

# Illiteracy, Progress and the Catholic Church

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The Catholic Church is hated by many in consequence of being wrongfully accused of fostering illiteracy. But from the earliest ages of Christianity, her priests and monks were the very soul of education. Sorrowful, therefore, that they should be so belied by so many.

## MONKS AND MONASTERIES

From the earliest centuries, many fervent souls secluded themselves from the widespread pagan wickedness and entered societies, whose main object was the personal sanctity of the members. For had not the Master said: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor," etc. (Matt. 19-21). At the end of the fourth century, such communities of holy men were already very numerous; these were the first monasteries which for centuries were the world's greatest asset. They were the schools and colleges of the people; their Social Service centers, places of hospitality for travelers and strangers, the nurseries of art and science.

The fact is that our own enlightened age has never produced artists, sculptors, architects, musicians, such as the so-called dark thirteenth century created. And that was three hundred years before Protestantism was born.

## WHAT THE WORLD OWES TO THE MONKS

It was these monks who copied and re-copied by hand text books from which the young received both secular and religious training, during a thousand years; they founded the greatest European Universities in existence today, such as Oxford and Cambridge, Paris and Bologna, Ferrara and Salamanca, Copenhagen and Prague.

WHEREAS, SEVENTY UNIVERSITIES WERE FOUNDED IN EUROPE UNDER CATHOLIC AUSPICES BEFORE, AND FORTY-SIX AFTER, THE REFORMATION. ONLY THIRTY-ONE IN ALL OWE THEIR ORIGIN TO PROTESTANTS.

Hence, among countless other benefits, our twentieth century is indebted to the monks and monasteries for (1) the preservation of the classics; (2) for historical data and records of priceless value; (3) the Bible itself; in fact, unless the Almighty had employed other means for the preservation of the Bible, without the monks, the world would hardly have it today; the old manuscript copies of the Bible still extant, were all the work of these monks, who with infinite labor, produced them.

## ILLITERACY TODAY

According to a recent report of the U. S. Commissioner of Education, fully half of the colored children of the South are not attending school; of these, seventy-five per cent are nominally Protestant, less than two per cent Catholic. Furthermore, till lately, the whites have fared little better in some southern States. Recently, one hundred thousand white children in Alabama were not attending any school; less than one-half were.

Hence, if you blame the Catholic church for the high percentage of illiteracy in certain countries, where her religion predominates, you must blame Protestants for the illiteracy prevalent in our Southern States, where Protestantism predominates. In fact, far less unreasonable would be this latter charge, since the governments of many so-called Catholic countries are most hostile to the Church and to all religion. Our Southern States are not. In ill-fated Mexico, the Catholic church has been persecuted for three-quarters of a century; her schools closed; her teachers exiled, and now, wonderful to relate, the illiteracy of that country is charged to us.

No, illiteracy, whether found in so-called Catholic or strictly Protestant districts, is due to neither church, but to causes beyond the control of either.

# Why the Parochial Schools?

On few subjects has the Catholic Church been so unjustly criticized as that of Parochial schools, in reference to which the Oregon Federal Court decision was no surprise to Catholics. Knowing that their parochial schools are in no way defective or blameworthy; understanding also the intent, scope and express provisions of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, they could imagine no other possible outcome of the present controversy. Nor does the future give them any alarm. Waves of intolerance and bigotry may again raise their ugly heads but the sane, thinking portion of the American people are unwilling to uproot the very foundation of this government; i.e. that all men have certain inherent and inalienable rights of which they must not be deprived, one of which is to control the education of their own offspring, subject to such state regulations as are necessary "for safeguarding the health, morals and general weal of the public."

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"Already there are in the United States more than sixty millions of people who do not profess any faith or religion, or belong to any church. To explain this our non-Catholics may assign any reason they desire, but the fundamental reason is that children are allowed to grow up without a Christian training, strong enough and thorough enough to enable them to battle with the lawlessness and irreligion with which the world today is filled. Nor can the Sunday School be substituted with anything like success. Thousands of children do not and will not attend. If they do, most of them learn very little and come to regard religion as a mere "Sunday affair," and not a part of their everyday life."

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# Are Catholic Countries Less Prosperous Than Others?

It is often alleged that wherever the Catholic Church predominates, reduced prosperity results. As instances, Spain and Italy are cited and we are asked to compare these countries with Great Britain, Germany before the war, the United States, etc. In reply, it may be asked — even supposing such comparisons to be fair, is it the mission of Christ's true Church to secure riches, wealth, or material success for her children? Our Divine Lord did not promise his followers human prosperity, but, rather, adversity. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16-24). If the predominating religious thought of a people directly effects their country's prosperity, then the prosperity of the United States must be due to the non-religious element which predominates here, while the prosperity of Japan must be due to paganism. Moreover, if intellectual culture and material success argue for the correctness of a nation's religion, then the religion of the ancient Greeks and Romans was true, while that of the Hebrews, whom we have always called God's chosen people, was false.

