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The Latin Question: Obedience or Americanism*
By Michael J. Witt, FSC, Ph.D.**

"I do not know the conditions in your city, but next year will be a more trying one for this house than the present one has been. We have to make a fight for existence." Thus wrote the President of Christian Brothers College in Saint Louis, Missouri to the President of Manhattan College in New York as the 1901 school year came to a close. The cause of this consternation was a long-running controversy between American and French Christian Brothers and including the Society of Jesus.[1] Termed the Latin Question, the argument revolved around the teaching of the Classics in Brothers' colleges in America and their Order's prohibition of this practice. Before the affair would finally be laid to rest in the 1926 removal of the ban on classics, the American Christian Brothers would lose ten of their thirteen colleges. They would witness the withdrawal of many Brothers from their Order, a severe decline in morale, and the exile of their leaders. This controversy nearly ruined the American efforts of one of the Church's largest teaching Brotherhoods.

The 15,000 member Institute of the Brothers of the Christian Schools was founded in 1680 by a wealthy canon from seventeenth century Rheims, Jean Baptiste de La Salle. Circumstances had slowly drawn him to embrace one of the most thankless tasks of his age, the primary education of the children of the uneducated masses in France of the *Ancien Regime*. De La Salle was an innovator. He had popularized the simultaneous method of instruction for the primary levels. It was De La Salle who systematized normal schools. He pressed for the abolition of severe corporal punishment in schools; he experimented with protectorates, juvenile reform programs, prison ministry, and with commercial and natutical [sic] schools. His Brothers were a strong impetus to the parish school system.

De La Salle was also remembered for one other innovation that came to have disastrous side effects on his American followers two hundred years later. Jean Baptist de La Salle believed that it was far more practical that the vernacular be taught to his students. The normal practice in education at the time was to instruct the students in Latin first, then later in French.[2] He realized that for his "Christian Schools," as he called them, Latin was almost useless. Most students left the Brothers' care at around age twelve.[3] They would enter the adult work world then. Of what use would a Latin education be to these people?

Further reinforcement of the ban of Latin came in the form of a protection for the Brother's vocation. Several of the earliest members of the Society had studies for the priesthood. They had

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left the seminary to join De La Salle in his mission to the poor and the shrewd founder had no intention of allowing these men to drift slowly away from their new commitment back to the more prestigious life of a cleric. By forbidding Latin, he believed, he would discourage priestly vocations among his own Brothers.

In the religious Rule of the Congregation, the question of Latin was made forcefully clear.

> Those Brothers who have learnt Latin will made [sic] no use of it after they have entered the Society, and they will behave as if they did not know it. It will not be permitted to any Brother to teach Latin to anyone either in the house or outside.[4]

For one hundred and fifty years the Brothers of the Christian Schools were, by this severe law, guarded from aspiring to a different vocation and from abandoning their special mission to the religious and practical education of the poor and working classes.

In 1849 the first Christian Brothers arrived in Saint Louis, Missouri. True to the spirit of their founder and to the letter of their rule, they began to conduct the Cathedral Male Free School. Rapidly their work grew to ten grade schools and a protectorate. In 1852 the Brothers opened the Academy of the Christian Brothers, later called Christian Brothers College.

In 1853 Archbishop Peter Kenrick approached the Director of the Academy, Brother Patrick, with a proposal to help prepare young men for the priesthood, a sore need in the Archdiocese. The Archbishop had urged his clergy to send to the College these boys "in whom they recognized signs of vocation to the priesthood," as it was his intention to begin to develop an indigenous clergy.[5] Brother Patrick explained the possible difficulties involved in structuring a minor seminary to be conducted by the Brothers, but both agreed that the cause merited the effort and that the new American circumstances overrode the logic of the ban on Latin. In 1854 Brother Patrick attended the General Chapter of the Institute, a general assembly of the Society which carried the weight of a constitutional convention. To this august body, Brother Patrick appealed for a dispensation from Chapter XXVIII of the Rule, the section which forbade the study and teaching of Latin.

Fortuitous circumstances won the day. Many of the Chapter capitulants were favorably disposed toward the American Missions. Scores of French Brothers had volunteered to staff American schools and a close bond of fraternity embraced the French and American membership of the Order. Permission was granted in a *viva voce* vote at the Paris meeting. Brother Patrick returned to Saint Louis immediately and established a classical curriculum for Christian Brothers College.

The new classical approach seemed to have caught on as the student population grew from forty-eight in 1854 to one hundred forty-two years later. Besides the regular Latin curriculum at CBC, a Brother with seminary training instructed fifteen youngsters from a nearby parish each day. These students had indicated a desire to pursue priestly studies and with these classes the first "petit seminaire" in America evolved.[6]

The Saint Louis idea spread rapidly throughout the United States. By the 1860's Calvert Hall, Baltimore, Saint Joseph's College, Buffalo, New York, Manhattan College, New York City, and

Saint Vincent's College, New Orleans, had introduced classical departments in their curriculum. In 1871, with the founding of the Christian Brothers College in Memphis, Tennessee, Latin was included in the course of study.

