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# The Delayed Development of Parochial Education Among Irish Catholics in Worcester

Timothy J. Meagher

Since James Farrell wrote *Studs Lonigan*, Irish American writers have seemed to regard attendance at a parochial school as a universal and central experience in the lives of Irish Americans. Indeed, no institution seems to have better symbolized the commitment of American Irish Catholics to their faith, or from another perspective, their suspicious ghetto mentality, than the Catholic school. For parochial schools, in the popular imagination at least, seem to have been at the heart of the separate social worlds created by Irish Catholics in cities across America.<sup>1</sup>

In some cities this may have been true for most of the one hundred and fifty years of Irish American history, but not in all of them. For despite the explicit mandate laid down by the Baltimore Council of Bishops in 1884 commanding all Catholic parishes in America to build their own schools and warning Catholic parents to avoid sending their children to public schools, some Dioceses were very slow in advancing parochial education.<sup>2</sup> In Dioceses like Chicago, Philadelphia and Rochester, the construction of parochial schools by Irishmen and other groups was already well under way by the time of the Baltimore Council's decree, and would continue at a frantic pace until well into the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> Yet in Massachusetts, a state heavily populated by Catholics, the largest proportion of them Irish Catholics, parochial education expanded only slowly.<sup>4</sup> In 1890 only four of the largest twenty-two dioceses in the United States had built fewer schools than the Boston Archdiocese, and only one, the Diocese of Santa Fe, had constructed fewer schools than Massachusetts' other diocese, Springfield.<sup>5</sup> By 1905 the two Massachusetts Dioceses still trailed far behind the rest of Catholic America in the construction of parochial schools: Boston ranking thirteenth out of the nineteen largest dioceses, and Springfield seventeenth out of nineteen.<sup>6</sup>

Why did the Dioceses in Massachusetts fail to keep pace with their sister

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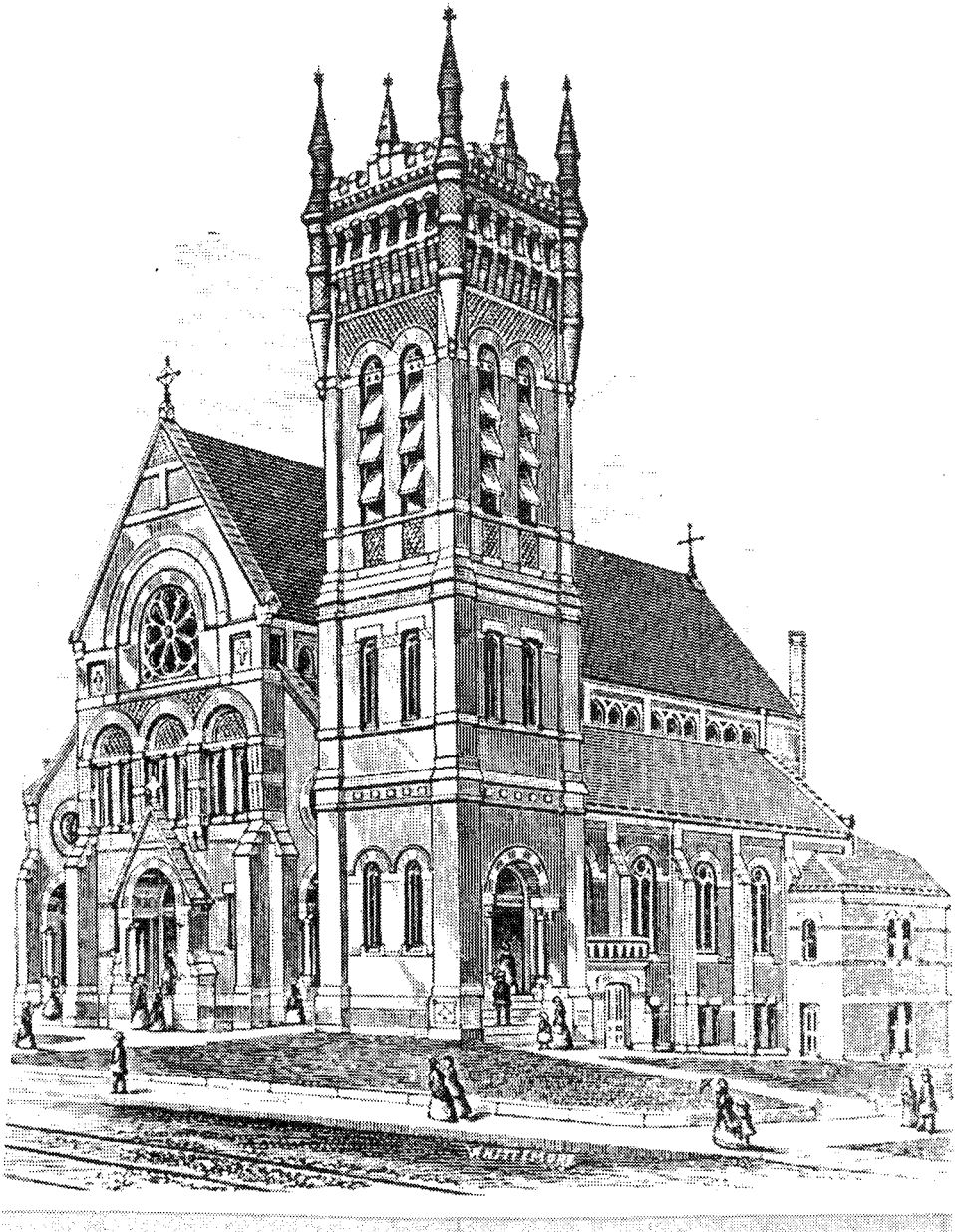
\*This paper was originally presented at the Fifth Annual Conference on the History of Massachusetts, April 23, 1982.