## BUT WHERE ARE THE PROTESTANT COUNTRIES?

The United States is not a Protestant country. There are more church-going Catholics here than church-going Protestants, of all sects combined: Sixty millions of our people are not affiliated with any Christian church; while vast numbers of those who are affiliated with Protestant denominations, are members in name only.

Germany is not Protestant. Catholics there form nearly two-fifths of the population. Among the Protestant element unbelief is becoming discouragingly prevalent. This was true before the war, but since the war, Protestantism in Germany has suffered further serious reverses. Now that Lutheranism is no longer the state religion, with the Kaiser as head of the church, defections from Lutheranism have become alarmingly great, whereas the Catholic church is as strong as before.

Nor is England more than Protestant in name. Many members of the Church of England insist on being called Catholics. In fact, about the only churches that attract the people at all, are those which follow Catholic services closest. For years, the English papers have discussed the question of empty Anglican churches, and the steady unceasing movement "back to Rome."

## CATHOLIC COUNTRIES OFTEN THE MORE PROSPEROUS

The truth is that Spain was at the zenith of her power when most intensely Catholic, in the days of Ferdinand and Isabella. Italy, when most Catholic, led the world in art. The Venetian State was most powerful when entirely Catholic. In all these cases, national prosperity declined later because of economic, not of religious causes. Today, the once powerful and most Protestant nation — Holland — is the merest shadow of its olden strength, while Catholic Belgium, before the war, was a striking example of the Catholic religion and extraordinary prosperity combined. Since France developed an anti-Catholic spirit, social evils of great magnitude have arisen, of which threatened depopulation of the country is not the least ominous. Canada, with a large Catholic population, is one of the soundest parts of the British Empire. Catholic Ireland leads all other nations in domestic morality.

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"Already there are in the United States more than sixty millions of people who do not profess any faith or religion, or belong to any church. To explain this our non-Catholics may assign any reason they desire, but the fundamental reason is that children are allowed to grow up without a Christian training, strong enough and thorough enough to enable them to battle with the lawlessness and irreligion with which the world today is filled. Nor can the Sunday School be substituted with anything like success. Thousands of children do not and will not attend. If they do, most of them learn very little and come to regard religion as a mere "Sunday affair," and not a part of their everyday life."

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# Does the Catholic Church Oppose or Fear Science?

No, her opposition is directed solely against the false claims of blatant theorists. The true scientist is usually modest in his claims—and does not demand absolute assent to what he has not definitely proven. But men of narrow vision who crave the publicity that clings to innovations are often the sternest dogmatizers, demanding acceptance of theories which they themselves cannot demonstrate; and these are usually the ones who sharply criticize the church for refusing to adjust itself to their hobbies. Naturally the church is opposed to them. But she is not nor can she ever be, the enemy of real science.

## THE TRUTHS OF REAL SCIENCE

cannot contradict the truths of divine revelation because God is the author of both. On this subject the Vatican Council officially states: "But although faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason, since the same God who reveals mysteries and infuses faith has bestowed the light of reason on the human mind; and God cannot deny Himself, nor can truth ever contradict truth. The semblance of such contradiction is mainly due, either to the dogmas of faith not having been understood and expounded according to the mind of the church, or to the products of opinions having been taken for the verdicts of reason." APPARENT conflicts therefore, as in the case of Galileo, are either because (1) even churchmen sometimes put an unwarranted personal interpretation upon the church's official doctrines or (2) because would-be scientists exploit unproved hypotheses as undoubted truths. Now the church

## CLAIMS NO DIVINE COMMISSION

to teach astronomy, biology, geology or other natural sciences. Only when anti-Christian pretensions are made in the name of these sciences does their cause come into her spiritual forum. Hence if in the name of science men deny the existence of God, or assert that the entire man body and soul come from the monkey, then in the interest of truth the church must denounce such doctrines as pernicious. But if scientists declare that the six days of Genesis were indefinite periods of time, the church does not contradict them because they have not contradicted her in any of her official teachings. The church therefore does NOT oppose real science

## NOR DOES SHE FEAR IT.

Believing in her own competency to teach spiritual truths correctly, and knowing that real scientific facts are based upon God's laws, she welcomes them as but another means of uplifting humanity and substantiating in some manner at times the great truths taught the world by the Lord Jesus. Moreover, correct history attests that the service which the church and her children have themselves rendered to science are such as to make mankind forever indebted to them.

