



T. ROBERT INGRAM

# *Education is* **A PRIVATE RESPONSIBILITY**

**I** HAVE HAD a continuing interest in the schools of our country ever since, as a boy, I was plunged into the socialist experiment started in the Denver public schools in 1925 and 1926. In one way or another I have kept an eye on school matters throughout my own school and college life, during thirteen years of newspaper work, and ten years as seminarian and priest in the Episcopal Church. So, in the two parishes I have served, the weekday education of children has been one of my major concerns, and I have helped to found two schools, Southwest Episcopal School in Houston and St. John's School in Abilene.

There were three main reasons for founding these schools. First, there was the conviction that all instruction, or teaching, or education (whatever we call it) is basically religious and therefore of primary concern to the Chris-

tian Church. Second, there was a general agreement that schools now controlled by tax-supported agencies are unsatisfactory. Not only are they unable to offer the desired kind of doctrinal instruction, but also they are falling behind the traditional high standards of Christian scholarship. Third, there was, and is, a need to use our money to the full advantage since we are a community of strictly limited resources.

Convinced of the correctness of the thesis that all education is basically religious, it follows that we, as a church are forced to accept responsibility in society for this duty. Just as the church is a place to worship, so is the church also a place to acquire, interpret, and evaluate knowledge. We cannot expect non-Christians to do Christian teaching, and we do not look for Christians who are not active in the church to do so. More-

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over, since we believe all education is a religious function, and since as Christians we believe the Church and the State are separate and autonomous organisms of society, we believe it is a primary duty of the Church to supervise and conduct its own schools. It should not pass the buck to the State, whose social function is quite different.

The Old Testament authority to teach may be found in the famous Sixth Chapter of Deuteronomy: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." These mighty words echo and color the Great Commission of the Risen Christ: "Go ye therefore and teach *all* nations."

### **Consult the Record**

The obligation of the Christian Church to provide schooling is thus inherent in her very existence. Her ability to do so in the United States today has been demonstrated dramatically in the last five years. The extent of the Roman Catholic school system is well-known. The Lutherans of the Missouri Synod are equally well-established. And a virile school movement has developed in Baptist, Evangelical, Episcopalian, and other groups in this decade.

A program of weekday educa-

tion is well within the capacity of any active church. All that is needed is that strange ingredient of conviction that flowers into deeds. This may be accomplished without hostile action of any kind against any other schools.

Church people do not need to overthrow the "public" school system; they do not need to organize a political machine; they do not even have to formulate a philosophy of education. Nobody who rejects the idea of a school system run as part of the Christian Church need be forced to support the church school with his earnings, or to send his children there. But if freedom includes the right of churchmen to send their children to a school where education is consistent with their faith, then churchmen have a similar right to establish their own schools. Certainly nobody else can be expected to undertake this necessary job on their behalf.

The principle that schooling is a function of the Church is one that was never questioned by the Founding Fathers of our country, and has been lost sight of for only a few decades — a relatively short time in the life of Christendom and of our people. Until 1837 when Horace Mann introduced in Massachusetts the first state board of education, even tax moneys for schools were expended largely

through church institutions; and even Mann did not live to see his Prussian-inspired plan run its course to the removal of religion itself. That this end result was clearly foreseen and greatly feared in Mann's own time, however, is shown by the repeated assurances he had to give that he had no such intention and that he agreed that religion was the foundation of education. In 1848 he wrote:

I avail myself of this, the last opportunity which I may ever have, to say in regard to all affirmations or intimations that I have ever attempted to exclude religious instructions from the schools, or to exclude the Bible from the schools, or to impair the force of that volume, that they are now, and always have been, without substance or semblance of truth.

### **School and Church Confined**

The church-controlled structure of schools is still to be seen in our nonstate universities and colleges, all but a few of which were founded under the auspices of some branch of the Church. The return of primary and secondary schools to the sphere of church control is no departure from either tradition or reason, but rather a restoration of both.

It is a lie to speak of "freedom in education" if parents have no choice of what is to be taught to

their children, but must accept a majority political decision as to curriculum. In tax-supported schools, this is the case, and must be the case. It would certainly breach a principle if sectarian doctrines were taught in schools operated by any unit of government, federal or local. Yet when religious bodies have their own schools, the possibility of choice thus made available for churchmen in no way militates against the "freedom" of statists to continue to tax everyone for state-run schools to which they can send their children. Since we may reasonably suppose the statists will continue to thrive in our midst for a long time, the fear that there will be no state-supported schools if there are also church schools is groundless. The devotees of the tax-supported school system often complain that to allow such sectarian schools would be a divisive force, making for disunity. This argument, however, begs the real question. The real question is simply what is the real source of our unity — Caesar or Christ?

Those who believe that the only binding force for a people is in the police power — civil government — would, as a corollary of that belief, see this cohesive power threatened by the mere existence of denominational school systems. More mature people, how-

ever, know that uniformity under the sword is not the unity we want anyway. The real unity for even a religiously variegated people lies in a universal principle that reads: "Whatever you are, be a good one." There is no necessary disunity for Americans in our diversified religious picture. The variety of privately supported religious bodies is rather the ground for our astonishing national harmony. In any event, people who put their trust in God, as Americans profess with their very money to do, must rely on the unity derived from allegiance to God rather than from a monolithic system of education answerable only to civil government.

That this truth has come home with real force to many in our nation today is evidenced by the number of church schools that have sprung up from coast to coast since World War II. I am in touch with developments among various denominations, but I will limit my remarks to my personal experiences.