The experiment bore fruit. Hundreds of priests and Religious came from these schools. De La Salle Academy, Providence, Rhode Island, alone claimed 358 priests as of 1948. West Philadelphia Catholic High School noted in that same Centennial Year of the American Brothers over two hundred priestly vocations and over one hundred vocations to the Christian Brothers in its twenty-five year history.[7] The impact of CBC on the Saint Louis Archdiocese is evidenced by the fact that between 1854 and 1924 over half of the priests who died and were buried in Calvary cemetery were alumni of the Christian Brothers College.[8]

Forty-eight of the American bishops in 1948 were Brothers' Boys, including four from Brothers' schools in Saint Louis.[9] A real need was being met by this growth of priests and religious.

In the second half of the nineteenth century fifty-five new diocese were created to minister to the exploding Catholic population in America. By 1900, Catholics numbered twelve million, up from one and a half million just fifty years previous.[10] If the Church was to retain these masses, many of them immigrants, and if She [sic] was to teach their children, a legion of new vocations was vital. Brothers' schools and colleges played a key role, along with other Catholic institutions, in fostering this work.

Despite the obvious need for the Brothers in higher education in America, there were early challenges to their Latin dispensation. In 1858 the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda received an anonymous complaint against the American Brothers. They were charged with irregularities in living their Rule. Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore, Brother to Archbishop Peter Kenrick, was instructed to investigate the curriculum at Christian Brothers College. He concluded that the work was good and that nothing should be done to alter it.[11]

Nonetheless, a second challenge was leveled in 1866. At the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore, Brothers Patrick and Justin were summoned by Archbishop Martin Spaulding, president of the Council. It was explained to them that the Society of Jesus had lodged a complaint with the bishops alleging that the American Brothers were guilty of irregularities within their Rule as they were teaching Latin. After explanations were offered by the two Brothers the bishops took the issue into consideration. On 11 October, Brother Justin was informed by a representative of Bishop Spaulding that the bishops had informally discussed the issue and that the only fault they could find with the Brothers teaching Latin was that there were not more doing so. Finding that the American prelates were so disposed, the Jesuits had dropped the complaint and it was not formally discussed at the Council.[12]

Within the Institution of the Brothers itself some had reservations about the Latin curriculum. Many feared it could alter the character of the Order. In a letter of Brother Patrick in 1867, Brother Facile, the man who first introduced the Brothers to Saint Louis and now the Assistant Superior General for North America, questioned the wisdom of this new trend. "Let us leave to others the teaching of Latin and Greek and remain good Christian Brothers."[13]

The issue was resolved formally for the Institute in 1874, during a General Chapter. Brother Patrick was in an excellent position to argue the American cause. He arrived in Paris as Provincial of the Saint Louis District, an area that covered most of the Mississippi River valley, and was quickly elected as Assistant Superior General. When the issue of Latin was brought up, he argued vigorously in favor of the 1854 decision. This time the vote was recorded and the document permitting the use of Latin in American schools was published. However, two reservations had been added which were not published and were not generally known. These specified that the classics were to be taught by professors other than Brothers, and that this American dispensation was not to set precedence for other countries.[14]

Within a year of this Chapter, the Superior General died and the new Superior, Brother Irlide, proved to be a friend of Latin advocates. During his administration, despite the 1874 reservations, he affirmed the classical program introduced at Sacred Heart College in San Francisco, where Bishop Joseph Alemany hoped the school would serve as a minor seminary. He authorized the teaching of Latin at La Salle College in Philadelphia upon the request of Bishop Wood and did not object to classical curriculum at Saint Joseph's Academy in Oakland, California though the institution served both as a preparatory seminary as well as a Brothers' novitiate.

Even so, opposition to Latin grew within the Congregation. Some Brothers feared that the character of the order was undergoing an unhealthy metamorphosis that was based on vanity and a bald pursuit of prestige. When the General Chapter of 1882 was called, many Brothers realized that the spirit of the 1853 and 1874 decisions to allow a local dispensation of the Rule had been widely violated. The classical curriculum had indeed altered the character of the Brothers in North American and a clear-cut policy statement was needed to justify this alteration.

Brother Irlide asked the Provincial of the Saint Louis District, Brother Paulian, and the Provincial of the New York District, Brother Justin, both strong advocates of Latin, to write a history of the twenty-eight year old issue. This document, plus a further report by an Assistant Superior General, Brother Joseph, supported the teaching of Latin in the Brothers' schools. It was noted that this practice had come because of the repeated requests of American bishops and that it served an important function in the development of the Church in North America.

