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The Influence of James Hubert Blenk on Catholic Education in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1885-1917.

Mary Bernardine Hill

Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF NEW ORLEANS, 1885–1917.

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THE INFLUENCE OF JAMES HUBERT BLENK ON CATHOLIC EDUCATION

IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS, 1885-1917

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in

The Department of Education

by

Sister Mary Bernardine Hill, M.S.C.
B.A., Our Lady of Holy Cross College, 1946
M.A., Notre Dame University, 1956
January, 1964
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ABSTRACT

Catholic education in the Archdiocese of New Orleans antedates the establishment of the Archdiocese itself. Whereas the Archdiocese was not established until 1850, the first Catholic school had been founded in 1725.

With the passing years various Religious Orders entered the Archdiocese to engage in the works of education. Private institutions built and financed mainly by these men and women bore the major burden of Catholic education in Louisiana. However, the methods, materials, and techniques they employed were those of the various European countries from which they came, thus creating a diversified educational set-up in the Archdiocese.

A period of 181 years elapsed before anything was accomplished that would provide the unifying bond among these institutions. With the advent of James Hubert Blenk as Archbishop of New Orleans in 1906, the first steps were taken to standardize and coordinate the Archdiocesan parochial school system. This study is an attempt to provide its readers with the scope of the work of Archbishop Blenk in this important undertaking.
In obtaining data for this study, the writer examined the personal correspondence, sermons and pastoral letters of the Archbishop, as well as newspapers and other documents published between 1906 and 1917, now housed in the Archdiocesan Archives in New Orleans. Manuscript materials and annals of the various Religious Orders have also been surveyed for pertinent information. Furthermore, the writer did research in the archives of the Marist Seminary in Washington, D. C., and held interviews with acquaintances of the Archbishop to determine the extent of his influence in educational circles before he became Archbishop. From these sources the greater part of the data necessary for the compilation of this research study was obtained.

As one critically examines these sources he finds that Archbishop Blenk's success in the establishment of the first Catholic School Board in the Archdiocese of New Orleans was not achieved in a vacuum. While his predecessors had taken no definite steps to systematize Catholic education in their province, they had supplied several predisposing conditions. In conformity with the Church Councils held in Baltimore, efforts had been made to curb the growth of private schools and to encourage the establishment of parochial schools. Added impetus was given this endeavor when each ecclesiastical
parish was converted into an autonomous unit, an arrangement which enabled each pastor to set up educational facilities according to the needs and means of the parish.

Following these developments, there was needed an individual with the ability to bring these separate units into a coordinated whole. This work Archbishop Blenk was prepared to do, for not only had he the dynamic qualities of character to accomplish this task, but his years as professor and then as president of Jefferson College had marked him as one of the great educators of his era.
CHAPTER I

EDUCATION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS

PRIOR TO 1906

... There is nothing upon which the establishment of a colony more essentially depends than upon the education of the young. ... Father Raphael

During the first two decades of the eighteenth century, French Colonial Louisiana, which embraced the whole Mississippi Valley from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, counted only a handful of settlements destined to remain historically significant. Among these was New Orleans, See city of the future Archdiocese of New Orleans, from which center, for more than a century and a half, would radiate both ecclesiastical and civil authority.

I. HIGHLIGHTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS BETWEEN 1725 AND 1860

The Diocese of New Orleans in Louisiana, the second oldest in the United States, was established on April 25, 1793,

by Pope Pius VI at the request of Charles IV, King of Spain. Originally its boundaries included the entire Louisiana Purchase and the Floridas. From this extensive territory eight Archdioceses and sixty dioceses have subsequently been carved,\(^2\) New Orleans itself being numbered among the former since July 19, 1850. Today, the Archdiocese occupies only the extreme southeast portion of the State of Louisiana. However, since the Diocese of Lafayette was erected only in 1918 and that of Baton Rouge in 1961, both these territories will be included in this study.

**Catholic Education in New Orleans under French Rule**

Catholicity was brought to Louisiana by the first white men to trod her soil. Founded and colonized by Catholic France and Spain, the nomenclatures of her parishes, towns, bayous, and streets bear witness to both the nationality and religion of her early settlers.

Secular clergy from the Seminary in Quebec and from the Paris Foreign Seminary began their labors among the people of the Southland as early as 1699. They were joined in 1700 by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) who built the

first Catholic Church in the State at Bayou Goula.3 From 1717 on, the Company of the Indies sent over thousands of colonists each year and arranged with the Capuchin Fathers to attend to the spiritual needs of the settlers and with the Jesuits to civilize and Christianize the Indians.4

The Capuchin school. Colonization now began in earnest. Families began to be stabilized; permanent settlements sprang up; and, as the population increased, the need for schools became clearly evident. The Capuchin Fathers who had been given charge of the Saint Louis Parish Church in New Orleans now started to petition the Company of the Indies for the funds necessary to establish a school for boys. After many endeavors, and weary of having their request ignored, they took matters into their own hands. Accordingly, the priests purchased the site now numbered 617-619 St. Ann Street on which was standing a small frame house erected by one of the first settlers in French Colonial New Orleans. Here they opened "the first regularly established school for boys in the French colony, not only the present state of Louisiana,


4News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], January 13, 1912.
but perhaps in the entire Mississippi Valley.⁵

Although the exact date of the opening of the school is not certain, the earliest reference to it is made in a letter from Father Raphael, superior of the Capuchin missions in Louisiana, to the ecclesiastical director of the Company of the Indies, Abbe Gilles Bernard Raguet. The letter is dated September 15, 1725.⁶ To this official, whose company directed all the affairs of Louisiana, he wrote:

I have just made an establishment for a little school at New Orleans. To direct it I have found a man who knows Latin, Mathematics, drawing, singing, and whose handwriting is fairly good.⁷

The teacher is identified as a lay brother, St. Julien, who had been recruited to assist the original schoolmaster, Pierre Fleurtet, who was also the choirmaster of the church. When question of salary arose, Father Raphael proposed to the Company of the Indies that the sum of money allotted to him for a non-teaching companion be turned over to St. Julien. To this the Company readily agreed, thus providing teachers for the two sections into which the pupils were divided: the


⁶Baudier, op. cit., p. 100.

⁷Wilson, op. cit., p. 11.
advanced who were taught Latin—"the liberal arts"—and the beginners who were taught to read. When Brother St. Julien returned to France in 1727, a student for the priesthood, Frater Cyrille de Rockefort, was sent to serve as teacher at the school. This Frater Cyrille evidently returned to France in 1729; and within a short time all reference to the School disappeared from the records, the last being made in 1731. Thus the efforts of the Capuchin Fathers to provide a Catholic education for the young boys of New Orleans came to naught after a self-sacrificing effort of five or six years.

Concern for girls' education. While the Capuchins had undertaken the task of establishing a boy's school in New Orleans in 1725, it was not until 1727, that a similar effort was made on behalf of the girls. Bienville had hardly taken his position as governor of the colony when he turned his attention to the necessity of every stable community, an educational institution—this time for girls. He commissioned Reverend Ignatius de Beaubois of the Society of Jesus to procure from France a community of religious women to undertake the instruction of the daughters of the colonists as well as the duties of nurses at the hospital to be erected in the

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8Baudier, op. cit., pp. 101-103.
city. Beaubois' choice fell upon the Ursuline nuns who had a splendid reputation in Europe and in Quebec both as teachers and as nurses. There was no difficulty in obtaining the prompt approval of the Company of the Indies and even of Louis XV himself who wrote personally to commend and encourage this undertaking:

His Majesty, wishing to favor everything that can contribute to the relief of the sick and the education of the young, has approved the treaty made between the Company of the Indies and the Ursuline Religious, the intention of His Majesty being that they should enjoy without interference all that has been or shall be granted to them by the said Company. His Majesty takes them under his protection and safeguard, and in proof of his good will has commanded the hastening of the present Letters patent, which he has willed to sign with his own hand.
Fountainbleau, September 18, 1726.

In conformity with their contract, the Religious were to be transported at the cost of the Company, and each received at her departure the sum of five hundred livres. Eight acres conceded to them in New Orleans were to be converted into a plantation capable of supplying their wants and serving as remuneration for their service in the hospital. Until such time as this could be accomplished, each nun was

9Original in Ursuline Convent Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.
to receive six hundred livres a year.\textsuperscript{10}

After a seven months' voyage on the Gironde, during which the passengers suffered from want of fresh water and were threatened by pirates, the brave little band of religious (eight sisters and a postulant) set foot within the present boundaries of the United States. Here they beheld their future charges, "the Colonists, the Indians, and the Negroes gathered in quaint and curious groups beneath the immense trees that overshadowed the scene.\textsuperscript{11}

The Ursulines' school. Although the Ursulines had come to Louisiana primarily to conduct boarding schools to provide education for the daughters of the more well-to-do families, they also opened their doors to day scholars, and organized classes for Negro slave girls and women they instructed in religion. In 1728 they undertook, at the request of the government, the care of orphans not only from New Orleans, but from the surrounding territory as well.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{10}Charles Gayarre, \textit{History of Louisiana, The French Domination} (New Orleans: Jonas A. Gresham, 1879), pp. 377-78.
\item \textsuperscript{11}Address of Albert Biever, S.J., at laying of cornerstone of Ursuline Convent. \textit{The Morning Star} [New Orleans], January 13, 1912.
\item \textsuperscript{12}Baudier, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 105.
\end{itemize}
Thus, the Ursulines became the angels of mercy in the colony, working tirelessly for all, regardless of social standing or race, at the same time serving their God and their people. How they stretched the small appropriation from the French government to carry on their splendid labors is but proof of their devotedness.

Not for ninety-four years would another religious order of women follow in their footsteps, and when they did come, it was the Ursulines, "the first on the battlefield, who generously welcomed and harbored almost all the Religious who settled in Louisiana." That the colonists appreciated the efforts of these religious women during the early days of colonization is evident from a letter of the first bishop of Louisiana, Ignacio Luis y Cardenas, to the Spanish King in 1795.

Excellent results are obtained from the Ursuline convent, in which a great many of the girls in the colony are educated. This institution is a nursery for all that is good and of future matrons who will inculcate in their children the lessons and principles that they imbibe within the sacred walls.

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13Letter of Archbishop Blenk to Ursuline Nuns, 1911, the original of which is in the Ursuline Convent Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.

14Quoted in The Morning Star [New Orleans], January 13, 1912.
Catholic Education under Spanish Rule

In 1763, at the close of the French and Indian War, France was forced almost completely out of North America. Spain came into possession of New Orleans, together with all of Louisiana west of the Mississippi River. Accordingly, on August 10, 1769, General Alexander O'Reilly arrived in New Orleans to assume his duties as governor of the colony. The transfer caused no little apprehension among the Ursuline Sisters who, being French, feared they would not be allowed to continue their ministrations of mercy. The Jesuits had already been suppressed by the government. However, the events accompanying the first months of the Spanish regime left the Sisters undisturbed.¹⁵

Creation of the Diocese of New Orleans. With the coming of the Spanish, the ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the colony had been transferred from French Quebec to the Bishop of the Diocese of Santiago de Cuba.¹⁶ This arrangement did not prove feasible since distance and poor communications hampered the work of the Bishop. To remedy the situation,


¹⁶Baudier, op. cit., p. 179.
Charles IV of Spain petitioned Pope Pius VI to erect a diocese in New Orleans. This the Pontiff did, entitling the newly created diocese the "See of St. Louis in New Orleans." On April 25, 1793, Most Reverend Ignacio Luis Penalver y Cardenas was appointed the first bishop.¹⁷

Educational efforts of the Spanish. One of the Bishop's chief concerns was that of providing education for the youth of the colony. He, therefore, gave his full approval to a Spanish school which had been established in New Orleans in 1772, but it received little encouragement or support from the French parents of the children. Pupils never exceeded thirty in number and sometimes dwindled as low as six. When the school was destroyed in the conflagration that swept a great part of the city in 1788, Don Almonaster y Roxas offered the free use of one of his properties to the Spanish officials. They accepted; but the number of pupils never again exceeded twelve, and this in spite of the fact that six Franciscans had, in the meantime, arrived from Spain to serve as teachers in the school. Instead, the parents of the children preferred to patronize the several private schools taught by Frenchmen. The Spanish school was short-lived, and

¹⁷Ibid., p. 22.
educational opportunity for boys again became non-existent. As for the girls, these were sent to the Ursuline convent where the zealous nuns continued uninterruptedly their splendid labors for Christian education.\footnote{Ibid., p. 217.}

**Conditions between 1801-1815.** In 1801, Bishop Penalver was elevated to the archepiscopate of Guatemala, and the See of New Orleans was again vacant until 1815. Within this period of time, Louisiana gained the status of statehood (1803) and thereby passed under the jurisdiction of the United States. The whole picture was changed. With the transfer of the colony back to France which preceded statehood, and its immediate turning over to the United States, nearly all priests left the country. Dissentions arose and Church activity fell to a low ebb. The Catholics of the diocese of New Orleans were without ecclesiastical and educational leadership within their immediate midst. Bishop Carroll of Baltimore took the new territory under his jurisdiction, but the immensity of the diocese, almost the whole United States, made it impossible for him to govern it properly. In an attempt to remedy the situation, he sent Father William Dubourg to New Orleans to act as administrator. Troubles
again arose between clergy and laity, and in 1815 the administrator, at Bishop Carroll's request was named Bishop of Louisiana.¹⁹

**Educational Conditions during Early Statehood**

Catholics realized that there would no longer be any government subsidies to support their schools. They would no longer be able to depend upon the "solicitude and piety of the King" for the maintenance of their parishes. As a result of this new arrangement, there was little initiative on the part of Catholics for sometime after 1803 toward establishing any schools. It is not surprising, then, to find little attention devoted to Catholic education during nearly twenty years.²⁰

**Father Martial's school.** Nevertheless, Bishop Dubourg began at once to labor incessantly for the Church in Louisiana. He obtained Vincentian Fathers and other zealous priests to

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erect schools in New Orleans, especially for boys. The first of these was established by Father Bertrand Martial, a French priest who came to Louisiana (1818) to devote his energies to the far-flung missions of the Diocese of New Orleans which then comprised the whole Louisiana Territory. While waiting for Bishop Dubourg to assign him to one of the churches or missions in the North, he was struck by the ignorance of so many children in New Orleans and decided to begin catechism classes for the boys. The classes grew into school-house proportions, and when the enrollment had increased sufficiently, Father Martial rented a house on Chartres Street. Later he moved his school below the city to more spacious quarters, approximately the place where the Ursuline Sisters later established their second convent. Although Father Martial experienced financial difficulties, he managed to collect enough money to keep the school going; and when faced with a larger number of pupils than he himself could conveniently handle, he resorted to the method of teaching in vogue on the European continent at that time—the Lancastrian system.

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21Lee, op. cit., p. 27.

22Prendergast, op. cit., p. 6.
Bishop Dubourg heartily approved of this institution, and gave it his full support. Nevertheless, as far as can be determined, Father Martial's school seems to have closed its doors permanently in 1824 or a little later.\(^{23}\)

**Father Portier's school.** A second boy's school was begun by Father Michael Portier, who also came from France to Louisiana to dedicate his life to the spread of the Catholic faith. Since the Ursulines had moved to their new convent (1824), they placed the old building at the disposition of the Bishop. The latter promptly decided to carry out his long-cherished dream—the establishment of a boys' boarding college and day school in New Orleans. He assigned Father Portier to the task which included remodeling the old convent so as to provide adequate classrooms and dormitory facilities. This involved considerable expense, and Father Portier himself paid the cost of classroom equipment and other appurtenances to the amount of $3,000. As did his predecessor, Father Portier also employed the Lancastrian system of teaching, since pay for teachers and professors and allowances for food and lodging were quite high at that time.\(^{24}\)

\(^{23}\)Ibid., p. 6.

\(^{24}\)Baudier, op. cit., pp. 274, 293-94.
Financial difficulties. In a short time the enrollment in this school had passed the one hundred mark. Bishop Dubourg was jubilant. However, once again the financial picture was brought into sharp focus. The Bishop had depended for some time on funds that he had been promised by the mission organization of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, founded a few years previous to this time in France. These funds were not always sufficient for the needs of the growing school, so the Bishop appealed for help to the group of the laity assigned as wardens to St. Louis Cathedral. This group, who controlled the finances of the Bishop's own church, contributed towards the education of some poor children and paid a pro rata up to $20 for furnishing heat in the classrooms for the children they recommended. They also gave money ($40) for prize books for the children at the commencement exercises. In return for these favors, they requested reports on the progress made by the children. Just how much success Father Portier met in the new boys' school can be gleaned from a letter of Bishop Dubourg:

The college prospers so far as day pupils are concerned, who are very numerous, but the locality is worth nothing for boarders. We number nevertheless thirty-six boarders; day pupils number from

But Bishop Dubourg was not satisfied with a school only at New Orleans. His paternal goodness extended to the boys beyond the limits of the city. His intention was to erect such an establishment next to the Church of the Assumption at Lafourche. This plan failed to materialize; no country schools for boys were ever built during his episcopate. In fact, even Father Portier's school was discontinued in 1826. In that year, when Father was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Alabama, he was obliged to give up the school and prepare for his new office. He sold the furnishings to the Bishop, who in turn appointed Father Desmoulins president of the school. Shortly after, due to unfortunate and distressing circumstances surrounding his office, Bishop Dubourg resigned and returned to France. Without the support of the Bishop, it became extremely difficult to get people to help a Catholic school, and Father Desmoulin's school was obliged to close. \(^2^7\)

Madames of the Sacred Heart. Thus, a second effort to establish a Catholic boys' school during this period was

\(^2^6\)Minutes of Meeting of Margulliers of St. Louis Cathedral, St. Louis Cathedral Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.

\(^2^7\)Baudier, op. cit., p. 294.
unsuccessful; however, several educational institutions for girls were begun, many of which have continued to the present. In 1817 Bishop Dubourg invited the Madames of the Sacred Heart, a religious order from France, to open a convent school for girls in his diocese. However, it was not until 1821, that two Religious Sisters, Eugenie Aude and Eugenie Layton, arrived in Grand Coteau, Louisiana, from Florissant, Missouri, to take possession of the loghouse, 55 feet square, and the one-story buildings that were to serve as convent and school. The school opened in October with five pupils, and by August of the following year, when the school reopened at the end of the summer vacation, the faculty had increased to eight members and the enrollment had reached eighteen boarders. Thus began the history of the Religious of the Sacred Heart in Louisiana in the educational field, a work made possible by the generosity of Mrs. Charles Smith, a pious woman and prominent landowner who had donated the property and buildings for the school and convent.28

The Academy of the Sacred Heart, as it came to be called, was a private undertaking. The church parish gave nothing towards its up-keep, and it was up to the Sisters to raise funds necessary for their own sustenance and to maintain

28 Ibid., pp. 286-87.
their buildings. Nothing daunted, and despite the hardships entailed, the Sisters cheerfully accepted the task of opening a second school in 1824, this time in Convent, Louisiana. The new establishment, called St. Michael, won instant favor and prospered far better than even the fondest expectations, notwithstanding that it, too, was a private school, maintained by the Sisters, not the parishioners.  

The Sisters of Loretto. It was also Bishop Dubourg's plan to establish a convent school at Assumption (Plattenville) so as to provide a Catholic educational institution for the children of the many planters of that section. Accordingly, he asked the Sisters of Loretto, an order founded in Kentucky, to staff the new institution. Early in 1826, the superior, Sister Johanna Miles, arrived with two companions, Sisters Regina Cloney and Rose Elder. This school, first in the Bayou Lafourche section, remained under the care of the Loretta Sisters for three years only. Because they lacked teachers who could speak and teach French, dissatisfaction developed, and the Religious of the Sacred Heart were

29Notes from the Archives of the Academy of the Sacred Heart, Convent, Louisiana.
asked to take over the school. Anxious to be of service in providing educational opportunity for the children of Louisiana, the Religious of the Sacred Heart readily acquiesced. However, the financial burden proved too heavy, since here, too, they were compelled to finance their own school. Within a few years, they also were obliged to give up the school (1832).

Catholic Education between 1829-1833

In 1829, Bishop Rosati, who succeeded Bishop Dubourg as administrator, requested the Sisters of Charity of Emmitsburg, Maryland, to open a house in New Orleans. This difficult task was entrusted to Sister Regina Smith and Sister Emily, who arrived in New Orleans to discover that the Bishop had left the city and his best laid plans for their reception had failed. Nowhere did they find encouragement or help except from the ever-hospitable Ursuline nuns who lodged the depressed and neglected Sisters.  

The Poydras Asylum. Just how close the people of New Orleans came to losing the Sisters of Charity is realized

\[30\] Register, Church of the Assumption, Plattenville, Louisiana.

\[31\] Baudier, op. cit., p. 311.
when one reads in the Annals of this Congregation of the near abandonment of the mission by the first two courageous missionaries who were on the verge of returning to Emmitsburg when an unexpected occurrence changed the situation. The Poydras Asylum, then under the direction of a number of lay women, was badly in need of new management. A group of these ladies, practically all Protestants, appealed to the Sisters to take charge of the institution. With their Superior's permission, Sisters Regina and Emily undertook this great work in 1830. It was a difficult and delicate task; but the prudence and firmness, faithfulness and devotion to duty gained for the Sisters the esteem and confidence of all. 32 "Thus," says Baudier, "under Protestant auspices in a nonsectarian institution, the Sisters of Charity began their apostolate in New Orleans."

