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## MISSIONAL MUDDLES: WHY PRIVATE SCHOOL STUDENTS HAVE A POSITIVE RIGHT TO LEARN DISSENT

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Democracy needs dissent. More specifically, democracy needs citizens with *knowledge* of how to practice political dissent, a willingness to *think* about why and when such dissent is necessary, and *habituation* to the practice of good dissent.<sup>1</sup> Where, then, are citizens to develop such habits?

Stitzlein suggests that public schools are the place best-suited to train American citizens in habits of good dissent. And more, she argues not only are public schools best-suited to this task, but American citizens have a positive right to learn dissent from them.<sup>2</sup> Stitzlein differentiates negative from positive rights.<sup>3</sup> She defines negative rights as, “freedom to be engaged without

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<sup>1</sup> *Knowledge* and *thinking*, as used here, cohere with Dewey’s understanding of them. Knowledge is past tense. I possess knowledge because I have had an experience (in the past) that confirms a theory. So, knowledge is known. Thinking, however, is future tense. It is theoretical, a knowledge-informed conjecture about what may be true but is not yet known. When these are actuated, repeatedly, they form habits, a proclivity to act to change one’s environment. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1916).

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent: Citizenship Education and Political Activism* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Though Stitzlein doesn’t rely on Berlin for her argument, this bifurcation between positive and negative rights, fits within the larger discussion of positive and negative freedom, which Berlin articulated, and to which many philosophers have since responded. See for example, Ian Carter, “Positive and Negative Liberty,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2018 Edition, accessed April 11, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/liberty-positive-negative/>; John Christman, “Liberalism and Individual Positive Freedom,” *Ethics* 101, no. 2 (1991): 343–359; J. P. Day, “On Liberty and The Real Will,” *Philosophy* 45, no. 173 (1970): 177–192; Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999). For Berlin, negative freedom meant freedom from interference by others, “the wider the area of non-interference the wider my freedom.” Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Liberty Reader*, ed. David Miller (New York: Routledge), 370. Berlin notes the presence of negative freedom throughout modern philosophy, from Helvétius to Hobbes. Conversely, the ‘positive’ conception of freedom concerns “not freedom from, but freedom to. . . . be his own master. I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind.” Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty*, 373. Who I am and conceive myself to be, then, becomes central to claiming positive rights. Westheimer and Kahne take up this question through the lens of democratic education, when they ask, “what kind of citizens are the schools trying to shape?” See Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, “What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy,” *American Educational Research Journal* 41, no. 2 (2004):

government intervention,” while positive rights are “freedom that requires certain government supports,” such as “a particular type of citizenship education [being] provided to our nation’s public school children.”<sup>4</sup> What, though, of private school students? Do they relinquish their right to learn dissent at the schoolhouse gate? In a word, no.

Yet, school faculty and staff are rarely, if ever, trained in the means of negotiating such missional muddles. Indeed, at Catholic schools, which emerge out of a hierarchical organizational structure, teachers are often encouraged to obey, rather than engage or challenge. How, then, can a religiously affiliated school succeed at enabling students to practice democratic dissent, when there are pressures within the religious hierarchy to silence dissent arising from religious teachings within the institution itself? Stitzlein’s argument is helpful in answering these critical questions, but alone, it is insufficient.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, in this article, I seek to expand Stitzlein’s argument to include private schools, using the insights of Catholic political philosopher John Courtney Murray, SJ to help construct a framework for thinking about institutional autonomy as a privileged positionality,<sup>6</sup> which enhances private schools’ ability to practice (and therefore instruct students in) dissent.

My argument will proceed in three steps. First, I will explain Stitzlein’s thesis regarding dissent as a positive right, locating it within the broader context of civics education in American democracy.<sup>7</sup> I will then explain the context of a private, mission-driven school, with particular emphasis on features that differentiate such institutions from public schools.<sup>8</sup> I

263. For purposes of this article, then, ‘who I am’ is a democratic citizen, studying in American schools.

<sup>4</sup> Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 2. If we extend Berlin’s insights to this definition, the claim that learning dissent is a positive right suggests, first, that a reasonable, democratic citizen should desire to learn dissent, and therefore, it is incumbent upon that citizen’s government to assist in this self-determined end.