Again the capitulants supported the classical curriculum, though this time their conclusion was rather nebulous. Latin and Greek might be taught in Brothers' schools, and under certain circumstances a member of the Congregation might even be permitted to study Latin, but no Brother was allowed to teach the subject.[15]

Two years after the Chapter of 1882, Brother Irlide died. He was succeeded by Brother Joseph, the author of one of the 1882 memorials which had favored Latin. Even with the death of Brother Patrick in 1891, the American Brothers felt confident that their cause could be successfully defended in Paris.

In October of 1894 another General Chapter was called in Paris. Of the twelve Assistant Superiors General in the Institute, ten were now French. Of the ninety-five capitulants, only six were American, while the French counted sixty-six. The attitude of close fraternity between

French and American Brothers had evaporated. Suspicion of Americanism was everywhere in France. Many European Brothers felt that their American counterparts had at best been duped by the American bishops into serving their cause rather than the cause of De La Salle. At worst, the Americans were guilty of flagrant violation of their Holy Rule in order to pursue a path of prestige and academic glory mongering. The Latin Question had created bad blood between the two groups and four of the twelve Assistance [sic] were adamant for strict restoration of Chapter XXVIII.

The most outspoken was Brother Reticius. He was considered among the other Frenchmen as an expert on American ecclesiastical and educational affairs. He served as the Visitor General, regional superior, of North America and later as Provincial of the Baltimore District before returning to his native France. One American author who knew him described Brother Reticius in a most uncomplimentary fashion.

> . . . the United States with its living, moving issues, the requirements of its people, could teach Brother Reticius nothing; he hailed from France, de facto, he knew everything man should or could know … He was an iconoclast, powerful to destroy, useless to build; an extremist, in all things saturated with French Bourbonism. He felt his power as a leader God-given, and at no time and under no circumstances did he brook advise or contradiction.[16]

When the issue was again put to a vote in Chapter, the American delegation was assured that the new decree forbidding Latin in Brothers' schools would not apply to the United States. One assistant, Exuperian, and the Secretary General of the Chapter, Justinus, both assured them that a positive vote on their part would endear the Americans to the French again and that the American schools would be exempt.[17] With this assured, the American Brothers voted to restore Chapter XXVIII of the Rule, the Latin sanction, to full authority, thus voting to disrupt the very system of classical education they had worked so hard to establish.

The implication of this whole affair came into true perspective only when Archbishop Cornelius O'Brian of Halifax was refused permission to establish an academy run by the Brothers in which Latin would be taught. The Superior General, the same Brother Joseph who had argued for Latin in 1882 refused the request on the grounds that Chapter XXVIII of the Rule had been reinstated.

Rumors began to circulate that the reason for Brother Joseph's change of heart was less his respect for the 1894 Chapter ruling and more his susceptibility to Jesuit influence in Rome and Paris.[18] These rumors are without foundation and misrepresent Brother Joseph's character entirely.[19] Nonetheless, the role of the Society of Jesus in the Latin Question can be traced back at least as far as 1866 to its petition at the Plenary Council of Baltimore. The 1858 charges of irregularities are alleged to have come from Jesuit sources also. The American press was keen to play up an academic rivalry between the two Orders and resulting publicity did neither side any good. Overstating the case considerably, an article in the *Chicago Sunday Times* declared

> If they (the Jesuits) succeed in forcing the Brothers to close their schools for the classics, they will get thousands of students, and will regain all their lost prestige in Catholic education affairs ... since the Christian Brothers opened schools for the classics, the

> Jesuits have had a fierce struggle for existence, notwithstanding their worldwide reputation and their preeminence in the domain of letters.[20]

Conflicts and rivalries between the two teaching Orders were real enough in the nineteenth century, though previously there had been a strong bond of fraternity. In Philadelphia the Jesuit College of Saint Joseph and De La Salle College competed for the same students and were even located on the same street after 1885. Both suffered declines in enrollment when the Archdiocese of Philadelphia opened its own high school in 1890, disrupting the two Orders' feeder systems to their colleges. In Buffalo, New York, the Christian Brothers, Oblates of Mary, and Jesuits vied with each other, even to visiting the parents of each other's students to persuade them to switch schools.[21] In Saint Louis the rivalry between Saint Louis University and Christian Brothers College was time-honored and not necessarily restricted to the athletic field. Taking up the cause of enrollment in the Jesuit University, Francesco Cardinal Satolli recommended in an 1893 letter to Archbishop John Kain that Saint Louis University might better accommodate the archdiocese than CBC when the classical program there would be withdrawn.[22]

Cardinal Satolli played an intriguing role in the Latin affair, further alienating the two societies. After Archbishop O'Brien had lost his appeal for the Brothers in Halifax, four other American bishops sent a request through the then Archbishop Satolli, Apostolic Delegate in the United States to the Pope. Archbishop Satolli seemed to be the prefect conduit. He had been a dear friend of Pope Leo XIII, the reigning pontiff at the time. He seemed very sincerely interested in the high quality of Catholic education in America. It was Satolli who suggested that the four archbishops appeal to Rome; he always encouraged the Brothers in their study of Latin. To Brothers Justin and Chrysostom he once said, "I tell you, in the name of the Holy Father, that it is his wish that you Brothers study Latin."[23]

