



Religious Schooling in America: Private Education and Public Life

Steven L. Jones

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Advocates of religious schooling have frequently had to answer the charge that what they supported was un-American. In a book that is more than just a history, Jones tries to make sense of that charge by tracing the development of religious schooling in America over the last 125 years. He explores the rationale for religious schooling on the part of those who choose it for their children and in terms of its impact on communities, and he considers the arguments of those who criticize such schools for undermining efforts to promote national unity. The book focuses on the gradual embrace of sectarian schooling by different religious communities in America, particularly Catholics, Jews, and later, conservative Protestants (mainly in the form of homeschooling). It also considers Muslim schools, not currently a force in private schooling or the subject of much debate, but perhaps next in line to make their case for a place in America's educational landscape.

Near the end of the 19th century, publicly financed, publicly administered schooling emerged as the default educational arrangement for American children. But this supremacy has not gone unchallenged. The sectarian schools that, in fact, predate public education in America have survived, even thrived, over the past century. Multiple religious communities, including those that opposed sectarian schooling in earlier generations, have now embraced it for their children.

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