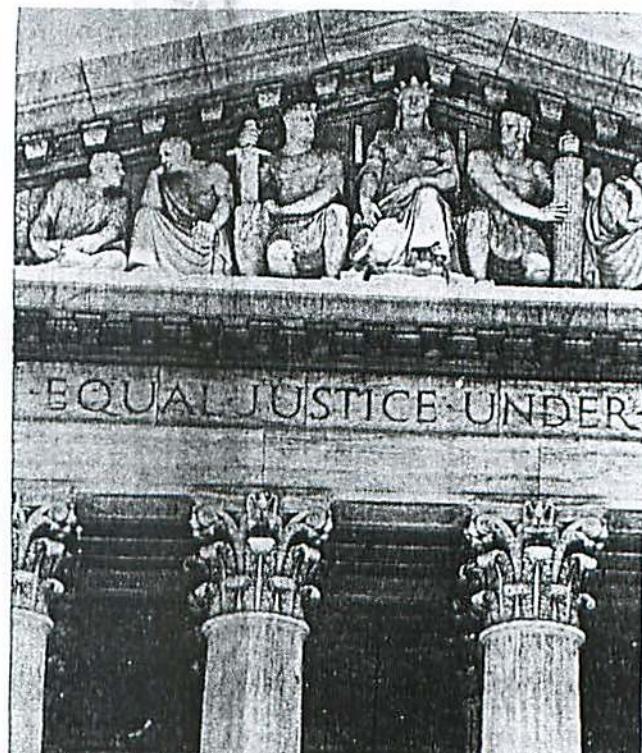
It was somewhat of a paradox, then, when the President announced quite categorically a few weeks ago that the Constitution "clearly" forbids federal aid for church-related schools and when he told us a few days later that the *Everson* decision precludes any debate on the subject. And it was a genuine

curiosity to find rallied 'round the flag, in support of the President, influential groups whose only appeal was an appeal to tradition, an appeal to our "American tradition of separation of church and state." Here was a quaint package of orthodoxy and tradition, so round and firm but loosely packed.

What is there in *Everson* that requires this absolute declaration? What is there in our traditions which proscribes federal aid to church-related schools? What is there in our Constitution which clearly forbids such aid?

The Constitution speaks neither of schools nor, for that matter, of any wall of separation between church and state. The First Amendment simply states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." It is a courageous thing, to be sure, but ill-advised for the President to cull the meaning of that rather unclear clause from the obiter dicta of one judge written in one case decided by the Supreme Court of the United States. It is rather odd, too, because the case on which the President relied held that aid to parochial schools, in the form of free bus transportation for children attending those schools, did *not* violate the First Amendment. After so holding for the court, Mr. Justice Black, who wrote the majority opinion, went on to express his view that neither the states nor the Federal Government can, consistently with the first amendment, "pass laws which aid one religion, aid all religions, or prefer one religion over

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There is nothing in our traditions or in Supreme Court decisions which proscribes Federal aid to church-related schools

Pope Pius XII has declared:

"Whoever takes any part in kindling or reviving the light of Faith in even one home, can be certain that the impulse of Divine Power which springs from that home will go on increasing forever."

"Whoever has helped toward the ordination of even one Missionary Priest will have an abundant share in all the Masses which that Priest offers and in the fruits which flow from his Apostolic labors and his holy life."

THESE THOUGHTS of the Holy Father are wonderfully consoling for those who might be wondering how to arrange for prayers for their immortal souls after their death. This causes anxiety to many persons, particularly elderly persons.

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The drawing up of a will is a prudent thing to do. For as Our Blessed Lord said, "Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour."

While we do not know the day nor the hour, we do know that even the most popular and friendliest persons are soon forgotten. A famous New York priest frequently said during his lifetime: "If you are inclined to be proud of yourself, you should attend 'your month's mind Mass to discover how quickly you are forgotten."

This good Priest had offered many a month's mind Mass which contrasted most remark-



ably from the funeral Mass, as far as attendance was concerned. So be good to yourself and arrange to be remembered by those whom you will help to God's Altar by your charity. Self-love as distinguished from selfishness and inordinate self-love, is not only good but it is a matter of Divine Precept.

Pope Pius XII has also said: "There exists in fact a defense, an esteem, a love and a service of one's personal self which is not only justified but demanded by psychology and morality. Nature makes this plain, and it is also a lesson of the Christian Faith. Our Lord taught, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Christ then, proposes as the rule of love of neighbor, charity towards oneself, not the contrary."

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## Sometimes God Says No

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If it had not been for your faith and trust in those past few weeks, I would not even have this job today, for I would never have the courage to apply for it. It was your hope that I could not shatter. It was your faith in me that I could not let down. You know, this may sound childish, but I was mortally afraid that at the end you would think of something that would get us out of this scrape. I think it would have crushed me completely, for it would have proved that I was not fit to be the head of the family, the man of the house. I wanted to be the one who takes care of you, not vice versa. I love you so much and see—everything is turning out for the best."