St. Patrick's Orphanage and St. Simeon's school. In 1833 the original missionaries of the Daughters of Charity were reinforced by the addition of seventeen new Sisters to their number. It was then they opened St. Patrick's Orphanage in a reputedly haunted house, the Withers, an old plantation home facing the banks of the Mississippi. Later, after

establishing the New Orleans Female Orphan Asylum (1840), they opened a day school to accommodate these children as well as others who desired to attend. This was the first Catholic school in what is now known as the "uptown" section of New Orleans. Here again was a private venture. The parish contributed nothing and the Sisters had to finance themselves as best they could, except for a little aid from Bishop Rosati. Notwithstanding the hardships suffered and the seemingly unrewarded efforts which accompanied many of the ventures, the Sisters of Charity undertook the direction of a finishing school for young ladies in 1860. St. Simeon's Select School for Girls and Young Ladies of the city became one of the most famous schools conducted by the Sisters of Charity, and despite the fact that it was a private school and the total responsibility of the Sisters, continued uninterrupted until 1912 to provide Catholic education for the young ladies of New Orleans.33

Sisters of Mount Carmel. During the years between 1830 and 1833 the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of New Orleans came under the direction of Bishop Leo De Neckere, a zealous young prelate, whose ill health and early death

33Ibid.
prevented the accomplishment of his great desire to extend the work of the Church in Louisiana. Nevertheless, as has been mentioned previously, it was during his episcopate that the Sisters of Charity expanded their educational labors in New Orleans. It was also during this period, and at the invitation of Bishop De Neckere, that the Sisters of Mount Carmel left Tours, France, in 1833, to begin their highly successful work in Louisiana. Upon their arrival in New Orleans, Mother Theresa of the Cross Chevrel and Mother St. Augustine Clerc were told the sad news that Bishop De Neckere had fallen a victim to yellow fever, then raging in the city. Without delay, they continued their journey to Plattenville, the mission for which they had been previously destined. Within the first year the Sisters undertook the erection of a building to be used for both resident and lay students, a labor that met with the satisfaction of patrons and pupils alike. In fact, so gratifying were the efforts of these Sisters that Bishop Anthony Blanc, the successor of Bishop De Neckere, proposed to Mother Theresa that the Sisters should open a school for colored girls in the city of New Orleans. This school, located near St. Augustine's Church, had formerly been in the charge of the Ursuline nuns who had been obliged to abandon this mission when they left their convent on
Chartres Street for the new location in the lower part of the city. \(^{34}\)

**Diocesan Education under Bishop Antoine Blanc**

When Bishop Blanc assumed charge of the diocese (1835), Louisiana had four Catholic schools for girls, but none for boys. Since he had labored in the diocese for eighteen years previous to his appointment as Bishop, he was well acquainted with its needs. Several years prior to this time, Catholics had formed the "Incorporated New Orleans Free-School Association," and in 1833 they petitioned the State Legislature to aid in the maintenance of religious schools in order that they might "reconcile the advantages of education for their children with the rights and duties of their conscience." Opposition from the Know-Nothing party, which unfortunately counted many Catholics in its ranks, brought the Association's efforts to naught. \(^{35}\)

*First pastoral letter.* Realizing the necessity of forming the rising generation to Christian principles, Archbishop Blanc's letter of 1835 bespeaks his solicitude for

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\(^{34}\)Annals of the Sisters of Mount Carmel, New Orleans, Louisiana.

the children and youth of his flock:

The greater number of you will no doubt tell us that you have no Catholic school within your reach, but might we not ask of you whether you have done whatever lay within your power to procure the establishment of truly Catholic schools? Alas! Pious masters are wanting; Catholic schools do not exist. . . . It is evident that our fellow laborers in the holy ministry, absorbed by painful and multiplied labors which frequently wear them out prematurely, are unable with all their zeal, to attend sufficiently to the religious education of children.36

Jesuits re-established. Accordingly, he appealed to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, and in 1837, eight Jesuit priests arrived to re-establish the Order in Louisiana. The Bishop contributed several thousand dollars towards the establishment of a college for boys, and St. Charles College was opened at Grand Coteau in 1838, followed in 1849 by the College of the Immaculate Conception in the city of New Orleans. This latter was the predecessor of Jesuit High School and Loyola University.37 With these two institutions were laid the permanent foundations for the Catholic education of boys in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.


Work of other Religious. In 1847, the Redemptorist priests answered Bishop Blanc's appeal for laborers for the numerous German, Irish, and French immigrants in the city of New Orleans.\(^{38}\) Within the year following their arrival, Brother Louis taught a one-room school, one of the first, if not the first, parochial schools in Louisiana. Later the Redemptorist Fathers succeeded in obtaining a group of School Sisters of Notre Dame to take charge of Saint Joseph's German Orphan Asylum and to teach in the newly erected Saint Mary's Assumption School.\(^{39}\)

Other religious Sisterhoods hearkened to the call of the zealous Archbishop even though New Orleans seems to have been held in special abhorrence because of the yellow fever. In 1848, the Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross took charge of the domestic affairs of Saint Mary's Orphan Boys Asylum. Their duties increased until the Sisters gradually undertook the educational responsibility of their charges. In 1851 the Marianites opened a boarding school for girls in the city of New Orleans—the precursor of the well-known Academy of the


\(^{39}\)Baudier, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 399.
Holy Angels. During the same year the Christian Brothers and the Brothers of Holy Cross, after an invitation from the Bishop, began work in behalf of the boys of the diocese.

**Concern for the colored.** Last but not least to claim the attention of Bishop Blanc were the colored, whether slave or free, by his encouragement and support of the newly founded religious community of Negro women, the Sisters of the Holy Family. These religious dedicated themselves "to care of old, indigent colored women, the instruction of slaves, and the teaching of catechism to children."

Such, then, were the beginnings of Catholic education in Louisiana—education which had been provided primarily by private Catholic schools and academies. The next half century would see the beginning and expansion of the parochial school system according to the decrees of the Plenary Councils of Baltimore. The new arrangement was many years in its development, but finally led to the Archdiocesan School System as it exists today in New Orleans.

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40 "Chronicles" (New Orleans: Marianites of Holy Cross, 1851), p. 10.

II. STATUS OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION FROM 1860-1906

Shortly after the death of Archbishop Blanc in 1860, Most Reverend John Marie Odin, C.M., was appointed his successor. On his advent to the Archdiocese, the newly-named Archbishop saw the war clouds gathering all too swiftly, and before his arrival in New Orleans on Pentecost Sunday, 1861, the cleavage between North and South had been consummated. All too familiar with the varying crises of war times, Archbishop Odin set about the task of financial reorganization of the diocese and, despite the destruction prevalent on all sides, undertook the work of expanding the influence of the Church by the erection of churches and schools. This he did in conformity with the promulgations of the Plenary Council of Baltimore whose sessions he had attended in 1866. These decrees exhorted the Bishops and pastors to build and equip parochial schools, to make provisions for the religious instruction of Catholic children attending public schools, and to protect in reformatories and industrial schools the wayward of their flocks.42

42 Concilie Plenarii Baltimorensis II, In Ecclesia Metropolitana Baltimorei, A Die VII ad Diem Octobris, A.D. MDCCCLXVI, Habita et a Side Apostolic Recogniti, Decrets. Baltimoraw: Joannes Murphy, MDCCCLXVIII.
Conditions Immediately Following the Civil War

Archbishop Odin's zealous and fatherly heart was grieved at the plight in which the War had left the emancipated Negro. Therefore, before leaving Baltimore he engaged the members of a Negro Sisterhood, the Oblate Sisters of Providence, to teach in his Archdiocese. Their efforts in New Orleans were short-lived, however; and in 1873 lack of funds forced the Sisters to return to Baltimore.43

His determination persisted despite apparent failure, and other religious communities, particularly the Madames of the Sacred Heart, obtained permission to open schools for Negro children. However, the heightened race prejudice and poverty that were consequences of the war, supplemented by the reconstruction policy of the North, left practically unrealized Archbishop Odin's most cherished ambition, the education of the Negro race.

His efforts on behalf of the white children, too, were curtailed by the ravages of war. The Sisters had been forced to abandon their classrooms and become nurses, cooks, and providers for the starving soldiers, whether Gray or Blue. Several academies were converted into military barracks and

the Christian Brothers' school at Baton Rouge became a hospital. Although the Jesuit College at Grand Coteau suffered severely, it enjoyed the singular privilege of being the only one of the Confederacy west of the Mississippi not closed during the War.44

Jefferson College reopened. Within a few months after the cessation of hostilities, the Archbishop set about to remedy the deplorable conditions. In 1864 he procured the services of the Marist Fathers who took over Jefferson College which had been operated under secular jurisdiction before the War. Shortly thereafter the Dominican Sisters, the Christian Brothers and the Brothers of the Sacred Heart added their efforts to those of already established communities who had been forced to educational inactivity during the War.

Archbishop Odin did not long survive the war years. Enfeebled in health by nine years' administrative duties during most troublous times, he died while visiting in his native city Ambierle, France, 1870.

Pronouncements of Archbishop Napoleon Joseph Perche.
In keeping with the policies of his predecessor, the cause of

44Alcee Fortier, *Louisiana Studies, Literature, Customs and Dialects, History and Education* (New Orleans: F. F. Hansell and Brothers, 1894), p. 293.
Catholic education was of prime importance to Archbishop Napoleon Joseph Perche, the next Archbishop of New Orleans. He crusaded in season and out of season for parochial schools and Catholic education. From his pastoral letters it is evident that he would have the future population of Louisiana "good citizens and gallant patriots who would reflect credit alike on their country and religion." He denounced Godless education; he endeavored to have enacted legislation by which Catholic schools should not be debarred from a just participation in the benefits accruing from the taxes paid; he pressed the pastors and congregations to establish schools and to see that the children attended such schools.

Entreaty gave way to command; words to action. Within a decade of years the Archbishop was able to write in a pastoral to his flock:

"... The priests of our diocese ... are convinced of the necessity of Catholic schools; they are all fully alive to the fact, that without a parish school, a parish itself is not complete. ... Almost all the churches in the city, new and old, have connected with

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45 Lettre Pastorale et Mandements de Mgr. l'Archeveque de la Nouvelle Orleans pour le Careme de 1872 (New Orleans: Archdiocesan Archives).

them parochial schools. It is for us a peculiar consolation to see such schools multiplying in the rural districts. . . . 47

In the same pastoral, he dwells at length on the difference between instruction and education, exposing the insufficiency of the former. He wrote:

Primary instruction, of which we recognize at once the usefulness and up to a certain degree the necessity, purposes to inform the mind, to extend, enrich, and decorate it; its only influence bears directly upon the intellect, while the aim of education is to furnish the mind of man with all the sound and exact knowledge it ought to possess, to infuse into his heart the pure and noble sentiments, the legitimate and honorable affections with which it ought to glow, and nerve his will with the stern resolve ever to choose the good and true, and use his body and his senses which pertain to it as simply ancillary to his immortal soul. Education, to be complete, must take hold of the whole man. 48

Response of the clergy and religious. That the clergy caught the enthusiasm of their Archbishop is evident from the number of priests who were pleading for religious teachers to staff their parochial schools. Benedictine Sisters from Covington, Kentucky; Sisters of Christian Charity, ousted from Germany by Bismarck's decree of expulsion; and Sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament from France were among the newly arrived religious who began apostolic labors in the New

47*Lettre Pastorale*, loc. cit. 48Ibid.
Orleans Archdiocese during this period. Their schools did much to augment the growing enrollments and expansion of the schools already established. Furthermore, this period witnessed the foundation of a native community under the title of "The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception," the first white Sisterhood founded in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

As has been stated, religious orders had been forced to refuse Archbishop Odin's appeals for help to enable him to conduct a sufficient number of schools to serve adequately the colored race. Now several Sisterhoods extended their apostolate to the Negroes and undertook the work of education among them—the Sisters of St. Joseph in Baton Rouge, the Sisters of Mount Carmel in New Orleans and in New Iberia, and the Marianites of Holy Cross in Plaquemine.

The Holy Family Sisters, in 1876, began their program of institutional child care in the present Saint John Berchman's Orphanage which had been preceded by the Louisiana Orphan Asylum under the auspices of the Gens de Coleur Libres, a volunteer body of lay workers. Two years previous, these Sisters had opened a school in Opelousas, the first mission

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49 "A Short History of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception" (New Orleans: St. Vincent de Paul Convent, n.d.).

50 Information gathered from the Archives of the Communities mentioned above.
house of the Congregation. 51

Archdiocese faced with bankruptcy. Such a program of expansion, coupled with an expenditure of charity lavishly bestowed on institutions, parishes, and individuals in impoverished circumstances, necessarily entailed financial burdens, and before the unsuspecting prelate realized it, the Archdiocese faced bankruptcy. The indebtedness, amounting in 1879 to $600,000, blanched the heart of the venerable Archbishop as he called a halt to practically all expenditures and meditated ways and means of liquidating the debt to prevent disaster and disgrace. The march of expansion had culminated in a Via Crucis for Archbishop Perche. 52

Financial crisis averted. The year 1883 brought to an end the life of this prelate whose ardent zeal in cultivating the harvest committed to his care minimizes the mistakes by which he unwittingly submerged the diocese into colossal debt. The whole ominous burden settled upon the shoulders of his successor, Most Reverend Francis Xavier Leray, who could give


52 Lee, op. cit., pp. 76-77.
little attention to anything except current duties of his office and the liquidation of the enormous liability to which he had fallen heir. As eager as Archbishop Leray was to carry on the expansion and establishment of schools, he was too prudent to attempt anything that entailed adding to the expenses of the Archdiocese. No great building program, nor organizational work, no imposing edifices mark the episcopate of this heroic prelate. His glory is in the sacrifices that he made and his achievement of preserving untarnished the good name of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Effecting a compromise pending Federal receivership in 1885, Archbishop Leray called upon his people to support him. He received such a loyal response from his impoverished flock that within the next two years the debt was reduced by half. Worn out by worry and anxiety his episcopate ended with his death after a brief three years when he was succeeded by Archbishop Francis Janssens.

The Work of Archbishop Francis Janssens

Though the muddled financial affairs of the Archdiocese claimed the primary attention of this Archbishop, two mutually dependent propositions—Catholic education and formation of a

53Baudier, op. cit., p. 306.
native clergy—were the major issues of his short (1888-1897) but fruitful episcopate in Louisiana. 54

**Independent incorporation of parishes.** One of his first official acts in the Archdiocese was the arrangement with the State Legislature of Louisiana for the independent incorporation of every parish—a step necessitated by the financial dilemma of the Archdiocese—but also a step which made possible the erection of parochial schools in many parishes where the priest and people had not taken the initiative heretofore. 55

**Preparatory seminary opened.** A native clergy was Archbishop Janssens' ideal.

Not that I regret having European priests, for I am one myself. . . . But it is an abnormal state of affairs, first because it becomes more and more difficult every day to obtain priests from abroad, and secondly, and above all, because it is an indication of a lack of religious fervor and of a true Christian spirit. 56

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56 "Ordinations at Saint Louis Cathedral," *The Morning Star* [New Orleans], June 5, 1915.
His predecessors—Blanc, Odin, Perche—had established major seminaries, but not one had taken any steps for the erection of a preparatory seminary where those who felt the desire for the priesthood, but who were unable to expend the large sums required to attend college, could get the necessary preliminary courses. That opportunity the Archbishop was determined to provide by erecting a Petit Séminaire at Gessen, near Ponchatoula. Abbot Fintan, a Benedictine from St. Meinred Abbey in Indiana, responded to his urgent request and purchased 2,000 acres of land on which the first modest building was erected—at the expense of the Benedictine Fathers. Its successful career continued until 1899 when lack of Archdiocesan support necessitated a discontinuance of its services.  

Provisions for Negro education. Although more than twenty years had elapsed since the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore had issued its appeal in behalf of the Negro race, provisions meager in comparison with the need had been made for the colored in Louisiana.

There is much to be done for the colored people, the building of new asylums, one for boys and the other for girls, churches and schools. . . . If I

57Baudier, The Catholic Church in Louisiana, p. 476.
had at present $100,000 it would not cover all my plans. Our prospects are not very hopeful; the resources on hand are in no wise adequate. . . .

Through the generosity of Thomy Lafon, a wealthy and devout colored Catholic, Archbishop Janssens was enabled to provide for a great expansion in the work of the Sisters of the Holy Family—the Lafon Boys' Asylum and a special home for reform of Negro girls, under the direction of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, being numbered among them.

He then sought and obtained the financial aid of Mother Katherine Drexel, Foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People, in behalf of the Negroes under his jurisdiction, and turned to Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini to solicit Sisters to aid in the education and Americanization of the many Italian immigrants in New Orleans.

Facilities provided for deaf-mutes. The Catholic deaf mutes, for whom little had been done in Louisiana, now claimed the Archbishop's attention. He established the Deaf-Mute


59 The Morning Star, July 27, 1912.

60 The Morning Star, April 3, 1915.
Institute at Chinchuba, placing the Dominican Sisters in charge. Two years later, forced by circumstances to relinquish their duties, they were replaced by the School Sisters of Notre Dame who have continued this great work, even without remuneration when the indebtedness of the institution would have necessitated its abandonment.  

Organization of Catholic Winter School. The Third Plenary Council, which had assembled in Baltimore in November, 1884, recommended that diocesan examinations for teachers be inaugurated in every diocese of the United States. While Archbishop Janssens did not make practical this recommendation he did become instrumental in organizing the Catholic Winter School in America. This was a four weeks' institute during which three lectures were given each day by prominent educators on Science, Philosophy, Pedagogy, History, and Social Problems. It proved to be one of the most brilliant and cultural movements in the annals of New Orleans. Unfortunately, after several years the Catholic Winter School was discontinued owing to lack of funds.

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Decrease of the Archdiocesan debt. Archbishop Janssens' fervent hope was to accomplish what his predecessors had been unable to do: to free his diocese from the fetters of debt. He himself never accepted any salary; donations he used for the diocese. At the beginning of each year he paid into the diocesan treasury one thousand dollars as his contribution towards the reduction of this deficit. Gradually, the debt fell to a relatively small amount. In fact, it was after he had embarked on a voyage to seek final settlement with creditors abroad that the Archbishop ended his days. While the steamer was still in the Gulf of Mexico, word reached New Orleans that its great spiritual leader had succumbed to heart failure and that his body would be brought back to the city on an inbound ship. Archbishop Janssens had labored for his diocese to the very end. 63 Truly, he had been a good shepherd to his flock. He had done much to promote compliance with the decrees of the Plenary Councils of Baltimore concerning Catholic education, notwithstanding the overriding burden of a debt-ridden diocese. Several schools had been established and some provisions for religious instruction of public school children had been made. He had arranged

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63 Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.
for the incorporation of every parish into a separate unit and had refinanced the Archdiocese. This made possible the growth of parochial schools which began to increase in number as a result of this reorganization. Finally, a first step had been taken towards the establishment of a program of enrichment (if not actual education) for teachers in the schools of the Archdiocese. It would seem that the time was ripe for bringing these several efforts into a coordinated whole, to establish in the Archdiocese of New Orleans the type of school system advocated by the bishops in Council during their meetings in Baltimore. Such, however, was not the case, although the new Archbishop, Louis Placide Chapelle, was a man of scholarly attainments both in sacred and secular sciences. During the many years he was stationed in Washington, D. C., he became a personal friend of Presidents Arthur, Harrison, and Cleveland, as also of many diplomatic representatives of foreign countries. While these relations with our government officials added to the glory and prestige of the Catholic Church in the United States in general, they nevertheless militated to deprive the Archdiocese of New Orleans to a great extent of much of the talent and time of its Archbishop.

64Times Democrat [New Orleans], August 10, 1905.
Louis Placide Chapelle, Archbishop and Diplomat

Shortly after Archbishop Chapelle's installation in the New Orleans Archdiocese, war was declared against Spain by the United States. The peace treaty of 1898, which made Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands United States' possessions and Cuba an American protectorate, necessitated reorganization of ecclesiastical jurisdiction in these islands. Accordingly, the Holy See appointed Archbishop Chapelle, because of his diplomatic knowledge and acquaintances, as Apostolic Delegate to the Philippine Islands. This extra burden necessitated immediate attention and caused long-continued absences from New Orleans, with the result that many of the Archbishop's plans for the development of his diocese were completely frustrated.65

Interest in education. Despite his absences from the city, Archbishop Chapelle retained his deep interest in Catholic education. While he did little to further educational efforts, he could be satisfied with no compromise with regard to compliance with the promulgations of the Plenary Councils concerning the establishment of parochial schools. One

example serves to illustrate this point. Monsignor Gassler, anxious to procure the benefits of instruction in Christian Doctrine for the children in his parish, introduced the Faribault Plan. This plan, which took its name from a town in the Archdiocese of St. Paul, Minnesota, where it had been introduced, provided that Catholic teachers be employed in State-supported schools and be allowed to teach religion in the schools outside of regular hours. Although this arrangement was not deemed ideal, it had been accepted as a partial and temporary solution in parishes unable to support a parochial school.

Rejection of Faribault Plan. The good Monsignor, pastor of Iota, Louisiana, seeing the dire need for schools in his parish but likewise the inability of the parishioners to support a parochial school, appealed to the civil parish school board to establish public schools in which the proposed plan would be allowed to function. The superintendent of public schools acquiesced, and eventually six public schools were opened, each at least partially staffed by Catholic teachers who taught religion to the Catholic students before

or after school hours. When Archbishop Chapelle was informed of the arrangement, he notified Monsignor Gassler that such schools would not be tolerated as substitutes for parochial schools in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, and notwithstanding the pastor's explanations and protests, the schools functioning under the aforesaid organization were discontinued.\textsuperscript{67}

The education of the clergy was a source of great concern to the Archbishop. Shortly after his installation he wrote:

> In our days, particularly, when intelligent people seek for enlightenment concerning Christian Doctrine . . . when so many organs of public opinion misrepresent Catholic teaching, it is no wonder . . . that your Archbishop should be most anxious for the improving of the intellectual level and culture of the clergy, and for taking all means in his power to make the preaching of the Gospel acceptable and of the greatest profit to the people.\textsuperscript{68}

This concern was destined to increase as the year 1899 progressed. Fearful of new debts when the remnant of the diocesan debt ($131,900) had yet to be liquidated, the Archbishop, under the advisement of some of the clergy, notified

\textsuperscript{67}Related by Monsignor Gassler to Roger Baudier. Recorded by Mr. Baudier in the Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.

the superior of the preparatory seminary in July that the financial condition of the diocese was such that he could no longer continue the appropriations for the seminary. The following October the seminary at Gessen was obliged to close without immediate provision being made for the ecclesiastical students.69

In the summer of 1905, the dreaded yellow fever again descended upon New Orleans. Having but recently returned from Cuba, Archbishop Chapelle was engaged in the episcopal visitation of his vast diocese, when he received word of the serious proportions to which the epidemic had grown in his stricken city. He immediately returned to minister to the people of New Orleans, and eleven days later he succumbed, a victim to the scourge that had ravaged his diocese.70

Educational picture in the Archdiocese in 1906. War, foreign service, debt, and yellow fever—all these had a share in preventing a growth in the educational opportunities offered to the people of the Archdiocese of New Orleans during the eight years of Archbishop Chapelle's episcopate. Few new

69Roger Baudier, The Catholic Church in Louisiana, op. cit., p. 495.

70Ibid., p. 525.
schools had been opened; the plan for widening the influence of Christian Doctrine which had proved successful elsewhere was rejected by the leader of New Orleans' parochial schools; the preparatory seminary had been forced to close its doors. Indeed, so far as education in the Archdiocese of New Orleans was concerned matters took on the somber tone of regression rather than advancement.
CHAPTER II

JAMES HUBERT BLENK--THE MAN AND THE EDUCATOR

The man appointed to succeed Louis Placide Chapelle as Archbishop of New Orleans was no stranger to the city nor to its educational needs. The fact of the matter was that James Hubert Blenk had been reared and educated in one of the Catholic Church parishes within the boundaries of New Orleans and had spent much of his early priestly life in furthering the education of Louisiana's young manhood.

I. EARLY LIFE AND SCHOOLING

James Hubert Blenk, the son of pious Lutheran parents, was born in Neustadt an der Haardt in the Rhenish Palatinate (Bavaria), on August 6, 1856. Before James reached the age of seven years, his father died, and the widowed mother and her son immigrated to the United States. Upon reaching these shores, they journeyed to New Orleans, and there they established their new home in St. Alphonsus Parish where an uncle of the boy, George Groetsch, was a prominent business man.

