

E PLURIBUS UNUM FOR STATES AND SCHOOLS

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JUST what would happen if the two million one hundred thousand children who attend Catholic parochial schools in the United States should find the doors of their familiar schools shut tight and placarded with advertising signs? Again, just what would happen if these two million one hundred thousand children turned the corner and demanded admission into the public schools which the taxes of their parents have built and supported and in which they have every right to expect accommodations? Last year New York City could not take care of the full number of students who applied for admission to the public schools and had to put one hundred and forty-eight thousand of them on "part time." Brooklyn had fifty thousand and Chicago forty thousand on the unsatisfactory basis of "part time." If the parochial schools of New York were to close their doors one hundred thousand additional children would demand entrance into the public schools, Brooklyn would have eighty thousand more and Chicago one hundred and twenty-six thousand five hundred. Only a short time ago New York appropriated sixty-four million dollars for the construction of schools for some one hundred and eleven thousand children, or approximately a number equal to the enrollment in the parochial schools of the same city. If the parochial schools of New York shifted their burden to the city another budget of sixty-four million dollars would be necessary to provide for the new one hundred odd thousand parochial students, two thousand five hundred new teachers would be needed and New York's annual school bill would jump seven million dollars.

Similar facts can be reproduced on a smaller scale for other cities; but all tell the same story of more children than desks and more school bills than money to pay them with. And yet in the midst of all this confusion and need of educational institutions in this country, when a school superintendent, Mr. Mor-

tensen of Chicago, says: "If the attendance increases at the past rate, the part time problem will not be solved"; yet in the face of all this we find an organized campaign to suppress the parochial schools, a campaign to lay another sixty-one million dollars of taxes, or the annual running expenses of Catholic parochial schools, on the teeming budgets which are already inspiring discontent and distrust throughout the country. This campaign has raised what is known as the school question.

The school question explicitly puts the query whether or not it should be legal to conduct schools in which religion is taught as one of the branches of study. At first glance, we are surprised that such a discussion could ever arise in the United States. The answer to the question seems so patent and of such direct consequence from the fundamental principles of our government that one can hardly understand how there could be any question at all about the right of parochial or any private schools to operate unless there were at the same time a question of abandoning our whole theory of government concerning the liberty of worship.

The amendment to Article One of the Constitution reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." We are thereby granted the liberty of worshipping God as we choose provided, of course, that we work no harm to the legitimate interests of any person or group of persons. But if we and our families have the right to worship God as we choose, we should likewise have the right to learn how to worship Him in the way we have chosen. One right includes the other and neither is complete without the other.

At this juncture the advocates of the measure take the aggressive with the assertion that it is not a denial of the right of worship to forbid the teaching of religion in the schools; but that such a measure would grant the purest freedom attainable, far purer than that which we now enjoy; for under present conditions the child is taught the religion of his parents without once having the opportunity of choosing a different one for himself. True, children in the parochial schools usually profess the same religion as their parents. But it is equally true that the children of Baptists, Methodists or Episcopalians do the same thing when such children are not sent to schools which instruct

them in the religion of their parents. It is not clear just what harm is done to the state or to the individual if children are preserved in their innocence and taught from their earliest days as the first truths of life the duty to respect and obey the laws of God; if they are taught from the very first in point of time those truths of religion which are first in importance and consequence. Far, far better would our old world be if all of us had learned better and practised more zealously the selfsame precepts of religion which the parochial schools teach.

By far the more likely result of any policy leaving the choice of religion to each child as he grows up would be a lamentable lack of any religious practises among them all. The chairman of the Kingston magistrates, near London, made the statement during the trial of a youthful criminal that juvenile crime in England is largely due to the decline of religious teachings in the schools. Dr. James V. Thompson, while advocating week-day religious instruction before the annual meeting of the Young People's and Week-Day School Department of the Board of Sunday Schools of the Methodist Episcopal Church, had this to say: "What a nation desires in its life must be taught its children. We must recognize that no education is complete without religion."