Dioceses throughout the Union? Some historians, particularly Thomas McAvoy and Dennis Clark, have suggested the Massachusetts Irish were so economically beleaguered, so mired in poverty, that they could not build an extensive parochial school system.<sup>7</sup> Donna Merwick, in a study of Boston's Catholic clergy, however, suggests that clerical and lay indifference to Catholic education rather than a lack of resources may have been the ultimate cause of parochial education's slow progress in the Commonwealth's Hibernian Catholic centers. She points in particular to the tepid support Archbishop Williams gave to Catholic school construction, and the general satisfaction of Irish Catholic laymen with public education.<sup>8</sup>

The lack of effort made by Irish Catholics in Worcester to build parochial schools, offers an opportunity to test these hypotheses. Worcester was the second largest city in the Commonwealth for most of the turn of the century era, and the largest city in the Springfield Diocese for that entire period. About one half of its people in 1880 were Irish, and though the Irish foreign stock proportion of the city's population declined to about one quarter by 1900, the Irish were still the city's largest foreign ethnic group and by far its largest Catholic ethnic group.<sup>9</sup> Just as important, the sluggish pace of school construction which characterized most of Massachusetts was clearly evident among the Irish parishes in Worcester. In 1884, the year of the Baltimore Council's decree, only one of the city's five parishes had a school. Eleven hundred children, most of them girls, attended that school in that year, while 3700 first and second generation Irish youngsters were enrolled in the city's public schools.<sup>10</sup> Twenty-six years later in 1910, only one other Irish parish in Worcester had built a parochial school, although three more Irish parishes had been created in the city by that time (St. John's parish which had built the girls' school in 1872, had added a boys' school by 1891).<sup>11</sup> Twenty-two hundred children attended the city's Irish parochial schools by the end of the twentieth century's first decade, while 2400 first and second generation (and countless third generation) young Irish were educated in the public schools.<sup>12</sup>

The Irish Catholics of Worcester had clearly failed to obey the orders of the Baltimore Council, but why? In part, the Worcester Irish, as McAvoy and Clark have suggested, lacked the resources to build more schools. Not only their poverty but their difficulty in securing trained religious personnel hindered their efforts to comply with the Bishop's decree. Yet their efforts, like the efforts of Irishmen in Boston, were never very enthusiastic. Both the Irish Catholic laity and the Hibernian clergy seemed indifferent, some even hostile, to parochial education until the second decade of the twentieth century.

Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Irish Catholic parishes in Worcester reeled under the weight of heavy debts and expenses. Normal operating expenses ran about \$12,350 for a large established parish in 1892, while receipts totalled \$12,400.<sup>13</sup> Yet it was the burdens of accumulated debts that weighed most heavily on Irish pastors and their congregations in Worcester. New parishes incurred financial obligations almost from the date of their organization. Indeed, the Diocese forced the pastor and members of the infant St. Stephen's parish to assume a \$16,000 mortgage the day the parish was



“St. Peter’s Church,” from Oliver B. Wood,  
*Worcester, Its Past and Present* (1888)

organized in January of 1887. (The Diocese had purchased land for St. Stephen's before its organization and along with the deed turned over the debt for that land on the day it created the new church.)<sup>14</sup> Once in debt it was very difficult for a parish to free itself, for the costs of renovations, building rectories, or replacing small wooden churches with larger brick or stone ones were always heavy.<sup>15</sup> Blessed Sacrament, created on the affluent West Side of Worcester in 1912, reported that it still felt the "crushing" burden of heavy debts twelve years later.<sup>16</sup> Even St. John's, the oldest Catholic parish in Worcester (or in the Springfield Diocese for that matter), still faced over \$123,000 in financial obligations in 1910, nearly eighty years after the parish was formed.<sup>17</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, Worcester's Irish Catholics were becoming more prosperous and thus better able to meet such obligations. Between 1880 and 1900 the number of white collar Irish foreign stock workers rose 91 percent, the number of skilled workers 31 percent, and the number of families with two or more adult working members 80 percent.<sup>18</sup> These prosperous Irish were critical to the institutional expansion of the church in Worcester. In the late 1890s, fourteen Irish white collar workers contributed \$1,335 to the new St. Vincent's Hospital and in the early twentieth century white collar workers and multiple income families gave \$5,130 of the \$10,624 raised for the new Ascension Church.<sup>19</sup> Yet despite the rising affluence of Worcester's Irish population, the financial resources of Worcester's Irish community were still limited and pastors often had a difficult time raising enough money to meet their escalating costs. The vast majority of Worcester's Irishmen even as late as 1900 were blue collar workers earning under \$600 a year.<sup>20</sup> Some Worcester Irishmen thus protested vehemently when they were assigned to new parishes where they would confront many years of mortgage payments. Parishioners of St. John's who were transferred to the new St. Stephen's in 1887, even called a meeting to protest the Diocese's attempt to reassign them to the new parish.<sup>21</sup> Even in older parishes like St. John's, however, pastors often met resistance to appeals for new donations. In 1902, collectors of the monthly assessment in St. John's frequently encountered parishioners who claimed that "they could not afford to pay" or even that "they did not intend to give."<sup>22</sup> The problem of recalcitrant parishioners was a chronic one. In 1915 Worcester's local Irish newspaper, the *Catholic Messenger*, reported that there were many "tightwads" in every parish who viewed their success in avoiding Church collections as a triumph of their inventive guile, rather than a shirking of their moral duty.<sup>23</sup>