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Mrs. Blenk's health, always precarious, failed within a short period of time, and James, after the death of his mother, went to live with his uncle.¹

Because the Groetsch family were devout members of the Catholic Church, James attended St. Mary's Assumption Catholic School with his cousins. Here he had his first contact with the Redemptorist priests to whose care the parish had been confided. The influence of these kindly men of God, together with that of the home in which he lived, soon led him to the desire to embrace the Catholic faith. Accordingly, at the age of thirteen, after sufficient preparation and adequate instruction, James was baptized on September 12, 1869, by the Redemptorist priest, Father Hubert Bauve.² The ceremony was without ostentation; in fact, so quiet and unpretentious it was, that only the sexton of the church, who had come to ring the evening Angelus, was present to act as witness and godfather for the youthful convert.³


²Baptismal record, St. Alphonsus Catholic Church, New Orleans, Louisiana.

³News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], April 25, 1907.
Higher Educational Background

His elementary and secondary education having been completed at the parish school in New Orleans, James resolved to continue his education along the classical lines upon which his early learning had been fashioned.

**Redemptorist College.** But more than this guided his choice of college. He felt the call to the priesthood to be his vocation, and with this end in view, he entered the Redemptorist College at Ilchester, Maryland. This is explicitly stated by Father John F. Byrne whose account of enrollment at Ilchester, found in the *Redemptorist Centenaries*, is as follows:

In September, 1873, there were 133 boys, among whom was James Hubert Blenk, who became Bishop of Puerto Rico in 1899 and Archbishop of New Orleans in 1906.4

In 1874, however, owing to circumstances of ill health, James decided against remaining at Ilchester, although his determination to study for the priesthood never waned.5

**Jefferson College.** Returning to Louisiana, he entered Jefferson College at Convent, a college under the direction

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5Ibid.
of the Society of Mary (Marists). Here, while continuing his own classical and scientific studies, James H. Blenk became professor of German in 1874. This newly-acquired position did not prevent the young scholar from taking part in campus activities. In fact, his interest in dramatics found fulfillment in several of the student productions, particularly in the enactment of Alonzo de Castile, in which he is listed among the leading dramatis personae.

During the scholastic year 1875-1876, one again finds J. H. Blenk listed among the members of the college faculty. Having been successful in his initial endeavors in the teaching profession, his duties were increased as he was appointed "Prefect of the Junior Division and Professor of the Third English Class, German and Arithmetic."

Education for the priesthood. At the close of the third year, which marked the completion of his own scholastic years at Jefferson College as well as a well-launched teaching

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career, the young Blenk decided to enter the Marist Seminary to prepare for priesthood in the Society of Mary. Thus, in 1877 he embarked upon a course of study which led to the fulfillment of a long-cherished desire to serve God and his fellowmen in the priestly office.9

He was sent by the Marist superiors to their House of Studies in Belley, France, where he distinguished himself as a leader in that eminent school of philosophy. From Belley, he was sent to the Marist novitiate in Lyons to complete his probationary and formative studies. After the year in the novitiate, the young seminarian embarked for Dublin to study science and higher mathematics at the Catholic University of Ireland. While there, Dr. Casey, a mathematician of some note, was favorably impressed with the ability of his talented pupil and prevailed upon the Marist superiors to allow Blenk to accept the proffered chair of mathematics at St. Mary's College, Dundalk, County Louth, Ireland. This favor granted, he remained at St. Mary's College for some time before resuming his theological studies in Dublin preparatory to his ordination to the priesthood.10 It was there on August 16, 


1885, at the age of twenty-nine, that James Hubert Blenk was raised to the dignity of the altar by Archbishop Redwood, S.M., of Wellington, New Zealand.11

II. FATHER BLENK RETURNS TO JEFFERSON COLLEGE

In the month of October following his ordination, Father Blenk returned to his childhood home, Louisiana, to labor among his own people. His first assignment was to Jefferson College where, in a short time, his influence was keenly felt among the faculty and student body of a college that had enjoyed an outstanding reputation from its foundation.12

Early Growth of the College

Originally, the college had been established in 1831 by rich French plantation owners who desired an education for their sons "befitting their state in life." It functioned under the direction of a splendid faculty assembled from universities of Europe and the states, but was soon beset by financial difficulties. The $124,000 contributed by the

11Weber, op. cit., p. 16.

12Information gained from papers in the Marist Seminary Archives, Washington, D. C.
planters proved insufficient to maintain the school, and after four years, the legislature voted an annual grant of $15,000. When the state withdrew this aid in 1845, the college was forced to close its doors until Valcour Aime bought the mortgages ($20,000) and reopened the establishment in March, 1861.

Incorporation by the state. That these unfortunate circumstances had not marred the good name of Jefferson College is evidenced by the following act of the state legislature, promulgated on March 5, 1861. Signed by Governor Thomas O. Moore, it reads:

An Act to incorporate Jefferson College, in the Parish of St. James, and the State of Louisiana:

Section IV. Be it enacted that the President and Board of Trustees of said Jefferson College shall have the power of granting such literary honors, degrees and diplomas as are usually granted by Colleges and Universities in the United States.

Jefferson given to the Marists. When the Civil War, which followed hard upon the reopening of the college, caused


14Ibid., p. 9.

15Original in Marist College Library, Washington, D. C.
its doors to close once again, everyone thought Jefferson College had sealed its doom. And this probably would have been true had not

. . . the threat by the Federal authorities to use the buildings as an institution for the education of freedmen caused the control to pass into the hands of the Marist Order at the invitation of Valcour Aime and his friends.16

"Then dawned the best day that Jefferson ever saw"17 finds credence in the following words written to Father P. H. Dagneau by T. H. Harris, State Superintendent of Education.

From that time, for a period of more than sixty years, Jefferson College performed an unvarying, useful, and important function, stimulating and training the intellectual efforts of the youth of the State of Louisiana. During that period, the function performed was not only important, but also indispensable, as the State, at that time, had not yet recovered financial strength adequate to the task of providing higher education for its youth.18

Blenk the Teacher

Such, then, was the institution to which Father Blenk returned to assume the duties of "Professor of the Humanities and the Commercial Course."19 From the beginning, he exerted

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16St. Jamesian, op. cit., p. 15.  
17Ibid.  
18Original letter in Marist Seminary Archives, Washington, D. C.  
all his energies to impart to his students the knowledge they sought, and before long he was reckoned a master teacher who displayed the greatest tact and judgment in his relationships with the boys. No more telling proof of his leadership abilities, his strong intellect, his true insight into character, his knowledge of human nature and his amiable disposition can be found than these words penned by one of his close friends at the time of his death:

His boys worshipped him, and throughout Louisiana today those who sat under him during a period of eighteen years of devotion to the classroom, bear testimony that those were among the truest and best years of their lives.20

Moderator of debate. During the first five years21 after his return to Jefferson College, one finds mention of Father Blenk not only as professor of Humanities and Commercial classes, but also as moderator of St. Mary's Literary and Debating Society.22 No doubt, his eagerness to advance the intellectual attainments of the students influenced his decision to guide the workings of this organization whose

21 1885-1890.
object was "to promote among its members a taste for Literature and Science, together with a healthy spirit of emulation, by forcing them to bring into play their oratorical and debating powers." 23

**Teacher of literature and languages.** His interest in English literature, and his conviction that a teacher must of necessity further his own education, led Father Blenk to continue his study of the great classics. So familiar did he become with Tennyson that there was scarcely a passage in that poet's works with which he was not thoroughly familiar. In fact, much of this author's works he could quote verbatim. 24 That he drew from this rich background to pass on to his students his appreciation and love of good literature is proven in records, still extant, of the accomplishments of the members of the debating society and the scholarly displays of oratory at the commencement programs and semi-annual entertainments. 25 A case in point is the exhibition held in connection with the commencement exercises in 1887. That

23Ibid.

24News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], April 28, 1917.

year the students enacted Don Juan, "a drama in five acts, translated from the French and portrayed by the seniors of the Humanities class, under the direction of Father Blenk."  

Interest in the sciences. His interest in the natural sciences prompted his students who were so inclined to spend much of their free time in the laboratory as the students of literature and the languages did in the library. Proof of this may be found in the records of 1887 which list Alexis Jolet as the first student to receive a Master's degree, which degree was in the field of civil engineering. Despite this advancement in educational opportunity offered by the college, Father Blenk recognized the growing inadequacy of laboratory equipment, the scarcity of space, and the need for further expansion of the school's scientific curriculum. However, these were problems which he had little power to solve at that time, problems which would have to await his election to the office of President of Jefferson College before they could be solved.

26 Ibid.
27 Record found at the Marist Seminary, Washington, D.C.
28 Ibid.
Vice-president of Jefferson. It was during the years between 1888-1890, when Father Blenk had been appointed vice-president of Jefferson College, that very tangible evidence of his interest and influence in matters educational first manifested themselves beyond the confines of the college. The pastor of Saints Peter and Paul Parish in New Orleans was advised by his physician to make an extended vacation trip abroad for reasons of health. Father Blenk was appointed to replace the pastor during his absence which lasted six months.29 It was in this comparatively short interim that his qualities of educational leadership came to the fore.

The parish school was in such a very dilapidated condition that it no longer served as a suitable place wherein classes could be conducted. After appealing to the people of the parish for their assistance, and having gained their interest and confidence, he proposed that they would give an entertainment to raise funds for the renovation of the building. This project proved to be so successful that returns sufficient to erect an entirely new edifice were realized. Construction was begun at once, and although the pastor had resumed his duties by the time the school building was

29News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], April 21, 1917.
completed, as the day of dedication approached, the people were practically unanimous in their request that Father Blenk be invited to deliver the sermon for the occasion. This he agreed to do, using "Christian Education" as his subject in an effort to arouse his listeners to a realization of the necessity and advantages of education.  

**Blenk the President of Jefferson College**

Father Blenk's superiors watched with growing interest the efforts of this young priest in the furtherance of education. They were not blind to the success that crowned his work as teacher, moderator of student organizations, and administrator of a parish plant. His devotion and attention to duty, regardless of the time and effort entailed, were just such characteristics that should identify any educational leader.

**Blenk's election to the presidency.** Accordingly, with the approach of the year 1891 and the need for electing a new president for Jefferson College, the thirty-five year old Father Blenk was the logical choice.  

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30Chronicles of the Convent of Saints Peter and Paul, New Orleans, Louisiana.

31Information from Marist Seminary Archives, Washington, D. C.
**First changes initiated.** With his election, changes began to be initiated at Jefferson. The first was in the format and contents of the college catalogue for 1891-1892. Whereas, until this time, this publication had been rather formal and uninteresting in its make-up, it now took on a more attractive appearance due to the inclusion of a number of pictures highlighted by a full view of the entire campus. Besides this, there was also an addition to the time-hallowed, unchanging regulations—this one aimed at stimulating the boys' study habits. It had been the custom in preceding years to present awards only at mid-semester and commencement. Father Blenk, knowing how short-lived interest and application were wont to be in many students, attempted to sustain their efforts by making this new regulation:

> On the last Saturday of each month, Cards of Merit will be distributed to students who have distinguished themselves during the month by their diligence and general good conduct.\(^{32}\)

> These Cards had the additional benefit of accumulating merit applicable to the recipient at the time of the yearly distribution of premiums.\(^{33}\)


\(^{33}\)Ibid.
Guidance activities. The new president of Jefferson College did not believe that his contact with the students should in any way be lessened because of his added responsibilities. He continued to teach the higher classes of mathematics and the classics, and retained his office of Prefect of Studies. In this latter capacity his personal interest in each of the ninety-five students enrolled at the college prompted him to aid these young men in their choice of curriculum in accordance with the potentialities manifested in their scholastic and recreational activities. Thus, at this early date, before the functions of formal guidance had become a part of education, Father Blenk had already introduced counseling in embryonic form into the lives of the Jefferson students.

Physical education introduced into curriculum. The year 1892 witnessed the introduction of physical education into the curriculum of the college. Firm in his belief that education of the intellect constituted but part of a

34 Ibid., p. 3.

35 The Morning Star, April 21, 1917, loc. cit.

complete education, Father Blenk sought means to promote the full development of the whole man. To this end, he organized and encouraged every form of outdoor athletic sport, and began what came to be known as "The Jefferson Athletic Club" whose purpose he described as being "to promote physical and muscular development and to furnish healthful recreation for its members." He initiated intramural contests within the framework of the club by forming two baseball teams, the Pelican and the Vigilant, which in several months' time, had extended their games to include teams of the surrounding areas. Because of the success which attended this initial attempt in the world of interscholastic sports, football and tennis were quickly added to the roster.

Like all young men, those at Jefferson College enjoyed swimming. Fearing that the Mississippi River with its treacherous currents would prove too enticing, Father Blenk ordered the construction of a "sheltered swimming pool" (natatorium) where students could enjoy themselves in seasonable weather.

37 Ibid., p. 41.
38 Information from Marist Seminary Archives, Washington, D. C.
40 Marist Archives, loc. cit.
Later, to add to its convenience, this structure was enclosed within a building equipped with "dressing rooms and steam heat so that the pupils could bathe and swim throughout the year."

**Interest in music.** From the earliest records available, one finds that music as a cultural aspect of education was offered to those students who desired it and who were able to afford the extra fee attached thereto. Offerings ranged from

... vocal music, at the price set by the professor; violin or piano, eight dollars per month; [to] brass band lessons and the use of an instrument, twenty-five dollars per year.\(^{42}\)

Now, Father Blenk sought to make vocal music, at least a part of every student's education. Himself the possessor of a beautiful tenor voice and a great lover of fine music, his aim was to inculcate and encourage this same appreciation among the boys in the classes he taught. To this end, singing became a part of the regular curriculum of the college.\(^{43}\)

\(^{41}\)Ibid.


\(^{43}\)From Archbishop Blenk's personal scrapbook kept in the Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans, Louisiana.
Curricula defined. This daily striving for the upbuilding of Jefferson College, doubly dear to him as his Alma Mater and as the house of learning over which he had been given jurisdiction, continued to manifest itself in a number of ways. The catalogue of 1892-1893 contained an almost complete revision of the prospectus of the college. Whereas the previous publications had dwelt at some length on the naturally healthful location and picturesqueness of the college, they left much to be desired in terms of description of scholastic offerings. The courses offered were thus described:

There are three courses of studies established in the College, viz: The Classical, Commercial and Preparatory; in a word, nothing is omitted that may be best calculated to fit young men either for mechanical pursuits or for the learned professions.

In the catalogue for 1892-1893, on the other hand, less space was devoted to the healthful aspects of the college location and more stress was placed on an over-all philosophy of the institution.

Careful and unceasing attention is given to the students' progress in every branch of learning. The programme of studies has been scrupulously graded and the text-books of the various classes are by authors of approved merit. While laying the greatest

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44 Jefferson Catalogue, 1872-1873, op. cit., p. 3.
45 Jefferson Catalogue, 1891-1892, op. cit., p. 3.
stress on the right moulding of character and the harmonious training of all the mental faculties, due encouragement is also given to bodily exercise. Healthy and agreeable distraction is promoted by the fully equipped gymnasium, by the natatorium, by the well-appointed reading and billiard rooms and by the many conveniences for outdoor sports.46

Also, for the first time, a distinction was made between the courses, and mention was made of the number of years required to complete each. The first description was, nevertheless, still very parsimonious of detail.

The Classical and Scientific [are] for those who desire to prepare themselves for the learned professions, extending over a period of six years; the Commercial . . . is destined to fit young men for mercantile pursuits, and lasts for four years.47

However, subsequent issues became more exact in the descriptive accounts. An illustration of this is found in the catalogue of the third year of Father Blenk's presidency at Jefferson.

The studies of the Commercial Department embrace all the branches of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Collegiate Classes, with the exception of Latin and Greek. Special attention is paid to Penmanship, Arithmetic, Bookkeeping, Mercantile Correspondence and Business Law. Typing and Shorthand are optional. At the completion of this four year course a Certificate of Merit is offered in lieu of a Degree.48

Expansion of science curriculum. It was also during this same year, 1893-1894, that the Science Curriculum was expanded to include botany, qualitative analysis, anatomy, and physiology in addition to the regular offerings in physics, organic and inorganic chemistry. The object, content and length of the Scientific Course could then be thus described:

... a four-year course leading to the Bachelor of Science Degree, the object being to prepare students to enter the Technological Department of our universities and to qualify them to secure advanced standing in any of the courses of Engineering. Latin and Greek are replaced by Sciences, Mechanical Drawing, and a second modern language, either German or Spanish. (French is required.)

Father Blenk's Philosophy of Education

Even as the college administrators were endeavoring to improve the several curricula offered to the young men attending Jefferson, they did not lose sight of the fact that "the Classical Course has always been the standing course of the Institution." Its object was to prepare the student for the medical, legal and other professions "for which the study of the Classics is indispensable."

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49Ibid., p. 22.  
50Ibid., p. 45.  
52Ibid.
Belief in the mental discipline theory. The supposed value of the classical languages in the interests of mental discipline—a psychological theory which enjoyed much prominence during the early years of this century—was clearly stated in the prospectus of the 1906 Catalogue:

The arguments in favor of a serious study of Latin and Greek are numerous, old and irrefutable. Their value as mental discipline and their educational influence have been so widely and generally recognized that it is needless for us to dwell upon the subject here. By bringing the students into sympathetic touch with the most celebrated writers of these two greatest languages of antiquity, by obliging them to enter daily into the ideas, the feelings, the struggles and the achievements of the master minds of the world's literature, their judgment is improved, their taste cultivated and their minds enriched with the thoughts and inspirations that make for true culture and mental growth. 53

Practical knowledge stressed. Despite this emphasis on the classics and their benefit as "trainers of the mind," Father Blenk continually strove to make their studies meaningful to the students. To this end, two telling examples may be cited. First, he insisted that these young men should know as much as possible about their own state if they were to become worthy citizens thereof. That this might be accomplished, he included the study of Louisiana history and the

53 Ibid., p. 37.
geography of Louisiana in the curriculum pursued by those in the high school or preparatory classes, and "Analysis of the Constitution of Louisiana" was made a requirement for all at the college level. 54

**Interest in vocational education.** Having been an instructor in the commercial subjects, Father Blenk clearly recognized the utilitarian and practical value of these areas of study for those who would not seek advancement in the learned professions toward which the Classical Course was geared. Therefore, his second endeavor to render the curriculum useful to all was in the field of commerce. His determination to afford "his boys" the best and most complete preparation for entrance into the business world prompted him to introduce into the commercial department an Advance Business Course. 55 While embracing all the requirements the commercial course had heretofore exacted of its constituents, several more were added. These included Business Arithmetic, Business Forms, Practical Business Operations, Lectures on Commodities and Commercial Law, Banking, Joint Stock,

Manufacturing, Phonography, Typewriting, and French or German. In order to give status to this new course, the traditional Certificate of Merit, awarded at the successful completion of the course, was replaced by a diploma.

Advocacy of the principle of self-activity. Although the erroneous but prevalent belief in mental discipline was subscribed to by the administration and faculty of Jefferson College, there was another very important principle of education that held an equally prominent place in their estimation. This was the principle of self-activity as the basis of all learning. So convinced of this was Father Blenk that when he introduced the Advanced Business Course he simultaneously established what came to be called the College Bank.

So that the students will be prepared for the complications of modern commercial life, and to give them that thorough training which will fit them to become successful business men, the department is equipped with complete banking facilities. The College Bank, with the usual offices completely outfitted, serves to make the banking course as practical as can be found anywhere. When the students have gone through the course, they have served their apprenticeship as teller, cashier, etc.; in a word, have filled successively every position in a bank, and can take charge of any bank position.

56 Ibid.  
57 Ibid.  
Not all the students, however, were destined to be bankers. Many would find jobs in the field of bookkeeping; and for these, also suitable activities were supplied.

A feature of the system is that the students transact with each other all the items that go on their books. By this method they learn to do by doing; they are taught business as well as bookkeeping. They see the reason for each entry made; for every note, draft, and business paper drawn. They go to the root of the matter and learn the why as well as the how.  

Interest in teacher-preparation. The fulfillment of one of Father Blenk's most cherished desires, that of preparing young men to take their places among the ranks of qualified teachers in the schools of Louisiana, was not to be realized during his years at Jefferson College. However, it was undoubtedly due to his efforts and zeal in planting the seeds of interest in this area of education that the college received the following notification from State officials, dated July 2, 1906. On that date the State Legislature passed an act by which the graduates of Jefferson College were

... ipso facto qualified to receive a first-grade certificate to teach in the public schools of Louisiana, without passing the usual examinations, except

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59 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
This act, relative to the qualification of Jefferson College graduates as teachers, was followed by an attempt on the part of the college to further the preparation of student teachers by the introduction of pedagogy into the senior year of the Classical program. Students preparing for a teaching career were obliged to study Thorndike's *Principles of Teaching* and White's *Art of Teaching*. While these requirements were far removed from those exacted for teacher certification today, they were a beginning; and what is far more important, they are an indication of the influence of a devoted priest, teacher, and college president who realized the value of education for every individual and who never tired of crusading that the recognition and acceptance of this value would become universal.

**Devotion to classroom duties.** Increasing enrollments brought with them the need for additional faculty members.

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60 Original in Marist Seminary Archives, Washington, D.C.


63 From 95 in 1891 to 175 in 1896.
Until 1893, the ten-member faculty had been adequate, but with the opening of classes for that year the number was increased to thirteen. Even then, Father Blenk would not allow his teaching duties to be curtailed. A copy of the schedule for the scholastic year beginning in September, 1893, substantiates the evidence that the responsibilities of his office were not allowed to over-rule his conviction of the importance of a classroom teacher. The sixteen hours of class he taught weekly were recorded as follows:

- 10:15 - 11:15 Bookkeeping 5 days
- 2:30 - 3:30 Natural Philosophy 1 day
- 3:30 - 4:30 Mathematics 5 days
- 5:00 - 7:15 Philosophy 2 days

Truly, here was a man who by his very life exemplified the ideals of education as stated by his religious congregation, the Marists. While they held the acquisition of knowledge to be important, true education was something far better and more noble than this.

It is in the harmonious development of all the faculties of man, in the quickening of the mental vision, in the refining of the taste and the training of the imagination, in the formation of the

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{64}} \text{Information gained from records in Marist Seminary Archives, Washington, D. C.} \]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{65}} \text{Original schedule in Marist Seminary Archives, Washington, D. C.} \]
heart and the strengthening of the will, in the increase of elasticity and breadth in the reasoning faculty and in the directing of the soul to its last end, that true education consists. 66

Building Program under Father Blenk

Consequent upon the increased enrollment and the additional faculty personnel came the necessity of expanding the physical facilities of the college. This, of course, led to another problem--that of financing a building program.

