

Unholy Water

By William A. Borst, Ph.D.

In the early 20th century, Catholic apologist G. K. Chesterton lamented about the sorry state of education. In his view “the main fact about education is that it does not exist.” He believed that the word “education” had no specific content, like “inheritance,” or “choice.” Their meanings hinged solely on how much was bequeathed or what were the options of the choice.

The same principle still applies. The nation’s schools have lost sight of the very building block of education, “reading, writing and arithmetic”. Solid principles of absolute truth and common sense have been discarded in favor of fads, such as values clarification and humanistic platitudes about “feeling good about oneself.”

True education revolves around an understanding of just what human nature is. The common premise in public education today is that human beings are animals put on this earth to be of use to their government and collect pleasurable experiences, especially sexual ones, along the way. Secular education ignores man’s spiritual realm while it trains students to be productive citizens. Religious dogma has been replaced by a new dogma of tolerance, openness, and radical feminism. Chesterton was right when he said, “Dogma is education!” But dogma should revolve around truth, not a perverse ideology.

NEW BATTLEGROUND

The classroom has become a virtual battleground in the Culture War. The real enemy is secular humanism, the godless philosophy initiated by John Dewey. Dewey hoped to create a secular religion that would replace traditional religion. In his book, *Progressive Education*, he stressed that most classroom instruction was “too rigid.” He thought children learned better in a less structured, more flexible educational setting where students and teachers had more of a casual relationship. Instead of math, verbal or historical skills, educators placed their emphasis on personal skills and group interaction, hardly the seedbed of intellectual development.

The National Education Association, founded in 1857, preferred

the Prussian system of education, which was committed to spiritual neutrality and socialism. In claiming education for itself, the school system stripped the American family of another of its basic functions. They demanded that parents surrender the rights of their children to the state because young minds were easier to mold without parental interference.

Another special tactic has been inclusion of sex and drug education in the classroom. These courses have coerced a generation of students into revealing their innermost thoughts and feelings, which have exposed the confused state of mind that inhabits many adolescents.

THE NAKED PUBLIC SQUARE

In several decisions, the Supreme Court has ruled that state schools must be neutral on religion; that is, they cannot mention anything of a religious nature. This means the schools are bound to be secular, materialistic, and godless. David Limbaugh has a myriad of shocking anecdotes in his recent book, *Persecution*, that clearly demonstrate how hostile the state has become to religion. It is not surprising that Karl Marx and Frederick Engels included public school education in their *Communist Manifesto*. They shrewdly understood that the public school system could be the vehicle through which religion would be marginalized to what Father John Neuhaus has called the “naked public square.” Freedom of religion has slowly changed into “freedom from religion.”

AN IMMUNE DEFICIENCY

Catholics should not be complacent. They cannot assume that the same educational malady will not happen to them. In a speech in Philadelphia celebrating the Bicentennial anniversary in 1976, radical lawyer Leo Pfeffer discussed the role of secular humanism in the Culture War. He singled out Catholics for their repressive social morality, which opposes contraception, abortion, and homosexuality, as choosing to force their beliefs on the rest of society. Secular humanists like Pfeffer had a great fear of the

Catholic School system because parochial schools had a significant impact on the society and provided a viable option to the public school system. Pfeffer felt the Catholic system had to be neutralized before a value-free democracy could emerge.

Many believe that the Achilles heel of Catholics in America had been their historical feelings of inferiority. Since they had always been out of the social mainstream, succeeding generations sought to be accepted by American society. John F. Kennedy and his public aversion for his own religion was an important step in this movement away from Catholic orthodoxy. The need to Americanize became indistinguishable from the need to belong. When coupled with the incorrect interpretations of the Second Vatican Council, this invariably led to the watering down of the faith as had been truly expressed in the Baltimore Catechism.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

The Baltimore Catechism had served as the main vehicle for the transmission of the faith for over four generations of Catholics. A direct result of the third Plenary Council of Baltimore held in 1884, the Baltimore Catechism was instituted the following year. The Catechism provided clear-cut, simple answers to the basic questions of human existence and the basic tenets of the Catholic religion. Catholics knew the basic principles and tenets of their faith backwards and forwards.