Caught between their parishioners' limited ability or reluctance to donate more money and their critical need, Irish pastors in Worcester frantically exploited virtually every possible means of raising funds. They placed "penny boxes" in the back of the church, instituted special collections and monthly assessments, rented pews, sent their curates door to door, and sponsored a wide variety of entertainment including lectures, concerts, slide shows, and church fairs.<sup>24</sup> Yet no matter how ingenious their fundraising schemes, almost all of Worcester's Irish priests felt they had to pressure or shame their parishioners into making adequate contributions. Rev. John J. Power, for example, read out from the altar the names of men and women who failed to make their monthly donations.<sup>25</sup> Monsignor Thomas Griffin published lists of contributors, and wondered

aloud in his Sunday sermons why some names were missing.<sup>26</sup> Pastors like Griffin also demanded that their parishioners attend church fairs or make contributions in lieu of their attendance.<sup>27</sup> The eagerness to raise more money so permeated church entertainment in Worcester that the *Messenger* lamented that such occasions were virtually devoid of any recreational or social character.<sup>28</sup> Irish pastors thus devoted an enormous amount of energy to fundraising, and often alienated their parishioners in the process. For genial and easygoing priests like Rev. Dennis Scannell of St. Anne's, such efforts were trying. After building a new church for his parish in 1891, Scannell worried so much about his need for new sources of revenue that he became an insomniac and fled to Ireland to quiet his nerves.<sup>29</sup> Building a school added to the worries of men like Scannell. Monsignor Griffin's new boys' school cost his parish over \$30,000 in 1891, and Rev. William Goggin's St. Paul's Grammar school, built twenty years later, cost over \$100,000.<sup>30</sup> Unless pastors were willing to engage in protracted efforts to squeeze extra donations out of grumbling parishioners such schools could not be built.

The financial resources of the Irish community then were limited, but pastors needed more than money to establish their schools. They needed teachers as well. Almost all pastors sought teachers from Catholic religious orders, either nuns or brothers. In part this was because of Church tradition, and because it guaranteed the proper religious atmosphere for the schools. Yet it also made good economic sense; personnel from religious orders did not have to be paid as much as lay teachers. Indeed, each member of the Sisters of Providence, the order of nuns which staffed Worcester's St. Vincent's Hospital, was paid only \$50 annually in the late 1890s.<sup>31</sup> In return for such small salaries, pastors acquired the services of devoted, sometimes zealous workers who usually performed other parish duties besides teaching in the church school.

In the late nineteenth century the pool of such religious workers was growing rapidly. In Ireland, a mid-century religious revival or devotional revolution in the Catholic Church had touched off a dramatic upsurge in the number of young Irish men and women seeking vocations. By the end of the nineteenth century the Irish Catholic Church had a surplus of religious personnel which it had already begun to export to mission countries like the United States.<sup>32</sup> Like other Irish American colonies throughout the United States, Worcester's Irish community profitted from this increasing availability of Irish-born religious personnel. Some orders of nuns like the Ireland-based Sisters of Mercy, in fact, deliberately sought to tap this surplus. In 1888 the head of Worcester's Sisters of Mercy Convent, Mother Cecilia, made a special trip to Ireland to recruit new novices. As a result of her efforts, by 1900 five new Irish born nuns found a home in the Worcester convent.<sup>33</sup> The American Church and American born nuns and brothers, however, proved to be a more important source of religious personnel for Worcester's Irish community. By the late nineteenth century many European orders had already been long established in America and were attracting large numbers of second generation ethnics into their ranks.<sup>34</sup> In Worcester, by 1900 half of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, three-fourths of the Xaverian Brothers, and two-thirds of the Sisters of Providence were American born of Irish parents.<sup>35</sup>

Yet despite this trend, the pastors' search for teachers was still difficult. The Baltimore Council's decree on schools and the nationwide effort by the Church to expand its charitable facilities had drastically increased the demand for religious personnel. By 1911 there were 4972 Catholic schools and 285 Catholic orphanages in the United States.<sup>36</sup> Thus the competition among pastors and Bishops for religious personnel was fierce, even as the number of nuns and brothers rose. In addition even when a pastor secured the services of an order, they sometimes could not meet all his needs because of special rules of their order or because of their lack of training.<sup>37</sup>

The difficulties Worcester's pastors encountered in securing religious personnel for their schools were perhaps best illustrated by Monsignor Griffin's long and troubled search for teachers to staff the boys' school in St. John's parish. Griffin announced his intentions to build a boys' school in the mid 1880s. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur had taught the girls in St. John's parish since 1872, but a special rule of their order prevented them from teaching boys above the age of seven.<sup>38</sup> Thus Griffin had to search elsewhere for teachers to staff his boys' school. He first looked to the Christian Brothers in Ireland, perhaps in hopes of reaping the benefits of the "Devotional Revolution" in that country, or perhaps out of nostalgia, for as a boy he had attended a Christian Brothers school in Ireland. Though wary of making a new commitment in America the Christian Brothers gave in to Griffin's entreaties and in 1886 sent four men to Worcester. After a year and a half, however, the four left St. John's and returned to Ireland, disgusted by the tenements Griffin had outfitted for their classrooms and alienated by American "manners and customs."<sup>39</sup> Over the next five years Griffin searched in vain for religious personnel to replace the Christian Brothers. He even went ahead and built a new boys' school in 1891, perhaps hoping to entice a religious order to his parish with a modern fully-equipped educational facility.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, Griffin did not succeed in bringing an order of brothers to St. John's until 1893, when he convinced the Xaverian Brothers, a religious order from Baltimore composed largely of American-born men, to come to Worcester and teach in his school.<sup>41</sup>