Financing the program. From the day the Marist Fathers took over at Jefferson College, they were entirely on their own insofar as financing the institution was concerned. They derived the bulk of their income from the tuition and additional fees charged the students. One learns from the statement of "Terms" in the Catalogue of 1872-1873 that board, tuition, and stationery for five months was $130.00; washing, $30.00 yearly; doctor's fee and medicines, $10.00 per annum for all; and entrance fee, $10.00. Extra charges were made for courses in German and Spanish, $25.00; violin or piano, $8.00 per month; band lessons, $25.00 a year; laboratory fee, $10.00 yearly; and bedding, when provided by the college, $14.00 per annum. 67

On this the college had been maintained and had survived; but the present need necessitated a larger income if a successful building program were to be undertaken. Accordingly, the college administration saw fit to increase the yearly tuition from $260.00 to $300.00. However, with the exception of an added charge of $10.00 for a graduation fee, no other increase in charges was made. True, this was not a tremendous increase if measured by present-day standards; but it, together with monthly assistance given by the Alumni, enabled the Marist Fathers to undertake the first significant construction attempted since the college had been placed under their direction.

Alumni Hall. The new building, called Alumni Hall, was a two-story structure. The first floor comprised a large auditorium or assembly hall containing a stage well furnished with artistic scenery. The walls were decorated with pictures of the former presidents of the college, and the floor was so constructed that it sloped gently toward the stage for the convenience of the audience. On the second floor were located

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68 Information from records at Marist Seminary Archives, Washington, D. C.

69 Ibid.
the new physical and chemical laboratories and three large classrooms.\textsuperscript{70} According to the records describing the furnishing of the building, no expense was spared in enriching the physical science laboratory with the most up-to-date scientific appliances, nor was anything missing that would make the study of chemistry as thorough as possible. The classrooms were fitted for the commercial classes, and the College Bank was transferred from its original location to these more spacious quarters.\textsuperscript{71}

Here, then, was the beginning of a building program which would not reach its completion until 1911 with the erection of the Blenk Science Hall by Father Blenk's successor,\textsuperscript{72} for at the end of the 1895-1896 school year, the president of Jefferson College was assigned to the Marist house in France.\textsuperscript{73}

**Pastor in Algiers.** Following a stay of a year in France, Father Blenk returned to Louisiana as pastor of Holy


\textsuperscript{71}\textit{Records, loc. cit.}


\textsuperscript{73}News item in \textit{The Morning Star} [New Orleans], April 28, 1917.
Name of Mary Parish in Algiers. His first major undertaking there was the erection of a home for the priests who had been living in a veritable shack for years. When the presbytery was completed, Father Blenk, educator that he was, turned his thoughts to the education of the youth of the parish.

It was his intention to open an industrial school for boys and a free night school for those who had to work during the day. December 13, 1897, was set for the opening date of the free night school. Classes were to be held in St. Mary's Hall, but owing to the poor response from the youth of the parish, the school never became a reality. This was a keen disappointment for the pastor of Holy Name of Mary Parish, and he turned his full attention to the development of the parochial school already thriving in his parish.

Auditor of the Apostolic Delegation to Cuba and Puerto Rico. Unhappily for the people of Algiers, they were soon to be deprived of the services of their devoted pastor. He was already serving in several positions of prominence in the

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74 Georgelin, op. cit., p. 28.
75 Ibid., p. 29.
76 Ibid., p. 30.
77 Records in Holy Name of Mary Parish Rectory, Algiers, Louisiana.
Archdiocese. Under Archbishops Janssens and Chapelle, Father Blenk had been appointed to the Archdiocesan Board of Consultants. When the Catholic Winter School was organized in New Orleans, the pastor of Algiers was named a member of the faculty and appointed chairman of the board of studies. Finally, at the close of the War with Spain, Archbishop Chapelle was chosen Apostolic Delegate to our newly acquired possessions of Cuba and Porto Rico, and Father Blenk was named Auditor of the Delegation. This last assignment led, ultimately, to his appointment as Bishop of Porto Rico in 1899.

Bishop of Porto Rico. As head of the Church in Porto Rico it was but natural that the first care of Bishop Blenk should be for the spiritual welfare of his charges. To this end, he organized the Ladies Diocesan Association of Porto Rico which counted a membership of 300 within the first month of its existence. The object of the association was to

78 Archbishops' Appointments, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

79 Catholic Winter School Records, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

80 News item in The Daily Picayune [New Orleans], July 8, 1900.
organize "a thorough and systematic teaching of catechism" in San Juan and from thence to spread all over the island.\textsuperscript{81} Besides preparing the children for their first Holy Communion, the association provided the necessary school books for distribution among the poorer children, as also "pictures that would delight, elevate, and cultivate their tastes and hearts." Moreover, the ladies provided clothing for those children who lacked even these bare necessities of life so that they could attend the kindergartens and schools. This was all part of the vast plan of the Bishop for his people. He hoped that through the children he would reach the whole population of San Juan, and eventually the entire island of Porto Rico.\textsuperscript{82}

When Bishop Blenk found a dearth of schools within his diocese he hastened to establish a large free kindergarten in San Juan. Of this institution one newspaper of that city remarked after a short time: "The effect is already apparent. The children are learning well and there are few vagrant children in the streets of San Juan."\textsuperscript{83}

But kindergartens were not sufficient to take care of the educational needs of the See city of San Juan. Older

\textsuperscript{81}Ibid. \quad \textsuperscript{82}Ibid. \quad \textsuperscript{83}Quoted in \textit{The Daily Picayune} [New Orleans], July 8, 1900.
girls and boys were in need of an education that would prepare them for adult responsibilities. To meet this need, the Bishop next established a large industrial school for girls and founded a college for boys in the place where a seminary had been. Here, in the latter arrangement, two needs were satisfied. The young men of the city had a school to attend; and to insure the adequate training of the seminarians, they would henceforth be sent to the United States for their studies preparing them for the priesthood. Thus one may see that within a year of his arrival, Bishop Blenk had already devised and begun a comprehensive plan for stamping out illiteracy among the people of Porto Rico.

Despite the rapidity with which Bishop Blenk was able to carry out his plans, one must not assume that he met with no opposition. The most glaring example of an attempt to thwart his efforts, and one which merited detailed coverage in many newspapers in the United States occurred at a convention of Porto Rican educators. Modeled on the National Education Association Convention in the United States, the

84 Ibid.

85 News item in The Daily Picayune [New Orleans], August 5, 1900; Catholic Standard and Times [Philadelphia], August 11, 1900; The Morning Star [New Orleans], August, 1900.
gathering was comprised of educators of all ranks—school teachers, ministers of various religious denominations, administrators. The object was to get the universal opinion on the inauguration of a plan to use public schools for religious instruction classes.  

Bishop Blenk was among the first of the invited speakers to address the convention. He spoke on the subject "Thoroughness," and "his sound and earnest views and advice produced a profound impression." Several Porto Rican papers reported that "he was thunderously applauded."  

Bishop Blenk was followed by a prominent local educator and scientist who gave his views on religion in public education:  

A thorough well-rounded education must be three-fold, the education of the body, the mind, and the heart or soul [for which] is needed moral education. Of this, religion is undoubtedly the basis.  

He then proposed the use of public school buildings for the teaching of religion by instructors of the several creeds, after school hours.  

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86 The Daily Picayune, August 5, 1900, loc. cit.
87 Quoted in The Daily Picayune, August, 1900.
88 Dr. Saldana, quoted in The Morning Star, loc. cit.
89 Ibid.
The overwhelming applause which acknowledged the proposal of this distinguished gentleman had scarcely died away before Vallmer, a Brazilian, rose to deliver his address. Within minutes he had begun a general onslaught on the Latin race, its contaminated blood, its superstitions, its ignorance. Then turning directly to Bishop Blenk he continued:

With due respect to you, sir, and the clergy present . . . the world holds the Catholic Church convicted of the backwardness and the state of utter degradation in which [many countries] are languishing and decaying.\(^9^0\)

At this, the Bishop rose to his feet, brought his hand down on the table with a crashing blow, and with

. . . calm deliberation and tone of voice which showed perfect mastery of himself, but absolute firmness in not yielding one inch to the accusation, declared, "Es mentira— it is a lie! I will not sit here quietly and see the Church . . . traduced in this manner."\(^9^1\)

Following this exchange, Vallmer was forced to abandon his speech, being hissed from the stage by the entire audience, Protestant and Catholic alike. A short intermission was declared, during which the Bishop was warmly congratulated by those in attendance for his staunch but gentlemanly rebuttal of Vallmer's statements.\(^9^2\) The next day La Opinion, a Porto Rican daily editorialized:

\(^9^0\)The Daily Picayune, loc. cit.  \(^9^1\)Ibid.  \(^9^2\)Ibid.
It was entirely uncalled for in an assembly where only educational matters . . . were under discussion. Each Porto Rican was grateful for the Bishop's implied defense of the Latin races, of which Porto Rico is flesh and blood, as well as his manly defense of his Church.93

Hence, what had evidently been intended as a hindrance to the work of Bishop Blenk in Porto Rico may well have been the means of cementing cordial relationship and understanding between Church and civil authorities on the island. Be that as it may, his work prospered. Not only were the educational facilities expanded since new parishes meant new schools, but governmental relationships between the United States and Porto Rico became increasingly stronger and more cordial.94 That Bishop Blenk had contributed greatly to this good understanding and harmony between the Porto Ricans and the United States government, and in so doing, had rendered an important service to his country95 is attested to by the words of President McKinley. "Bishop, you are doing a great work in Porto Rico; still, a great field lies before you. There is much to

93Editorial in La Opinion [San Juan, Porto Rico], June 30, 1900.


95Ibid., from Governor Blanchard's speech welcoming Bishop Blenk to Louisiana.
Back to Louisiana. This "great field," however, would have to be cultivated by others; for Bishop Blenk, that same year, was recalled to New Orleans to fill the office left vacant by the death of Archbishop Chapelle.
CHAPTER III
FROM PRIVATE TO PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS

Loud were the acclamations of the people of New Orleans when their "own Father Blenk" was raised to Archepiscopal dignity! Upon his return to New Orleans to assume Church leadership there

. . . he received such an ovation as no one but President Roosevelt had ever received before. . . . Priests and laymen, lawyers and journalists, and merchants, representatives of the chivalry and wealth and intelligence of New Orleans, all gathered to pay him homage. All would do honor to this New Orleans boy who had reflected so much credit upon his city and upon the great Church which he represented.2

However, it was not only in New Orleans that he elicited such warm praise. Like Archbishop Chapelle, his predecessor, Archbishop Blenk had served his country well during and after the Spanish-American War. His efforts on behalf of the government and people of Porto Rico during the years he was Bishop

1News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], April 22, 1906.
2Ibid.
of that island possession were not unappreciated by the highest civil authorities in the United States. In fact, President Roosevelt, in a letter to Elihu Root, Secretary of War, had written:

He has always been a true and helpful friend of the government. He is good, strong, influential, and patriotic under all circumstances. We have felt the lift of his sterling character in our work.  

I. PROBLEMS AWAITING THE NEW ARCHBISHOP

Now this great friend of the people at all levels of society was to be Archbishop of New Orleans! He was, of course, pleased with the splendid reception accorded him and the promises of co-operation in his undertakings. However, he was not ignorant of the problems with which he would soon have to cope. One of these, the establishment of an adequate Catholic school system, was among those he considered most important and to which he applied all his energies.

Need for Reorganization of the School System

A practical educator himself, with many years of experience both as professor and president of Jefferson College, as well as pastor of a parish plant, Archbishop Blenk realized

3Quoted in Alcee Fortier, Editor, Louisiana (Atlanta: Southern Historical Association, 1909), n.p.
the necessity of a complete reorganization of the Catholic school system in New Orleans. Nor was he to allow any appreciable length of time to elapse before he made known his views in this matter.

Blenk's earliest statement concerning the schools. When he blessed Saint Joseph Parish School on South Roman Street in August, 1906, he sounded the keynote of the progress that would ensue from his efforts and enthusiasm for Catholic parochial education.

It is not only my pleasure, but my solemn duty to encourage by word and deed solid Christian education, the kind that will make girls virtuous daughters and mothers whom men will venerate and whom they will lift up to their responsibilities to God. . . . I have no fears on the score of our schools. I expect them to be of the highest standard. Those that are not will not have my countenance. . . .

To tell the truth, I would rather see a school than a church, because in a school there is found a true, earnest, practical Christian. . . .

With God's help, all my energies all the days of my life will be dedicated to this great work of Catholic education until in every parish there will be a school flourishing for its lessons, its virtues, and its great love for Almighty God. 4

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4News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], August 11, 1906.
Recommendations of the Baltimore Councils. The solution of the school problem was to him of paramount importance, and to Archbishop Blenk must be given the credit for having taken the proper steps to insure compliance with the recommendations of the Second and Third Plenary Councils with regard to Catholic education. These stipulations, stated in part, read thus:

Since it is evident that an innumerable number of children born of Catholic parents, especially the poor, have been exposed, and are even now exposed to the great danger of losing their faith and moral character on account of the great scarcity of teachers sufficiently qualified to warrant their being trusted with the great task of education, we seem it by all means necessary that schools be established in which the young may be taught the principles of faith and morals while being instructed in letters.\(^5\)

Since the best and most effective remedy, as seen by the Fathers of the Council, to counteract these dangers to Catholic youth, would be the establishment of parochial schools, they drew up the following plan to that effect:

We exhort the bishops and, considering the very serious evils consequent on a defective education, we beseech them . . . that they see to the establishment of schools connected with each church in

\(^5\)Concilii Plenarii Baltimoresi II, In Ecclesia Metropolitana Baltimoresi, A Die VII ad Diem XXI Octobris, A.D. MDCCCLXVI, Habita et a Sede Apostolica Recogniti, Decreta (Baltimorae: Joannes Murphy, MDCCCLXVIII).
their diocese, and if it be necessary and admissible, to let them provide from the revenues of the church to which the school is annexed, that suitable teachers be employed.  

These promulgations had been made initially in 1829, reiterated in 1866, and again included in the official legislation of the Plenary Council assembled in Baltimore in 1884. Efforts had been made in New Orleans to comply with these decrees, but the many immediate problems with which the Archdiocese was beset in the interim had prevented steady progress. Now, however, Archbishop Blenk had stated what was to be the outstanding project of his episcopate.

Catholic schools prior to 1906. Heretofore, the majority of the schools established within the Archdiocese were not truly parochial, inasmuch as they were not operated by the pastor. The invitation to the Religious congregations

6Ibid.

7Dates of the First and Second Plenary Councils.


to take up educational work had come from the Archbishops, and in practically every case, they had given some assistance to the members of these congregations. Many times this aid was bolstered by help from Catholic groups or individuals. However, in nearly all cases, it was necessary for the Sisters and Brothers to erect their own buildings, or at least to re-model an old structure to make it habitable and usable as a school until such time as a suitable building could be erected. The schools were regarded as the property of the respective congregations and were conducted according to their own system. They were required to obtain all funds needed for expenses of operation, maintenance, expansion and improvement. The parishes in which they were located had no responsibility in the indebtedness of these schools, though they did cooperate in the work and in their efforts to operate successfully.

Importance of private institutions. Thus, private Catholic institutions of learning carried much of the burden of education, together with a number of private institutions


of a non-religious nature. The influence of many of the former—academies, convents, and finishing schools—made itself felt not only in Catholic families, but also in Jewish and Protestant circles. Any number of these aristocratic planters, merchants, and commission brokers would entrust the education of their sons and daughters only to Sisters, Brothers and priests because of the excellent training offered in the belles lettres and cultural subjects. The marvelous aspect of this work was the fairness of the teachers and their general abstention from proselytizing. There were very seldom any complaints of undue influence, and the Religious in charge were consistently trusted to the utmost.

Fine as this arrangement was, there was a social question involved also. The private schools generally catered to the wealthy classes, and per contra, the wealthier classes were about the only ones that were financially able to pay the rather high tuition required for education in the institutions. This aspect of social status applied to both Catholics


13 Most religious teachers did not require non-Catholic students to follow religious instruction classes.

and non-Catholics alike, and when the public schools developed, the wealthier and more social minded members of the population desired more than ever to have their children trained in the "select" schools.\textsuperscript{15} From this situation, says Prendergast, we may safely infer that the old academies and convent schools were responsible in a great measure for "the development of music and art-loving penchant of the people of this section, or at least for the sustenance and growth of the native French and Spanish love for the beautiful."\textsuperscript{16} This was in addition to the preservation of Catholic educational ideals—the teaching of moral principles, right living, and the Christian culture.

\textbf{Beginning of Parochial Schools}

In the meantime, the public school system had begun to expand. Since it had to provide education for children of all creeds, God and religion were necessarily excluded.\textsuperscript{17} Many Catholics were obliged to send their children to the public schools because they could not afford to pay the comparatively

\textsuperscript{15}Prendergast, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 15. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

high tuition of the private Catholic institutions.

To remedy this situation, pastors in some sections began to establish schools that were operated by the pastor and were intended for the Catholic children of the parish.\textsuperscript{18} This arrangement had been facilitated by the incorporation of each parish as an independent unit within the Archdiocese during the administration of Archbishop Janssens, for now, each unit was empowered to incur its own indebtedness and to finance its own projects.\textsuperscript{19} Moreover, the emphatic decrees of the latest Baltimore Council had given the parochial school movement a tremendous impetus.

Lack of unity in conduct of schools. This growth, however, did not come over night. For many years, the parochial schools were operated more or less on an independent basis, each parish school being under the supervision of the pastor. The curriculum and methods were largely determined by the Religious congregations engaged in teaching in the schools.\textsuperscript{20} Since this was the situation, there could be no

\textsuperscript{18}Prendergast, op. cit., p. 18.


\textsuperscript{20}Baudier, Vol. 11, op. cit., n.p.
assurance that all of the children of the Catholic schools of New Orleans Archdiocese received the same educational opportunities. An example of this arrangement is graphically portrayed in the early work of the Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross who had come to Louisiana from France. In the old country, these Religious had conducted industrial and boarding schools for girls and orphanages for the homeless. Upon their arrival in New Orleans they patterned their educational establishments after those they had conducted in France. In fact, within the boundaries of one city block, they set up an orphanage and industrial school for young girls as well as a boarding and day school for the daughters of those parents who wished to avail themselves of the opportunity offered for a liberal academic education. Each of these institutions was operated separately. In the former, religion and elementary instruction in the three R's, together with instruction in cooking and plain sewing formed the curriculum for the orphans. They were not

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22 Marianite Centennial, op. cit., pp. 44-46.
permitted to attend classes in the academy. On the other hand, the students of the academic curriculum were given a vastly different course of studies. During these early years, when every class was conducted in both English and French, the system of education embraced

... reading, writing, French and English grammar; arithmetic; ancient and modern geography; the use of globes; prose and poetical composition; ancient and modern, sacred and profane history; chronology; French and English literature; mythology; rhetoric; natural philosophy; chemistry; astronomy; botany; bookkeeping; mathematics; music; drawing; plain and ornamental needlework; tapestry; embroidery; artificial flowers.

The same source of information carried an advertisement for the College of the Immaculate Conception, a high school conducted by the Jesuit Fathers. Their course of instruction included:

Greek, Latin, French, poetry, rhetoric, history, geography, mathematics, astronomy, natural and mental philosophy, with the addition of bookkeeping and the usual commercial branches.

Thus one may judge for himself of the variety and diversity of academic offerings in these two prominent

23Chronicles of the Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross, 1852, New Orleans.

24Advertisement in The Morning Star [New Orleans], October 4, 1868; Marianite Annals, loc. cit.

25The Morning Star, loc. cit.
schools of the city of New Orleans.

**Recommendations of Archbishop Blenk concerning the establishment of parochial schools.** Perhaps, if one is broad enough in outlook, these variations may be looked upon as the meagre beginnings of vocational education. Be that as it may, Archbishop Blenk recognized in the muddled school affairs the need for organization of purpose, method and curriculum. His object was

... to establish schools in no way inferior to the public ones. Every effort, then, must be directed towards starting Catholic schools where they are not, and, where they are, towards enlarging them and providing them with better accommodations and equipment until they have nothing to suffer, as regards teachers or equipment, by comparison with the public schools.  

**Co-operation of pastors.** Therefore, in compliance with the recommendations of the Archbishop, pastors began making strenuous efforts to establish parish schools, legally owned, maintained, and operated by the members of the respective ecclesiastical parishes so that the educational facilities would be truly parochial.

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Records of the type of transaction which was necessary to bring this situation into being include those which record the change of the private academy, formerly staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Holy Name of Jesus Parish into the parochial school under the direction of the Sisters of Mercy in 1909. Still later the following transfer is recorded:

Resolved that the Administrators of the St. Louis Cathedral be and they are hereby authorized to purchase for and in the name of the Congregation of St. Louis Roman Catholic Cathedral of New Orleans, Louisiana, the Convent of the Sacred Heart, now the property of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart .... and all the property they have in said square, .... for the sum of $20,000 cash; and that the said Reverend F. Racine as Pastor of said church, be and he is hereby authorized to accept said transfer, pay said amount and sign all necessary acts and deeds.

The act of transfer was signed by "James H. Blenk, Archbishop of New Orleans, President of the School Board." Such were the efforts made to provide every parish with a school that was really parochial, for it was the fervent wish of the Archbishop that before he would be laid away,

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28 "Historical Sketch of the Church of the Most Holy Name," Baudier's Historical Collection, Vol. VI, p. 42.

29 Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors of St. Louis Cathedral, New Orleans, July 25, 1914.

30 Ibid.
... every parish in this diocese would have its parochial school, its band of enlightened and zealous teachers, and a pastor who dedicates himself entirely to the instruction of the children of his flock.\textsuperscript{31}

**Private schools not abandoned.** The establishment of parochial schools did not by any means, require the abandonment of the private schools. Though operated as private ventures and financed by the religious congregations that maintained them, they formed an important and necessary part of the Catholic educational system, particularly in the field of higher education. However, the Archbishop did require that these privately operated institutions of learning on the elementary and secondary level conform to the rules and statutes laid down for the parochial schools of the Archdiocese in educational matters.\textsuperscript{32}

II. FINANCING THE SCHOOLS OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF NEW ORLEANS PRIOR TO 1906

The financial scene took on a very decided change when emphasis was laid on the establishment of parochial schools.

\textsuperscript{31}News item in *The Morning Star* [New Orleans], February 16, 1907.

\textsuperscript{32}Prendergast, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
From the founding of the first free school for boys in 1725 to the opening of the most recent parish school, many and diverse means were employed to finance Catholic education in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

**Finances in the Colonial Period.**

During the colonial period, when France governed Louisiana, it was the duty of the government to provide schools and other educational facilities. Thus it was under government auspices that the Ursulines established themselves in New Orleans in 1727. They received regular fees from the Company of the Indies, and later, from the King of France.33

When Spain took over Louisiana, and a school was opened under the tutelage of the Spanish Franciscan Friars, it, too, was maintained at the expense of the King.34

**Effects of Statehood on Catholic School Finances**

With the passage of Louisiana into the status of statehood, the Spanish officials departed, and Louisianians realized there would be no more financial aid from the government.


