

# THE CATHOLIC HOUR

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## AMERICA'S TRIPLE ARSENAL FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HUMAN VALUES — THE HOME, THE CHURCH, THE SCHOOL

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## AMERICA'S TRIPLE ARSENAL FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HUMAN VALUES— THE HOME, THE CHURCH, THE SCHOOL

Dear Fellow Americans:

The story is told that on the morning of May 31, 1889, a workman passing below the dam which held in check waters threatening life and property in the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, noticed a slight trickling of the water through an almost invisible crevasse in the giant embankment. The seepage of water through this small opening seemed so little in comparison with the waters held at bay, that the workman passed on giving it but scant reflection. That night thousands of lives and millions of dollars in property were lost, all because a heedless passerby did not think that so slight a seepage could bring about destruction.

In France and Flanders twenty-eight years ago on a gray November day, bugles blew the "cease fire" which stopped the flowing of a river of blood and ended a world war. A war, we were told, that was to end wars; a war which was to make the world safe for Democracy. Men who were there on that chill November morning, tell us that there was a strange new look in eyes that had stared grimly beneath steel helmets. And no

wonder, for the world's manhood now looked forward to life instead of death.

With life beckoning, hope came into the hearts of these sorely tried veterans of strife; a hope that their sufferings were not in vain, and that in consequence, a new day was dawning for mankind. As we look back in retrospect over the years that have passed since the Armistice silenced the guns of that first world conflict, we are reminded that those who survived that horrible carnage anticipated the future with hope, because they firmly believed that they, by force of arms, had proved that right must inevitably prevail over might. They also looked forward with hope because they thought the philosophy fundamental to true democracy had not only survived brutal force, but had actually gained the ascendancy in men's thinking and acting.

In the years that followed immediately upon the close of that suicidal conflict—years of unparalleled prosperity; years, too, of unparalleled excesses—no one took seriously a certain beer-parlor agitator whose philosophy of government was so at vari-

ance with the philosophy of government for which men had bled and died, had fought and won. His philosophy was considered as so much seepage by a world sick of strife but a world sure of itself. Charlatan, this man may have been; demagogism may have been his methods. But at least it could be said of him that he was alert, more active, more fired by zeal, although a false zeal, than those who took him lightly and to whose places of command he would eventually succeed.

While others, secure in their positions of authority, underestimated the power of seepage, he, realizing its power, continued his lightly-regarded campaign, eventually weakening and finally destroying the structure of existing government. At first regarded as a Gilbert and Sullivan tragedian, Hitler emerged from the wreck of government the symbol of strength for a people poisoned and weakened by the seepage he caused to flow.

In this, our country, we must begin to take stock, rearrange our house, and look to its foundations, if the seepage that is in evidence here is not to destroy us. If we do not, then we deserve the deluge that threatens us and the consequent destruction that will follow in its wake. Contemporary America has only

begun, and that remotely, to sense the danger that threatens life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Gradually, but persistently, Secularism—and this is the seepage to which I refer—is working away at the dam of fundamentals, which have held in check the waters of subversive and perverse doctrines that seek to contaminate the stream of our national life. In a way, we ourselves, have contributed to the flow of this seepage which threatens the very groundwork of our national structure. We, Protestant, Jew, and Catholic, holding in common those religious truths which constitute the basic premises of Americanism, are yet to agree on a civics text which will bring to the school children of America a knowledge of all that is implied in the term Americanism. Instructed in the form and the mechanics of our nation's political structure, the average school child lacks a knowledge of the reasons out of which this form developed and for which the mechanics were evolved as a guarantee.

Treatment of minority groups in America is proof conclusive that we, as a people, either are not cognizant of the basic premises on which our nation stands, or we are as yet to be instructed fully in them. In

either case, American Education has fallen short of its objective. Yes, it is true that as a people we know what is implied in the Bill of Rights, but we do not know to all intent and purposes what is stated in the Declaration of Independence. The body of the law we feel: the spirit of the law we fail to teach under public auspices lest there come the charge of sectarianism. By neglecting the spirit, while emphasizing the form and mechanics of our unique Democracy, there has resulted a sort of distortion in the thinking of many. This distortion is best described in the words of a prominent educator of an equally prominent Southern university. Lamenting the progressive obscuring of the religious values, which are basic to the American concept of Democracy, this distinguished educator charged that a new religion was evolving in America, the Deification of Democracy, which comprises the worship of the will of the majority, wherein that will means the blotting out of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, as these rights relate to so-called minorities within the body politic. Democracy, so understood, is seepage working away at the dam of fundamentals in our national structure. It is seepage widening divisions among the nation's

citizens, threatening to sweep away those essential safeguards of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which twenty centuries of Christianity have established, supported and sustained. There can be no compromise, and certainly there can be no acceptance.

Secularism is so insidious that if given but slight ground, it will threaten the whole structure of supernaturalism; if its seepage is not checked, its waters will engulf fundamentals to such an extent that only the faintest suggestion of them will remain.

It is, indeed, the hour of crisis and Democracy can survive only to the extent that religion flourishes.

The Catholic Church, knowing how intimately interwoven are religion and Democracy, seeks the preservation of human values, which true Democracy safeguards, by stressing the essential importance of the inter-relation between home, Church and school. So determined is the Catholic Church that this essential importance will not be overlooked, she calls upon the home to support both Church and school. So militant is the Catholic Church in defense of human values, that she insists that both home and school determine their objectives in accordance with God's plan in creation.

From time immemorial, the home has been the great educative agency, and, in the eyes of the Church, the prime educative agency. Before the development of our vast modern school system, the child received his preparation for life within the family circle. Today, even with that school system, the Church still regards the home as the school of schools, and the parent as the teacher preeminent. Unfortunately, this is not always so in this streamlined age in which we live, when apartments have taken the place of homes, pent houses the place of mansions, and automobiles the place of babies.