Pastors and their congregations in Worcester thus faced difficult obstacles in securing adequate money and personnel to build and maintain parochial schools, but these were not the only, nor perhaps the principal reasons why the Irish in Worcester were so slow in fulfilling the Baltimore Council's mandate. Worcester's Irish newspaper, the *Messenger*, did note the Catholic community's lack of "means" for building parochial schools, and Worcester's Irish priests often complained of the burden imposed on their people, the poorest part of the community, in having to pay a "double tax" to support public and parochial schools.<sup>42</sup> Yet French-Canadians in Worcester, who were as poor or poorer than the Irish, built parochial schools far more quickly than the city's Hibernians.<sup>43</sup> By 1904, three of the four French Canadian parishes in the city had built parochial schools, and even earlier than that date the children in French schools outnumbered French Canadian students attending public facilities.<sup>44</sup> Further, Irish parishes such as Immaculate Conception had fully cleared their debts by the mid 1890s and never built schools, and St. Paul's and St. Peter's had not only extinguished their debts, but had established convents of nuns in their parishes by the

late 1890s, and still did not construct schools until after 1912.<sup>45</sup> The failure of Irish Catholics in Worcester to build more parochial schools, then, stemmed not only from their lack of “means,” whether funds or personnel, but from their lack of commitment to parochial education, a lack of commitment shared by both Worcester’s Irish laymen and its Irish clergy.

In part the indifference of Worcester’s Irish laity to parochial education at the turn of the century could be traced to disenchantment with earlier abortive attempts to establish parochial schools in the city. The *Alumna*, a magazine published by graduates of St. John’s school, lamented in 1887 that “Those schools were never a great success and their failure has been the cause of discouragement with some people ever since. . . . we even now sometimes feel the effect of that old time failure.”<sup>46</sup> Yet Worcester’s Irish Catholics in the late nineteenth century were skeptical of their own contemporary parochial schools, not just those “old time failures.” Worcester’s Irish in that era were still working class people whose families were dependent on the income of their working children. They therefore viewed education pragmatically, carefully measuring its potential benefits against wages lost in sending a son or daughter to school. As the *Alumna* stated in 1887 many Irish parents “contend that many of our educated youth are idlers and that the education that was intended to fit them for the duties of life has had a directly opposite effect. They [the parents] tell us that their children are to be toilers not fine young ladies and gentlemen and they do not wish to encumber them with that which will not be of practical use thereafter.”<sup>47</sup> It was not education in general, however, but parochial education in particular, which Irish parents felt failed to prepare their children for the duties of life. Both the *Messenger* and the *Alumna* recorded grumblings by Irish parents in the 1880s and 1890s, complaints that Catholic schools put too much emphasis on purely mechanical recitations and devoted too much time to religious training or instruction in useless skills like etiquette or fine needlework.<sup>48</sup> The *Messenger* itself also seemed skeptical of the quality of Catholic education. In 1891, for example, it applauded efforts by state authorities to close down a French parochial school in nearby Fitchburg, arguing that state officials had correctly determined that the school was providing poor quality education for its students.<sup>49</sup>

By contrast many Irish Catholics seemed very satisfied with their city’s public schools. The *Messenger* praised the “grand work” done by the public schools in 1890, and hinted in 1892 that the parochial schools could not match the “standard of efficiency” set by their public counterparts.<sup>50</sup> The *Alumna*, a stout defender of parochial education, also conceded bitterly in 1886 that “Of course if a Catholic had eyes which could see nothing in life more beautiful than a dollar and a heart that had no hope beyond a good position then all the shiny chatter about the grand privileges of our public schools would be music in their ears. . . .”<sup>51</sup>

This support for public education was not rooted merely in appreciation of their quality, however; it also seemed to reflect the popularity of Liberal Catholic ideals among Irish Catholics in late nineteenth century Worcester. Liberal Catholic spokesmen including Rev. Issac Hecker, Bishop John Keane, James



Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop John Ireland, and even Rev. James McGlynn, a bitter opponent of parochial education, were heroes to many Irishmen in Worcester.<sup>52</sup> Temperance, an important part of the Liberal program, also flourished among Worcester's Hibernians.<sup>53</sup> There was then a strong interest among Worcester's Irish laity in the adaptation of their religion to the American environment, or as the *Messenger* said echoing John Ireland in 1895, "the best way to Catholicize America is to Americanize Catholicism."<sup>54</sup> Many Irish laymen seemed eager, as an Irish public school principal told a cheering throng of Irish temperance men, to prove that the "Irish had the faculty of becoming more American than the Americans themselves."<sup>55</sup> When Liberal Irishmen sought education for their young then, they looked to schools which first and above all, as the *Messenger* said in 1895, tried to make their students "proud of the stars and stripes [and] loyal to the Constitution."<sup>56</sup> Their optimistic embrace of American culture and their attendant faith that Irishmen could and should be integrated into the American mainstream seemed to lead Liberal Irishmen in Worcester to naturally support the primary agent of acculturation in America, the public school.

Not all Irishmen in Worcester of course were fully committed to the Americanization of their people. Yet Irish nationalists in the city had little reason to turn to the parochial schools for help in preventing the assimilation of their children. Unlike French Canadian schools which made concerted efforts to preserve the French language and other marks of *Canadien* ancestral identity, Irish parochial schools did little to preserve the ethnic culture or enhance the ethnic consciousness of their students.<sup>57</sup> In part this was because the Irish, unlike the French Canadians, had no language of their own to preserve. By the late nineteenth century only a tiny fraction of Worcester's Irish population could speak Gaelic.<sup>58</sup> Yet as Worcester's Irish nationalists often complained, Irish Catholic schools in the city made only half-hearted efforts to even teach their children Irish history, music, or literature. Indeed, Worcester's Ancient Order of Hibernians had to battle for more than a decade in the early twentieth century merely to have Irish history added as an elective to the curriculum of St. John's school.<sup>59</sup> Thus while the city's French-Canadians could rely on their schools to foster an appreciation of French-Canadian culture and nationalism (even if those schools were, as the city's school board reported in 1910, badly lit, poorly ventilated and overcrowded) Worcester's Irish nationalists could find no such benefits in their own schools.<sup>60</sup>