"Yes, darling, everything is for the best, if we only trust in God and do our best," she whispered happily, before the next pain engulfed her, bringing them a step closer to the fulfillment of their love and hopes. †

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another" and that "no tax in any amount, large or small, can be levied to support any religious activities or institutions."

It is rather rash, I should think, to rely on any one decision of any one court to establish a principle of constitutional law. I do not mean to suggest that the meaning of the Constitution varies with the variations in the membership of the court nor do I mean to imply that Chief Justice Hughes was quite correct when he said that "the Constitution is what the judges say it is." There is too little of fact and too much of fallacy in the adage that the state of the law depends on the state of the justices' indigestion. But, surely, it is not unsound to say that we can accept a single case, or the obiter dicta of a single case, as though it were the last result of human wisdom? It is, I should think, evident that there is more wisdom in the method of those of the President's supporters who would turn to tradition and to other cases to find the meaning of the First Amendment.

It has been said many, many times before, I am sure, that ours is a religious heritage. "We are a religious people," Mr. Justice Douglas once noted, "whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being." The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 written by the men who wrote the Constitution expressly stated that religion was the

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## The Great Education Debate

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concern of government and that it was in the interest of good government to encourage religion. We have had innumerable manifestations of our religious traditions—chaplains in both houses of Congress, chapels on our military establishments, the invocation of God and the asking of God's benediction at the President's inauguration and at the commencement of the sessions of Congress, the proclamations of Thanksgiving Day, "in God we trust" stamped upon our coins. To say now that there always has been and always must be a complete "wall of separation" between church and state is to take a myopic view of history and to introduce a metaphor which has little meaning and less merit.

Catholics, Protestants, Jews, agnostics, atheists—all, I do suppose, can and do accept the principle of separation of church and state but the same principle, I am afraid, has different meanings for different people. The separation principle was a guarantee to religions that the state would not interfere with the affairs of church. It was never intended to foster hostility between government and religion or to create a preference for irreligion over religion itself. The fact is recorded in history and established by long continued custom. And the custom itself of governmental aid to religion itself has been consistently affirmed in the decisions of the Supreme Court of the United States.

In 1899 a unanimous Supreme Court, in *Bradfield v. Roberts*, found no impairment of the First Amendment when the Federal Government built a hospital in the District of Columbia for the Sisters of Charity of Emmetsburg, Md. And nine years later not a single justice was heard to dissent when, in *Quick Bear v. Leupp*, the court approved disbursements of Indian funds by the Secretary of the Interior to the Bureau of Catholic Missions to provide parochial schools among the Sioux. Indeed, the custom of appropriating federal funds to subsidize religious schools among the Indians had been, even then, a Congressional practice consistently followed for a period of over eighty years. Again in 1930 a unanimous court, in *Cochran v. Louisiana*, a court on which sat Mr. Chief Justice Hughes, Justice Holmes, Justice Brandeis and Justice Stone, found nothing unconstitutional when the state of Louisiana elected to provide secular textbooks for children attending parochial school.

It is rather late in the day to

suggest that church-related schools must, by reason of the First Amendment, be excluded from governmental assistance. This, I do believe, is to say that church-related schools do not perform a public service. Is that a reasonable assertion? Isn't that to ignore the fact that there are secular subjects taught in church-related schools? The student in the Jewish Day School learns that two and two are four the same as the student in the public school. In the Catholic Parochial School the United States is bounded on the east by the Atlantic Ocean and on the west by the Pacific just as it is in the public school. And in the Lutheran School a plural subject requires a plural verb just as it does in the public school.

There is not only a great injustice but, it would appear, little of reason or logic in the exclusion of church-related schools from federal grants in aid of education. No case and no justice has ever suggested that religion must by governmental fiat be made subordinate to irreligion. History does not require the exclusion. Nor is there any case which suggests that non-preferential aid to all schools, public, private and sectarian, is forbidden. The Everson dicta about which the President spoke forbade the use of tax money to aid religion. It forbade a preference for all religions over irreligion. Is this not a far different thing from a proscription of governmental aid for the secular service which the church-related schools render to the state?

Would it not appear, therefore, that the very dogmatical assertion of the President is based upon a very dubious assumption? Would it not appear that the President's own view is actually at war with the Everson dicta when the Everson dicta is given a proper construction? Would it not appear that the President's orthodoxy is at war with American tradition itself?

## Unitas: A Quest For Unity

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of non-Catholic individuals and groups visiting the Holy City. Presently the Foyer is being continued with the help of the (Dutch) Ladies of Bethany. Every Tuesday evening a small cadre of unity minded lay people meet there for discussions and talks on Unity. The Foyer Unitas also serves as an informal meeting ground for social gatherings with Protestants and Orthodox.

The English edition of *Unitas*, like its French and Italian counterparts, is under the general editorship of Fr.

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