Another charge alleged against the sectarian schools is that they excite and propagate religious suspicion among the commonwealth and that they are dangerous to the spirit of patriotism. This accusation has been most effectually noised abroad by such vague slogans as "One flag and one school," and "The Little Red Schoolhouse. More secret has been the censure that parochial schools teach treasonable doctrines. If treasonable doctrines are taught in the parochial schools it is a question of fact and could and should be proved; but up to the present there seem to be a paucity of proof and an abundance of unsupported charges. The idea that religious or sectarian schools foster suspicion and are injurious to the spirit of patriotism is a private little bug-bear which political night-walkers shake before the windows of timid and gullible people. Why religion or the love of God should exterminate patriotism or the love of country is not quite clear. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's," should dispel such an illusion.

But we need not turn to Scripture for our examples. Our own political history can give a substantial host of military and civil heroes who were nurtured in sectarian schools and did not find that their training in private schools offered any impediment to their patriotism. To begin with the beginning, we will go back to the first days of our republic. No public school supplied the Revolutionary Army or reared Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Jackson, Marshall and the whole throng of our first patriots. This is absolutely certain for the simple reason that there was no public school system in the early days of our country; the public school system is a mere eighty years old and long before that time the sectarian schools flourished. In the days of our country's hottest patriotism it was the sectarian school which fanned the flame. If the sectarian school could give us our classic age of patriotism in the persons of Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Jackson, Marshall and the unnumbered multitude unknown to fame, is it not strange to hear men scream with fright lest the sectarian school will Chronos-like devour its own children?

Nor have the sectarian schools produced the first patriots and then rested on their laurels. In the time of the Civil War we find that the heroes who were crowned whether with victory or defeat, were children of sectarian schools: Lee, Grant, Sheridan, Davis and too many more to mention. In our own day the terrible Teddy Roosevelt who was certainly the greatest exponent of patriotism of his age, did not go to the public schools; neither did McKinley, and a host of our great political and military men today. Lieut. William Fitzsimmons, the first American officer to fall in Great War was the son of St. Mary's College, St. Mary's, Kansas.

But after all it would not matter much if the private school could not boast of a record of patriotism. Its claims to gratitude may rest on the services it has rendered its country; but its claims to existence lie deeper than anything its country can give or take away. True, the government has the right and the duty to see that its citizens are preserved from ignorance and when it finds that children are growing up without care being taken that they receive a suitable education the state has not only the privilege but the obligation of interfering with the family and compelling the parents to provide the proper education for their

children. But the state is at best only a step-mother and crosses the threshold of our homes only when the real, true and lovable mother has died either physically, mentally or morally. If parents die to their children in so far as they fail to act towards them as living parents should, then the state must play the dry role of step-mother; but the healthy, happy, fortunate family does not need and does not want a step-mother.

The state did not form the family, but the concourse of families formed the state. The family reads its genealogy back to the Garden of Paradise; the state can trace back its genealogy only in an uncertain fashion to the outside gate of Paradise where the ills of men started and there arose the need of co-operation for self-defense and improvement. The family is the elder child of God and it does not completely resign its inheritance to the state but only shares it with the state for their mutual benefit. The idea that men are made for governments to practise on is brutal and stupid; but it is absolutely true that states and all forms of governments are made for the good weal and betterment of men.

For the state is the handiwork of man just as man, in turn, is the handiwork of God; and in the same way as man has only those powers which God has given him, so the state has only such rights as man has surrendered to it. And man did not give the state all the powers and rights which man originally possessed. He gave the state only those rights which were necessary for the prosperity and smooth running of the organization. Anything beyond what is necessary for the maintenance of the state has been reserved by man for his own use. Or more specifically, in the matter of education the family has conceded to the state only such authority as is necessary for the proper education of the future citizens. Beyond that the state has nothing. The school question, then, ultimately resolves itself into one of necessity; into a question of how far it is absolutely necessary for the peace and good weal of the state for the state to interfere in education.