Irishmen in Worcester did admit to some defects in the public schools, defects which the parochial schools did not have, but these deficiencies seemed unimportant to them and did not alter their support for public education. In particular, Worcester's Irish noted that the public schools were "incomplete" because they failed to provide moral training for their students.<sup>61</sup> In the early 1890s many Worcester Irishmen held out hopes for plans such as Archbishop John Ireland's "Faribault Scheme" which would permit religious instruction in the public schools and thereby remedy public education's greatest deficiency.<sup>62</sup> Yet when the Church dismissed such schemes, the Worcester Irish did not abandon their preference for public education. Underlying this preference was an assumption that Irishmen in other cities could or did not make, that even if they did

not provide Catholic instruction, the public schools did not expose Irish Catholic children to Protestant or atheistic proselytization. Though conflicts between Catholics and Protestants had long marred the history of Worcester, that mutual antagonism seemed muted in the 1880s and early 1890s. Further, Catholics seemed to enjoy a particularly friendly relationship with the superintendent of schools, Albert Marble, in those years, so friendly in fact that some Protestant nativists suspected Marble of being a Catholic.<sup>63</sup> Catholics thus scoffed at notions that they should fear Protestant proselytization in the public schools. In 1886 even the *Alumna* considered such ideas "ridiculous."<sup>64</sup> The *Alumna*, however, also pointed to another reason why Irish Catholics did not fear the public schools: many of the teachers in those schools were Irish Catholics. Indeed, because relations between Irish Catholics and Worcester school authorities were so close, and the proportion of Catholics in the teaching force grew so large, the city's Protestants and not its Catholics began to fear religious proselytization in Worcester's schools and in the 1880s and 1890s complained vigorously of sinister religious threats to free public education.<sup>65</sup>

By the 1880s and 1890s the public education had gained the strong support of a substantial proportion of Worcester's Irish laity. While in other cities Irishmen and Catholics generally sought to restrict expenditures by the public schools, both to undercut those schools and to save themselves from paying higher taxes, Irish Catholics in Worcester tended to favor increased outlays for the schools.<sup>66</sup> In 1898, in anticipation of the city's future population growth, the *Messenger* even urged the school board to build new schoolhouses in sparsely settled districts.<sup>67</sup> Francis O'Connor, a student at Worcester's English high school, seemed to speak for many Irishmen in the city when he told a meeting of Irish nationalists in 1891 that "he was pleased to see so many Irish children educated in the public schools and he only regretted that the number was not larger."<sup>68</sup>

Yet what of Worcester's Irish clergymen? Were they, who should have been more sensitive to the injunctions of their hierarchy, as indifferent to parochial education as their flocks? The attitudes of most of Worcester's Irish pastors are difficult to gauge. Only a few of the priests were willing to defy the Bishops or the Vatican. For most, then, their opinions can ultimately be determined only from their actions, or more appropriately, from their inaction. Though many Worcester priests faithfully defended their church's right to build its own schools, and some even promised to build schools in their own parishes, almost none seemed willing to assume the burden that constructing a school entailed.

Though most of Worcester's Irish priests were careful not to publicly challenge the Church's decrees on education, one very powerful Irish pastor in Worcester, Rev. John J. Power of St. Paul's, displayed little hesitation in revealing his opposition to the Baltimore Council's pronouncements. Though Power did not explicitly criticize the Baltimore Council's decrees, he did openly praise public education, proclaiming on one occasion, for example, "the necessity of our public schools and their ennobling influence."<sup>69</sup> Power, like many Irishmen, felt that most Catholic schools were inferior to the public schools. Power confided to a Yankee friend that Catholic schools "could never compete with the city schools."<sup>70</sup> Power did not ignore the faults of public education, particularly

the traces of anti-Catholic sentiment which had occasionally cropped up in the curriculum. Yet, rather than abandon the public schools he sought to reform them, embarking very early in his clerical career on a lifelong crusade to "keep religion from entering the public school."<sup>71</sup> In the 1850s, he frequently travelled to Boston to lobby against bills which sought to introduce Bible readings into the public school curriculum. In Worcester, he served for many years on the school committee where he labored "to establish liberal education unhampered by religious prejudices." By the turn of the century, Power seemed convinced that these efforts had been successful and that Catholic children would profit better from attending public schools, cleansed of anti-Catholic influences, than in Catholic schools which offered inferior education.<sup>72</sup> Thus though he constructed an orphanage and a home for working girls at St. Paul's parish, he never once in his long tenure as pastor of St. Paul's even hinted that he might consider building a school.<sup>73</sup>

It is difficult to determine how many of Power's colleagues shared his convictions, for none were as forthright as he was. Yet whatever their reasons, most other Irish pastors in Worcester also failed to build parochial schools in their parishes. Two Irish born priests, Rev. Dennis Scannell, pastor of St. Anne's from 1870 to 1899, and Rev. Robert Walsh, pastor of Immaculate Conception from 1874 to 1908, seemed fearful of imposing new financial burdens on their parishioners. Both men had earned the affection of their flocks because of their geniality and humility and seemed to lack the necessary zeal to promote a school building effort.<sup>74</sup> Almost all of the other Irish pastors in turn-of-the-century Worcester had been born or were raised in America.<sup>75</sup> Nearly all of them had attended public schools, and thus could appreciate, as one Worcester priest proclaimed in 1899, what the public schools had "done" for the Irish in America.<sup>76</sup> Further, many of Worcester's priests, like their lay flocks, seemed caught up in the spirit of Liberal Catholicism. Worcester's leading Irish priest, for example, Rev. Thomas J. Conaty, seemed far more interested in a host of Liberal causes such as organizing a Catholic Chautauqua, serving as President of the National Catholic Temperance Union, and publishing a national Catholic temperance journal than in building a school for his own parish.<sup>77</sup>