Satolli's attitude changed with his appointment to the Cardinalate. His previous relationships with liberal bishops like Ireland and Spaulding dwindled. Worse still, a scandalous rumor circulated among the American Brothers that the Cardinal had accepted a gift of $1,000 from the Jesuits on the understanding that he would further their wishes and interests. A rather unguarded remark by Brother Maurelian, President of Christian Brothers College in Memphis, to Brother Gerardus, Provincial, in a 9 May 1911 letter marked "Private and Confidential" has misled one historian of the period to put faith in the bribe accusation.[24]

Upon arrival in Rome, Cardinal Satolli refused to support the bishops' petition. Their appeal failed despite their best efforts to state their case. Arguing changes in milieu, they pointed out that education for the poor, in De La Salle's sense, had changed.

> But with us the free school has done away with the poor school. The children of the poor and rich sit side by side in the same classrooms; and it would be disastrous should the faithful be led to think that our parish schools are for the poor alone, for then the poor themselves would refuse to send their children to them. The Blessed De La Salle, were he living here and now, could never think of founding a Brotherhood to teach the children of the poor.[25]

These bishops even hinted at a secession if American Brothers were not freed from the restraints of the General Chapter of 1894.

Despite the failure of this appeal, the American Brothers remained confident. No curriculum had yet been changed. Manhattan College even planned a major expansion campaign. A second appeal was being prepared by the archbishops of Philadelphia, Halifax, San Francisco, Saint Louis, Chicago, New York, and Peoria when word came of the death of Brother Joseph and the need for a new General Chapter. This second appeal could now be presented directly to the capitulants.

The General Chapter of 1897 was unquestionably a disaster for the American cause. Though the American capitulants held several letters from American bishops urging the Latin studies, American bishops themselves were held in suspicion in European circles. Fears of Americanism were at their height. Almost immediately prior to the opening of the Chapter, *Le Pere Hecker, Fondateur des "Paulistes" Americans*, a biography of Father Isaac Hecker, was translated and published in France. It carried the imprimatur of Archbishop Corrigan of New York and was prefaced by Archbishop Ireland. While the book won instant popularity among French liberal thinkers, it was not so well received by the French Christian Brothers, who could seldom be accused of liberal thought. Also, dangerous parallels existed between Hecker with the Paulists and the American Christian Brothers with the International Institute. Father Hecker, a convert to Catholicism, had joined the Redemptorists, a mainly German Order, in 1849. His work had been so popular that when he was expelled from the Redemptorists for having left the United States without permission, he was encouraged to continue his work by Pope Pius IX. Working under American bishops, Father Hecker and several other former Redemptorists formed the Paulist Fathers. The weight of his example could certainly not be lost on the American Christian Brothers as they struggled with their European counterparts for what seemed to be the very existence of their schools in the United States.

Tension was also increased by a recent revolt in Cuba. The United States government openly pressured the Spanish in regard to their treatment of the Cubans and the American Press demanded an active role against Spain. This international tension certainly did not help to create for the American delegates a warm spot in the hearts of the Spanish Brothers.

Nonetheless, a hearing was won and special commission of twelve Brothers studied the issue. Three sessions of the General Chapter were then devoted to the debate over Latin. Argument grew heated and one Brother Assistant hurled insults at the Americans, questioning their motives, charging them with lies and deceit. This Brother went on to denounce Brother Patrick as the instigator of the whole affair and even read publicly a redditional letter of a Brother who had been a capitulant thirty years previous. In the Institute of the Brothers redditional material, private correspondence between a Brother and his superior, is considered privileged information not to be divulged to any other. This act was in bold violation of one of the most ancient traditions of the Society and clearly shows the extent to which bad will had fomented between the two factions.

One of the most severe opponents of Latin, Brother Gabriel Marie, was elected Superior General by the Chapter. After his election and a vote of ninety to three against Latin, he acted swiftly. In

February, 1898, Brother Gabriel took an unprecedented step by sending an Institute Circular, usually an internal communique from the Superior to the members of the Society, to every bishop in the United States as well as to the Brothers' communities and Houses of Formation. He described, from his perspective, the history of the Latin Question and called for obedience to the 1897 ruling. This public Circular, along with a very curt questionnaire for the Brothers, angered and offended the American Brothers. On 13 March 1898, at a meeting of professed Brothers in Memphis, Tennessee, an assembly resolved to direct Brother Paulian to send an American reply to each of the American bishops.

