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Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice

Volume 9 | Issue 3

Article 1

3-1-2006

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James C. Conroy

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Recommended Citation

Conroy, J. C. (2006). Faith-Based Schools and the State: Catholics in America, France and England, by Harry Judge. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 9 (3). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15365/joce.0903132013>

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FAITH-BASED SCHOOLS AND THE STATE: CATHOLICS IN AMERICA, FRANCE, AND ENGLAND

HARRY JUDGE
SYMPOSIUM BOOKS, 2002
\$38.00, 278 pages

Reviewed by James C. Conroy

Recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in Catholic schooling and education. Despite some important structural differences on both sides of the Atlantic, this interest has been fueled by important questions of funding, which in turn give rise to consequent issues of principle. This contribution to the debate by Harry Judge opens up refreshingly new channels of exploration and inquiry.

Judge develops a historical comparison of the evolution of Catholic education in the different political contexts of the United States, France, and England. This comparative method offers us a different heuristic structure for exploring Catholic education in the three jurisdictions. Rather than developing three parallel historical descriptions and subsequently drawing comparisons, Judge weaves together the three stories of Catholic education refracted through the lives and thoughts of key personalities and events through the 19th and 20th centuries. Thus, the volume is organized into an introductory chapter, four main sections, and a conclusion. The introductory chapter outlines and justifies Judge's innovative method, suggesting that, despite their differences, the three countries share the sense that a critical moment was reached around the turn of the 20th century. Consequently the first section deals with three key figures in Catholic education: Archbishop John Ireland (American), Emile Combos (French), and Robert Morant (English). Here Archbishop John Ireland is cast as a pivotal figure in late 19th century Amero-European Catholic culture. Educated in France, Ireland became an advocate for Catholic involvement and integration into the life-stream of democratic republicanism and consequently a promoter of the state school and a form of the 1870 English Compromise whereby the state funded substantial parts of the activity of the Catholic

school. However, events were to overtake Ireland in the Vatican, at home, and, most importantly, in France where the church and state were to end up at loggerheads, due in no small part to the machinations of the radical secularism of Emile Combes. The result was that Ireland's integrationist view would not prevail in America, where the lobby for separate Catholic schooling would grow in intensity resulting in the pattern seen throughout most of the 20th century.

Combes is the focal character of the next chapter, and one who pushed in the opposite direction from Ireland, with it would seem, more success. An advocate of the complete separation of church and state, he would come to decouple the two as Prime Minister during the Third Republic. Like Ireland, Combes was a seminarian, but there the similarity appears to have ended. Combes spent much of his political life as a kind of deist Freemason intent on disentangling the complex set of relations between church and state and ensuring that the church (especially its religious congregations) stayed out of politics. The infamous Dreyfus affair was the catalyst for hardening of the Right-Left divide in French politics which enabled Combes to enact serious and severe anti-clerical laws. In education these were to take the form of pressing forward with the laicization of what had been heretofore religious schooling and shifting the balance of power from church to state. Among other strategies this entailed the confiscation of property, the exercise of substantial control over clergy, and the withdrawal of state support for ecclesiastically sponsored activities.

Robert Morant was to play a very different role in the English context. A civil servant, Morant entered the not uncomplicated world of denominational schooling at the end of the 19th century. His major achievement was to secure, in the first instance, substantial temporary funding for church schools while simultaneously integrating them into a national network funded through local authorities. This he did against a background of complex and competing hostilities towards the idea of continued funding for Anglican and Catholic schools. Regarded by many as a somewhat Machiavellian character, he nevertheless managed to ameliorate the anxieties of many in the church. He was, however, to have less success with the Free Church leaders, much less the Liberals who were to take control of Parliament in 1905.

These opening forays are followed by three, equally detailed, chapters on three central figures that had a profound effect on shaping the educational thought patterns which gave form to the later political engagements of their successors.

Interestingly, the first of these had little enough to do with Catholicism or Catholic education per se. Horace Mann is seen as one of the pivotal fig-

ures, if not the seminal figure, in the evolution of American public education. The public education which Mann was to play a leading role in shaping was, in his image, to be founded on generalized non-sectarian Protestant principles. It was precisely this formulation which was to generate the Catholic reaction and thus begin the creation of a substantial separate school system.

The French figure so influential in the shaping of education was Francois Guizot of Modern who, like Mann, was deeply committed to the idea that education represented the best route to emancipation. The last member of this triumvirate was Bishop Ullathorne. Born into a recusant English Catholic family, Ullathorne had to come to terms with a new burgeoning Irish Catholic population. Like their North American relations they were, on the whole, impoverished and illiterate. Education was for Ullathorne a necessary prerequisite for maintaining moral and religious probity among poor Catholics. However, paying for this would not prove easy, and Ullathorne was always suspicious of the price to be paid for state funding. Despite being overruled in the end by Cardinal Manning, Ullathorne's concept about the price to be paid for the public financial support of Catholic schools was to continue to influence the somewhat fudged church and state relations of the late 19th and 20th centuries.

Judge's study then moves forward into the 20th century and examines the three primary forums where church and state relations in education have been marked out. In the United States, this was to be the courts where the arguments for and against Church involvement in publicly funded education have raged back and forth for most of the century. In the French case, the platform for broadening this ever contentious question has been the streets. Here the government has continuously had to formulate legislation with a careful eye to the competing claims of public opinion. England has of course been quite different having always preferred to conduct delicate negotiations, if not exactly in smoke-filled rooms, then certainly in the corridors of power. Legislation on church and state relations proved to be no exception.

The final section is concerned with describing the position of Catholic education in the three countries today and has a concluding chapter which raises some contrasts and some cautions.

This is a good book, replete with interesting and challenging explication, discussion, and analysis. It offers a quite different perspective on a well-trodden discussion. In doing so, Judge weaves a rich and interesting tapestry bringing into focus a variety of seemingly disparate strands which turn out to be more connected than might have been assumed initially. The final chapter offers tantalizing comparisons and raises important questions about

the sustainability of Catholic education in the various polities.

There are some minor weaknesses in this study. One is the tendency in the commentary to overuse the label, sectarian. In a world where sectarian attracts pejorative connotations, it is inadvisable to use it generically of schools that are religiously denominating. This tendency extends to the use of the term subsidy to describe the funding of church schools. Whether such funding is a subsidy or a distribution of public funds is itself an important point of disagreement. A further minor shortcoming is to be seen here and there where Judge implies that traditional Christian groups, especially in the United States, are opposed to the extension of funding to non-Christian traditions, but such claims are assertion and are not underpinned by any particular evidence.

These are minor criticisms. Despite its having been published some 3 years ago, this book will remain for some time an important source for those interested in Catholic education.

James C. Conroy is professor of religious and philosophical education and dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Glasgow, Scotland.