For much of the turn-of-the-century era, Diocesan officials did not seem to try to change these clerical attitudes, or at least they did not put direct pressure on their pastors to build parochial schools. Indeed the Diocese seemed to allow Worcester's pastors to run their own affairs. In part this may have stemmed from poor communications, the Diocesan See after all was in Springfield, fifty miles from Worcester. In addition, while the Bishop lived in Springfield his chancellors for most of the turn-of-the-century era were stationed in Worcester. The first chancellor, Rev. John J. Power, had little interest in parochial education.<sup>78</sup> The second, Monsignor Thomas Griffin, was by contrast a zealous supporter of Catholic schools. Yet, although he built two schools in his own parish, there is no evidence that he ever attempted to encourage his colleagues to follow his example.<sup>79</sup>

The freedom the Diocese allowed its pastors seemed to stem more from respect for the well entrenched positions of its Worcester priests than from any

agreement with the priests' indifference to parochial education. For the Diocese did act, albeit cautiously, to promote the construction of more Catholic schools in Worcester. Diocesan officials did not threaten or transfer established pastors, they merely waited until those older men died and replaced them with priests who were firmly committed to parochial education. Thus the Bishop in 1899 assigned Rev. James Tuite, a "sound financier" who had built a parochial school at his previous parish in North Brookfield, to replace Rev. Dennis Scannell at St. Anne's.<sup>80</sup> Three years later, Tuite demanded that Worcester school authorities sell him the public schoolhouse in his parish. When the city refused, he built his own school which soon enrolled over 800 students.<sup>81</sup> When Rev. John J. Power of St. Paul's died in 1902, and Rev. D. H. O'Neill of St. Peter's in 1916, the Diocese again selected pastors who had previous experience in school construction. Like Tuite, these new pastors also soon set about constructing schools in their parishes.<sup>82</sup>

While the Diocese was slowly providing clerical leadership for the construction of new schools, lay attitudes also seemed to become favorable to parochial education. The Vatican's crackdown on Liberal tendencies in the American Church in the late 1890s combined with the rise of the American Protective Association in Worcester in 1894 seemed to undermine the faith in Liberal Catholicism.<sup>83</sup> By the early twentieth century the term "Liberal Catholic" had become an epithet among the Irish in Worcester, who by then preferred to call themselves militant Catholics, suspicious of their Protestant neighbors and devoted to the expansion of their church.<sup>84</sup> This new Catholic militance seemed to override the confidence of Irish laymen in the quality and non-sectarian character of Worcester's public schools by making support for parochial education a test of loyalty to the Church. Thus the *Messenger* (renamed the *Catholic Messenger* in 1906) began a strong campaign in the second decade of the twentieth century to encourage parochial education. In 1911, for example, it charged "that worldliness and atheism will conquer, if Catholic education was left to deteriorate" and in 1915 it urged Catholic parents to remember the Baltimore Council's injunction when "the time to select a school for your boy and girl drew near."<sup>85</sup>

By the 1920s Worcester's Irish Catholics finally began to heed the mandate issued by the Baltimore Council almost fifty years before. In that decade, Irish parishes built five new elementary schools and two new secondary schools.<sup>86</sup> In part this burst of parochial school construction may have resulted from the continuing economic progress of the Worcester Irish and their easier access to an enlarged labor supply of religious teachers. Irish attitudes, however, also seemed to change. The optimistic faith of Liberal Catholics that their people could be easily integrated into American society had disappeared, and so had their faith in the public schools. New clergymen appeared to be more obedient to their Church's injunctions, and laymen became more zealously devoted to the advancement of their church. Such changes did not occur in Worcester alone. As Donna Merwick has pointed out in her study of the Boston Diocese, the first two decades of the twentieth century seemed to be a turning point in the attitudes of priests and laymen there as well, as clerical discipline was tightened and a new, more militant Catholic outlook was born. For Irish Catholics in Worcester

and throughout Massachusetts, the parochial school finally did become the symbol of their separate society and culture, but perhaps a little later than the legends would suggest.

#### NOTES

1. James T. Farrell, *Studs Lonigan: A Trilogy* (New York, 1935). For a more recent depiction of the stereotype see John F. Powers, *The Last Catholic in America* (New York, 1973).
2. Thomas T. McAvoy, *A History of the Catholic Church in the United States* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1969), p. 260.
3. Dennis J. Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience* (Philadelphia, 1974), pp. 94-95; James W. Sanders, *The Education of an Urban Minority: Catholics in Chicago, 1933-1965* (New York, 1977), p. 4; Robert F. McNamara, *The Diocese of Rochester* (Rochester, N.Y., 1968), pp. 161-166; Robert E. Curran, S.J., *Michael Augustine Corrigan: The Shaping of Conservative Catholicism in America, 1878-1902* (New York, 1978), pp. 507-508.
4. *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910*, Volume I, "Population" (Washington, D.C., 1913), p. 865.
5. *Messenger*, January 11, 1890.
6. *Official Catholic Directory, Almanac and Clergy List*, Volume XIX (1905), p. 965.
7. Thomas McAvoy, *The Americanist Heresy in Roman Catholicism* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1963), pp. 6-7; Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia*, p. 95.
8. Donna Merwick, *Boston Priests 1845-1910: A Study of Social and Intellectual Change* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), pp. 111-116, 176-177.
9. U.S. Census Office, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census June 1, 1890*, "Population," pp. 664-665; *Twelfth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1900, Volume I*, "Population," (Washington, D.C., 1901), p. 802.
10. Figures prepared for the author by the Worcester School Department estimate that there were 1,500 students in the city's private schools in 1884. The French school which opened in 1881 had an estimated 500 pupils. See also "Report of the Clerk of the School Committee," *City Document, No. 59*, p. 98 and *City Document, No. 64*, p. 1099.
11. Pamphlet of clippings, undated, "A Quarter Century of St. John's High School," Pamphlet File, Worcester Historical Museum; *Catholic Free Press*, April 17, 1970.
12. *City Document, No. 65*, p. 1042.
13. Folio 2, January 4, 1892, in Richard O'Flynn Papers, Holy Cross College Archives.
14. St. Stephen's Folio, January 30, 1887, in O'Flynn Papers.
15. St. Anne's Folio, January 3, 1886 and October 11, 1888, in O'Flynn Papers.
16. Catholic Church in Worcester, Massachusetts, Scrapbook, July 5, 1925, in Pamphlet File, Worcester Historical Museum; *Catholic Messenger*, June 10, 1926.