On that same day, 13 March, two Brothers Assistant arrived in New York City to begin a three-month tour of the United States to observe the application of the 1897 decision. Of the two, Brother Aimarus was the most fluent in English and familiar with the American scene. He counted several American Brothers as acquaintances and had once the opportunity to converse with President Cleveland. On that occasion, Brother Aimarus was showered with compliments on the fine work of the American Brothers.[26]

Brother Aimarus and his companion, Brother Madir Joseph, were met in New York City by Brothers Justin and Severian and were taken to Manhattan College. Brother Justin very shortly offered a transition period of five years to eliminate classics if pressure from Paris was to cease. Brother Aimarus was favorable to the idea, as a way to prevent a total collapse of the Brothers' institutions and perhaps disastrous consequences on potential vocations. Nonetheless, the other Brothers in New York were less than cordial to the two visitors and made their opinions known in sharp conversations. After eight days in New York City the two Assistants journied [sic] to Baltimore where they were greeted by an even colder reception by the Brothers. In a letter to Paris. Brother Aimarus complained that the Brothers "questioned and cross-questioned him like magistrates in a court of law." [27]

Despite a friendly meeting with Cardinal Gibbons, the Baltimore visit proved a disaster. Brother Quentinian, auxiliary provincial of New York, wrote the Superior General, "Your two Assistants have been here, and are now in Philadelphia. I am sorry you did not come yourself. You could not have sent a man more unfit to represent you than Aimarus."[28]

In Philadelphia the scene devolved to discourtesies. Wallace Thornton, a journalist and friend of the Brothers in Philadelphia, delivered the welcoming address to the two Assistants. It was as much as an apologetic for the American cause. Upon concluding, Thornton handed the address to Brother Aimarus, who tore it up and threw it in a nearby wastebasket.[29]

In Washington, D.C., Monsignor Martinelli, the newly appointed Apostolic Delegate, told the Assistants of several inquiries recently made by Brothers about the mechanics of secession from the Order. In Cincinnati, when the Bishop tried to argue for the Brothers' Latin programs, Brother Aimarus curtly suggested that the bishop found his own congregation.[30] In Saint Louis, Archbishop Kain also brought secession into the conversation.

This confrontation was followed by a bitter meeting with Brother Maurelian in Memphis and later by an impassioned appeal by Archbishop Patrick Riordon of San Francisco. Only in New Orleans had the visitors found support.

After three months the pair returned to New York and booked passage back to France. At the departure Brother Justin came on board the ship to say farewell to Brothers Aimarus and Madir Joseph. Brother Aimarus, obviously shocked by the findings of his trip, asked Brother Justin about the seriousness of the secession movement among the American Brothers. The New York Provincial dismissed the idea, assuring the Assistants that he for one was too old to lead a rebellion and that, as only fifty or sixty Brothers were directly involved in teaching Latin, the whole notion was absurd.

Even so, Brother Justin did broach the subject with a man he respected for his sound judgement. Brother Quintinian responded with vehemence:

> Separation? For what? To go adrift, to be at the mercy of every Bishop, at their whims and fancies to make us sextons and bellringers? Never! We must get what we want in a loyal way. Now we are in a position of a great body. What would we be after separation? A dried branch! ... Others have tried separation, and what have they done?

Brother Quintinian went on to say he would sooner suffer exile as a Christian Brother than separate. He ended his letter to Brother Justin, "I certainly would be more than sorry to see you start any break."[31]

Despite the fine and loyal sentiments such as these, the report of the two Brothers Assistant caused Brother Gabriel Marie to take very harsh steps. He secured from the Pope powers to release from his vows any Brother who failed to comply with the Constitutions of the Institute after due time had lapsed to allow him to submit. The vows of Poverty and Obedience would be rescinded; the vow of Chastity, however, would remain.

Each Brother was sent what was in reality a loyalty oath. The Brother was given seven days to search his soul and then to manifest his obedience to his superiors.

Even more shocking was the news that Brothers Justin and Paulian were called to Paris for reassignment. Brother Justin, Provincial of New York, former Provincial of San Francisco, and England, was assigned to the Pensionnat Saint Joseph in Toulouse. Brother Paulian, Provincial of Saint Louis and former President of Manhattan College, Provincial of New York, and President of Christian Brothers College in Saint Louis, was sent to a primary school in Rheims, France. Shortly after, Brother Bettelin, Provincial of California and Brother Justin's stepbrother, was removed from his post. Being sixty-eight years old, he was retired at Manhattan College.

The men replacing these giants were considered to be safer by the French Superiors. Brother Bettelin was replaced by a French Canadian who had no previous ties to Latin. The Saint Louis Provincialate went to Brother Gerardus, a saintly Religious who was considered to believe it improper to question his Superiors, especially on such a definite issue as Latin. Brother Justin's New York seat was taken temporarily by Brother Quintinian until a more docile man could be found. Brother Quintinian himself was eventually exiled to Malonne, Belgium.

These removals were no sooner accomplished than a second wave of transfers took place. Brother Maurice of Washington, D.C., was sent to Ceylon. Brother Eusebius went to Saint Etienne, France, where he despaired of the whole affair and left the Order. Brother Reneus Bernard, a well-known professor of Engineering at Manhattan College, was dispatched to Cairo. Egypt. He made the best of a bad situation and continued his engineering studies which would later serve to establish fine Engineering departments in the Brothers' colleges upon his return to America. Brother Maurelian, President of Christian Brothers College, was assigned to Rheims when brother Paulian was reexiled to Ireland.