34Ibid., p. 175.
for Catholic schools. This fact, rather than serving as an impetus to spark the initiative of the Catholic population in the establishment and support of their schools, caused Catholic education to fall to an ebb from which it did not rise for nearly a quarter of a century.35

Means of support. Private backing, funds from the French mission society for the Propagation of the Faith, and the contributions of the lay trustees of the various churches all figured in the support of the Catholic schools in New Orleans.36 In the rural sections where Religious Orders had been invited to open schools, the Archbishops themselves defrayed most of the initial expenses of furnishing suitable dwellings for the Religious, but the latter were obliged to provide, subsequently, for their necessities.37

During the period preceding the Civil War, state aid was given the orphanages of Louisiana. This was discontinued after the War, and these institutions became dependent upon

35Prendergast, op. cit., pp. 5-6.


local aid, upon funds raised by societies organized primarily to sponsor the various institutions, upon private benefactions and proceeds from public benefits such as fairs, concerts, lawn parties, and excursions. Attempts to support the institutions by private industry such as farming, laundry, and sewing generally met with only mediocre success.  

Maintenance of schools after the Civil War. In compliance with the recommendations of the successive Archbishops, some pastors made efforts to establish parish schools after the Civil War. Ordinarily, the school building was erected on Church property and sponsored by the pastors who utilized any of the following means to finance the costs of outlay:  

Parish revenues, consisting of pew rents, the revenues of lands and other properties, the collections taken up in the church, the honoraries paid for burials, marriages, baptisms, and funeral services, and from the graveyards. . . .

Tuition fees, special school collections, and particularly, parish fairs and bazaars. In some instances, significant

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38 Condon, op. cit., p. 286.
39 Lee, op. cit., p. 97.
40 Pastoral letter of Archbishop John Marie Odin, 1861.
contributions were made by individual benefactors.  

Private school maintenance. The private schools in this period continued to be financed much as in the earlier period. They were dependent almost exclusively upon tuition fees charged resident and day students and the proceeds from various benefits. But, owing to the general financial status of the South, income declined, and many formerly wealthy families were impoverished by the Civil War and the financial panic of 1873. Moreover, the ever-increasing number of local schools available made resident schools unnecessary.

Financing school personnel. Despite the monetary problems facing the pastors who had set up parochial plants and had engaged the services of Religious Communities, there were some advantages. In general, there were no fixed salaries for the teachers during this period, although, in many instances, the parish schools were staffed by lay teachers until the pastor could obtain the services of a Religious

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42 Information gained in a personal interview with Sister Mary Ligouri, M.S.C.

43 Condon, op. cit., p. 289.
Once the Religious took over the educational services, their employment insured the parish not only organized school administration and standardized teaching procedures along with thorough training in Catholic philosophy and ethics, but also an economical means of staffing the school.45

Ordinarily the teaching communities kept the tuition they collected in lieu of salary compensation.46 Depending upon the finances of the locality, and more specifically, on those of the families of the students, this could be a very beneficial arrangement or a rather poor one. Frequently, and this despite the fact the schools were parochial, the Religious were required to purchase their convents. Therefore, in order to supplement their income, they provided within their homes accommodations for resident students.47

Growth and maintenance of Negro schools. It was during this time that schools for Negroes were widely established. Owing to the all too frequent impoverished condition of these

44Records in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.  
47Records in Marianite Archives, New Orleans.
people, they were unable to finance the construction and maintenance of their schools.\textsuperscript{48}

To relieve this situation, the Archbishops applied for and received donations from Mother Katherine Drexel whose generous contributions were used to erect schools and pay teachers' salaries.\textsuperscript{49} Other major sources of revenue were the Catholic Board for Mission Work among the Negro and Indian Missions, gifts of land and money from the successive Archbishops and other benefactors, and the proceeds of special fund-raising benefits.\textsuperscript{50} In general, the Negro people were too poor to pay sufficient tuition to assure the Religious teachers a livelihood; therefore, the meagre school receipts were supplemented by private industry. All efforts to obtain state aid, other than tax exemption on school and church property, proved fruitless.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{48}Records in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

\textsuperscript{49}Information obtained in a personal interview with Mother Mary Agatha, a companion of Mother Drexel.

\textsuperscript{50}Information from records in the Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

\textsuperscript{51}Mother Mary Agatha, loc. cit.
III. SCHOOL FINANCES SUBSEQUENT TO THE EPISCOPATE OF ARCHBISHOP JAMES HUBERT BLENK

The period after 1906 saw the emergence of the parochial school system as envisioned by the participants of the Baltimore Councils—that in which the entire parish plant, Church, school, and convent, were owned and maintained by the ecclesiastical parish and the Religious received a salary.

Financial Organization of Parochial Schools

In conformity with the instructions of Archbishop Blenk, all school revenues from tuition in parochial schools were entered into the parish accounts, and the pastor was responsible for the payment of all school expenditures.52

*Capital outlay revenues.* With financial organization came specified means for obtaining funds applicable to expenditures for capital outlay. Subscription drives and gifts from the clergy and wealthy individuals were still vital sources. Another was from real estate, one example of which can be found in the archives of the St. Louis Cathedral. The wardens of that church had leased a tract of land to the Pacific Railroad Company for ten years with the sum fixed at

$260,000 and rate of interest at six per cent per annum, the proceeds of which were to be used for the upkeep and education of children in the Catholic orphan asylums in the city of New Orleans. 53

Revenues for operational costs. For meeting operational expenses, several other sources were utilized extensively. Among these were: tuition, occasional collections taken up in the parish church, proceeds of activities of parent groups and the school children, entertainments, fairs, and raffles. 54 Although these procedures did not differ greatly from those used previous to the establishment of parochial schools, the significant difference lay in the manner of handling the monies derived from these sources. 55

Financial resources for Negro parochial schools. Archbishop Blenk was constantly occupied with the problem of improving the condition of the Negro members of his flock. To this end, and to ease the tension that existed in some places because the Negroes were obliged to attend the Catholic Church

53 "Documents, Resolutions, etc. of the Congregation of St. Louis Roman Catholic Cathedral," September 17, 1915, Cathedral Archives, New Orleans, n.p.

54 Condon, op. cit., p. 344

55 Ibid.
with the white parishioners, separate church parishes were established for Negroes. As in the earlier period, they could no better finance a complete parish plant than they had been able to support a school. To relieve the situation, Mother Drexel continued her contributions, and the Board for Mission Work among the Negroes and the Board for Indian and Negro Missions contributed their share. Tuition receipts were, for the most part, negligible; and the pastors habitually donated their salaries to the cause. In some instances funds were obtained by solicitation among the white people of the adjacent parishes.

Archbishop Blenk's Evaluation of the Parochial School System

Certainly such conditions as those stated above were a long way from ideal. But a beginning had been made; the surface had been scratched. Archbishop Blenk realized that Catholic education in the South had not made the progress that its early beginnings had betokened. This he made clear in his address before the fourth annual meeting of the National Catholic Educational Association. "I am from the belated

"South," he said. We are struggling to the forefront of events and progress, especially along educational lines."\(^{58}\)

Nevertheless, his dedication to the task of furthering the establishment of parochial schools in his Archdiocese and the organization of these schools into a praise-worthy system can be gleaned from the following words penned by the Archbishop himself:

The parochial school, my dear friends, is a stronghold, a powerful fortification in defense of Church and State; in defense of the best interests of the individual, the family and society; in defense, in a word, of the sacred laws of God and man. It is a fortification in defense of order for the promotion of civilization, progress, prosperity, and the dignity of man. . . .

If the parochial school is true to its mission, it will see that the rights of God are recognized and obeyed and that the rights of man are held sacred and respected. It shall then be our glorious privilege to hand down to future generations a glorious republic. . . .\(^{59}\)


\(^{59}\)News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], February 16, 1907.
CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST ARCHDIOCESAN SCHOOL BOARD

Mindful of the instruction of the Third Plenary Council that parochial schools "should have nothing to suffer, as regards teachers or equipment, by comparison with the public schools," Archbishop Blenk next set about establishing a central governing board for the parochial schools in his Archdiocese.

I. EARLY EFFORTS TO COORDINATE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN NEW ORLEANS

That the prelates of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, before the episcopate of Archbishop Blenk, had attempted to unify the Catholic schools within their jurisdiction, is attested to by records examined by the writer. Although none proved successful insofar as permanency is concerned, they deserve to be mentioned here.

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Attempts at Organization Before 1906

Each of the Archbishops who preceded Blenk in New Orleans had been subject to the decrees of the Baltimore Councils. However, each of these men, for one reason or another—religious, political, economic—had found it impossible to conform to these injunctions. Failure notwithstanding, it was during the half century immediately preceding the appointment of James Hubert Blenk to the Archbishopric of New Orleans that the greatest progress had been made along these lines. Throughout the country many dioceses had begun operating Catholic schools under systematized methods and diocesan supervision and organization, while the efforts made in others had met with the same reception as those in New Orleans prior to 1906.  

New Orleans Free School Association. The earliest organized effort on behalf of Catholic education in Louisiana was the Association of Catholics of New Orleans for the Erection of Free Schools, formed in 1851-1852, with the approval and backing of Archbishop Blanc, first Archbishop of New Orleans. The purpose of this group of Catholic laymen was

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3 Information from Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
to provide free Catholic schools when it became evident that the free public school system was being developed, and Catholic schools would be excluded from the reception of public monies. The organization petitioned the State legislature for allocation of funds for the operation of Catholic Free Schools, but the petition was denied.⁴

Second petition to the legislature. A second attempt to obtain funds from the State was made in 1872-1873 under the direction of Archbishop Perche, and, again, the petition was refused.⁵

Efforts of Archbishop Janssens. To Archbishop Janssens goes the credit for the initial efforts to Americanize the French-guided and French-minded Church in Louisiana. It was he who sought to bring into full accord with the policies and methods of the American Hierarchy the prevailing French customs.⁶

This zealous prelate arranged for the Catholic schools

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⁵Pastoral Letter of Archbishop Perche, 1872, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

of New Orleans to participate in the educational exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893. Furthermore, that the academies taught by the Dominican Sisters might profit educationally by the experience, he requested that six Sisters attend the exhibit. The results were very gratifying, for a number of awards were won by pupils and schools of the Archdiocese.

This move, however, was resented by the French religious engaged in teaching in the schools. They looked to France for guidance, teaching methods, policies, ideas, and inspiration. They took no pride in the fact that their schools and students had been thus honored, since such recognition was gained under American auspices. Their attitude of "Could anything good come from America in the way of education?" was plainly manifest, but it in no wise dampened or curbed the spirit of the Archbishop. His aim was to inaugurate in the New Orleans See the same system of education which had proven successful in other dioceses of the country; and he so planned

7Original Letter in the Archives of Dominican College, New Orleans.

8Baudier's Historical Collection, MMS. Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
in the latter part of his administration. Unfortunately, he did not live to see his plans executed, for he died in 1897 before establishing a Catholic School Board.

II. ARCHBISHOP BLENK, ORGANIZER OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

When Archbishop Blenk took over the government of the Church in the Archdiocese, the social, political, and economic life of south Louisiana was in a period of transition. The change that had set in during Archbishop Janssens' time was very evident now.

Breaking away from the traditions of the past and the permeating of the American attitude and view in all classes became accelerated. The old school and the old aristocracy waned. English as the common tongue gained ground, and French began to be neglected. In fact, this period may be regarded as the era of Americanization, and the final breaking away of the venerable archdiocese from the old French school of thought and views, attachments and influence. Attention turned sharply to Catholic affairs and activities in this country,

\footnote{Information from records written by Archbishop Janssens, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.}

\footnote{Baudier's Historical Collection, Vol. 10, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.}
and finally the Archdiocese began participation in American church activities. These, under the brilliant leadership of Archbishop Blenk, brought New Orleans Archdiocese national prestige.

Creation of the Catholic School Board

One cannot but admire the great progressive movements undertaken by energetic, modern-minded courageous Archbishop Blenk—courageous, truly, because it did require courage for a prelate to break through the battlements of tradition and conservatism to inaugurate a new educational system. When he saw the progress of other dioceses far outstripping the nation's second oldest Archdiocese, his own, he strove energetically to bring it into step, to eradicate the old public view that the Church in Louisiana was a European institution, out of gear with American ideas. Indeed, the creation of a Catholic School Board, under which the parochial schools in the Archdiocese of New Orleans would function, was one of the major features of his episcopal program.\textsuperscript{11}

Objectives of the Board. Archbishop Blenk's aim was to raise the teaching standards of the religious and lay

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}
teachers in the parochial schools so that they would meet or surpass those of the state schools. The principal purpose of this aim was to negate excuses given by Catholic parents for not sending their children to Catholic schools; namely, the inferiority of church schools, the lack of proper training and teaching, and the foreign Sisters who spoke broken English to the children. The Archbishop planned on putting pressure on Catholic parents and demanding Catholic education for Catholic children.

What the Archbishop desired was a system of parochial schools, completely organized and functioning in every parish, making available conveniently close to the parishioners, a substantial and efficient education, religious and secular.

Opposition encountered. Archbishop Blenk had to contend with opposition not only from the teaching religious, but also from some of the clergy. As stated in an earlier chapter, the Catholic schools had been independent units under the authority and direction of the individual pastors and operated by the Sisters and Brothers who followed teaching methods according to their source of origin—France, Germany,


13 Ibid.
Ireland, America. Probably in only one department was there any unity or uniformity—in the Baltimore Catechism—and even here there was some deviation according to the decision of the respective pastors.\(^{14}\)

Some pastors felt that the establishment of a supervising authority for the schools was an infringement of pastoral rights and privileges, and of freedom of action for their parishes. On the other hand, the Sisters and Brothers felt that such supervision was an invasion of their private domain and interference with their rights and rules.\(^{15}\)

**Superintendent named.** Despite the obstacles encountered in the persons of pastors and members of Religious Communities, Archbishop Blenk could not be turned away from his purpose. According to the recommendations of the Third Plenary Council, a school board was to be established in the Archdiocese.\(^{16}\) Therefore, shortly after his arrival in New Orleans, Archbishop Blenk named Right Reverend Monsignor Leslie J. Kavanagh Superintendent of Catholic Schools. The

\(^{14}\)Information from Archbishop Blenk’s personal scrapbook, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

\(^{15}\)Baudier, Vol. 10, *loc. cit.*

\(^{16}\)Acta et Decreta, *op. cit.*, 203.
announcement in the local newspaper read:

Reverend Leslie Kavanagh, pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, was yesterday appointed by Archbishop Blenk as superintendent of Catholic parochial schools. Father Kavanagh is the son of Irish parents, though a native of England. He completed his college studies in Louvaine, Belgium, and then studied under the Marist Order in France and in the Marist College at the Catholic University of America. He taught rhetoric there in prep classes and for several years at Jefferson College in Louisiana. Father's phenomenal work in building up his parish since its establishment three years ago, as well as the superior management of his parochial school, are high recommendations for his appointment to his new office.17

At the same time, the Archbishop made the first announcement of the policy he intended to follow with regard to the parochial schools of the Archdiocese. There would be appointed a board of education, which together with the superintendent, would

. . . systematize the instruction in the parish schools. All the schools will follow the same curriculum, all teach from the same text books, and all follow the same methods of teaching.18

Selection of a school board. Although the appointment of Father Kavanagh was made in January, 1907, it was not until the late spring or summer that the board members were named.

17News item in The Daily Picayune [New Orleans], January, 1907.

18Ibid.
Those selected as officers, and members who constituted the Board of Directors were: Most Reverend J. H. Blenk, president; Right Reverend Monsignor J. M. Laval, vice-president; Reverend Leslie J. Kavanagh, superintendent; Reverend R. Power, secretary; Reverend F. Franciscus, C.S.C.; Reverend George Hild, C.S.C.; Reverend Thomas Larkin, S.M.; Reverend Thomas Weldon, C.M.; Reverend J. O'Shanahan, S.J.; Reverend L. Richen, and Reverend Alexander Barbier among the clergy and Messrs. W. J. Waguespak, Allison Owen, E. Hynes, C. I. Denechaud, and William J. Byrne, Jr., from the laity.19

First board meeting. The first meeting was held on Thursday, September 5, 1907.20 After the preliminary statements of appreciation to the board members for good will shown in accepting their office, the Archbishop asked for a report from Father Kavanagh who had, since his appointment, spent several months visiting a number of Catholic institutions in the North to examine their respective school systems. According to Father's report he had had the opportunity to learn from various pastors and superintendents at first hand


20Ibid.
"information concerning progress of Catholic education, the obstacles it has to encounter, the mistakes its exponents have made in the past and their plans for the future." 21

Among the important changes which Father Kavanagh advocated for the Archdiocesan system was the adoption of a new series of textbooks to be used throughout the Archdiocese and the composition of a completely revised course of studies, based on the new texts, for common use in all schools. These innovations were of primary importance, he felt, if the schools were to be improved. 22

Duties of the School Board

Following this statement by the superintendent, committees were appointed to study the various aspects of the organization and the best possible means of assuring its success. Accordingly, committees on Curriculum, Textbooks, Teachers' Examinations, Statistics, Teachers' Institute, and Finance 23 were formed and asked to prepare a statement concerning their several areas of inquiry.

Committee on statistics. While the textbook and curriculum committees were busy about their tasks of providing

21Ibid., p. 5.  
22Ibid.  
23Ibid.
suitable materials and syllabi, the members of the committee on statistics sought to devise ways and means of obtaining information on the following lines:

The number of Catholic schools, parochial, private, white and colored in each parish.

The number of pupils, male and female, at each institution.

The number of teachers employed in said schools and the branches taught by each teacher.

The number of grades or classes.

The number of children in the various classes and the estimated average age of children in each class.

The number of exams held throughout the year and the average number of children promoted from grade to grade each year.

The average number of pupils at school during the school years 1905-1906, 1906-1907.

The textbooks used in the various grades, and if one book is used in more than one grade, what portion of the book is allotted to each. 24

To this end a circular was sent to all pastors in charge of the parochial schools throughout the city and also to the Superiors of the Catholic colleges, convents, private academies and schools. 25

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25 Ibid.
School population. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to find any reports concerning the statistical returns to most of these queries, but by the end of the school year in 1908, the following report, made on school population, gave clear evidence that parochial schools were becoming more popular and providing the greater share of Catholic education in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. There were at that time the following enrollments in the Catholic schools:

White parochial schools:

- boys 4,009
- girls 4,624
- unidentified 1,663

Negro parochial schools: 675

Private schools: 1,013

Total All Schools: 11,984

Later figures on school population and teacher personnel, although incomplete, were given for the years 1913-1916:

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Academy</th>
<th>Parochial (W)</th>
<th>Parochial (N)</th>
<th>Asylums</th>
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<td>6649 8252</td>
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<td>7289 8860</td>
<td>1275 1591</td>
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26Minutes of the Board, May, 1908, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
These data were obtained from records in the Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

Local schools boards proposed. It was at the first meeting of the scholastic year 1909-1910 that the members of the school board decided school age for all children under its jurisdiction (actually or potentially) would be from six to fourteen years. So that all Catholic children would comply, it was moved that the number of children not attending parochial schools would be investigated to determine whether or not they were in attendance at private or public schools.27 To facilitate this procedure and to simplify the parochial school system in general, Archbishop Blenk proposed the formation of school associations in each parish which would act as local school boards under the guidance and direction and in conformity with the Archdiocesan Board.28 Whether or not his suggestion was acted upon immediately cannot be ascertained, but his proposition is an actuality at the present time.

Textbook selection. Although the textbook committee was prepared a month later to offer a possible list of books


28 Ibid.
to be used in the parochial schools, much discussion and study intervened before the final choice was made. Among the texts which were settled upon without too much difficulty were:

- **Readers:** The New Century Series, with Long's language lessons as introductory.
- **Arithmetic:** Robinson's Series
- **Writing:** Palmer's
- **Spellers:** Aiton's
- **Catechism:** Baltimore Catechism, Kinkead's grading
- **Bible History:** Gilmour's, with Benziger's Bible Stories as introductory.  

Decisions concerning the choice of other branches came only after months—and, in some cases, more than a year—of controversy over the relative merits and shortcomings of various texts.

Although many private Catholic schools continued to use the Gould Brown Grammar, the committee advanced the following reasons why the Christian Brothers' works *First Lessons in English Grammar* and *Principles of English Grammar* were

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better for general use.

First, they are the work of teachers who had the experience of over two centuries; second, most other books are only language lessons, books where grammar is scattered, founded on the false supposition that children learn English at home; third, children leave school early and require exactly that fundamental knowledge which these books offer; fourth, the exercises are well adapted and well chosen; fifth, the books have a Catholic tone.\(^\text{31}\)

When there was still an indecision to be resolved among the members of the meeting, Archbishop Blenk finally volunteered his opinion, evidently based on his objective to use the best means to Americanize the schools rather than solely on the importance of formal grammar:

In order to learn a language well, the pupils should know the rules of grammar . . . but they should be couched in simple language so that they can be understood. This particular work was not written by one, two, or three of their teachers [Brothers of the Christian Schools], but by many; it has been closely scrutinized by their best teachers, and for these reasons commends itself above others.\(^\text{32}\)

Thus, the Christian Brothers' Grammar books were officially adopted by the school board for use in the schools.

Another controversy centered around the choice of Geography and History texts. In the case of the latter, Lawler's

\(^{31}\)Minutes of the Committee meeting, Spring, 1908, pp. 22-23.

\(^{32}\)Minutes of the Board, \textit{op. cit.}, Spring, 1908, p. 25.
United States History in two volumes was adopted with little trouble, but the unanimous decision concerning a geography text came only after the author, Frye, agreed to add a detailed chapter on the state of Louisiana. Moreover, the primary book (the work was in two volumes) particularly recommended itself on account of its completeness, "an excellent text for many of the children who seldom go beyond the fifth grade."

With the resolution of the problem of the choice of a geography text, the selection of the textbooks for the parochial schools of the Archdiocese of New Orleans was complete. There was left, however, the task of developing a curriculum that would embrace what was necessary for a well-rounded education, an education which would make of the clients of the parochial schools not only good Catholics, but also good Americans.