<sup>5</sup> Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*.

<sup>6</sup> John Courtney Murray, SJ, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> See Dewey, *Democracy and Education*; Westheimer and Kahne, “What Kind of Citizen?”; Joel Westheimer, “What Kind of Citizen Do We Need?” *Educational Leadership* (2017): 12–18; Marilyn Price-Mitchell, *Tomorrow’s Change Makers: Reclaiming the Power of Citizenship for a New Generation* (Bainbridge Island: Eagle Harbor Publishing, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> See Julie Dallavis, “Does a School’s Mission Matter? Exploring Changes in Statement Content, Use and Understanding, and Links to Student Achievement,” paper presented at the AERA Catholic SIG, Toronto, CA, April, 2019; Susan R. Torres-Harding, Antú Schamberger, and Olivia Carollo, “Psychological Sense of Community and University Mission as Predictors of Student Social Justice Engagement,” *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 19, no. 3 (2015): 89–112; and James Youniss, Jeffrey A. McLellan, Yang Su, and Miranda Yates, “The Role of Community Service in

will then introduce Murray’s insights to explain how mission-driven contexts possess distinct positionality for practicing dissent, a positionality which inheres responsibility for the practice of this positive right.<sup>9</sup> This will be followed with concluding remarks.

#### THE RIGHT TO LEARN DISSENT

Stitzlein has argued that not only is dissent necessary for democracy, but instruction in dissent is a positive right in American democracy. The American proposition, that people can self-govern and that their government derives its authority directly from the people, relies on the revolutionary notion that said people can know what is best for themselves and their community. This is evident in the Declaration of Independence, which posits that America’s citizens are “endowed by their creator with certain rights, amongst which are life, liberty, and *the pursuit of happiness*.”<sup>10</sup> Only if one’s own happiness is personally and/or communally knowable can one realistically think of ways to pursue it. This assumed right and ability to pursue notions of happiness gave reason for collective actions of resistance, which ultimately led to the American Revolution and independence from Great Britain. Thus, the ability to consciously resist accepted political practices, that is, to dissent, is inherent to the practice of American citizenship. The American system of government, which followed this first collective resistance, incorporated into its structures means by which dissent may be exercised actively and persistently by its citizens.

Democracy requires citizen participation, and that participation requires the opportunity for dissent to lead to change, because such change may serve the common good. Such common good may not be knowable by one generation on behalf of another, and so, the Founders created institutional mechanisms by which such good aims might be enacted over time by informed and engaged citizens. Accordingly, at least some of the Founders understood that for these mechanisms of government to truly serve the needs of citizens, citizens must be informed about the world and the democratic institutions which governed it.<sup>11</sup> This is why Thomas Jefferson supported public education. Stitzlein gives evidence for this by quoting Jefferson’s letter to his friend, Samuel Kercheval:

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not

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Identity Development: Normative, unconventional, and deviant orientations,” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 14, no.2 (1999): 248–261.

<sup>9</sup> Murray, *We Hold These Truths*.

<sup>10</sup> Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America, 93 H. Con. Res. 679, 93rd Cong. (1974), ProQuest Congressional, 13072-2 H.doc.415, at \*1.

<sup>11</sup> See Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*; Westheimer, “What Kind of Citizen Do We Need?”; and Westheimer and Kahne, “What Kind of Citizen?”

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enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to *inform their discretion by education*.<sup>12</sup>

Put differently: because the American system of government requires citizens knowledgeable of and thinking about dissent, in order to give their legitimate and informed consent to be governed, the government has a responsibility to provide the means by which to educate citizens in and habituate them to this political practice. To paraphrase another American visionary, Abraham Lincoln, government *of* The People, in order to be *by* The People, must *educate* The People in how to make Government work *for* them, lest that form of Government perish from the earth.