17. "Annual Diocesan Report 1910," St. John's Parish Mss., St. John's Parish Archives, Worcester.
18. One in nine samples of all Irish born males and females aged eighteen and over in Worcester, Massachusetts taken from the 1880 and 1900 United States Census Manuscript schedules, one in six second generation Irish males and females aged eighteen and over taken from the 1880 U.S. Census Manuscript Schedules and one in twelve second generation Irish males and females aged eighteen and over in Worcester taken from the 1900 U.S. Census Manuscript Schedules.
19. "Subscription for the Building of the Church on Vernon Street: 1906-1908," St. John's Parish Mss., St. John's Parish Archives; *First Annual Report of the Sisters of Providence for the Year Ending December 31, 1894*; *Worcester City Directories*, 1895, 1907 and 1908.
20. Immigrant and Second Generation Irish Samples, 1900 U.S. Census Manuscript Schedules.
21. St. Stephen's Folio, January 30, 1887, in O'Flynn Papers.
22. Monthly Assessment Collection Book, Fox Street, Collectors Mrs. Herbert and Miss Minnie Foley, St. John's Parish Archives.
23. *Catholic Messenger*, January 1, 1915.
24. Announcement Book, St. John's Parish 1889-1895, December 12, 1890, October 4 and April 5, 1891, in St. John's Parish Archives; Announcement Book, St. Paul's Parish, 1871, Second Sunday in Lent, 1871, St. Paul's Parish Archives, St. Paul's Parish, Worcester; *Worcester Telegram*, April 18, 1887; *Worcester Spy*, July 4, 1889; Announcement Book, St. John's Parish, 1903-1908, February 9, 1905; Catholic Church in Worcester, Scrapbooks, May 20 and November 18, 1917, in Pamphlet File, Worcester Historical Museum; Folio 2, May 24, 1883, in O'Flynn Papers.
25. Announcement Book, Third Sunday After Easter, 1871(?), St. Paul's Parish Archives.
26. Announcement Book, St. John's Parish 1896-1902, May 10, 1896 and June 7, 1906, in St. John's Parish Archives.
27. Announcement Book, St. John's Parish 1889-1895, October 4 and January 25, 1891, St. John's Parish Archives.
28. *Messenger*, October 14, 1893.
29. St. Anne's Folio, October 11, 1888, in O'Flynn Papers.
30. *Messenger*, January 1, 1895; Charles Nutt, *History of Worcester* (New York, 1919), Vol. II, p. 872.
31. Mother Mary of Providence, "History of the Community," Typewritten Mss., unpublished, Volume II, p. 196, in Sisters of Providence Archives, Mother House, Sisters of Providence, Holyoke.
32. Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland: 1850-1875," *American Historical Review*, LXVII (June, 1972), pp. 626-627.
33. Annals of the Sisters of Mercy, p. 31, in Mother House, Barre Road, Worcester; 1900 U.S. Census Manuscript Schedules.
34. Sister Miriam of the Infant Jesus, *The Finger of God: History of the Massachusetts Province of Notre Dame de Namur, 1849-1893* (Boston, n.d.), p. 32; Brother Julian C.F.X., *Men and Deeds: The Xaverian Brothers in America* (New York, n.d.), pp. 1-15.

35. 1900 U.S. Census Manuscript Schedules.
36. Aaron Abell, *American Catholicism and Social Action* (New York, 1960), pp. 27-34; James Kennessy, S.J., *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York, 1981), p. 173; *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1913), Vol. XIII, p. 562.
37. Annals of the Sisters of Mercy, p. 143, in Sister of Mercy Archives; *The American Foundations of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur* (Philadelphia, 1928); Robert H. Lord, John E. Sexton and Edward Harrington, *A History of the Archdiocese of Boston*, III:346.
38. *The American Foundations*; Lord, Sexton and Harrington, *A History of the Archdiocese of Boston*, III:346.
39. "Quarter Century of St. John's High School," in Pamphlet File, Worcester Historical Museum.
40. *Messenger*, August 5, 1893; *Worcester Telegram*, November 22, 1892.
41. "Quarter Century of St. John's High School," in Pamphlet File, Worcester Historical Museum.
42. *Messenger*, November 26, 1892; *Worcester Telegram*, April 18, 1887, March 18, 1898; "Notre Dame Speech," November 12, 1899, in Rev. John J. McCoy Papers, Holy Cross College Archives; St. Anne's Parish, pamphlet, in Pamphlet File, American Antiquarian Society.
43. Though the proportion of French Canadians in Worcester who were skilled blue collar workers exceeded the percentage of Irish in skilled jobs 37 percent to 30 percent, the proportion of Irish who were white collar workers was larger 13 percent to 8.5 percent; *Twelfth Census of the United States*, "Special Report: Occupations" (Washington, D.C., 1904), pp. 760-763.
44. In 1888, for example, there were 1,197 children in three French schools and only 845 Canadian children, French and English, in the public schools. In 1904, the number of children in the French schools was 1,500, the number of Canadians in the public schools was 1,476; *Le Worcester Canadien* (Worcester, 1889), pp. 62-64; *Le Worcester Canadien* (Worcester, 1905), pp. 67-72; *City Document, No. 64*, pp. 1098-1099; Alexandre Belisle, *Livre D'Or Des Franco Americaines De Worcester Mass.* (Worcester, 1920), pp. 19-52.
45. *Catholic Messenger*, May 13, 1908; *St. Peter's Parish Seventy Fifth Anniversary Jubilee Memorial*, in St. Peter's Parish Archives, St. Peter's Parish, Worcester; Rev. John J. McCoy, *History of the Catholic Church in the Springfield Diocese* (Boston, 1900), pp. 265-266.
46. *Alumna* (January 1887), p. 3; see also *Alumna* (May 1886), p. 2.
47. *Alumna* (June 1886), p. 3.
48. *Messenger*, August 3, 1894; *Alumna* (September 1886), p. 2; *Alumna* (May 1886), p. 2; *Alumna* (June 1886), p. 3.
49. *Messenger*, November 21, 1891.
50. *Messenger*, July 16, 1892, May 16, 1892, November 21, 1891, March 22, 1890.
51. *Alumna* (May 1886), p. 2.
52. *Messenger*, March 19, 1892, November 7, 1891, April 20, 1895, January 13, 1900, April