The President of Saint John's College, Washington, D.C., Brother Fabrician was sent to Saint Etienne. His removal did not alter the curriculum though, as the next president, Brother Abdas, assured the faculty that nothing would change. Brother Felix John, President of Christian Brothers College in Saint Louis was sent to Ostend and later to Manchester, England, where he was assigned to teach in primary school. The exile and conflict over the classics so disenchanted him that he withdrew from the Institute and entered the priesthood.

Brother Christian, Provincial of Baltimore, heard rumors of his own imminent transfer. To Brother Quintinian in exile he wrote with resignation.

> Many say that I am the next one to go. Maybe, as I need a good rest. I am glad to hear you say that you are happy “over there.” I would be so in Italy, Spain, or Germany; not much in France or Belgium.[32]

Brother Christian was sent to Brussels, Belgium.

The last of the outstanding scholars and leaders to be exiled was Brother Potamian, Professor Michael O'Reilly, as he was known in scientific circles. Beyond his work in the classroom, Brother Potamian's greatest contribution to science was research on wireless telegraphy. He and Guglielmo Marconi had worked together in London. Tribute was paid to Brother Potamian when the great inventor was unable to lecture in New York and sent the following cable to his hosts: "You have in your city in Dr. O'Reilly, professor at Manhattan College, a man eminently fitted to give you those lectures in my place; engage his service and you will not regret this disappointment."[33] Despite his renowned position in the academic world and his previous services to the Order in England, Ireland, and America, Brother Potamian had displeased the Superiors when he circulated a petition among the American Brothers calling for the reversal of the 1897 Chapter. Brother Clementian, American Assistant, warned “Brother Potamian does not know what he is doing to himself and to all the American Brothers by such an act."[34] Shortly, he was sent to a boarding school in Bel Air, France.

It was now for the American Brothers to survive these reversals. Christian Brothers College in Saint Louis lost thirty-three percent of its student population in two years and eventually devolved to a high school. It was joined by CBC of Sacramento, Saint Michael's College of Santa Fe, Calvert Hill [sic] of Baltimore, Rock Hill College in Ellicott City, Saint Joseph's College of Buffalo, and CBC of Memphis. Though each had lost their college status for varied reasons, each had been cut to the quick by the Latin restriction. Only Manhattan College in New York City, La Salle College in Philadelphia, and Saint Mary's College in California could greet

the second quarter of the twentieth century, a time when colleges across the nation would experience tremendous growth. Furthermore, the trend of increased Brothers' institutions came to a sudden halt. In the years following the 1900 application the Brothers opened only two institutions: Christian Brothers Academy in Syracuse (1900) and Cathedral High School in Duluth (1907).[35]

Also, morale declined among the Brothers. Perseverance was hurt; at CBC in Saint Louis the attrition rate was twice as high during the Latin restriction as the years before. A clear twenty-five percent of the Brothers who had taught at CBC between 1898 and 1926 withdrew from the order. Several left to study for the priesthood. [36]

Though the French Brothers had hoped to lay the question to rest, Latin continued to be an issue. In 1907 the American bishops appealed to Rome only to receive another rejection. In 1908 Archbishop Riordon tried again, using new tactics and arguments. He was rebuffed. Again in 1913 he tried, this time appealing to the congregation of Religious rather than the *Propoganda*[sic] *Fide.* The California prelate took this tack because the United States had been taken off the list of mission countries in 1908 and he would be thus freed from having to work through the hostile *Propaganda Fide*.

Much to the surprise of all parties, the Congregation of Religious granted Archbishop Riordon permission to have Latin taught in the Brothers' college in San Francisco. Unaware of the circumstances of the affair, this body had effectively nullified years of effort on the behalf of the French Brothers. The contest which followed reveals the byzantine complexity of papal politics.

The French superiors countered by informing Teodoro Cardinal Valfre di Bonzo, the Prefect of the Congregation of the Religious, of the opposition to the ruling. Clearly embarrassed by their ignorance of the issue, the members of the Congregation of Religious wished to rescind their permission but could not find a graceful way of doing so. While they were wrestling with this problem word came to the superiors that a conspiracy of American Brothers advocating secession had come to light.