Curriculum development. The curriculum committee began its work immediately after the choice of the first textbooks was definite. It was decided that special care be devoted to the primary grades, that a syllabus be prepared for at least

33 Minutes of the Board, op. cit., April 5, 1909, p. 33.
34 Father Kavanagh in Minutes, op. cit., p. 18.
these grades, and that a program of studies be drawn up for all other of the eight grades.\textsuperscript{35}

By the spring of 1908, when the primary syllabus had not been completed, the committee members realized that the project of curriculum development entailed more than they had anticipated, and consequently could not be accomplished in the time limit they had set for themselves.\textsuperscript{36} With some misgivings they presented their plight to Father Kavanagh who immediately dismissed their worries by agreeing

\ldots that the task is a long and difficult one, and since the reputation of the entire Board will be at stake, great care should be exercised in the preparation of such a thing as a syllabus and a programme of studies.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Primary syllabus submitted.} By September of 1908, the tentative syllabus for the first grades was completed and presented to the Board.\textsuperscript{38} Father Hild had previously submitted the outline to the Sisters in his school for their criticism, and they had returned the course to him with many valuable suggestions.\textsuperscript{39} Some members urged, therefore, that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{35}Minutes of the Board, \textit{op. cit.}, September 5, 1970, p. 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{36}Minutes of the Board, \textit{op. cit.}, Spring, 1908, p. 23.
  \item \textsuperscript{37}Information from scrapbook kept by Father Kavanagh.
  \item \textsuperscript{38}Minutes of the Board, \textit{op. cit.}, September 8, 1908, p. 26.
  \item \textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
the syllabus be placed in the hands of the teachers for immediate operation. However, "the wise Archbishop" suggested that more time be allowed for scrutiny, especially by the superintendent, who at the time had been absent from the city for a month and had not seen the finished product.

We are responsible for the nature, character, and excellence of the education that will be given to our children. Hence, it would not only be wise and prudent, but necessary, to refer the course to the Superintendent and to allow him time sufficient to examine it, so that he can clearly inform the Board on all subjects for the course and syllabus. Slow haste or deliberate work and action is surest and best.40

Whatever may have been the opinion of the individuals in the group, the Board decided to heed the advice of the Archbishop, and the course of studies was held over for further study.

Music in the schools. Recalling the words of the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the country assembled at the Second Plenary Council in Baltimore41 with regard to church music, the Archbishop ordered the introduction into the parochial schools the systematic study of liturgical music.42 In the

40 Ibid., p. 27.
42 Pastoral letter of Archbishop Blenk on "Church Music," December, 1907.
parochial school, he said, lay the solution of the entire problem of a suitable choir and congregational singing.43

In his pastoral of December, 1907, he wrote:

It is our determination now, in our own Archdiocese of New Orleans, to begin at once to lay this solid foundation for the permanent restoration of Sacred Music by introducing into all our Parochial schools the systematic study of vocal music, and in particular the music of the Church. For the success of this great undertaking we rely on the hearty cooperation of you all, both clergy and laity. The reverend Pastors will advance this great work by giving encouragement and liberal aid to those whose vocation or duty it is to teach. The teachers themselves—both religious and secular—will spare no effort to fit themselves for their noble task.44

He reminded those to whom he wrote that the value of music as an educational factor had become generally accepted; so much so that vocal music had been incorporated as one of the regular branches of school curriculums.45

Music, then, is a serious factor in the mental, physical, and emotional development of the child, and it is as important in character molding as any other subject in the school curriculum.46

To assure himself that the schools would follow a uniform program, the Archbishop recommended that the teaching of music be begun in the first grade and cover a period of from

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seventy-five to ninety minutes a week, "irrespective of 
entertainment or pure amusement." 47

There are four essentials of music education; namely, 
conception of good music, voice training, sight singing and 
musical interpretation, and they should be developed side by 
side for each of the eight years of elementary school life. 48

By 1912 Father Kavanagh, ably assisted by James Mc­
Laughlin, the organist of St. Mary's Church, Boston, had 
edited a publication called the Crown Hymnal especially for 
use in the parochial schools of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. 
Published in two editions—children and organist-teacher—the 
hymnal contained all music in general use in Church functions 
during the year. 49

**Interest in physical fitness program.** In writing a 
curriculum for use in the schools, the committee had evidently 
relegated the study of health and physical fitness to an inci­
dental place in the course of studies. However, within two 
months after the beginning of the work, some one proposed that 
a textbook on hygiene be included among the others. 50

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47Pastoral, *loc. cit.*

48"Course of Studies," *loc. cit.*

49News item in *The Morning Star* [New Orleans], March 
9, 1912.

50Minutes of the Board, December 9, 1907, *loc. cit.*
Archbishop Blenk, whose staunch adherence to the philosophy of "a healthy mind in a healthy body" later brought about the foundation of the first Catholic School Athletic League in the United States, agreed wholeheartedly with the suggestion. But all evidence points to the fact that this proposition died in the making. The course of studies, as late as 1912, makes no mention of hygiene as a specific subject area.

**Tentative Curriculum Presented**

When the school board met in September, 1909, the Committee on Curriculum proudly presented their finished product—the courses of study for grades one through eight—so diligently begun two years previous to that time. Despite the favorable evaluation placed upon the work by the Board, it was decided that the syllabi be used on a tentative basis for one year before the final adoption be made. Father Kavanagh, in discussing the move, had this to say:

> Practical use in the classroom will give the teacher the true working knowledge as to real value. Practical suggestions that tend to enhance the value of the course

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51 News item in *The Morning Star* [New Orleans], September 30, 1916.

52 Minutes of the Board, September 13, 1908, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
are possible. The fact that each teaching Order
will then be consulted in its formation will in-
sure a readier cooperation after the course is
adopted. And, finally, a better uniformity in
the work will be possible.  

**Importance of reading stressed.** Particularly with
regard to reading did Father Kavanagh advise careful study.
Since this branch of learning is so basic to all that follows
in the education of children, he cautioned:

Too much care cannot be taken in this if we would
obtain the best results in enunciation, pronunciation
and accentuation, the most essential qualities for
clear, accurate, and intelligent reading by the chil-
dren.

One of the greatest defects in our schools in this
matter is that the work is too mechanical, due to the
fact that children are pushed forward in their readers
before they are intellectually ready for it.

We hope in this course to lay out certain matter
for the cultivation of this latter quality, and thereby
lay the foundation for intelligent thought.  

In conformity with the wishes of the Superintendent,
the adoption of the course of studies was delayed until the
end of the following year when for the first time the Cath-
olic schools in the Archdiocese of New Orleans were put on a
unified basis insofar as textbooks and curriculum were

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54 Ibid.

55 September, 1910.
concerned. Indeed, the second great step in Archbishop Blenk's plan for a systematized school organization had been taken.

**Financing the School Board**

After Archbishop Blenk had organized the Catholic School Board, and its work increased, it was manifest that the superintendent could not carry out all the proposed programs without some revenues. To remedy this situation, the Archbishop put into effect a resolution adopted by the school board—to tax every child in parochial schools ten cents per year to provide operational funds for the board. This was in 1910.\(^\text{56}\) It continued through 1913 when it was discontinued because some of the clergy refused to pay or asked to be exempted despite the rather sharp letters written to the recalcitrant pastors by the Archbishop.\(^\text{57}\)

Again faced with the necessity of providing for the financial support of the school board, one member suggested that the Archbishop appoint a committee to solicit donations and yearly subscriptions for the work. The Archbishop's

\(^{56}\text{News item in The Daily Picayune [New Orleans], December 12, 1910.}\)

\(^{57}\text{Records in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.}\)
only comment to this proposal was, "In due time." Therefore, whatever the final decision was concerning a plan for finances, one must hazard a guess. No account can be found. Nevertheless, one thing is certain. The plan proposed in 1910 is the basic means of assuring a substantial fund for the operation of the Archdiocesan School Board today. Through the years it has proved successful, even when the per capita tax has been sequentially raised from ten cents, to twenty-five cents, and, presently, to fifty cents.59

These, therefore, were the beginnings of the New Orleans Archdiocesan School Board. Much yet remained to be done, but it was with pardonable pride that Father Kavanagh could say in summarizing what had been accomplished by September 1909:

Uniformity of textbooks has been secured in the great majority of our schools--the present course is now being tested--the Teachers' Institute is about to begin its third year, while the efforts of the Board have been the means of many of our schools seeking improvement in the line of equipment.

So true is this matter [of improvement], that it is safe to say that within the next three years the ill-equipped will be the exception rather than the rule.

58Minutes of the Board, Spring, 1913, op. cit., p. 31.

The work of preparing the Course has undoubtedly been slow, but the task is no easy one—many a book, many an expert must needs be consulted. Yet there is every reason to believe that [in] September, 1910, the Course will be ready for use in our schools.60

60Minutes of the Board, September, 1909, loc. cit.
CHAPTER V

TEACHER EDUCATION PROVIDED IN THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF NEW ORLEANS

Since the condition and growth of schools depend principally upon the competency of the teachers, the greatest care should be exercised that not only good, but qualified teachers be employed to discharge this function. Mindful of this truth, the Catholic hierarchy in the Council at Baltimore\(^1\) decreed and commanded that henceforth no one be admitted to the office of teacher in a parochial school unless he has proved by an examination his competency and suitability.\(^2\) Within a year from the promulgation of this Council, the Bishops were to appoint a Diocesan Examination Board before which all Religious teachers belonging to Diocesan congregations and all secular teachers were to appear to testify their fitness to teach in a parochial school. Without a diploma from this board, no

\(^{1}\)Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, November 9, 1884.

teacher (except those who had taught before the Third Plenary Council) should be employed by any pastor.³

I. THE NEED FOR TEACHER-TRAINING INSTITUTIONS IN NEW ORLEANS

That there might be a sufficient number of Catholic teachers, Bishops were entreated to "negotiate with the superiors of Religious Communities for the establishment of normal schools for their subjects."⁴

Until the episcopate of Archbishop Blenk, little had been accomplished by way of compliance with these decrees. In fact, little is known of the early efforts to provide educational training for the Religious and lay teachers of the Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

Teacher Education Prior to 1906

The Catholic Winter School of America, begun under Archbishop Janssens in 1896, is the only recorded organized effort in the direction of teacher education in the Archdiocese prior to 1906. The school consisted of a four-weeks'

³Acta et Decreta Concilii Plenarii Baltimoresis Tertii, A.D., MDCCCLXXXVI (Baltimorae: Typis Joannis Murphy et Sociorum, MDCCCLXXXVI), n.p.

⁴Ibid.
institute, in session at Tulane Hall during the latter half of February and the beginning of March. Many noted educators were invited to lecture on various subjects of practical interest to the teachers in the Catholic schools. But these were mere lectures and only for one month of the year:5

One also finds mention made of a practice commonly followed by the Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross prior to the turn of the century:

As early as the year 1863, the Sisters of the mission houses returned to the Provincial House to spend their vacation in improving themselves scholastically. Many priest professors are brought to lecture at Holy Angels Academy with a view to fashioning the Sisters for their great task of teacher.6

Perhaps other Religious Communities followed this same custom, but no records of such activities on behalf of in-service training can be found.

Teacher-Education Under Archbishop Blenk

With the formation of a Catholic School Board and the strenuous effort put forth to comply with recommendations that had already lain dormant for almost a quarter of a

5Information from records in the Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans; news item in The Morning Star, Centennial Number, July 27, 1912.

century, teacher education took on a stature of great import. Originally begun as a series of workshops, this educational program was pushed forward until the Archbishop's desire to establish a training or normal school for teachers was fulfilled.

Teacher institutes. As was mentioned previously, when Father Kavanagh was appointed superintendent of Catholic schools, his first task was to visit school systems in other parts of the country to study the organizational patterns and methods employed. This tour through the North and East during the early months of his superintendency crystallized one project in his mind: he wanted the teachers of the Archdiocese to profit by his experiences; and to afford them this opportunity, he planned to inaugurate a series of teacher institutes where he and other educators would be able to share their time and talent with the classroom teachers. Particularly did he want to share the information gained while attending the summer course at Harvard University, the lectures of which "will furnish me with abundant material for those on

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7 Supra., Chapter IV, pp. 114-15.

8 Letter to Archbishop Blenk from Father Kavanagh, May 29, 1908. Original in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
methodology that are to be given at the teacher-institute this coming year."9

Gradually, these institutes expanded into more than a once-a-year meeting, especially after the adoption of a uniform curriculum for the schools. By 1910, the institute had become a workshop which met for the prime purpose of ironing out difficulties that arose from the reorganization of the school system.10 In making this innovation, Father Kavanagh explained:

In order to secure a uniformity in teaching the Course, the work done in the teacher institute should, as far as possible, be of such a nature that would lay down certain fundamental, Catholic, pedagogic principles as would enable the teacher to make an intelligent use of the syllabus.

If necessary, it would be well this year, to curtail some of the papers and devote more time to lectures and questions on the matter taught. Teachers can, in writing or otherwise, expose their difficulties to the lecturer. Consecutive work of this kind can be productive of good results, and prepare the teachers for the right use of the course that is given them.11

Along with his invitation to teachers to take an active

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9Ibid.

10Minute Book of the Catholic Board of Education of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, pp. 40-42; information gained in a personal interview with Sister Mary Basil, M.S.C.

11Minute Book, loc. cit.
part in the "institute-turned-workshop," Father Kavanagh made other recommendations in keeping with efficient school policy. To promote order, regularity, and good work he proposed the use of uniform records in attendance "to reduce tardiness, half and whole day absences and as a means to enhance results of teaching." Class schedules were emphasized as a preventative against the pushing of one branch to the detriment of others, and also as a safeguard against taxing the attention span of little ones. Accurate reports of class recitations and examinations were stressed as necessary means of enabling teachers and administrators to obtain a knowledge of individuals in a class and a fair idea of the standard of work done in each school.¹²

Much discussion centered on the social studies as proposed by the course. Great emphasis was placed on "the study of nature and of home lore in the first years of school life" as an introduction to home geography

. . . which shall lead up to and merge into a global knowledge of the world as a whole, thus giving a proper basis for the intelligent study of the more important continents, that the principles taught after review and enrichment shall become guides for a later, more detailed study of the political, social, and physical conditions of the world.¹³

¹²Ibid., pp. 41-42.
¹³Course of Studies for Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, 1915, p. 36.
Again, teachers were made to understand that they had not to make great historians of their charges, but rather to form a basis for the development of patriotism, obedience to law and respect for duly constituted authority. To accomplish this task, teachers were exhorted to take advantage of the children's natural delight in action and to use historical biographies in the first years to awaken interest in the great country that was theirs. Technical instruction and critical examinations would then be left to the later years of the elementary school.\footnote{Ibid., p. 52.}

Other topics treated in these workshops ranged from discussions on methods and content of oral and written language in primary and intermediate grades, to hygiene, music and drawing.\footnote{News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], October 24, 1914.}

Truly, Father Kavanagh had set out a comprehensive plan of in-service training for the teachers in Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. But even this, improvement though it was, did not satisfy the demands of Archbishop Blenk who realized that in-service training could not substitute for preservice competency. His objective was the establishment...
of a normal school in his Archdiocese.

Dominican College, Archdiocesan training school. Accordingly, he lent all the support of his authority and influence to aid the Dominican Sisters to secure from the state authorities the rights and privileges of a training school for teachers. He personally presented his plan to Lieutenant Governor Lambremont, calling attention to the fact that the girls' academy conducted by these Sisters had already won state approval in 1907. The state authorities listened with a gracious ear to this request, and in the latter part of 1908 gave the authorization to begin the teacher training course in their academy, now officially housing a normal college. When Dominican College opened its doors to prospective teachers on December 8, 1909, the Sisters received the following communication from Archbishop Blenk:

My dear Mother Prioress:

The great feast of our dear Immaculate Mother is a most propitious occasion for the expression of my deep thanks to you for the vigorous and enlightened manner in which you have taken up the important work

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16Information from Dominican College Archives, New Orleans.

17Ibid.

18Records in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
of the "Diocesan Training School"—a work that will mean so much to religion and education in this city and diocese. The Reverend Leslie J. Kavanagh, Superintendent of Education, keeps me informed regarding the solid growth and gratifying progress of your arduous undertaking. And I know from other sources that you and the entire community are exerting the best of your vast experience, ability, and energy to have in your flourishing institution a model Diocesan Training School.

I deem it, therefore, a duty as it is certainly a great pleasure, officially to declare your institution the regularly constituted Diocesan Training School for Teachers, and as such, to accord it all the rights and privileges which are the natural and necessary consequences of this official declaration and establishment. . . .

May you behold unto several generations the most happy results from the great work you have planned and which today I have definitely assigned to you and your community.

Yours sincerely in Christ,
James H. Blenk, S.M., Archbishop of New Orleans

To make secure their position as a training school for teachers, the Sisters applied to the General Assembly of Louisiana for power to confer degrees. The Assembly passed the bill which the Governor signed on June 17, 1910, bringing into existence the first Catholic college for young women in Louisiana. Two separate programs of study were now

19 Original in Dominican College Archives, New Orleans.
20 Records in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
inaugurated: first, the regular four years of study in the College of Arts and Sciences, requiring for entrance, graduation from a four-year, state approved high school, and for graduation, sixty-eight hours; and, secondly, a teacher training program. This latter was described as follows:

Teacher Training School, a two year course requiring for entrance a High School Diploma and for graduation eighteen hours of Professional Subjects and thirty-two hours of Academic Subjects. Diploma entitles to State Teacher's Certificate (Elementary Schools) for life.21

Development of Teacher-Training Facilities

Dominican College, however, did not remain the only institution in which teachers for Catholic schools were trained. With the passing of time other Communities were empowered to grant normal school certificates and, subsequently, degrees. Furthermore, Sisters and Brothers, as well as lay teachers, began to attend out-of-state colleges and universities to broaden their educational outlook. The seed that had been planted with the institution of the Catholic Winter School had, indeed, sprouted and blossomed into a mighty tree.

**Jefferson College.** Despite the fact that Dominican College was named the official teacher training school in the

21Information obtained from Dominican College Archives, New Orleans.
Archdiocese, it was not the first. Jefferson College had already received in 1906 the official notification that its graduates were *ipso facto* entitled to a first-grade certificate to teach in the public as well as the private and parochial schools of Louisiana. That this institution was located outside the limits of the city of New Orleans and accepted only young men as students may well be reasons why it was not accorded the privilege bestowed upon the Dominican school—the official Training School for Catholic Teachers.

**Ursuline College.** Long an integral part of the educational scene in the Archdiocese of New Orleans, the Ursuline Nuns expanded their Academy to include a four-year college program early in the century. Chartered by the state in 1912, its work continued until recent years when lack of physical facilities forced the administration to devote all their energies to college preparation on the secondary level.

**Academy of the Holy Angels, College Department.** Although a summer training program had been functioning at the Academy

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22 *Supra*, Chapter II, pp. 69-70.

of the Holy Angels since 1863, no recognition had been given it by the State Department of Education. Finally, in 1916, the state empowered the Academy in its "College Department," operated exclusively for the Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross, to confer the Bachelor of Arts degree. The Academy, however, was not at this time equipped to exercise this privilege since every Sister was needed to fill the ranks of teachers in the academies and parochial schools operated by the Marianites. Therefore, during the years the normal school was not functioning, the Sisters attended Loyola University to work for normal credits and degrees, and, later, other institutions of learning in Louisiana, Texas, Indiana, Missouri, and New York. In 1938, their own College Department was expanded and received permission to operate as a four year teachers' college, now entitled Our Lady of Holy Cross College.

24Supra, p. 135.


27Marianite Centennial, op. cit., p. 140.

28Education Committee Report, Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross, New Orleans.

Other summer normal courses arranged. From a report on the Congregations of Religious Women in the Archdiocese between 1913-1918, one learns that during the administration of Archbishop Blenk, the Motherhouses of all communities within his ecclesiastical jurisdiction were obliged by him to be moved to a location within the city of New Orleans. This, he felt, would facilitate the discharge of the responsibility of enabling members of the communities to attend institutions of learning and thus increase their efficiency.

The same report mentions that for the first time, the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception followed summer normal school courses for Religious teachers held at Annunciation High School. Also, some of the Sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament are recorded as having attended summer classes at universities in Washington, D. C., while all other teaching Sisters of the community followed regular normal courses under the direction of experienced Brothers from Holy Cross College.

Summer school classes for the Sisters of Charity were held after 1912 in buildings which had formerly been used for

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31Ibid.

32Ibid.
St. Simeon's Academy, and the Academy of the Sacred Heart at Grand Coteau offered normal courses leading to a teacher's certificate from the State Board of Education "without further examination."

Thus, from the foregoing account, one may readily understand the eagerness with which the Archbishop's request for teacher training was answered. But one may also conclude that with such a mushrooming of centers of education within the same city, some were destined to be discontinued with the passage of time. This is, in fact, what has happened, with the result that much better and more thorough training is given by those schools which remain—Loyola, Dominican College, Our Lady of Holy Cross—as well as by the few Junior Colleges which have since been founded and affiliated with larger universities.

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33 News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], July 24, 1915.

34 Advertisement in The Morning Star [New Orleans], May 17, 1917.

35 Junior College of the Eucharistic Missionaries in Covington, Louisiana, affiliated with Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.; Mount Carmel Sisters' Junior College in New Orleans with the same affiliation; St. Joseph Sisters' Junior College in New Orleans approved by the State of Louisiana to operate in accordance with the requirements for the first two years of teacher training.
There was yet another project undertaken by Archbishop Blenk to promote the educational advancement of Catholic school teachers in the Archdiocese of New Orleans. The National Catholic Educational Association, which had been formed in 1903, had, until 1913, held its annual conventions in those sections of the country where Catholic education had had its earliest beginnings; namely, the North and East. Now, on the tenth anniversary of its foundation, the Archbishop of New Orleans had proposed that his See City be the scene of the meeting.

Many looked askance at his proposal, remembering that but six short years before there had been no true organization in the Catholic schools of the South. They wondered if New Orleans were ready for such an undertaking.  

Preparation in the Archdiocese. Archbishop Blenk, not to be thwarted by the objections raised, began preparation in New Orleans. He received the whole-hearted cooperation of the priests and the firm support of a number of prominent laymen,

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36 Information from correspondence held between Archbishop Blenk and Association Administrators. Original letters in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
all promoters of Catholic education. At a meeting held on January 27, 1913, he explained his reasons for wanting the convention in New Orleans. He was, he said, mindful of the position the South held in educational circles, and his aim was to make manifest that, despite its belated beginnings in Catholic education, it had now come into its own—could take its place among the older systems in the country.

The South is not as bad educationally as it has been painted. There is room for improvement here, but in comparison with conditions in the East, the South is well to the front. It is certain that there are fewer fads indulged in here, and this is probably not to be regretted. The most important difference between conditions in the two sections is that in the East the educational institutions have more means at their disposal, and as a result, they have finer buildings and more complete equipment. But if the South had the means which the East has, no doubt the equipment here would be as fine.

