

The Life and Catholic Journalism  
OF THE LATE  
**JAMES A. McMASTER,**

Editor of the New York Freeman's Journal and  
Catholic Register.

Edited by VERY REV. MARK S. GROSS.

For the Carmelite Review.

CHAPTER V.

THE PAROCHIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM—McMASTER'S JOURNAL, THE PAROCHIAL SCHOOL BANNER JOURNAL—THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS—THEIR RECENT ORIGIN—OPPOSED BY THE FREEMAN'S JOURNAL AS OPPRESSIVE AND UNCONSTITUTIONAL. LEGISLATION BY THE STATE OF NEW YORK—McMASTER FROM THE BEGINNING DEFENDS THE PRINCIPLE TAUGHT BY THE POPE, THAT TO THE PARENT, UNDER THE CHURCH OF GOD, BELONGS THE INALIENABLE RIGHT TO EDUCATE THE CHILD—ARCHBISHOP CORRIGAN ADMITS McMASTER TO HAVE BEEN IN GREAT MEASURE THE FATHER OF THE AMERICAN PAROCHIAL SCHOOL—THE PAROCHIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM SUSTAINED BY THE NEW YORK PRIESTS—THE REV. FATHER EDWARDS, RT. REV. BISHOP KEANE, HIS EMINENCE, JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS.



NE pre-eminent public question of which James A. McMaster treated oftener and more exhaustively than any other, is the necessity of religious teaching in the education of the young. The public school system, as at present constituted, is a thing of comparatively recent growth, little as the present generation appear to know it. To hear the ranting advocates of the system, one would suppose that it had been incorporated in the Constitution of the United States by the Revolutionary Fathers, and that it is little less than treason to denounce the evils of it.

The first scheme, on any extensive scale, was brought forward in the Albany Legislature in 1849. True to his instinctive recognition of any foe to public welfare or Christian morality, McMaster at once opposed the bill with all his power, and if he

did not succeed in defeating it, he at least secured the modification of many of the features introduced later on. A series of powerful articles, turning the measure inside out and exhibiting its dangerous character, began on August 11, 1849, in which issues McMaster said:

"In the proposed measure of free schools for the State of New York, we see a system of wholesale oppression and unconstitutional legislation, to which we intend inviting the attention of the public to be interested. We shall do so in no spirit of party. The Methodists, the Presbyterians, and every sect in the State, supposing them to believe their religion worth teaching, and capable of being taught to their children, have the same interest in the subject that we have. We have shown that the project is irreligious—impious would not be too strong a term—and we shall do what we can to show that it is the interest of the community at large to reject it."

With unanswerable argument and cogency of reasoning McMaster proved to the public in general, that the State has no inherent right to educate our children, but that this right is the inalienable right of parents who, by the law of nature, are free to educate their children in the school of their own choice. Year after year he was assailed on all sides, but he fought for the principle to the last.

The chief point then was to unite Catholics themselves on this question—to make them understand that they had better build schools first, and leave the building of the churches afterwards to the scholars educated in these schools. But here he was supported by the teaching of the Church. Any one who is familiar with the history of the Church must certainly know the maternal solicitude which the Church has ever had for the instruction of the young. Not to go beyond our own country, we find abundant proofs here. In the very first Synod ever held in the United States, at a time when the United States was made up of one diocese, in the year 1791, when the first Bishop of this country assembled his priests from north and south and east and west, to meet in Baltimore, and there take measures for the common good, he found he was able to gather around him from this immense country, from Maine to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, twenty priests; and these, even then when the need of Church