### **A Plan Carried Through**

In my present parish, school and church were planned and developed together. St. Thomas was a new parish, and so it was possible to conceive church and school as a unit from the start, and to plan every phase of growth as a

whole. This was particularly helpful in laying out buildings and buying property. By the winter of 1954, the Vestry had found a site for its proposed church and school and set a timetable for moving to the site and opening school in the fall of 1955.

There was no cash on hand except for a small building fund, and no financial guarantee. If we wanted a church, it was going to cost us less than \$150,000 for minimum requirements of land, Sunday school rooms, and a place to worship. At least a third of this cost would go for Sunday school rooms. We did not have enough money to spend \$50,000 for rooms to use for one hour each week, especially when we would also be required to pay taxes for the public school building that our children would attend during the week. While one building was in use, the other would be empty. We think one building in one community is enough. Now it is true we have to pay school taxes anyway. We have to pay more, therefore, than we would if church schools were the rule rather than the exception and more church buildings were so used. Nonetheless, we felt we would be getting value received for what we would pay extra in the quality of schooling for our children.

A headmaster was engaged in

April, a school board appointed by the Vestry, teachers hired for kindergarten and six grades of school, and registrations opened. I remember talking to one parent in my temporary office in a rented house adjoining the new site. She said, "Where is the school?" I pointed to the vacant five acres. "There," I said. She signed up. Southwest Episcopal School is now completing its second year of operation with enrollment of 112.

### **Cost per Pupil**

The average tuition is \$250 a year. That compares with the cost in the two fine Houston private schools of like operation of \$700 a year. We are making available to people of modest means an education that will equip their children to compete on the highest levels in the finest colleges and most exacting professions in the nation. Moreover, we think our economics are of vital concern to the general public — the tax-paying public. We think it is good sense dollar-wise for the general public — which is already under extreme pressure for school buildings — to make use of church educational buildings or parish houses already in existence in every city. Many of the same people pay for them anyway. Why build more? Why build double and parallel facilities?

The actual cost per pupil at Southwest Episcopal School in 1956-57 was \$260 per year. This was an inefficient year, with two classes of only 11 or 12 students each. Estimated cost per pupil next year, with low enrollment of 180 now in sight, will be \$225. With a school of 210 students, or only six less than the capacity, the average annual cost would be \$191.60. This is for a school whose teachers are paid salaries comparable to those in the public schools; a school where classes are limited to 24; a school where there are available the resources of the entire church community which includes a score of Doctors of Science, Doctors of Philosophy, university professors, and other professional people to say nothing of business executives. By comparison the cost to the general public of educating each child — apart from the expense of construction and maintenance of school buildings — was \$230.40 a year per pupil in 1953-54. Salary increases last year raised this nearly 10 per cent to at least \$245.00. If the general public can have top quality education at a cost of at least \$50 per pupil less than it costs in tax-supported schools; and if it can at the same time eliminate the duplication of classroom buildings by restoring the schools to church control and supervision, the sav-

ings will be enormous. The benefits of school construction now being asked for through federal financial grants, can be made immediately available from coast to coast simply by using existing church buildings. No time is lost in construction, no more money spent.

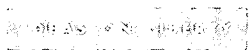
The best index of the Southwest's strength and achievement is in the enthusiasm of the parents and the reputation in the community. This has been so favorable that a second section of kindergarten and of first grade will be added during 1957-58 and the present combined fifth and sixth grades will be separated. There is a good possibility of a capacity enrollment of 216. Four new teachers are to be added to the staff, and three classrooms. This has been accomplished with no advertising except the enthusiasm of parents of children now in school.

Tax-supported schools are required to take all comers and work with them for at least ten to twelve years in most states. Obviously, they cannot conform to any particular church's sectarian

position. In addition, since the schools must accommodate all children, they can neither point toward the slow scholars, nor the fast ones. They cannot establish a discipline of learning expected, not of the majority, but of the skilled and expert few. As a result, unless there are special schools to provide the highest possible scholastic equipment to those who want it, our nation can in one generation be stripped of an irreplaceable resource.

My experience has shown that any ordinary American community which can support a church can operate a school in connection therewith. If we could do it, anybody can. No extra capital funds are necessary, no fancy window dressing. All that is required for a school are teachers, pupils, and a place to meet. I believe it was Mark Hopkins who taught on the end of a log. The school can pay its own operating expenses with modest tuition, or the cost can be absorbed by the congregation.

It is not a matter of merely arguing for the soundness of a theory. This can be done. • • •



### **Attention, Parents**

UNTIL THE FAMILY again accepts the teaching tasks it has abdicated so freely to the schools, education must be overburdened.

CANON BERNARD IDINGS BELL, 1955

# VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND THE STATE

SYLVESTER PETRO

A STRIKING FEATURE of the free society is the diversity of the voluntary associations it tends to breed. A voluntary association is potential whenever two or more members of the free society decide that it would be mutually advantageous to pool their efforts, or a part of their efforts, in the achievement of a mutually desirable objective. Even a relatively ungregarious member of the free society may find himself belonging to more voluntary associations than he can enumerate offhand. His associations may include economic, professional, educational, health, good-fellowship, sporting, and religious societies or associations, to mention only the possibilities which come to mind instantly.

Nor is there anything in the theory of the free society which confines a voluntary organization to any particular function. The

functions of an association may be as various as its members wish them to be and can agree upon. The mutual interests of the membership define the objectives of the voluntary association.

The only limitation upon the voluntary association in the free society is the standard limitation placed upon the activities of all men in such a society: the voluntary association as a separate entity may not invade the property rights of persons; it may not engage in violent, coercive, or fraudulent conduct.

While the function of the voluntary association in the free society is to advance the interests of its members, whatever those interests may be, the function of the state in such a society is to preserve the peace: to prevent and remedy expropriations, to establish and maintain conditions which insure

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