

2023) make for fine pairings with Dempsey's overall book but especially with chapters three through five. On the history of intersections between religion and human rights, Gene Zubovich's *Before the Religious Right: Liberal Protestants, Human Rights, and the Polarization of the United States* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022) offers a complementary study.

On a final note: the book's accessibility lends itself to a broader readership, too. It would not only work quite well in undergraduate classrooms, but it would also seem especially appropriate for organizations in Los Angeles seeking to advance the rights of immigrants, the poor, racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTQT community, and other progressive religious groups. Today, Angelenos can still feel the effects of the history told in this fine book.

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***American Catholic Schools in the Twentieth Century: Encounters with Public Education Policies, Practices, and Reforms.* By Ann Marie Ryan. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022. xiv + 180 pp. \$70.00 cloth; \$30.00 paper.**

“The phenomenon of the *Catholic public school*,” Ann Marie Ryan writes, “was one of the unique configurations in American Catholic educational history” (1). Catholic public schools, a term with which I was not familiar, are simply Catholic elementary and secondary schools that have been changed and/or shaped by public policy. When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that private schools had a right to exist in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925), it also supported a 1923 ruling (*Myer v. Nebraska*) that required these schools to accept some regulation from the state. Although these two court cases are not the focus of the book, *American Catholic Schools in the Twentieth Century* examines the process by which Catholic schools either agreed to accept some state rules and standards, or voiced their disagreement over measures church leaders believed were being imposed upon religious schools.

Ryan describes her work as primarily an “educational history [not religious or institutional history] focused on the interactions between Catholic and public schools and the question of how public educational policy, instruction, and reforms affected Catholic schools in the United States” (8). In addition, she examines the role played by the National Education Association (NEA) in lobbying against the existence of and funding for Catholic public schools, as well as the ways in which the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) attempted to “resolve” some of the issues that had arisen when various factors, including those related to personnel and finance, led Catholic and public schools to find ways to share resources during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (20). Other topics considered in this larger discussion, include state policies related to educational measurement and their impact on Catholic schools; the relationship between the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC) and the NEA; a critical analysis of the 1965 ESEA; and a discussion of

what all this might mean for contemporary efforts to secure state funding for Catholic/private schools.

Catholic schools offered traditional academic subjects such as, mathematics, English, science, and social studies. Church leaders also believed, however, that their schools were providing something public schools did not: salvation. Salvation, of course, cannot be measured; but students could certainly be assessed – or measured – in other academic aspects of their education. Many Catholic educators supported the movement toward accreditation, including those responsible for “non-parochial urban Catholic high schools” that recruited students throughout a particular city. These urban Catholic high schools were administered by congregations of women and men religious (e.g., Sisters of Mercy, Jesuits), who found that receiving state accreditation, even when it meant “relinquishing complete curricular control and administrative independence,” helped their students to be accepted at the college of their choice (33).

Catholic and public schools struggled during the Great Depression and sometimes found ways to share resources in a way that lightened the financial burden for both. Some school districts, for example, hired women religious to teach secular subjects during traditional school hours and allowed them to staff religious education classes after school had ended for the day. The NEA believed this was a clear violation of the wall of separation between church and state, and when the Supreme Court ruled in 1947 (*Everson v. Board of Education*) that parents could be financially subsidized for costs incurred in transporting their children to and from Catholic schools, the Association doubled down on its attempt to prevent Catholic – or any private school, for that matter – from receiving federal aid.

In 1965, the ESEA was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The Act allowed funding for non-public schools under the rule of the child-benefit theory, which had been upheld several times by the Supreme Court. If the money benefits the child – that is, lunches, books, transportation – then the funds can be dispersed. As Ryan correctly states, at the same time Catholic schools were able to take advantage of state funding, the system itself was changing. The number of schools were decreasing, for instance, and there were fewer and fewer women and men religious serving as teachers and administrators.

Although *American Catholic Schools in the Twentieth Century* is educational history (see above), it is important that it be reviewed in a journal such as *Church History* because scholars should at least be aware of this very important component of U.S. Catholicism. At the same time, historians of U.S. education need to understand the complexities of the nation’s Catholic school system. (I am always amazed when histories of education do not include any discussion of parochial schools.) Ryan packs a good deal of information into a scant 147 pages, and readers should be able to follow her argument without any difficulty. Her work is extensively documented and those desiring more information will be able to access the extensive footnotes and bibliography. I do, however, wish Ryan had paid more attention to women religious in this otherwise fine study. Although she cites six sisters in the chapter devoted to educational measurement, I would have liked some stories about the sisters who taught in public schools.

Although it is suited more to graduate than undergraduate students, *American Catholic Schools in the Twentieth Century* is a valuable resource for anyone interested in U.S. Catholicism, public policy as it relates to religion, or educational history.

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