Today, we find that government-mandated, publicly funded schooling is ubiquitous in the United States.<sup>13</sup> That schooling implements a curriculum that is, likewise, government mandated. While some Founding Fathers were supportive of public education, no provisions for public education were incorporated in the US constitution. Rather, these mandates have been incorporated into the states' constitutions, and so each state sets its own education and graduation standards, accountability structures, and licensing procedures.<sup>14</sup> This results in sometimes-significant differences in curricula between states.<sup>15</sup> What is consistent, though, and what this article primarily concerns, is that each public school is responsible for implementing the curricular standards which its state requires of it, and must be accountable to the institution of state government. Further, those state governments, while reserving powers, like education policy, not delegated by federal law, are still responsible for the principles upheld and rights protected by the US constitution.<sup>16</sup> Thus, it stands to reason that, institutionally-speaking, public schools operate as an extension of the State.

If we accept that education in the practice of dissent is still a practical necessity for democratic government to achieve its goals, as Stitzlein and others assert,<sup>17</sup> then we must look for those training grounds where dissent can

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<sup>12</sup> Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 24, emphasis added.

<sup>13</sup> David B. Tyack, *The One Best System: A history of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

<sup>14</sup> Dana L. Mitra, *Educational Change and the Political Process* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Dana Goldstein, "Two States. Eight Textbooks. Two American Stories. American History Textbooks Can Differ Across the Country, in Ways that Are Shaded by Partisan Politics," *The New York Times*, January 12, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/01/12/us/texas-vs-california-history-textbooks.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Mitra, *Educational Change and the Political Process*.

<sup>17</sup> Price-Mitchell, *Tomorrow's Change-Makers*; Torres-Harding, Schamberger, and Carollo, "Psychological Sense of Community and University Mission as Predictors of

be learned. As a functional extension of the State, whose public mandate is to inform The People in the knowledge and skills necessary for a flourishing life,<sup>18</sup> public schools are the natural training ground for citizens to acquire knowledge of dissent, and this knowledge must be practical. Stitzlein writes,

Education for democracy . . . includes not only school-based learning about government and one’s role within it, but also learning outside of school about skills of communication and transaction so that individuals learn how to recognize, value, and improve the conditions of associated living.<sup>19</sup>

By placing the schoolhouse in conversation with the wider society, education for democracy intentionally creates the conditions in which students may encounter tensions between the two. Many have named this dialectical process citizenship education.<sup>20</sup> Stitzlein argues that it is the responsibility of the public school to train students how to engage this tension, because only when citizens know how and develop the proclivity to engage tensions to work toward compromise—that is, to practice good dissent—can democracy function most effectively.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, Stitzlein claims that learning dissent is a positive right in American democracy—with historical, philosophical, and practical underpinnings. Because public schools, as an extension of the state, are a natural training ground for the practice of dissent, this positive right should be provided for in American public schools.

Not all students, though, attend public schools. Indeed, over ten percent of current US students attend private schools.<sup>22</sup> If Stitzlein’s argument is correct, that *all* citizens have a positive right to learn dissent, then this argument must be expanded to include these private school students. Toward

Student Social Justice Engagement”; and Westheimer and Kahne, “What Kind of Citizen?”

<sup>18</sup> Dewey, *Democracy and Education*.

<sup>19</sup> Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 167.

<sup>20</sup> Price-Mitchell, *Tomorrow’s Change-Makers*; Westheimer, “What Kind of Citizen Do We Need?”; and Westheimer and Kahne, “What Kind of Citizen?”

<sup>21</sup> Here, we see echoes of Berlin’s positive rights and the identity of the claimant. How does one claim positive rights in a way that strikes a balance between excessive strictures or a vacuous vagueness? Stitzlein gives some insights when she writes that pursuing happiness is integral to the individual practice of dissent. However, “these skills sustain good citizenry insofar as they develop skills of civil public dialogue, propose better ways of living, and keep people interested in the lives of others as well as that secured for them by the state. . . . Dissent can bring about social happiness and . . . lead to greater justice and equality among the population.” Berlin, “Two Kinds of Liberty,” 87. Thus, any citizen understood to be claiming these rights can only do so, rightly, if they are empathetic to and engaged with the lives of their neighbor, with a care for the common good and social happiness. In short, this practice of dissent should be a hedge against tyranny, rather than a perpetrator of it.