A General Chapter in that same year, 1913, had awakened an independence movement among the Christian Brothers in the Midwest that came to center around Archbishop John Glennon. Brother Lawrence Sixtus, President of Christian Brothers College, staged a meeting between Archbishop Glennon and the Provincial of the Saint Louis District, Brother Emery Ildefonsus. It was prearranged that Brother Lawrence would request permission for a major fund drive for CBC and that the prelate, in front of the Provincial, would refuse on the grounds that the classics were no longer taught at the college. The hope was to impress Brother Emery enough that he would write the French superiors that the work of the Brothers would be doomed in America if the Latin order was not reversed.[37]

Further encouragement to the Archbishop came from Brother Hubert Lewis, respected science professor at CBC. From Memphis came a letter pledging Brother Leander William, Hubertus Mark, Henry William, and John Berchmans to separation from the European Regime. "We are delighted," they wrote, "to learn that the movement has the approval of several Archbishops and

Bishops, particularly of your Grace." They ended their note, "…we trust that you will be able to carry it (movement to separation) to a successful issue.[38]

Most stringent of all was Brother Leopold Julian. He spoke of "certain death as an organization" and that the Brothers were "in a worse condition than we were twenty years ago." In the eyes of Brother Leopold, the drop in new vocations to the Brotherhood and the increased withdrawals stemmed from the Latin Questions and its rendering impotent the vital work of the Brothers.

Brother Leopold ended with words of separation and a sincere belief that a new vibrant order of American Christian Brothers might spring up in the soil of the New World.

> Our only hope lies in complete separation from the Superiors who lend a deaf ear to the almost unanimous voice of the American Brothers and the hierarchy for reform. Complete separation seems chimerical to me. The old men would look with disfavor on such a move...
>
> But the workers-the American-born, the young generation- who look forward with awe at the impending disaster that is inevitable and the consequent disgrace before the public; these, one and all, are heart and soul for change. Change, complete, if possible, but change, even it if be but thirty or fifty to start anew and build up an organization worthy of the ambitions of "young America," an organization that will fit its members, intellectually and spiritually by long years of study and prayer to do battle for God and Country.[39]

Proof of this conspiracy fell into the hands of the American superiors when a letter was sent to Brother Joseph Fenlon in California inviting him to join the group and even to sign an oath of loyalty. Instead the director of Saint Vincent's Orphanage turned the letter and oath over to his superiors. Brother Emery also sent proofs adding, "Since writing the above I have received the names of 23 Brothers who are in the above oath bound cabal."[40]

The exposure of the movement put a powerful weapon into the hands of the French superiors who easily persuaded the discipline-conscious curial officials that compromise in San Francisco could break down their authority everywhere. By April 1914 the Congregation of Religious suspended their permission to Riordon. The archbishop remained undaunted. He sent his auxiliary bishop, Edward J. Hanna, to Rome where, in the summer of 1914, Hanna outmaneuvered the curia and received permission for the Latin studies from Pope Pius X during a private audience. This move was nearly checked when Pius died and, as the permission was only verbal, the agreement died with him. Nonetheless, Pius successor, Benedict XV, agreed to abide by his predecessor's verbal permission.

As Europe descended into the nightmare of the First World War the French superiors were still fretting over this curriculum argument. Relief finally came to them when they learned of the death of the seventy-three-year-old Archbishop Riordon. The old opponent out of the way, the French rested secure for the next five years. The Latin Question, they believed, had been answered once and for all.

How wrong they were became apparent in 1920 when Edward Hanna, another old foe, came to Rome again to seek permission for the classics at Sacred Heart College. He had succeeded Riordon but had taken five years to get his diocese into order. Promising to have the forbidden language taught off-campus by non-Brother professors, he won permission from Benedict XV. When the superiors monitored the Sacred heart [sic] experiment, they discovered that Hanna was interpreting his permission liberally and applying it to all of the Brothers' schools in his diocese. Again swords were drawn in the offices of the curia, but now the French found that even the pope was asking embarrassing questions. Why does this great and revered Order of Teachers oppose the teaching of the Church's official language in their schools? On 23 August, 1921 Benedict re-affirmed his permission to Archbishop Hanna and agreed with Hanna's interpretation that it should be diocese-wide. Curial friends of the superiors let then [sic] know that Benedict would show similar favor to requests by other American bishops. The superiors began to read the handwriting on the wall.

When the General Chapter of 1923 was held, despite the best efforts of the French to keep the Latin Question off the agenda, the topic was unavoidable. Brother Imier, the Superior General since 1913, received a communication from Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, expressing the wishes of the Pontiff that the classics be taught by the Brothers. At last, under direct intervention by the Pope, the decision of the General Chapter of 1897 was reversed in the Chapter of 1923. Classical curriculum was restored to the Brothers' schools.

The previous quarter century had tried the souls of the American Christian Brothers. Despite dislocations and loss of schools, defections within their ranks. and even the temptation of secession, most had remained loyal to their international Society. Their obedience proved stronger than their ambition.