- 21, 1900; *Worcester Telegram*, February 22, 1891, February 25, 1891; Announcement Book 1889-1895, St. John's Parish, January 19, 1890, in St. John's Parish Archives.
53. In 1888, 1,200 Irish men belonged to temperance societies in Worcester; see *Messenger*, July 7 and October 13, 1888.
54. *Messenger*, May 25, 1895.
55. Sacred Heart Folio clipping, February 2, 1887, in O'Flynn Papers.
56. *Messenger*, August 3, 1895.
57. *Le Worcester Canadien* (Worcester, 1888), pp. 62-64; Mason Wade, "The French Parish and Survivance in Nineteenth Century New England," *Catholic Historical Review*, XXXVI (July, 1950), p. 178.
58. *Messenger*, February 17, 1900.
59. *Worcester Telegram*, September 7, 1912; *Messenger*, September 6, 1902, May 26, 1905, March 2 and 15, 1907.
60. "Report of the Superintendent of Schools," *City Document*, No. 64, pp. 888-889.
61. *Messenger*, May 14, July 16, and November 26, 1892.
62. *Messenger*, February 8 and May 14, 1892.
63. Donald Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association* (Seattle, 1963), p. 100, p. 180; *American*, October 27, November 14, December 5 and 19, 1893.
64. *Alumna* (May 1886), p. 4.
65. *American*, September 26, October 24, November 14, and December 5, 1893, January 2, 1894.
66. Sanders, *Education of an Urban Minority*, p. 32; *Messenger*, April 9, 1898 and January 8, 1904.
67. *Messenger*, April 9, 1898.
68. Twenty First Annual Convention of the United Irish Societies, Convention Records, Vol. III, in O'Flynn Papers.
69. J. M. McGratty, *The Life of the Very Reverend John J. Power D.D. U.G., Pastor of St. Paul's Church* (Worcester, 1902), p. 82.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
71. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 72-82.
73. McCoy, *History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Springfield*, pp. 265-266; *Messenger*, January 19 and June 22, 1895.
74. St. Anne's Folio, November 16, 1890 and February 1893 in O'Flynn Papers; Immaculate Conception Folio, clipping, February 21, 1891 in O'Flynn Papers; *Messenger*, October 28, 1899.



75. Sixteen of the twenty Irish pastors who served in Worcester between 1880 and 1920 were American born. See Curriculum Vitae of Pastors in Worcester, in Springfield Diocese Archives (prepared for the author by Rev. Mgr. Roger Vian, Chancellor of the Springfield Diocese), October 16, 1976. By 1876 all of the Ceveates in Worcester's Irish parishes were native Americans as well; *Sacred Heart Review*, November 14, 1896.
76. Curriculum Vitae of Pastors, Worcester, in Springfield Diocese Archives; Nutt, *History of Worcester*, II:871, 877, 879; McCoy, *History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Springfield*, pp. 248-269, 270-277; *Sacred Heart Review*, November 14, 1896; *Messenger*, August 30, 1902.
77. McCoy, *History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Springfield*, p. 273; Mgr. John F. Reilly, "Memories of Beloved Worcester Priests," Typewritten Ms. of Speech delivered at the Catholic Women's Club, March 6, 1955, in Pamphlet File, Worcester Room, Worcester Historical Museum; Nutt, *History of Worcester*, II:871.
78. McCoy, *History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Springfield*, p. 266.
79. Instead of pressuring other pastors to build schools in their own parishes, Griffin turned to projects which could attract city-wide support, building a hospital, an industrial school for boys and a novitiate for the Sisters of Notre Dame Namur; McCoy, *History of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Springfield*, p. 257; *Messenger*, June 30, 1905.
80. *Worcester Telegram*, June 7 and 8, 1903.
81. *Messenger*, July 12, 1902; *Catholic Free Press*, April 16, 1957 and April 17, 1970.
82. *St. Peter's Parish Seventy Fifth Memorial Jubilee*; in St. Peter's Parish Archives; *Catholic Messenger*, April 20, 1926; Nutt, *History of Worcester*, II:94-95.
83. *Berkshire County Eagle*, February 18, 1914; Rev. John J. McCoy, "The Playground Movement," 1911, in Rev. John J. McCoy Papers, Holy Cross College Archives.
84. *Catholic Messenger*, March 30, 1916, January 8, 1915, April 22, 1910, December 2, 1915, April 9, 1915; *Messenger*, February 10, 1905, June 28, 1900.
85. *Catholic Messenger*, November 10, 1911, June 24, 1915, February 12, 1915, July 29, 1915, July 1, 1910, September 2, 1915.
86. Examination Records of Parochial Schools in the Springfield Diocese, in Rev. John J. McCoy Papers.