

**THE EDUCATIONAL  
SYSTEMS OF THE PURITANS  
AND JESUITS COMPARED,  
A PREMIUM ESSAY**

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The Educational Systems of the Puritans and Jesuits Compared, a Premium Essay by N. Porter

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EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS  
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*A Premium Essay,*

WRITTEN FOR

"THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF COLLEGIATE AND  
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BY

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## ESSAY

"THE Jesuit" and "the Puritan" are names of principles rather than of men. They do not so appropriately designate sects and parties, as they describe opposite tendencies in character and institutions. These principles and tendencies are not, on the one hand, confined to "the Society of Jesus," nor on the other, to the Puritan party; though they are most perfectly represented in each. The Romish church was the natural mother of the Jesuit; his principles and spirit were already in being within her pale. He only separated them from their incongruous and inconsistent elements of good, and applied them with a consistency that was fearfully rigid. It would seem, that every peculiarity by which the Romish system is distinguished from the Christianity of the New Testament, is represented in the society of Loyola. On the contrary, the Puritan is no more than a consistent Protestant. His principles are those, and only those, which gave being and life to the Reformation. He has only understood

them more clearly, applied them more consistently, and acted them out with a more heroic spirit.

It will be important to keep in mind the import of these names, as thus explained, in the comparison which we propose to institute between the Puritan and the Jesuit systems of education. This only will save us from a narrow and partisan view of the subject, and will lead us to study principles rather than names. Let it be understood, then, once for all, that by the Jesuit system of education, we intend the system most perfectly represented in the institutions of the Jesuits, in whatever schools it is found, whether Protestant or Romish, whether developed in whole or in part. By the Puritan system we mean, the one generally adopted in Protestant schools and universities, but which, in *some of its features*, has been most completely realized in the educational institutes of the Puritans.

The Society of Jesus was formed in and for a crisis in the history of the Romish church. A sudden and violent onset had been made upon this vast structure, under which it seemed to be tottering to its fall. The ignorance and dissoluteness of the priesthood, together with the glaring inconsistency of certain dogmas of the church, when tried by the common sense and conscience of man, furnished the most convincing arguments, by which the Reformers all over Europe were reasoning out the essential corruption and error of the entire system. These Reformers were able debaters and fervent preachers. Their intellectual activity had been quickened into surprising energy by their new religious life,

The society was constituted in the year 1540, by a bull from Pius III. Its zealous founder had already spent years of enthusiastic fervor, and concentrated thought, in maturing its principles. At the first moment of its organized existence, it was, in its most important features, the same which it has ever continued to be. It is true, its amazing efficiency, and the wide extent of its influence, were neither of them anticipated even in the wildest dreams of Loyola. Mad as he was, he could never have been mad enough to dream, that he had developed a power which should first educate the youth of Europe, and then make kings and pontiffs to tremble upon uneasy thrones, or to disappear from the seat of power, as at the whisper of an enchanter. As the society was tested by actual trial, its hidden capacities and its secret energies were skilfully developed by Loyola's able successors; new elements of power were added to it, and the harmonious working of its several parts was carefully adjusted, till its power and perfection astonished as well as delighted its able architects and directors. Nay, we cannot but suppose, that its head was now and then struck with terror\* at the awful energy

favor, rather than to those which were written avowedly against the society. It seemed also better to select the most recent work, as likely to be the most able and plausible. No writer would be likely, at this day, to write largely in the interest of the Jesuits, without having access to the most abundant stores of information, and without being duly instructed how to put the most favorable construction on the weak points in their history.

\* As, for instance, when a general of the society said to the duke of Brancas, "See, my lord, from this room--from this room



of the machinery which he essayed to guide, as the electrician will at times watch with a solicitude approaching to dread, the slumbering power that he has so quietly accumulated in the frail enginery by his side.

The constitution and spirit of the society are essentially military. Ignatius had been a soldier, and he carried all the soldier into his new order. He aimed to bring the ardor, the daring, and above all, the discipline of the camp, to do their utmost in the service of the church. The name of the head of the order was General. All the gradations and divisions were military. The authority of each superior over his subordinates was complete and despotic. Every member, from the highest to the lowest, vowed the most implicit obedience to any and to every order from the General. It was obeyed on the instant, whether it reached them by day or by night, in sickness or in health. It was obeyed to the letter, whether it sent them to the North or the South, to a point near at hand or to the opposite side of the globe, whether it would conduct them into apparent safety or certain death. The *Professed*, who were the society proper, had made a solemn vow to God, in the presence of the Holy Virgin, and to their General, who *was to them in the place of God*.\* It was a vow of perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience. This obedience

I govern, not only Paris, but China; not only China, but the whole world, without any one knowing how it is managed."

\* *Je fais profession et promets à Dieu tout-puissant \* \* \* et à vous révérend Père Général, qui tenez la place de Dieu.*—Crét. Joly, I. 110.

extended to the use of the time, to the disposal of the person, to the direction of the studies, to the control of every thought and feeling of the man. The subject was rendered up to the will of the superior—as was he to his superior—not merely as the soldier surrenders his external self, nor even as the devotee yields his conscience to the direction of his confessor, but in his entire being; to be in body and spirit, in thought and feeling, nay, in look and smile, the passive executor of his decrees, and a machine controlled by his touch. Most frightful is the truth which is uttered of this society by one of its latest historians, that “it developed human devotedness to its extremest capacity, and made of the most absolute obedience, a lever, the incessant and ever present activity of which, must necessarily take the place of every other species of power.”\* Efficiency was the law and the life of this society. The accomplishment of its objects, in the glory and strength of the order, for the defence and enlargement of Rome, was the one aim to which every rule was shaped, and by which it was directed. For this reason, the authority of every superior was made absolute. For this, the novice was broken down to the performance of the most servile offices, and to every species of austerity—to fasting, to watchings, to long continued meditations and prayers. These austerities were no end in themselves, for it was never Loyola’s design to train a company of painful ascetics, the only products of whose energy should be bloody flagellations, marvellous fastings, and unnatural self-tortures.

\* Crét. Joly, I. 57.

No, the men whom he would train were to be men for active service. So far as austerities would fit them for this object, so far were they imposed, even to the extreme limit of human endurance. Whenever they interfered with this, they were despised and rejected. If they weakened the body for labor, or the mind for study, they were strictly forbidden. The daily devotions of the church, usually esteemed of the highest consequence and enforced with the most rigid punctiliousness, were not enjoined upon the Jesuit priests. They were even forbidden, if they would interfere with any active duty. As each member must be understood by his superior and the society, both in his weakness and in his strength, it was made his duty to the order to lay open to his confessor his most secret thoughts, not only upon spiritual themes, but upon every topic whatsoever. Those thoughts which reserve would hide, those feelings at which nature would blush, were to be revealed, not merely to one, but to all. All those secret processes of thought and emotion which are a man's most sacred self, were subjected to the familiar and rude inspection of hundreds of men. That escape from inspection might be impossible, that disguise might be precluded, and that the whole society might be fused into a common mass of co-operating and harmonious minds, each man was set as a spy over his fellow; every look and smile, and even the lifting of the eyelids was to be accounted for. Loneliness and individuality were impossible, or rather they were absorbed and overborne by the force of an omnipotent and omnipresent organi-