<sup>22</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, “Fast Facts,” US Department of Education, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>.

this end, in American educational vernacular, public schooling is a system of primary through tertiary institutions, which is funded primarily by the State, managed by state employees, and is mandated, at the primary and secondary levels particularly, to accept students residing in a particular geography.<sup>23</sup> More than finding their funding and mandate in state sources, some have argued that for a school to be called “public” it should also serve the common good of society, without exclusion, and in the United States, that means it should help train society in effective democratic practices.<sup>24</sup>

Conversely, private education is that schooling, which is funded and managed primarily by non-state means, and which has the right to deny admittance to certain students.<sup>25</sup> Most of these schools “have non-profit status. . . and pursue an educational mission rather than profit.”<sup>26</sup> The freedom to choose one’s students, mission, and (limitedly) curricula comes at a price, paid by non-state actors, (e.g. private donors and tuition fees). Private schooling offers many families the choice of what environment their child will learn and grow in.<sup>27</sup>

Beyond simply understanding that private schools are institutions which operate with different funding and legal freedoms than public schools, it is essential for our discussion that we understand that private schools, by their nature, necessitate dialogue between two distinct institutions. One institution is the State, which is governed by laws that protect the rights of students to learn.<sup>28</sup> This includes the right to learn those mechanisms and skills necessary for democratic participation, including, if we agree with Stitzlein’s argument, the positive right to learn dissent. The other institution is the private school and its governing body. That governing body can vary widely, but, for more than half a million students currently enrolled in Catholic schools in the United States that institution is the Catholic Church.<sup>29</sup> It is to this institution that we will turn in the remainder of this discussion.

<sup>23</sup> Mitra, *Educational Change and the Political Process*; Tyack, *The One Best System*.

<sup>24</sup> Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*.

<sup>25</sup> National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, “What Are Private Schools?” Teachers College, Columbia University, FAQs, accessed June 24, 2020, <https://ncspe.tc.columbia.edu/faqs/>.

<sup>26</sup> National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education, “What Are Private Schools?”

<sup>27</sup> Michael W. Apple, “Whose Markets, Whose Knowledge?” in *Sociology of Education: A Critical Reader*, ed. Alan R. Sadovnik (New York: Routledge, 2016), 257–273.

<sup>28</sup> Note discussion above regarding Federalism and States’ responsibility to provide public education.

<sup>29</sup> National Catholic Educational Association, “Catholic School Data,” accessed March 27, 2019, [https://www.ncea.org/NCEA/Proclaim/Catholic\\_School\\_Data/Catholic\\_School\\_Data.aspx](https://www.ncea.org/NCEA/Proclaim/Catholic_School_Data/Catholic_School_Data.aspx).

Private Catholic schools (hereafter, “private schools”) inhere a responsibility not only to prepare citizens for constitutionally-driven aims—such as voting and civic participation—but also to be faithful to missional aims specific to the institution of which they are a part, the Catholic Church. Responsibility to these two sets of aims must be consistent, even when the aims themselves are not. Put differently, private schools, by their institutional structure, must regularly deliberate between directly opposing aims.<sup>30</sup> This makes them a perfect laboratory for the practice of “citizenship education.” When educational institutions have private-mission aims opposed to specific practices protected by the Constitution or current law (e.g. capital punishment, homosexual marriage, etc.), the school may become the incubator of dissent, and the classroom the battleground upon which such tensions must be resolved.

As I’ve noted, dissent can only be practiced in an environment where questions are welcomed, diverse perspectives are taught, and tensions are allowed to manifest.<sup>31</sup> However, institutional authority is often unwelcoming of dissent, especially but not exclusively internal dissent. This is a challenge to all citizenship education but poses a particular challenge to teaching citizenship and dissent in a private, Catholic institution.

#### JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY, SJ AND INSTITUTIONAL FREEDOM

John Courtney Murray, SJ was a Catholic Jesuit priest and a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, American political philosopher. He wrote extensively about the Establishment Clause of the US Constitution. This clause states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”<sup>32</sup> Murray understood that this law had been interpreted by the US Supreme Court to mandate a separation of Church and State, so that the State shall neither support nor coerce citizens in regard to a particular faith, and such protections applied to all faiths, equally. Murray found this interpretation important because it provided legal protections that (1) served to protect the civil peace by treating all faiths equally under the law and (2) created autonomy for religious institutions;<sup>33</sup> which (3) enabled said institutions

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<sup>30</sup> Consider, for example, a state-mandated health class in which the curriculum includes sexual education. The Catholic Church does not condone the use of most forms of contraception for purposes of contraception. See Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004). However, a state-mandated curriculum may advise instruction in prevention of sexually transmitted infections, viz. contraceptive methods. In this situation, a Catholic school would find its civic and missional aims in conflict and would need to negotiate these starkly contrasting aims within the classroom.

<sup>31</sup> Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*; Westheimer, “What Kind of Citizen Do We Need?”

<sup>32</sup> Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America, at \*31.

<sup>33</sup> Murray held that peace morally-superseded correctness of faith or morals. Murray, *We Hold These Truths*. This diverged from an early Church position, which held “error

to function with freedom of conscience, apart from the State.<sup>34</sup> If a church institution was protected under the law, and could function without interference from the State, then, Murray reasoned such an institution could form ideas, practices, and even political critiques without fear of reprisal from the State.

As a mission-oriented institution, the Catholic Church, like all faith-based institutions, benefited from this autonomy by having the freedom to teach its members to think about faith and morals in a distinct way. Sometimes, Murray understood, that distinction would even go so far as to oppose, on grounds of faith and morals, freedoms protected under law. (One thinks, for example, of contemporary tensions around capital punishment or homosexual marriage.) To put it simply, separation of Church and State protected the Church's right to peacefully practice dissent from the State, free of state coercion or interference.

Institutional autonomy from the State not only protected the Church's right to exist, but in so doing created a protected space wherein the Church could form its conscience, develop ideas freely, and craft moral arguments without the taint of state influence. Institutional autonomy meant that the Church had greater ability to develop dissenting ideas. Murray uses examples from history to show that where and when the Church and State were more institutionally unified, the Church's ability to follow its conscience was structurally tethered to the State, and therefore, less free.<sup>35</sup> This institutional bind was, for Murray, far more morally problematic than institutional autonomy of all churches, even objectionable churches, as protected by the First Amendment. "The juridical result of the American limitation of governmental powers is the guarantee to the Church of a stable condition of freedom as a matter of law and right."<sup>36</sup> Freedom to be Church meant freedom to form the conscience of church members; and, freedom to form the conscience of church members meant freedom to dissent from the State.

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has no rights." Murray rooted his position in the teachings of Pope Pius XII, who held the Papacy during WWII. This orientation coheres with Murray's general tendency to philosophize in response to the times. Murray claimed that a state that treats all faiths equally, and thereby maintains peace, is serving a greater good, than a state that would subvert one faith practice in support of another, even if that other faith practice was "more true" in terms of faith and morals. Civil peace is a moral good, and so a law which promotes such peace, through equal treatment of people and faiths under that law, is a good law in and of itself. By this measure, the First Amendment of the US Constitution is a good law, cohering with Catholic morals.

<sup>34</sup> Murray, *We Hold These Truths*.

<sup>35</sup> Here, Berlin's negative and positive freedom crosses over. Freedom from state interference (negative freedom), allows the church's self-determination (positive freedom).

<sup>36</sup> Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, 80.

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## EXTENDING THE ARGUMENT

Here, Murray's argument becomes particularly helpful for our discussion of Catholic schools and positive rights. First, some of Stitzlein's characterizations regarding the positive right to learn dissent in public schools also hold true for private schools. Namely, if public schools are extensions of the State, then private schools are extensions of the Church. Legally, this religious designation gives the private school certain protected freedoms, such as the right to instruct its students in religious coursework, but these legal freedoms do not absolve the institution of its civic responsibilities. Civic responsibilities are, at their root, responsibilities of citizens to society at large. Private schools are constituted on the grounds that they serve a missional aim within society, an aim designated in their documents of legal incorporation, certified by the State, and accredited, regularly, through the institutional Church of which they are a part.<sup>37</sup> Further, the Church, and its subsidiary organizations like schools, understands itself as morally bound to serve the common good, not just of the Church, but society at large.<sup>38</sup> Schools have a legal mandate to educate students for standard content, content which is crafted to serve the common (civic) good. While they have the freedom to add to these standards, private schools do not have the right to take away from them. Similarly, students who enter public or private schools, alike, may possess certain positive rights to learn, which those schools are responsible for respecting. Likewise, Stitzlein's right to learn dissent holds true for all citizens, whether that citizen enrolls in a public or private institution.