Prudence would dictate that the state should not tamper with the machine of education any more than a man tinkers with his watch just as long as it works well. The man is not interested in how the wheels spin round; what he wants is results, and results in a certain peculiar line. Unless he is interested in

mechanics, he will care not the least what system of construction is used in the watch provided it supplies the particular service he asks of it—the time of day. So with the state. The state need not care a jot where or how its citizens are educated as long as they are educated; it is the end, the result which interests the state, not the means or methods. Therefore, if the parochial schools can provide the children of any locality with the proper education, the wise thing for the state to do would be to keep hands off and be glad that it could find such a capable assistant. The only thing remaining to be seen is whether or not the parochial school really does give children a serviceable education.

The curriculum of the parochial schools is practically the same as that of the public schools with the exception that a part of the time is devoted to religious instruction. The parochial schools work on the supposition that education should develop the whole man; and since man is spiritual as well as mental, the parochial schools try to develop the spiritual side along with the mental. Some tastes may prefer a man with arms like gnarled oaks and legs so perilously thin that only a hero would venture forth on them; but sensible aesthetics demand symmetry. And rational aesthetics when applied to education has convinced Catholics that it is better for the individual and for the community to spend some time and energy training a man proportionately; and for that reason parochial schools educate not only the intelligence through the arts and sciences, but the will through religion.

In the mere matter of studying the same subjects and spending the same time over practically the same books the public schools have no advantage over the parochial schools. But neither books nor schedules make as good a criterion of the work of the parochial schools as the competitive examinations which show the finished products of both organizations pitted against one other. For instance, in the "George Washington Essay Contest," conducted in 1922 by The Daily News of New York, both the first prize of \$1,000 and the second prize of \$500 were won by Catholic school pupils and thirteen of the twenty-five \$50 prizes also went to Catholic school pupils. In the War Department Contest for the best essay on "The Benefits of Enlistment in the United States Army" a pupil of Notre

Dame parochial school of Washington, D. C., took first prize. In the same city the Rotary Club held an essay contest as part of its Boys' Week program. All the prizes went to boys in the local Catholic High School for Boys. Pupils of the Bishop England High School of Charleston, S. C., received six of the seven prizes offered by the Daughters of the Confederacy in their annual essay contest. If these few instances offer a good criterion it does not appear that the nation would become more learned by sending all its children to the public schools.

But going back to a time even before the parochial or public school makes its appearance we find that the process of education starts before either the child or the parents have any thought of the state or its rights. The first morning of the life of the new-born infant is his first day at school when his mother wets his lips with milk to teach him to know and desire the food which nature has provided. The state does not interfere there, yet that is one of the first and most important lessons the child receives in life. That lesson is succeeded by many more and the whole process of education would naturally center around the parents just as it began around them. But some, and, indeed, most parents have neither the time, ability nor inclination to serve as tutors for their children. They must needs get some one else to fill their place. The state has no right to say who shall be this substitute, but it is left to the free will and good judgment of parents to choose such a substitute as will most closely resemble their own ideals. It is not necessary for the existence and health of the state that it indicate the sources of education, provided of course, that its citizens get a satisfactory education without the interference of the state. The vitality of the state is not interested in the manner by which its citizens are educated; it is staked upon the result that they are really educated. The duty of seeing that the children are educated rests first in time and in importance upon the parents and only secondarily upon the state when the parents have failed to fulfill their duty.

Because children are given to the parents and the state itself is a barren abstraction, the parents must be the first ones responsible for the health of the child's mind just as they are the first ones responsible for the health of the child's body. If they fail, then of course some one must come to the rescue of the help-

less child; but the best thing for the community to do is to stand prudently on the outside and be sure that a family can not run its own affairs before it comes bursting through the domestic doors and creates the customary confusion of the over-zealous peacemaker. As long as the parochial schools do their work and do it well, as long as they are the nurseries of heroes, as long as they do not involve the state in the foil of ignorance they have a perfect right to exist and to operate just as any other concern which ministers to the legitimate and honorable needs of mankind. No one pleads for a state monopoly on baby milk; but the state legitimately inspects its distribution. So, too, with education which is the milk of the mind; inspection is reasonable and salutary, but a monopoly is unjust and unnecessary.