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[1] Chief among the sources on the Latin Question are William J. Battersby's *The Christian Brothers in the United States: 1900-1925*, (Winona, Minnesota: Saint Mary's College Press, 1968), Brother Angelus Gabriel's *The Christian Brothers in the United States*; 1848-1948, (New York: Declan X. McMullen Company, 1948), Brother Hubert Gerard's *Mississippi Vista*: *1849-1949*, Saint Louis: Mulligan Printing and Publishing Company, 1948), Ronald Isetti's *Called to Pacific: 1868-1944*, (Moraga, California: St. Mary's College of California. 1979), and the present author's *Devolution of Christian Brothers College*, (Saint Louis: CBCHS Press, 1980).
[2] This trend had been opposed earlier by the *petites ecoles* of Port Royale and De La Salle was not one to shun a good idea, even if it came from Jansenists.
[3] Brother Angelus Gabriel, FSC, *The Christian Brothers in the United States*, p. 479.
[4] William J. Battersby, *The Christian Brothers in the United States*, p. 8.
[5] Brother Angelus Gabriel, FXC, *The Christian Brothers in the United States*, p. 130.
[6] Ibid., p. 483.
[7] Ibid., p.484.
[8] William J. Battersby, *The Christian Brothers in the United States*, p. 31.

[9] These were the Reverend Jeremiah J. Harty, Archbishop of Omaha, Most Reverend Joseph Chartrand, Bishop of Indianapolis, Most Reverend John J. Hennessy, Bishop of Wichita, and Right Reverend James Schwebach, Bishop of La Crosse.
[10] John Tracy Ellis, *American Catholicism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1956). p. 86.
[11] Brother Angelus Gabriel, FSC, *The Christian Brothers in the United States*, p. 485.
[12] William J. Battersby, *The Christian Brothers in the United States*, p. 19.
[13] Ibid.
[14] *Capitual Register*, p. 439, as cited in ibid., p. 23.
[15] Ibid., p. 28.
[16] Wallace Thornton, "The Persecution of the Christian Brothers," *The Independent*, pp. 2316-18 1901. as cited in ibid., pp. 40-41.
[17] lbid., p.42
[18] Ibid., p. 45.
[19] Ibid., p. 46.
[20] *Sunday Times Herald*, Chicago, 22 January 1899, as cited in ibid., p. 46.
[21] *History of St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute*, MS, p. 98. St. Joseph's Institute Archives, Buffalo, New York, as cited in ibid., p. 46.
[22] Letter preserved in Saint Louis Archdiocese Chancery Office, as cited in ibid., p. 116.
[23] Document by Brother Chrysostom preserved in New York District Archives, Washington, D.C., as cited in ibid., p. 52.
[24] Ibid., p. 53. "Furthermore, on leaving the United States for Rome, where he was to receive the cardinal's hat in November, he had accepted $1,000 from the Jesuits on the understanding that he would further their wishes and interests." Battersby cites as reference for this remark J.T. Ellis' Documents of American Catholic History, though there is no reference to a Jesuit-Christian Brother rivalry in this source. Also cited are the letters of Archbishop Ireland of Saint Paul, Minnesota, from 1892 to 1900. These letters are preserved at the Saint Paul Archdiocesan Archives at the Seminary of Saint Paul, Saint Paul, Minnesota. The present author combed these letters, finding many references to Satolli and to the Jesuits, many of these being uncomplimentary, but none intimating a $1,000 bribe.
[25] "Text of the Appeal of the Four Metropolitans to the Holy See," Monsignor Denis O'Connell Papers, Richmond Diocesan Archives, Richmond, Virginia, as cited in ibid., p. 55.
[26] Ibid., p. 84.
[27] Ibid., p. 90.
[28] Letter of Brother Quintinian to Brother Gabriel Marie, Superior General dated 25 March. 1898, New York District Archives, as cited in ibid., p. 90.
[29] Wallace Thornton. The Independent, pp. 2316-18, as cited in ibid., p. 92.
[30] Ibid., p. 93.
[31] Letter of Brother Quintinian to Brother Justin, dated 21 September. 1898, New York District Archives. as cited in ibid., pp. 99-100.
[32] Letter of Brother Christian to Brother Quintinian, dated Ammendale, 15 March, 1899, New York District Archives, as cited in ibid., pp. 158-159.
[33] Rev. Brother Potamian. "Apostles of Youth: Life Sketches of Noted Christian Brothers, Rev. Brother Potamian," Number 9 (New York: n. p.1920), p. 15.
[34] William J. Battersby, *The Christian Brothers in the United States*, p. 157.
[35] lbid., p. 259.

[36] Michael J. Witt, FSC. *Devolution of Christian Brothers College*, p. 121.
[37] lbid., p. 135.
[38] Letter of Brothers Leander William, Hubertus Mark, Henry William, and John Berchmans to Archbishop Glennon, undated, Saint Louis Archdiocesan Archives.
[39] Letter of Brother Leopold Julian to Archbishop Glennon, dated 10 January 1914, Saint Louis Archdiocesan Archives.
[40] Letter of Brother Emery to Brother Beneze Thomas, 29 March 1914, Archives of the Procurator General at the Christian Brothers Generalate, Rome, as cited in Ronald E. Isetti, *Called to the Pacific*, p. 181.