The very first question in the Baltimore Catechism succinctly asked, "Why did God make me?" This is an elementary question yet one pregnant with deep philosophical and theological mysteries. The answer "To know, love and serve Him in this life and be happy with Him in the next life." It is simple, direct, and contains wise advice. It makes everything else people crave, strive for, or lust after, unimportant by comparison.

The traditional catechism fell into disuse after Vatican II in 1966. It was considered outdated and too strict for the "kinder, more gentle Catholic faith." As an unintended consequence of Vatican II's ecumenical agenda, the tap of Catholic orthodoxy received a flood of the "unholy water" of secularism that made its dogma less "severe" and more open to acceptance by the Church's Protestant brethren. In many ways this has been as destructive of Catholic orthodoxy as the "smoke of Satan," of which Pope Paul VI warned.

THE VANISHING NUN

This historical development also raises the question as to whether or not the Catholic schools are adequately preparing their students to flourish in the face of hedonism, apathy, and religious indifferentism in our society. The Catholic divorce rate, immodest dress, number of abortions and the young engaging in pre-marital sex seem to imply they are not. Something seems to be missing.

One of the most vociferous enemies of the Church was Paul

Blanchard. In his book, *American Freedom and Catholic Power*, he recognized in the forties that if the Catholic nuns could ever be separated from their vocation as schoolteachers, Catholic school education would crumble to the ground.

In the aftermath of Vatican II, encounter groups and group psychology penetrated many of the nation's convents. The Sisters of the Immaculate Heart invited noted psychologist, Carl Rogers to their retreat house in Montecito, California in 1966 to begin something they called the Education Innovation Project. Rogers' book, *On Becoming a Person*, had revolutionized psychology and became known as "third force psychology." As in the public school, the client solved his own problems with little interference from the therapist. Many Catholic religious were unhinged by these encounter group sessions; they became confused and disoriented by the godlessness, by the focus on "self" and uncertain about their commitment. Many nuns started to dress for the world instead of God and His church, while hundreds resigned from their religious orders.

Rogers' movement spread as thousands of nuns became liberated from their vows, and some from their faith. It eventually led to the undermining of the Catholic school system because when the nuns left, Catholic education lost its backbone, the very strength of its existence. Forced to hire lay teachers, who were often not as well versed in the knowledge and practice of their faith, Catholic school education started to resemble the public schools. Author E. Michael Jones recognized this in his book, *Libido Dominandi: Sexual Liberation and Political Control*. Echoing the principles of the Cultural Marxists, Jones pointed out the key to destroying the Catholic school system was to be certain that young Catholic women were "reared in the free and hearty atmosphere of modern America."

IVORY TOWER LIBERATION

The greatest loss of dogmatic faith appears to have taken place on the Catholic college campus. Secularism has implanted itself at the highest level in Catholic American college education to the point that there have been battles over keeping the crucifixes on the walls. College presidents facilitated this move from orthodoxy at their Land O' Lakes meeting in 1967. It was here that they established that "the Catholic University must have true autonomy and academic freedom in the face of authority of whatever kind, lay, clerical, external to the academic community itself."

The results of this bold move have been disastrous for the Catholic higher education and the Catholic faith. Secular cultural influences have included homosexuals' and lesbians' recognition, pro-abortion counseling, performances of offensive and immoral plays such as Eve Ensler's hideous, *The Vagina Monologues*. A *New York Times* poll shows that as students advance from freshman to senior years in Catholic colleges their attitudes toward abortion,

homosexuality and premarital sex lose their firm hold within the boundaries of the traditional Catholic faith.

Papal biographer George Weigel has opined, “the Catholic sexual ethic is treated intellectually as a curious medieval artifact” without any real place “in the ordering of college life. Catholic colleges are often turning out, not committed Catholics well versed in the principles of their faith, but cynical pagans who have lost interest in the demands of their religion’s moral content.”

EX CORDE ECCLESIAE

To restore the ordered liberty of the Catholic conscience on campus, Pope John Paul II issued his apostolic constitution on Catholic University education, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, in 1990. The Pope laid out specific guidelines in defining the characteristics of a “truly” Catholic college. Understandably, the document met with steadfast opposition, especially in the United States, whose college presidents jealously guarded their institutional power.