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# Why so Many Falsehoods in History?

It was Dr. Nightingale (Religion of All Nations, page 16) who said: "In scarcely a single instance has the case concerning them (Catholics) been fairly stated, the channels of history, not grossly corrupted." But why? One reason for these historical perversions was the intense nationalism prevalent in many parts of Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which easily created antagonism against any great international society like the Catholic Church. Moreover, though Europe was nominally Catholic, the rulers were frequently guilty of great injustices which brought them into conflict with the church. Their tendency therefore was to create national churches over which they would be supreme. "Cujus regio, illius religio"—the religion of the ruler should be the religion of the country, was then a popular motto in many parts of Europe.

## ANTI-CATHOLIC PROPAGANDA IS NO RECENT INVENTION

With certain abuses even among churchmen that needed to be corrected, with a large amount of church property that could easily be confiscated, the church became a popular target. To attain their personal ends, her enemies had to represent the Catholic Church as the enemy of religion, progress, good government, etc., just as do her foes today. Falsehoods were invented about her, bogus documents were circulated, then as now. Naturally many of these were recorded as facts. Those who wrote history in those days were usually either selfishly interested, prejudiced, or they did not dare to expose the crimes of those in civil power.

## TODAY THESE ANCIENT FALSEHOODS STILL TRAVEL

The best modern historians understand this when dealing with subjects like the Spanish Inquisition, St. Bartholomew's Night, the so-called "Sale of indulgences," the integrity of certain reformers, etc. Imagine a radical, prejudiced Frenchman, Austrian or Russian, writing an unbiased version of the late war; imagine an enemy of ex-President Wilson speaking with fairness of his part in the Versailles Conference; then imagine a professional anti-Catholic writing present or quoting past history about the Catholic church. The unreliability of such "history" is easily apparent; but of this type was most of the history written by anti-Catholics in the Post-Reformation period.

## WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE US DO?

And so when Catholics today make some slight effort to have eliminated the crude lies and glaring injustices from historical books, why should they be blamed, much less accused of "Romanizing" or corrupting historical truth. A booklet "Misrepresentations of History" will be mailed free upon application.

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# Are Catholics Allowed to Read the Bible?

How often, kind reader, have you not heard the ancient calumny—that Catholics are forbidden to read the Bible. The truth is that Catholics are not only NOT FORBIDDEN to read the Bible, but they are encouraged and urged to do so. Nay, more, they are obliged to hear Bible-reading at Mass every Sunday morning. How then explain certain regulations—and temporary restrictions upon Bible-reading in the vernacular—heretofore made? Such regulations were (1) to protect the people from being spiritually poisoned by the corrupted and distorted translations of designing men; (2) to protect God's word from vandalism. If the Catholic church had been hostile to or wished to destroy the Scriptures, as enemies have said, she had from 1000 to 1400 years during which to do it. The fact, however, is the church has ever been

## THE FAITHFUL GUARDIAN AND PRESERVER OF THE BIBLE

How, except for the zeal of her monks, who with infinite labor copied the scriptures by hand, would these sacred writings have been available before the invention of the printing press? During those centuries Bibles were naturally rare and costly; but preaching, teaching, art, sculpture, etc., were all effectively employed as conveyances of Biblical knowledge. When printing was invented about 1440, one of the earliest, if not the first printed book was an edition of the Catholic Bible, printed by John Gutenberg. It is reliably stated that 626 editions of the Catholic Bible, or portions thereof, had come from the press through the agency of the church in countries where she reigned supreme, before Luther's German version appeared in 1534. Of these, 198 were in various European languages. Hence Luther's "discovery" of the supposedly unknown Bible at Erfurt in 1503, is one of those strange wild calumnies with which anti-Catholic literature abounds.

TODAY, THEREFORE, THE FACT THAT PARTS OF THE BIBLE ARE READ FROM EVERY CATHOLIC ALTAR EVERY SUNDAY; THAT THE CHURCH GRANTS A SPIRITUAL PREMIUM OR INDULGENCE TO THOSE WHO READ THE BIBLE; THAT EVERY CATHOLIC FAMILY HAS OR IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE, THE BIBLE IN THEIR HOMES; THAT MILLIONS OF CATHOLIC BIBLES ARE SOLD ANNUALLY—THESE FACTS SHOULD SATISFY THE MOST SKEPTICAL OF OUR HONEST CRITICS ON THIS SUBJECT.

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