What will differ is the culture of the school in which that student learns. That culture will be shaped, in significant part, by the freedoms afforded each school, and the narratives those freedoms enable. In a public school, the narrative structure is, institutionally-speaking, monotone by design. The State alone mandates certain curricular features. So, if dissent is a mandated curricular component, it is the State that mandates that dissent, for the sake of the State receiving dissenting inputs from students who are operating within an organizational extension of the State. In a private school, however, the narrative structure is, institutionally-speaking, polyphonic. The state-mandated curriculum exists alongside church-mandated curriculum. The institutional structure of private schools in the United States, then, is inherently dialogical in a way public schools are not.

Now, let's consider this dialogical nature in light of our understanding of citizenship education. Stitzlein claims that citizenship education "goes beyond [learning about government] to account for other places [such as churches] where community members interact."<sup>39</sup> This helps to train students to be democratic citizens, because it allows students to learn beyond state-

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<sup>37</sup> The Ohio Catholic School Accrediting Association, accessed October 19, 2019, <https://www.ocsaa.org/>.

<sup>38</sup> Murray, *We Hold These Truths*.

<sup>39</sup> Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 167.

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mandated curricula to also include “skills of communication and transaction so that individuals learn how to recognize, value, and improve the conditions of associated living.”<sup>40</sup> The private school is an example of extremely close, associated living. In this instance, the Church can’t exist peacefully without the state’s protections, and the state curriculum can’t be implemented without communication and cooperation with the Church. In this educational context, dialogue is essential for both institutions to flourish.

Thus, if practicing dialogue is an essential part of both democratic education and of private schooling in the United States; and if practicing dialogue is not an inherent feature of public schooling, but rather a feature which must be constructed purposefully through engagement inside and beyond the schoolhouse walls; then, we should conclude that private schools may be better-positioned to train their students in democratic education because of the institutional dialectic, made *possible* and *necessary* by the First Amendment separation of Church and State. This is not to say that private schools are inherently better at training students for democracy but, rather, to suggest that there is a more immediate opportunity to learn democratic practices in an educational space where democratic practices are required for everyday existence. Further, by virtue of their mission, such private schools may carry greater responsibility to leverage this positionality to practice dissent. Put differently, because they can dissent, they must.

For many, the practice of dissent can feel uncomfortable. This is particularly true in the Catholic community, which has accustomed itself to a hierarchy that often demands obedience. These totalitarian inclinations are antidemocratic and do not serve the common good.<sup>41</sup> However, just as Murray reminds us that dissent can be an act of conscience, in the final chapter of her book, Sarah Stitzlein shares that dissent is about more than civic duty; it is an expression of moral hope:

citizenship focuses on putting one’s right to dissent to work in one’s community, not just as a duty to keep democracy strong, but also as a way of sharing in the collective effort of maintaining the well-being of oneself and one’s community members. My desired citizen does more than just participate in civic and public life, she also critiques established systems to understand them, to identify when they perpetuate injustice, and to challenge and alter them when they do so.<sup>42</sup>

Our schools may emerge from different institutions, but whether public or private, the students which they form engage in the same democratic society. If we are to form a truly good society, wherein the common good is pursued by

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<sup>40</sup> Stitzlein, 167.

<sup>41</sup> Westheimer, “What Kind of Citizen Do We Need?”

<sup>42</sup> Stitzlein, *Teaching for Dissent*, 166.

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all, we need to equip every member of that society with the skills to recognize, understand, confront, and alter injustice that impacts every member of society. To do so well, *all* our schools have a responsibility to train students in the exercise of good dissent.

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