The Pope stressed three major points in *Ex Corde*. A competent ecclesiastic authority must determine the Catholic credentials of a university. A Catholic theologian must have a mandate from his or her bishop to teach Catholic theology. University officials should ensure the appointment of a predominantly Catholic faculty. None of these statements is unreasonable or harsh. Under simple rules of “truth in advertising,” a school that promotes itself as “Catholic” should be willing to adhere to the basic tenets of the faith without argument or rancor.

Unfortunately, too many Catholic colleges tend to follow the dictates of a secular world that has lost contact with its original and fundamental moral principles. Because of finances, bordering on greed, governmental aid, academic acceptance, and humanistic endeavors, the Catholic colleges have effectively denied their spiritual birthright under the tired rubric of academic freedom and pedagogic license. Weigel accuses these colleges of consumer fraud by advertising themselves as “Catholic,” while ignoring and even subverting the faith.

Some of the schools that are in strict accord with the Pope’s document are Catholic University in Washington D. C., Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, St. Thomas More in Fort Worth Texas, Christendom in Front Royal, Virginia, Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Ave Maria in Naples, Florida, Magdalen in Warner, New Hampshire and Thomas Aquinas College, in Santa Paula, California. Noticeably absent are Notre Dame University and each one of the nation’s twenty-eight Jesuit colleges and universities.

DOGMATIC WATCHDOG

The Newman Center named after John Cardinal Newman, the English Catholic apologist, and author of *The Idea of a University*, is synonymous with a Catholic presence on the secular campus. It has served this purpose for many decades and continues

today with 700 Catholic Centers across the nation. Also, there exists the Cardinal Newman Society, the only national organization dedicated to the renewal of Catholic identity in higher education in the United States. Its members include college teachers, students, alumni and friends, who fear the loss of this identity and the deleterious effect it can have on the future of American Catholicism. It is a watchdog organization that prides itself on holding Catholic colleges to the truthful flame of their Catholic heritage.

This society is the brainchild of Patrick Reilly, who experienced a crisis of faith while a student at Fordham University in New York City. Reilly was disturbed by the fact that campus peer councils referred women to abortion clinics and dispensed birth control pills. Fordham’s administration treated issues like abortion as a debatable topic. Inspired by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Reilly founded the Cardinal Newman Society in 1991. This past year the Society protested twenty commencement speakers at Catholic colleges who publicly disagree with the Catholic teachings such as abortion. Included was MSNBC’s “pro-choice” commentator Chris Matthews at his alma mater, Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts. This Society just might be the antidote for the poison that has been killing Catholic dogmatic education. For more information, contact Cardinal Newman Society, 10562 Associates Court, Manassas, VA 20109. Membership costs \$25 annually.

THE DAVINCI CODE

The situation is crucial. The schools on all levels seem to have been negligent in transmitting the basic beliefs of the Catholic faith in a strong and lasting way. Dan Brown’s best selling novel, *The DaVinci Code*, which vilifies the Catholic faith from an historical and doctrinal perspective, underscores the gravity of this situation. According to History Professor James Hitchcock, of St. Louis University, the book “makes the biblical story of Jesus’ life on earth into a thriller in which Mary Magdalene and Jesus were married, she was a rich woman who financed His ministry, and the Apostles conspired to suppress the truth to maintain male dominance.” Why the title *DaVinci Code*? Author Brown says, “Leonardo DaVinci had an unfortunate place in history of being a modern man of reason in an age of religious fervor when science was synonymous with heresy.” Many Catholics are reading this book, which Hitchcock says, “is not merely another revision, but a deliberate fraud.” Brown’s book and others like his, run the grave risk of leading the naive Catholic into serious error, if not apostasy.

William A. Borst holds a Ph.D. from St. Louis University. He is heard every Wednesday from 2-4 PM on WGNU radio and nationally on WGNU.net. He is also the author of the book, “Liberalism: Fatal Consequences,” available from PO Box 16271, St. Louis, MO 63105, for \$17.50 ppd. (BBPROF@aol.com).

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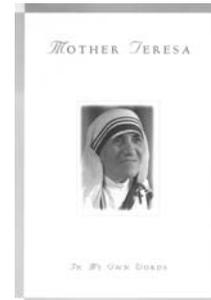
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