Benefits of the convention to the South. On the other hand, Archbishop Blenk knew that both clergy and laity would benefit greatly from the convention. Educators from all over the United States, representing the best thought on Catholic

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37 Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee of Arrangements, January 27, 1913, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

38 Ibid.

39 News item in The Daily Picayune [New Orleans], August 24, 1908.
education and discussing its most difficult problems, must produce results that would be far reaching and of especial benefit to the Archdiocese.40

To many Catholics in Louisiana whose views on Catholic education are hazy and often erroneous, the sight of so large a representative body, and the knowledge they will acquire from the extensive work that is being done by Catholics for education, will be a lesson of infinite value. . . . To ourselves, the meetings that will be held, the various papers that will be discussed, will not only be instructive and interesting, but a stimulation to better efforts.41

Invitations to Religious Communities. In February Archbishop Blenk wrote personal letters to the Superiors General of the Religious Communities in the United States, urging them to send representatives from among their members to the convention.42 Many accepted his invitation, but others declined, saying the distance was too great between themselves and the convention city. Never before had Religious, especially women, traveled so far to attend an educational gathering.43

To insure as great an attendance as possible from among

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40Committee Minutes, loc. cit.  41Ibid.

42Original letter dated February 20, 1913, in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

43Original letters in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
southern educators—Religious and lay, alike—the Archbishop next wrote to the other Bishops of the Province of New Orleans begging them "to impress upon the Sisterhoods in your diocese the immense importance of this convention, urging them to send to it as many representatives as possible." He referred to the Bishops as the "doctors of the educational systems in their dioceses" and exhorted them to be present so as to draw into a closer bond the association which could do so much to study the educational situation in the United States, at once so complex and ever-changing.

His deep concern for the future of Christian education and everything related to it prompted the Archbishop to include discussions on the changing curriculum as an important topic for consideration. He recognized the necessity of having educators study the needs of the children, and at the same time, attend to "the reasonable demands of the parents." He thought it desirable that Catholics, as far as possible, should have a uniform educational policy despite the fact that "parochial educational development had been influenced, in part,

44Original letter dated May 16, 1913, in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

45"Topics for Consideration," National Catholic Educational Convention, 1913.
by secular education, and we cannot free ourselves altogether from that influence."\(^{46}\)

Such were some of the projected topics for consideration at the convention. When the final program was drawn up and sent to the printer, a letter from the secretary general of the Association to Archbishop Blenk held the following comments:

"It is a great pleasure to assure you that in my opinion, it is the most practical program the Association has ever offered, and I am confident that our New Orleans meeting will be the most valuable the Association has ever held. The attendance may not be so large, and in my opinion this is not a detriment, but every important Catholic educational institution of the country will be represented in some way or other.\(^{47}\)"

True to this prophecy, when the convention had run its three days' length, letters from those who had attended from all over the United States arrived at the Archbishop's residence to congratulate him on the outstanding work of the meeting at which he had been host. Much of the correspondence contained the admitted surprise of the writers "that New Orleans should have the wherewithal to produce a gathering so beneficial to those concerned and, at the same time, so

\(^{46}\)Ibid.

\(^{47}\)Letter from Rev. Francis W. Howard to Archbishop Blenk, June 14, 1913, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
II. EDUCATION OF THE CLERGY

It was not in the field of parochial school education alone that Archbishop Blenk exerted his time and talent. Like his predecessors, he also labored to secure sufficient priests for the diocese and to encourage vocations among the young men of his Archdiocese. He expressed the hope that there would "not be a single family who would not consider it an honor . . . to have a son raised to the dignity of the priesthood." His ambition was to give the Archdiocese a permanent major and minor seminary.

The Role of the Priest in Parochial Education

That the importance of Catholic education as one of the chief duties of the pastor should be impressed on students in ecclesiastical seminaries, was a firm conviction of Archbishop Blenk. Therefore, in keeping with the decrees of the Councils, he too would have seminary programs that would offer

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48Original letters in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.


50Acta et Decreta, loc. cit.
courses in psychology, pedagogy, and pastoral theology with special reference to the training of youth, together with courses in catechetics and methods of teaching Bible History. 51

Priests should confer with one another on educational matters, and the parish school should be the special concern of the pastor. Frequent visits, watchfulness over the character formation of the pupils, the teaching of Catechism and Bible History and interest in the periodic examinations given the children should characterize his relations with the teaching personnel and students according to the Council of Baltimore. This the Archbishop was at pains to procure for the clergy in his diocese.

St. Joseph's Seminary opened. To assure himself that the young men with aspirations towards the priesthood would receive an adequate foundation upon which to build their later theological studies, Archbishop Blenk knew that a preparatory or minor seminary was a necessity in the Archdiocese. Archbishop Janssens had engaged the Benedictine Fathers from St. Meinrad's Abbey, Indiana, for just such a task during his episcopate, 52 but financial conditions in New Orleans had

51 Ibid.

52 Information from records in Baudier's Historical Collection, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
obligated Archbishop Chapelle to close the seminary in 1899.\textsuperscript{53}

In 1902, when Reverend Paul Schaeuble, O.S.B. was elected superior of the Benedictines in Louisiana, the community purchased a sizable piece of property in Covington and again opened a seminary. Five years later the entire plant was destroyed by fire. Nothing daunted by this calamity, the Fathers began anew. New and more substantial buildings rose to replace the old, and before long, the seminary could again open its doors to the young men who asked admittance.\textsuperscript{54}

Archbishop Blenk was quick to take advantage of the opportunity offered for the training of young men, and, to insure the existence and continuance of the preparatory seminary, entered into a twenty-five year contract with the Benedictines to that effect. By this agreement the Benedictine Fathers bound themselves to conduct a preparatory seminary.

\textit{... in accordance with the requirements outlined in the Third Council of Baltimore and in accordance with the plan of studies approved by the Most Reverend Archbishop of New Orleans.}

All applications of students for the Archdiocese must be submitted to the Archbishop who, to assure

\textsuperscript{53}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{54}Information obtained from a letter from Roger Baudier to Rev. Robert Laplace, O.S.B., Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
himself that a high standard of study and discipline is maintained in the Seminary, has the right at all times to examine the students.

The fee for board and tuition is hereby fixed at $200 per capita for the scholastic year, to be paid semi-annually in advance. The Archdiocese guarantees the payment of these fees for its own students, but in particular cases the fees may be altered by mutual consent.

No student of the Archdiocese can be dismissed except by the consent of the Archbishop, except in case of extreme and urgent necessity.

Since no fixed number of students is to be guaranteed by the Archdiocese, in order to insure the proper support of the Seminary, the Benedictine Fathers have the right to admit, also, students sent by pastors or bishops of other dioceses.55

Curriculum of minor seminary. The scope of the education offered at this institution embraced the four years of high school plus the first two years of college; therefore it came to be known as St. Joseph's College and Preparatory Seminary.56 It offered to the students "superior facilities for a solid Christian education through its practical methods of teaching, bookkeeping, banking and other commercial branches which are unsurpassed." Special attention was given to the English, French, German, Latin and Greek languages, mathematics

55Copy of original contract, drawn up June 22, 1911, in Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

56Baudier's Records, loc. cit.
and music. At the end of the second year of college work the seminarians were awarded Junior College Certificates and were sent to out-of-state major seminaries to obtain the philosophical and theological training leading to the priesthood.

**Plans for major seminary fail.** This latter arrangement Archbishop Blenk hoped to alleviate by the establishment of a major seminary within his own Archdiocese. Over and over again he appealed to the people on behalf of New Orleans, the second oldest See in the United States, which did not possess a theological seminary. He begged them to come forward to support a building program that would provide the means of educating candidates for the priesthood during their final years of study. But in this project the great Archbishop failed, and the failure proved a crushing experience to him. Nevertheless, his dream did become a reality. Notre Dame Seminary, contemplated and ardently desired by

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57 Ibid.

58 Pastoral letter of Archbishop Blenk on "Vocations to the Priesthood," 1915.

59 Ibid., p. 16.

60 Sentiment expressed by Bishop Gunn of Natchez, Mississippi, in the eulogy at Archbishop Blenk's funeral.
Archbishop Blenk, was brought to a reality by Archbishop Shaw who succeeded him in the episcopate. Here, until the present day, young men are trained not only for the priesthood, but also as educators who can go out into the schools of their parishes with a broad understanding of the educative process and thereby continuously contribute to the upgrading of parochial school education.

61 Completed in September, 1923.
CHAPTER VI

NEGRO EDUCATION UNDER ARCHBISHOP BLenk

The pioneers of Negro education in the state of Louisiana were the Ursuline Nuns who arrived in New Orleans in 1727. No sooner were they settled when these Religious began to conduct religious instruction classes for Negroes, thus anticipating by almost a century and a half the decrees of the Second Council of Baltimore.¹

I. EARLY DECREES CONCERNING NEGRO EDUCATION

The Second Baltimore Council stated that especial care should be taken to secure the salvation of the Negro, particularly in the South.² The Fathers of the Council realized, however, that the problem was a local one and that only general regulations could be made. Therefore, the

¹1866.

Bishops were left free to employ the means judged best suited to the individual circumstances, but they were urged, wherever possible, to erect Catholic schools for the children. Orphanages, too, were considered a necessity for the numerous homeless Negro children left in the wake of the freedom offered the slaves after the Civil War.³

Prior to the episcopate of Archbishop Blenk, several Religious Communities had undertaken the works of education among the Negro population, and one Religious Community for Negro women—the second in the United States—had been founded in New Orleans in 1842.⁴ These latter gradually took over the education of the members of their race, and by 1893 the Negro Catholic parochial school population numbered 2,705.⁵

II. THE ADVANCEMENT OF NEGRO EDUCATION AFTER 1906

One author has said of Archbishop Blenk that he was "foremost in every movement undertaken for the moral uplifting

³Ibid.

⁴Sisters of the Holy Family.

⁵Information from records in the Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
of the people of Louisiana."^6 His solicitude for the spiritual and educational betterment of the Negro may well be called the crowning glory of his administration. In their interest exclusively, he called to the Archdiocese the Fathers of the Society of the Holy Ghost, the Josephite Fathers, and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People. It was the work of these last-named Sisters which gave greatest impetus to the education of the Negro during the years of Archbishop Blenk's episcopate.

Mother Katherine Drexel, Benefactress of the Archdiocese of New Orleans

Mother Katherine Drexel, Foundress of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indian and Colored People, had been born the second of three daughters to one of Philadelphia's most distinguished citizens, Francis Anthony Drexel. While still a young girl she gave freely of her wealth to establish Catholic missions among the neglected Indians of this country and to further missionary work among the Negroes.^7 In an

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audience with Pope Leo XIII, she besought him to send missionaries to the American Indians. His answer to her was also a question, "Why not become a missioner yourself, my child?" 

Humanly speaking, her sacrifice was heroic. She turned her back on wealth, social prominence, enjoyment of all that money can buy in order to dedicate her life to the outcast, downtrodden, despised Indians and Negroes of the United States. She gave to her work her immense fortune amounting to some eleven million dollars, but more than this, she gave herself.

Mother Drexel's first benefaction in favor of the Negro Catholics in New Orleans was the result of a request from Archbishop Janssens for funds to build a convent for the Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and a separate school where they might teach their Negro charges. This was during the last decade of the nineteenth century, but much has been accomplished through the Drexel Fund since that time.

**Mother Drexel visits New Orleans.** In response to the urgent pleadings of Archbishop Blenk, Mother Drexel journeyed

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8Ibid., p. 21.


10News item in *The Morning Star* [New Orleans], April 3, 1915.
to New Orleans in 1915 where, after hours of consultation and deliberation, she agreed to send Sisters to open a secondary school for Negro children. Accordingly, that same year was undertaken what was to prove one of the Sisters' most far-reaching enterprises; namely, the opening of Xavier secondary school in New Orleans.

**Xavier University Preparatory School.** The old building occupied at one time by Southern University, the state university for Negroes, had been vacant for years after the removal of the University to Scotlandville, near Baton Rouge. Desirous of purchasing this building for the establishment of her school, yet fearful of the opposition she knew she would undoubtedly encounter if the motive for the transaction were known, Mother Drexel had recourse to Mr. McEnerney, the editor of the *Times Picayune*, who made the purchase for her at the public auction. The building, repaired and renovated, included on its three floors a total of sixteen classrooms which opened their doors to the Negro youth of New Orleans on

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11 Information gained from personal conversation with Mother Mary Agatha, S.B.S.


13 Mother Mary Agatha, *loc. cit.*
September 27, 1915. The school was officially called Xavier University Preparatory School—the title "University" had been used in the original charter granted to the Sisters—although its curriculum included two years of elementary work in addition to a complete high school with commercial, industrial and music departments. On that September day there began in New Orleans a development unparalleled in the history of schools for Negro boys and girls.

For those whose immediate educational aim was preparedness for entrance into the business world, a two-year commercial course was offered. This included bookkeeping, typewriting, phonography, English, penmanship, and arithmetic, the successful completion of which merited a commercial certificate.

The industrial department. In the industrial department work was subdivided in mechanical arts and home economics. The mechanical arts, in turn, were further divided into a manual training course and a trade course. Four hours of shopwork weekly were provided by the manual training course,

while the trade course trained students for skilled work in a particular trade. Work in mechanical and architectural drawing, carpentry, cabinet making, wood-working, concrete masonry, and brickwork, together with mathematics, English, geography, physics, and chemistry were offered in connection with these courses. Again, a certificate was issued upon completion of the course.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{Home economics course.} As with the mechanical arts course, so was the home economics curriculum subdivided into two distinct curricular offerings: the domestic arts course and the domestic science course. Under the former, the student engaged in the study of fabrics, care and use of the sewing machine, darning, mending, art needlework and lace making. The domestic science course offered the study of air, water, food, household bacteria, and household administration. In both of the above divisions botany, physiology, and chemistry were required subjects.\textsuperscript{18}

Far from being the cause of Xavier Preparatory School becoming a vocational enterprise, each of these departments was later developed into what is presently offered, the state

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 17. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 19.
course of study required for a four-year secondary school. 19

Xavier teacher training school. The educational future for the Negro of Louisiana as envisioned by Archbishop Blenk has become a reality, embracing rural, elementary, and secondary schools with a University spreading the influence of Catholic culture and philosophy throughout the entire South. How that development came about is an interesting story.

Due to increasing enrollments in the high school grades of Xavier Preparatory, the seventh grade was dropped after two years, but, at the same time, a two-year curriculum preparing students for the teaching profession was inaugurated. 20 It was this normal course, later developed into a teachers' college, which was to supply the teachers for a project most dear to the heart of Mother Katherine Drexel.

Mother Drexel's rural schools. Almost from the time of her arrival in New Orleans, Mother Drexel had revolved in


her mind the problem of the great number of Catholic Negro children in the country parishes of Louisiana deprived of the knowledge of their Faith and growing up in many cases without any education whatsoever. Making a personal tour of these rural districts, she saw for herself a poverty and wretchedness that one would have to witness to believe possible in America. In some sections she found that schooling in miserable shacks had been arranged for the Negro children for only three or four months of the year; in others, not even this provision had been made.

When she had satisfied herself by first-hand knowledge of the conditions under which the impoverished fishermen, trappers, and small farmers eked out a living, Mother Drexel met with members of the clergy to unfold her plan. Mother's plan was to finance the establishment of small frame schools, near a church, if possible, to be taught by Xavier Teachers' College graduates. Thus, it came to pass that some twenty modest rural schools were erected, each costing from $2,000

21Mother Mary Agatha, *loc. cit.*


24"Golden Jubilee," *op. cit.*, p. 79.
to $4,000.25

Drexel Fund aid for public schools. More than this, she met with the members of the various civil parish school boards and offered to pay the salaries of the teachers for several months if the respective boards would supply funds for the remaining months. Her offer was accepted, and part-time salary was provided for four public schools where the state had provided only four months of schooling.26

Xavier University. As was mentioned above, in order to meet the demand for teachers in Negro parochial schools and in conformity with the wishes of Archbishop Blenk that these teachers should be adequately trained, Xavier University Preparatory School opened a teacher training school in 1917. Xavier University as it stands today is the outgrowth of that school.27

The training school began with a two-year curriculum designed to prepare students for the teaching profession in rural public and parochial schools of Louisiana. After a

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25Ibid., p. 81.  
26Mother Mary Agatha, loc. cit.  
successful career of eight years, it was expanded, in 1925, into a Teachers' College which subsequently grew into the present-day University, authorized by the state of Louisiana through an act passed by the General Assembly on June 18, 1918.28

How could Archbishop Blenk foresee the culmination of this great work so humbly begun in 1915? For now, not only is Xavier University the only Catholic Negro University in the United States, but it offers its clients an opportunity to obtain an education in any of its several colleges—Liberal Arts and Sciences, Pharmacy, Education, Music, Physical Education, Social Studies. It has membership in the Catholic Education Association, the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (being one of the two such accredited Colleges for Negroes in the United States), the Association of American Colleges, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools for Negroes. It holds a Class "A" rating from the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and the American Medical Association. Xavier is accredited by the Board of Education of the state of Louisiana and is affiliated with the Catholic University of America.29

28Ibid.  29"Golden Jubilee," op. cit., p. 75.
Expansion in the Archdiocese of New Orleans

Simultaneous with the development and expansion of the first school organized by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, elementary schools were opened in various places. When the Sisters arrived in 1915, there were two Catholic Churches exclusively for Negroes in the city of New Orleans and two Catholic schools under the direction of the Sisters of the Holy Family. These were, by any standard of measurement, totally inadequate for the needs of the Negro youth of the city. Therefore, Archbishop Blenk called to the Archdiocese the Fathers of the Holy Ghost and the Josephite Fathers who became the pastors of parishes where elementary schools, staffed by Mother Drexel's Sisters, were opened.

Holy Ghost School. The Holy Ghost Fathers opened a chapel in the uptown district of the city in 1916 on Louisiana Avenue. In connection with this chapel, the first elementary school conducted by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in New Orleans was begun on October 16 of that same year. At first, there were facilities for four grades only, but each

30 Mother Mary Agatha, *loc. cit.*

31 Records in Baudier's Historical Collection, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
year brought the addition of a subsequent grade until a complete elementary school education could be offered to the young Negro boys and girls of that area.  

Corpus Christi School. The next undertaking of the Sisters was on the opposite side of the city, the downtown section. In the beginning, three Sisters traveled from Xavier Preparatory each Sunday to give religious instruction to the Negro children of that area. In September, 1917, two Sisters and two lay teachers opened Corpus Christi School in two small frame houses which had been purchased for that purpose. Much to the consternation of the faculty, more than 300 children registered the first day. Some, of course, had to be turned away until more space could be acquired. The continued increase in student body and teaching personnel finally led to the formation of plans for a large two-story building on the corner of Johnson and Ongaza streets which today comprises part of a plant accommodating the enrollment in the largest Catholic Negro parish in the United States.  

33 Records of Corpus Christi School, New Orleans.
Blessed Sacrament School. The third parish to be begun on behalf of the Catholic Negro population during the administration of Archbishop Blenk was that of the Blessed Sacrament. Here the Josephite Fathers were assigned parish duties, and in 1918 an elementary school, under the direction of the Blessed Sacrament Sisters was opened.  

Schools outside the city of New Orleans. As early as 1918, when St. Edward Parish in New Iberia was established, the Blessed Sacrament Sisters prepared to direct the elementary and secondary school erected for the benefit of the Catholic Negro population. This school had an additional purpose: the Sisters who lived at St. Edward Convent also had to supervise the country school teachers who were employed at the Drexel-financed rural institutions. From the beginning, in order to assure themselves that the teachers would take part in some type of in-service program, an annual professional seminar for all teachers was inaugurated at St. Edward at the beginning of each school term, and every summer the teachers returned to Xavier Summer School for educational advancement.  

34 "Golden Jubilee," *op. cit.*, p. 78.  
35 Records of St. Edward School, New Iberia, Louisiana.
At Lake Charles, from a small elementary school begun in 1908 evolved the present-day Sacred Heart High School. This, too, was financed by Mother Drexel whose help was solicited in favor of the Negroes living in that part of the state. Today, the high school is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and an extension unit of Xavier University is conducted there.\textsuperscript{36}

Truly Archbishop Blenk had set in motion a great work when he invited Mother Drexel to the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Although her Sisters had begun work in other sections of the United States, he convinced her that her real work lay in the South where the development and expansion of a Catholic educational program for Negroes has found its culmination in Xavier University. This University, in its turn, has become the mainspring from which a whole system of Catholic elementary and high schools has evolved in the cities and rural districts of Louisiana.

\textbf{The Sisters of the Holy Family and Negro Education}

By 1906 the Sisters of the Holy Family had been engaged in Negro education for sixty-four years. They had established

\textsuperscript{36}Records of Sacred Heart High School, Lake Charles, Louisiana.
several schools in the city of New Orleans and others outside its boundaries, the most important being St. Paul in Lafayette, Louisiana.

**St. Paul School.** The Holy Family Sisters began their educational work in Lafayette in 1903. Accommodations were of the poorest, the classrooms being little more than sheds provided by a Mrs. Fisher who also lodged the Sisters in her home. This arrangement continued until 1906 when Mother Katherine Drexel financed the construction of a convent for the Sisters.37

Six years later a parish church was organized for Negro Catholics in Lafayette, and, in conjunction with the church, the construction of a school was begun. By April, 1913, the school was completed, and the Sisters and 400 pupils transferred to the new building.38

At first, St. Paul was only an elementary school, and since the nearest high schools for Negroes were in Texas or New Orleans, the majority of the children could not continue their studies on a secondary level. To overcome this handicap,

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37 Information obtained from the archives of the Holy Family Motherhouse, New Orleans.

38 Information obtained from records at St. Paul School, Lafayette, Louisiana.
high school grades were added at St. Paul during succeeding years, thus making it the first high school for Negroes in that section of Louisiana.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Holy Rosary Industrial School.** Holy Rosary Industrial School had been opened for girls in Galveston, Texas, in 1898. To afford the opportunity of further training to the Negro girls who would not attend regular classes at St. Paul High School, the Sisters moved Holy Rosary to Louisiana in July, 1913. At that time, the Sisters and fourteen boarding students transferred to the buildings acquired in Lafayette. The school, now called Holy Rosary Institute, proved inadequate to accommodate the students after the first year. Therefore, a property of eighty acres was purchased, and a new building was erected. This project was completed in March, 1914, and by the spring of 1915, the enrollment numbered fifty-two students, thirty boarders and twenty-two day students—the first to be admitted to the Institute.\footnote{Information obtained from records at Holy Rosary Institute, Lafayette, Louisiana.}

**Lafon Home for Negro Boys.** The Sisters had undertaken the care of orphaned Negro boys in 1893, the original home
being located in New Orleans on St. Peter Street between Caliborne Avenue and Derbigny. The number of applicants soon necessitated more spacious quarters, and in 1904, a lot was purchased on Gentilly Road, outside the limits of New Orleans. 41

Owing to conditions existing in the Archdiocese, nothing further was done for two years. However, in 1906, Archbishop Blenk, backed by the generous financial assistance of Thomy Lafon, a wealthy Negro philanthropist, granted permission to the Sisters to erect a residence building on the site. The forty-seven boys who thus became the first to reside at the Lafon Home attended the elementary schools in the city in order to gain the rudiments of education; then, to fit them to become self-sustaining members of society, graduate farmers from Tuskegee Institute and Prairie View College were employed to give a certain amount of vocational training in the principles of agriculture and the care of stock. This training proved to be quite profitable not only in terms of a future livelihood but also in the immediate present. From the farm, the boys were able to produce a sufficient quantity

of vegetables to take care of their own institution as well as being able to send some to market. The proceeds from these sales the Sisters used to help pay the salaries of the teachers.42

The original Lafon Home was destroyed by fire in 1933, but this noble work which had been begun under the patronage of Thomy Lafon continues to the present day, the orphans being housed in more modern and comfortable buildings erected after the fire.43

**Free school for boys.** There was another notable work in the interest of Negro Catholic education attained by Archbishop Blenk during his episcopate. A school for girls had been established in connection with the Sisters' Motherhouse on Orleans Street, but until 1915 nothing had been done on behalf of the boys. At that time the Archbishop readily granted the necessary permission for the Sisters to add a two-story brick edifice to be used as a free school for Negro boys. This annex was blessed on January 24, 1915, and


43 Information obtained from records in Holy Family Motherhouse Archives, New Orleans.
classes were begun for the Negro boys in the vicinity.44

Such, then, were the outstanding accomplishments made on behalf of Negro Catholic education during the years between 1906 and 1917. Among these one finds some of the most important of the educational contributions of Archbishop Blenk.