Now, sad to say, in many cases the home is only incidental to the school, and the school has become not only parlor, bedroom, dining-room and bath for the child, but in a sense mother and father, brother and sister as well. Here the child is supposed to develop those domestic virtues without which good citizenship is impossible. Today the school is expected to so ground the child in desirable practices that parents will be released from their God-given obligation of fashioning and forming the true man and the true woman of character.

The Catholic Church insists that the school at best is only supplementary to the home, aid-

ing and assisting, but never taking the place of the home. She knows that the home is the very center of the child's emotional, physical, intellectual and moral life. Here habits and attitudes are determined. There is no doubt but that impressions made by parents are more frequently than not indelibly stamped and seldom erased from the memory of children. Where the home fails in its duties and obligations, the Church and school rarely succeed. It is from the home properly motivated that religion and democracy draw their greatest strength. It is from the home grounded in religious truth that the Catholic Church attracts her teachers whose religious consecration dramatizes for pupil and student those supernatural truths which are the very essence of true democracy.

And so the Catholic Church reminds parents that God has entrusted them with that which reflects, not only themselves, but Him as well. In a word, the Church charges parents to create that environment out of which the child committed to their care will be enabled to achieve a life unending, a liberty never degenerating into license, a happiness giving peace within and contributing to the peace of others.

In the classroom, the Catholic Church commits the child to the

care and instruction of one whose very garb suggests those domestic virtues which are the firmest props of morality and the securest foundations of true Democracy. Here the nun, and she constitutes eighty percent of Catholic school teachers, integrates religious truths with the content of other subjects. In this integration, she enables the pupil and student to escape the debilitating influence of secularism, for to her the content of all subjects to be taught is part of the plan of an all-wise and an all-provident Creator. Her methodology is to give practice in the social virtues and to develop attitudes that are at once consistent with the Christian and the American philosophy of life. Strengthened by prayer, the nun's whole character is the product of consecration to God through the formation of the true and perfect Christian in the lives of the little ones committed to her instruction. With her teaching is no profession; it is a vocation to which she accepts the call to form men and women of character. It is a life's work subject in no manner to the vagaries of time and circumstance. Perfection in teaching means for her greater security in the attainment of eternal salvation, which alone prompts her dedication to the desirable ob-

jectives of the classroom. She knows that the better she qualifies herself for the teaching profession, the more God is pleased with her, and so she does not content herself with mediocrity in her chosen work. Her educational objective is the harmonious development of the whole child and all his faculties. To cultivate and strengthen child, body and soul, mind, heart and conscience, she knows is the business of true education. From her own Catholic training, the nun has the conviction that Education permeated through and through with the sublime truths of Religion, makes not only for the highest type of citizenship in the Kingdom of God, but makes likewise for the highest type of American citizenship.

As an American, the Catholic teacher rejoices that this conviction is supported by no less a person than he whom history terms as the "Father of Our Country." "Of all the dispositions and habits," said George Washington, "which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who should labor to subvert these firmest props of the duties of man and citizens. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar

structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail to the exclusion of religious principles."

This conviction of the "Father of Our Country," so reminiscent of our country's Declaration of Independence, is re-echoed today more and more by thinkers in the American field of education. The eminent head of the Department of Philosophy in one of the country's leading universities, a non-Catholic, speaks as follows: "Religious development is just as essential as it is intellectual. Anyone who thinks otherwise is a moron. We have altogether too many intellectual, or artistic, or musical geniuses who are religious morons. Religion and Education should go hand in hand to achieve the final goal of a life better fitted for success. Religion is necessary and should find a place in every educational institution, from the primary school to the university, throughout the land."\*

With religion the citizen is a creature of God, dedicated to preserving the dignity with which God has endowed him. Without religion he is simply the creature of the State, a pawn in the play for power on the part of those who would use him

to achieve omnipotence for a State of their own creation. With religion properly inculcated, the citizen, even though he fails in his upward climb, must ever seek not only his own welfare but the welfare of all others as well. Without Religion indoctrinated with the doctrine of survival, the citizen is motivated by fear and the determination to survive even though survival means liquidation for his fellow citizen.

The Church in the Catholic philosophy of Education becomes the bond between home and school. She belongs to neither exclusively, but very definitely is part of each. To her, parents, pupils and teachers are God's children to be guided along the way to that full and rich maturity that can be found only in Christ.

Because the family is not a perfect society, that is, because it is not, out of its own resources capable of attaining fully its end, it needs the help of other institutions or societies. The school is one of these, and the Church is solicitous that the school serve the home as an adjunct and not as an usurper.

In Home, Church and School, the Catholic Church charges parents, pastors and teachers to take due care that this noble concept of child and pupil is

\*Dr. Charles Gray Shaw—New York University.

never obscured. The Catholic Church looks with alarm on the threat to this noble concept, which emanates from the secularizing influences so rife in the world today.

Seeing the seepage of secularism gradually widening the gap in the dam of fundamentals, the Catholic Church prayerfully, through her head, the Pope of Rome, calls for a salutary union of thought between Catholics and other believers in God. (Sertum Laetitia) In the midst of crisis, the Catholic Church is happy in the knowledge that her schools, from primary to university, to-

gether with other religious schools in the nation, enable the educational system of America to reflect totally the philosophy of government which has made the United States the highest exemplar of human liberty and human dignity. Hopefully the Catholic Church looks to the future, knowing that this philosophy of government, once it takes hold in its fullness of meaning on the thinking of the citizens of the United States, the home, the Church and the school will stand forth conspicuously as the triple and secure arsenal of human values.