CHAPTER VII

OTHER EDUCATIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ARCHBISHOP BLENK

The Archbishop was interested in every member of his flock—the newsboys, the seamen, the waifs, the deaf, and the lepers. Those who desired higher education under Catholic auspices saw their fondest dreams realized with the opening of a Catholic university in New Orleans. All, regardless of their station in life, experienced his fatherly solicitude.

I. ARCHBISHOP BLENK, PROMOTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Not satisfied with his accomplishments in the field of the parochial school system, Archbishop Blenk did his utmost to comply with the recommendations of the Baltimore Councils regarding higher education under Catholic sponsorship. In addition to this he used his influence to obtain admission for deserving students to the state and private universities in the state.

Loyola University

At a meeting of the Marquette Association for Higher
Education held in Jesuit Alumni Hall on Baronne Street in 1907, Archbishop Blenk addressed the following words to the gathering which numbered among its members some of the most prominent men in Louisiana:

Do not think that when our parochial schools are put on a perfectly acceptable basis that there is no need for colleges and universities. The necessity is pressing for higher education. . . . We are here for the discussion of the noblest and best enterprise in the Southland . . . the establishment of Marquette College to take young men and young women and educate them in every branch of science and at the same time not neglect their souls.

We need a Catholic university, and New Orleans is the place for it. The Fathers of the Society of Jesus are the men to develop it unto final success.2

Under the patronage of the Archbishop, and with his encouragement, the Jesuit Fathers erected Marquette Hall, and Loyola University began its career of Catholic higher education in the Archdiocese. In 1912, the University was granted the power of conferring college degrees by the State Legislature.3

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1News item in The Daily Picayune [New Orleans], March 21, 1907; The Morning Star [New Orleans], March 23, 1907.

2Ibid.

3Information obtained from records in the Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
Higher Education for Foreign Students

Several letters preserved in the Archdiocesan Archives attest to the fact that Archbishop Blenk was influential in obtaining the entrance of foreign students into the universities of Louisiana. This was particularly true of students from the Latin American countries. To cite one such instance, there is a letter recommending Jose Antoine Morales of Porto Rico as a student of Law at Tulane University. Although endowed with all the qualities desired in a student, it was pointed out that the young man would encounter language difficulties, and for this the Archbishop asked indulgence. The reply to this recommendation was in the affirmative "owing to the high regard" of the Honorable E. P. Craighead for the opinion of the Archbishop.\(^4\) Other letters are extant expressing similar sentiments entertained by Thomas D. Boyd, President of Louisiana State University, and Edwin L. Stephens of Southwestern Louisiana Institute.\(^5\)

Teacher Recommendations

Not only was Archbishop Blenk asked to intercede on

\(^4\) Archbishop Blenk's personal correspondence, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

\(^5\) Ibid.
behalf of students who desired entrance into the university. There is additional evidence that teachers, wishing to secure positions in the public school system in New Orleans, sought help from him. Bessie Kavanaugh who was named "permanent music teacher in the public schools of New Orleans," and Marie de Hoa LeBlanc, who was appointed as teacher of drawing in the high school division of the same system, were but two who profited from the influence of the Archbishop.⁶

**Commencement Speaker at L.S.U.**

On Wednesday, May 29, 1907, Archbishop Blenk delivered the commencement address at Louisiana State University. This the Archbishop consented to do following a request from President Thomas D. Boyd:

> I assure you that the University and its many friends in Louisiana will feel honored by your consenting to render the University this service, while I shall esteem your acceptance of our invitation a great personal favor.⁷

Several years later in correspondence exchanged between these two great educators, another project was proposed by President Boyd for consideration by Archbishop Blenk:

⁶Ibid.

⁷Letter to Archbishop Blenk from Thomas D. Boyd, March 25, 1907, Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.
I wish to see you some day and talk over a matter I have long had in mind. It is this: Would or would it not be well for the Church to build dormitories at or near the state universities, where students could take advantage of the free tuition afforded at the universities and be under the control and government and instruction of the Church during the hours when they were not attending the university lectures or recitations?

It is a fact that far less than half the time of the college student is spent in the classroom under the direct instruction and supervision of his professors. What he does and what he learns outside of the classroom may have more effect in shaping his character and his destiny than the instruction he receives from his professors. Would it not be wise, therefore, that he should be placed during these extra-classroom hours under the direction of church officials, whose duty it would be to look after his conduct and his moral and religious instruction?

Archbishop Blenk did recognize the importance of a Catholic center on the Louisiana State University campus, but he also realized the impossibility of undertaking such a project when so many other pressing needs claimed his immediate attention. Nevertheless, the seed had been sown, and the realization of this hope was fulfilled some thirty years later when the Christ the King Chapel and the Cardinal Newman Student Center were blessed and dedicated to the service of Catholic students attending the University.

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8September 16, 1911.
II. EXPANSION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FACILITIES

The expansion of parochial elementary education in the Archdiocese of New Orleans did not end with the establishment of a permanent school board and the unification of the system. New Religious communities were welcomed into the Archdiocese, more schools were built, and improvement of existing educational facilities became the hallmark of the Catholic educational system in New Orleans.

New Religious Orders Admitted to the Archdiocese

Between 1906 and 1917, six Religious Orders which had hitherto not been a part of the Catholic school system in New Orleans were admitted into the Archdiocese.

The Brothers of Mary were invited to take charge of St. Stephen School in New Orleans; the Sisters of Divine Providence opened a school in Broussard, Louisiana; French Benedictine Nuns, expelled from their own country by the government, were placed in charge of St. Gertrude School at Ramsey, Louisiana; the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament began their work among the Negroes; and the Teresian Sisters, fleeing from persecution in Mexico, were given charge of the newly-established parochial school of St. Louis Cathedral. The sixth of these communities was that of the Sisters of
the Presentation who, while not directly engaged in classroom work, were placed in charge of the household at Holy Cross College in New Orleans, thus enabling the Brothers to pursue their works of education without undue concern for their young boarders.  

Existing Educational Facilities Improved

Besides the schools, industrial institutes, and orphanages already mentioned, other establishments in several of the parishes of the Archdiocese likewise profited by the extensive program of Archbishop Blenk.

First among these, and the object of the Archbishop's special care, was the Chinchuba Institute for Deaf-mutes. It was during his episcopate that arrangements were made to place its management completely under Archdiocesan auspices. Prior to this time, the Institute had been the responsibility of the School Sisters of Notre Dame who were often without adequate means for its maintenance.

In several parishes new convents were erected to replace the outmoded and ramshackle buildings that had previously served as homes for the Sisters. Within the city of New Orleans in The Item-Tribune [New Orleans], May 12, 1935.

9 Information obtained from records in the Archdiocesan Archives, New Orleans.

10 News item in The Item-Tribune [New Orleans], May 12, 1935.
Orleans a new convent for the Ursuline Nuns and one in Mater Dolorosa parish were built, while the Sisters in Lake Charles and New Iberia enjoyed similar expansions in their school plants.\textsuperscript{11}

New parochial schools were also erected in New Orleans --St. Francis de Sales, Sacred Heart School in Cathedral parish, and St. Francis of Assisi being among their number. Outside the city, school facilities were renewed in Plaquemine, Thibodaux, Broussard, and Lockport.\textsuperscript{12}

Opposition to Child Labor

The Archbishop knew that all the brick and mortar put into these new establishments would do nothing to stem the rising tide of the numbers of child laborers; therefore, this, too, became a major issue in his program for the improvement of his diocese. Addressing a gathering of his flock, he pointed out the existing conditions and their consequential dangers in these words:

\begin{quote}
Modern industrial society is in part built upon the prostrate form of children. Hundreds of thousands of children . . . are exploited and prematurely
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11}News item in \textit{The Morning Star} [New Orleans], April 28, 1917.

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Ibid.}
exhausted by the burden of toil which is laid upon them. The child under fourteen that is set to work becomes physically stunted, mentally crippled, and gets no chance at the time when the mind is plastic to be in school. When we exclude children from work, we must include them in the schools. The child means more to the community than any material gain.13

St. Luke's Guild

The Archbishop's kind and fatherly heart was touched, too, by the young boys and girls whose parents were unable to afford necessary medical attention for their children. To help combat the unfortunate consequences of such deprivation, he appealed to the Catholic doctors of the Archdiocese for help.

Rallying to the cry of their beloved Archbishop, these gentlemen were soon organized into St. Luke's Guild whose purpose was to supply gratis the immunizations and other basic medical care for the needy children of the parochial schools of New Orleans.14

13News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], March 21, 1914.

14News item in The Morning Star [New Orleans], September 28, 1912.
III. DEATH OF ARCHBISHOP BLENK

Although the Archbishop's health was becoming increasingly impaired from overwork, he refused to spare himself in the pursuance of the undertakings he believed to be part of his mission. Consequently, by the beginning of 1917, that "eloquent voice, that inspired preacher, whose words, looks, manner, gesture, carried home argument, conviction, inspiration, and always lifted minds and hearts, saints and sinners to higher and nobler and better things," was succumbing, a victim to his own zeal.\textsuperscript{15}

He had suffered a heart attack in 1915, and now, tired and worn by his labors, he again fell victim to this malady. Finally, on April 20, 1917, death robbed the See of New Orleans of its seventh Archbishop.

The legacy James Hubert Blenk left the Archdiocese has become an enduring one. He bequeathed to his successors in the Archdiocese a well-organized, unified, and promising parochial school system, an Archdiocesan Catholic Board of Education, and lastly an Archdiocesan Training College to mold and harmonize the methods of those who would hand down

\textsuperscript{15}News item in \textit{The Times Picayune} [New Orleans], April 27, 1917.
to future generations the great Catholic heritage. To Archbishop Blenk, then, more than to any other prelate who occupied the See before him, must be given the credit for having exerted the greatest and most permanent influence in the foundation of the Catholic school system in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.
CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

The Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New Orleans are today component parts of a highly organized system of education. That this system did not exist per se prior to 1906, despite the existence of numerous Catholic schools in Louisiana, is clearly evident in the literature pertinent to Catholic education in the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

It was largely through the untiring efforts of Archbishop James Hubert Blenk that the work of coordination and unification was accomplished into a system that is second to no other of its kind throughout the United States.

By way of examining the important changes affected during the years when the influence of James Hubert Blenk was most keenly felt in Catholic education, the last chapter of this study will be devoted to summarizing the advancement of the various aspects of the Catholic school system in the Archdiocese of New Orleans from 1885 to 1917.
I. STATUS OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF NEW ORLEANS PRIOR TO 1906

Catholic education was begun in Louisiana with the establishment of a school for boys by the Capuchin Fathers in New Orleans in 1725. This was followed two years later by the opening of a girls' school by the Ursuline Nuns who had just arrived from France.

Not for another ninety-four years did another Religious community arrive to enlarge the work begun by these courageous pioneers in the works of Catholic education.

Education under Spanish rule

With the close of the French and Indian War in 1763, Spain came into possession of New Orleans. At the request of the Spanish King, Charles IV, a new diocese was created in New Orleans, and Ignacio Luis Penalver y Cardenas was appointed its first bishop.

One of his first works was the establishment of a school within the city of New Orleans. The venture, however, was short-lived. Being of French ancestry, the people refused to patronize a Spanish school and sent their children to the several private schools operated by French-speaking teachers. These unsettled conditions, enhanced by the removal of Bishop
Penalver to the Archbishopric of Guatemala in 1801, continued until Louisiana was finally granted the privilege of statehood in 1803.

**Conditions During Early Statehood**

When Louisiana gained statehood in 1803, Catholics realized that there would no longer be any government subsidies to support their schools. They would no longer be able to depend upon the "solicitude and piety of the King" for the maintenance of their parishes. As a result, there was little initiative on the part of Catholics in terms of providing schools for almost twenty years. Several French priests, under the patronage of Bishop Dubourg, attempted to establish schools for boys, but each met with failure owing to the indifference of the people and lack of financial support.

**Arrival of Religious Communities of Women**

The first Religious women to arrive after the Ursulines were the Madames of the Sacred Heart. With the opening of their school at Grand Coteau, Louisiana, in 1821, the expansion of Catholic education for girls received a new impetus.

They were followed in 1826 by the Sisters of Loretto who established a school in the Bayou Lafourche section at
Plattenville. From the beginning these Sisters were doomed to failure since none of them were able to speak French. They returned to their native Kentucky after three years, and their school was placed under the care of the Madames of the Sacred Heart.

In 1829, Bishop Rosati welcomed into the diocese the first Sisters of Charity. They undertook the management of the Poydras Asylum under the auspices of a group of Protestant ladies. Later, they opened St. Patrick's Orphanage, the New Orleans Female Orphan Asylum, and St. Simeon's Select School for Girls and Young Ladies, a highly fashionable finishing school which flourished until 1912.

The Sisters of Mount Carmel were the next to arrive in New Orleans. At the request of Bishop Anthony Blanc they undertook the work of educating Negro girls in the section of the city near Chartres Street.

**Provision of Education of Boys**

Bishop Blanc was greatly concerned about the lack of educational facilities for boys. Accordingly, he appealed to the Superior of the Society of Jesus who sent eight priests to Louisiana. These Jesuit fathers laid the permanent foundations for Catholic education of boys in the Archdiocese of New Orleans by the establishment of St. Charles College at
Grand Coteau in 1838 and the College of the Immaculate Conception in the city of New Orleans in 1849.

Other Religious Communities harkened to the call of the Bishop and by 1860 there were Catholic schools in New Orleans staffed by Redemptorist priests, Christian Brothers, Brothers of Holy Cross, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Marianites of Holy Cross, and Holy Family Sisters, the latter being a Negro community founded exclusively for the education of Negro children.

**Effects of the Civil War on Catholic Education**

Archbishop John Marie Odin, whose task it was to re-establish educational facilities in New Orleans after the Civil War, made special efforts to relieve the plight of the emancipated Negro. However, heightened race prejudice and poverty, supplemented by the reconstruction policy of the North, left practically unrealized the Archbishop's ambition for education of the Negro race.

His efforts on behalf of the white children were curtailed by the war. Sisters had been forced to abandon their classrooms to become nurses, cooks, and providers for the starving soldiers. Several academies had been converted into barracks and one school at Baton Rouge became a hospital.

With the cessation of hostilities, Catholic education
very slowly began to regain the ground it had lost.

**The Inauguration of the Crusade for Parochial Schools**

The crusade for parochial schools in lieu of the numerous private academies and colleges (high schools) that had dominated the scene of Catholic education prior to 1870 was begun by Archbishop Napoleon Joseph Perche. However, the rapid expansion and growth in numbers of parish schools, all of which were financed by the Archdiocese, soon became a financial burden which placed the Archdiocese on the verge of bankruptcy. Undoubtedly, the realization of this situation did much to hasten the death of this zealous prelate who did all in his power to prevent disaster and disgrace.

His successor, Archbishop Francis Xavier Leray, although eager to carry on the expansion and establishment of schools, was too prudent to attempt anything that entailed adding to the expenses of the Archdiocese. In the brief three years of his episcopate he managed to reduce the debt by half.

Archbishop Francis Janssens who succeeded Francis Xavier Leray in the Archdiocese of New Orleans was greatly hampered by the financial embarrassment of the Archdiocese. Nevertheless, he devoted himself enthusiastically to Catholic education and the formation of the clergy. For the advancement of the teachers of the Archdiocese, he organized the
Catholic Winter School of America, which after a few years was forced by lack of funds to be discontinued.

With the accession of Louis Placide Chapelle to the See of New Orleans many expected a tremendous improvement in the parochial schools. However, this was not to be. Continued absences necessitated by his appointment as Apostolic Delegate to Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippine Islands left little time for the accomplishment of the best-laid plans.

When Archbishop Chapelle died a victim of yellow fever in 1906, the vacant See was filled by one whom Louisiana claimed as its own, James Hubert Blenk.

II. CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE AFTER 1906

James Hubert Blenk was no stranger to the people of New Orleans. He had proven himself a prominent figure in the educational world during the years he held the position of professor and then president of Jefferson College. As pastor of Holy Name of Mary Parish in Algiers he did much to promote the growth and development of the parochial school already thriving in his parish.

Further proof of his competency was evidenced by the outstanding works he accomplished while Bishop of Porto Rico. In fact, it was after he had proven himself to be such a
capable leader in that country that he was appointed Archbishop of New Orleans.

**Change from Private to Parochial Schools**

Prior to 1906, the majority of the schools established within the Archdiocese were not truly parochial, inasmuch as they were not operated by the pastor. The members of the various Religious congregations were responsible for the erection and maintenance of the schools. Thus, private institutions of learning carried much of the burden of education in the Archdiocese. There was no organization nor unification of purpose, method and curriculum—no planning on a diocesan-wide basis.

Archbishop Blenk undertook the task of providing every parish with a school that was really parochial, one that was owned and maintained by the ecclesiastical parish with the Religious receiving a salary for their services.

**Financing the Parochial Schools**

During the colonial period the schools were financed by the rulers of the colony. With the granting of statehood to Louisiana came the necessity for the people themselves to provide for their educational facilities. Many and diverse means were employed—funds from the Propagation of the Faith,
contributions from clergy and laity, fairs, concerts, parish revenues, tuition fees, special school collections, honoraries paid for burials, marriages, baptisms, and funeral services being numbered among them.

In conformity with the instructions of Archbishop Blenk, the pastor of each parish became responsible for the operation and improvement of the parochial plant. Accordingly, stipulations were made regarding the sources from which needed funds would be derived. Subscription drives, money realized from real estate, gifts, tuition, parish fairs and bazaars furnished the greater part of the money. Contributions from Mother Katherine Drexel and donations from mission funds comprised the bulk of the support for Negro schools. Although these procedures did not differ greatly from those used previously, the significant difference lay in the manner of handling the monies derived from these sources.

Archdiocesan School Board

Several efforts had been made early in the history of the Archdiocese to organize the schools into a coordinated body, but to no avail. It was not until Archbishop Blenk undertook to inaugurate a new educational system that anything of permanence was accomplished. He chose a school board of seventeen members, including among their number the first
Superintendent of Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese.

Duties for which the board was responsible were outlined, and within a relatively short period, the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of New Orleans were functioning as a unit with every institution following the same curriculum.

Teacher Education

The Catholic Winter School of America, begun in 1896, is the only recorded organized effort in the direction of teacher education in New Orleans before 1906. Several Religious communities undertook the education of their members by furnishing lectures during the summer months, but no records of an extensive program of in-service training can be found.

With the formation of a Catholic School Board, teacher education took on a stature of great import. Teacher institutes were organized and workshops were conducted. However, the crowning glory in this program was the establishment of Dominican College as the official Archdiocesan training school for teachers. Other Religious Communities, following the example of the Dominicans, soon set up their own normal schools from which their teachers received certification. Of these latter, only a few remain, the others having been discontinued with the passage of time.

To insure the fitness of the parish clergy for the
business of classroom teaching, Archbishop Blenk established St. Joseph's Seminary as a training center not only for ecclesiastical studies but also for "a solid Christian education" in the secular branches.

**Negro Catholic Education Given Impetus**

The Ursuline Nuns, upon their arrival in the state, were the first to inaugurate education for the Negro race. In the years intervening between their efforts and 1906, several Religious Communities had undertaken this work, but nothing was done on a very elaborate scale.

Archbishop Blenk, during his episcopate, invited three groups of Religious, dedicated to work among Negroes, to his province. Most notable among these were the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indian and Colored People. Under the patronage of the Archbishop, and financed with the funds donated by Mother Katherine Drexel, these Sisters established Catholic schools at every level for Negroes. Beginning with the elementary level, their system terminated with Xavier University, the only Catholic university for Negroes in the United States.

The Holy Family Sisters, a community of Negro Religious, had been working in the Archdiocese for more than half a century when James Hubert Blenk became Archbishop.
Encouraged by this great prelate they expanded their educational facilities and opened an orphanage for Negro boys after having received a very generous contribution from Thomy Lafon. In addition to this, a free school for boys was established in connection with the Motherhouse of these Sisters.

**Other Educational Interests of Archbishop Blenk**

Not satisfied with the flourishing parochial school system, Archbishop Blenk became instrumental in the establishment of Loyola University for higher education with Catholic auspices. He exerted his influence on behalf of foreign students who sought admittance into the institutions of higher learning in the State. He graciously acquiesced when asked to use his educational prestige to obtain jobs for deserving teachers in the public school system.

His interest in higher education did not, however, stifle his efforts to expand the educational facilities on the lower levels. He invited new Religious Communities to take up the work of Catholic education in his Archdiocese, and saw to it that school plants were renewed or improved where the need existed.

Archbishop Blenk's sympathies were always with the underprivileged. This is manifested in the interest he showed
in the deaf-mutes at Chinchuba. He brought this institute under Archdiocesan control to insure its continued existence. When parents of children in the parochial schools were unable to provide medical care, the Archbishop organized the Catholic doctors of the city into St. Luke's Guild to provide the necessary services.

He fought the evils of child labor by word and example, and strove to have every child of school age in the classroom.

Death of Archbishop

When death claimed the Archbishop in 1917, it could be said he had worn himself out in the interests of his flock. True, all that was accomplished by him was not untouched by his predecessors; but it was necessary that a man of his courageous and adamant character be the instrument for welding all efforts into a unified whole.
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The writer was born in Plaquemine, Louisiana, on January 27, 1924. After receiving her elementary and high school training at St. Basil Academy and St. John High School, she entered the Congregation of the Sisters Marianites of Holy Cross in 1941. During the subsequent years she taught in the elementary and high schools conducted by the Congregation throughout southern Louisiana.

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