

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE VI.

THE BIBLE AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.¹

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR FRANK HUGH FOSTER, PH. D.,
OBERLIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

THE question of the Bible in the public schools is the question whether, in compliance with the requests of certain portions of the public, the Bible shall be removed from the schools. It has been common to seek an answer to this question in considerations derived from the reason of the case, and often with the silent but impossible assumption that such a method could bring the question to a settlement. There are advantages in discussing every public question as it may arise, *de novo*. The fundamental principles upon which all governmental action rests are sometimes thus brought out with a clearness not otherwise attainable; and an air of candor and of readiness to do that which is right and best is secured which goes far to remove distrust and promote a cordial acquiescence in the result finally arrived at. The disadvantage, however, is, that differing parties often start from radically different premises, and that cordial agreement cannot, in the nature of the case, be obtained. And the fundamental mistake is often committed of neglecting an element which will assert itself and vindicate its right to be heard, namely, the share which the past has in the character of every present public question, or the verdict of history upon the questions of the administration of an historic institution like a government.

¹ A Paper read before the Ohio State Congregational Association, May 8, 1889.

We shall at this time confine ourselves principally to ascertaining the bearings upon the question before us of the historical situation. In dealing with the Bible in the schools we are dealing with an institution. Presumably it had its justification and now performs a certain well-defined service. What was its origin? Why was it established? Why has it been so long retained? What does it do? What is the relation of the government to it, and of what sort are the functions of the government which are actually exercised in the introduction and maintenance of the Bible in the schools? All these are questions of constitutional and legal fact, not of theory. The answer to them is historical; and that answer, as already said, must be had before any decision of great worth or permanence can be reached as to the propriety of the removal of the Bible.

The American public schools originated in the schools of New England. They were there a part of the great organization by which the State took upon itself the responsibility for the religious welfare of the people. In effect, if not in name, they were at first parochial schools, and the minister, if not formally as pastor, yet in the exercise of functions which were actually pastoral, visited and instructed in them, gave his advice, and exercised authority over them. The law recognized them as a part of the religious system of the people, and it was early incorporated in the statutes of Massachusetts that all the teachers of the young, from the professors in Harvard College to the remotest and humblest village school-master, should instruct their pupils in the principles of piety and religion as well as in sound learning. Hence in those early days not only was the Bible read, but more specific religious instruction was given. The Assembly's Catechism was taught, and it occupied a prominent place in that New England Primer which contained even in the list of alphabetical letters a re-enforcement of its contents. This was the system before the Revolutionary War and

after it. Massachusetts in particular was slow in shaking off the system of an established church, and the Catechism remained in use in the schools till far on into this century. But little by little the new ideas embodied in the religious freedom established by the Constitution of the United States became effective, and all exclusive support of any religious denomination was discontinued. Still, the substance of the old usage was retained, and religious instruction given in many ways, direct and indirect, by the occasional instruction of the teachers, by the implications and express lessons of the text-books, and particularly by the continued reading of the Bible and the offering of prayer at the opening of every school day. With the spread of the public-school system this observance has also spread, till, at the present time, it is believed to be kept in four-fifths of the American public schools.

Upon what basis, now, does the observance still rest? In its original form in Massachusetts the basis was plain. The State had established Congregationalism, and the peculiar religious instruction given in the schools was introduced there because the State was not only a religious state, but a Congregational state. All this has passed away. There is no form of established religion, and the peculiar doctrinal tenets of Congregationalism are no longer taught in the schools of Massachusetts or any other State. Why then is the general teaching of religion continued? The answer is because something of that original basis remains, and because the United States is still a Christian nation. It is founded upon the Christian religion, and the general truths of Christianity are necessary to its well-being as a state.

Under the influence of crude and unhistoric discussion of the subject, especially by those who ignore the historic character of our nation because they are hostile to the ideas upon which it is founded, this conception of the American state has passed from the minds of large bodies of our people. It may therefore be necessary to

dwell somewhat at length upon this point and to show, amid the various conflicting statements of the theorists, that this is not an additional theory to be judged upon its merits, like their own, but is a statement of a simple legal and historical fact.

We may see that it is such by the following considerations. The judicial utterance of Sir Matthew Hale that "Christianity is parcel of the laws of England ; and therefore to reproach the Christian religion is to speak in subversion of the law " has been taken up and applied to the constitution of the American State by the highest judicial authorities. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania decided in 1822 that "Christianity is and always has been a part of the common law of Pennsylvania," and the Christianity of the decision was further defined by the judge as "general Christianity, without the spiritual artillery of European countries ; not Christianity founded upon any particular religious tenets ; not Christianity with an established church and tithes and spiritual courts, but Christianity with liberty of conscience to all men." In the celebrated Girard will case, Daniel Webster in arguing against the will said : "It is the same in Pennsylvania as elsewhere ; the general principles and public policy are sometimes established by constitutional provisions, sometimes by legislative enactments, sometimes by judicial decisions, sometimes by general consent. But however they may be established, there is nothing that we look for with more certainty than the general principle that Christianity is part of the law of the land.....Christianity, tolerant Christianity, Christianity independent of sects and parties, that Christianity to which the sword and fagot are unknown, general, tolerant Christianity, is the law of the land." And the Supreme Court of the United States decided, Justice Story delivering the decision, that "the Christian religion is truly a part of the common law of Pennsylvania." The same judge, in explanation of the provision of the constitution of the United States which

secures religious freedom, says: "The right of society or government to interfere in matters of religion will hardly be contested by any persons who believe that piety, religion, and morality are intimately connected with the well-being of the state, and indispensable to the administration of civil justice. The promulgation of the great doctrines of religion; the being and attributes and providence of one almighty God; the responsibility to him for all our actions, founded upon moral freedom and accountability; a future state of rewards and punishments; the cultivation of all the personal, social, and benevolent virtues,—these never can be a matter of indifference in any well ordered community. It is indeed difficult to conceive how any civilized society can well exist without them. And, at all events, it is impossible for those who believe in the truth of Christianity as a divine revelation, to doubt that it is the especial duty of government to foster and encourage it among all the citizens and subjects. This is a point wholly distinct from that of the right of private judgment in matters of religion, and of the freedom of public worship according to the dictates of one's own conscience."

Thus it is well established that Christianity is part of the law of the land. I quote, however, in addition, the summary of the whole subject by Judge Dwight, President of the Columbia Law School in New York. He says: "It is well settled by decisions in the courts of the leading States of the Union—*e. g.*, New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts—that Christianity is a part of the common law of the state. Its recognition is shown in the administration of oaths in the courts of justice, in the rules which punish those who willfully blaspheme, in the observance of Sunday, in the prohibition of profanity, in the legal establishment of permanent charitable trusts, and in the legal principles which control a parent in the education and training of his children.....The American States adopt-

ed these principles from the common law of England, rejecting such portions of the English law upon this subject as were not suited to their customs and institutions. Our national development has in it the best and purest elements of historic Christianity as related to the government of states. Should we tear Christianity out of our law, we would rob our law of its fairest jewels, we would deprive it of its richest treasures, we would arrest its growth, and bereave it of its capacity to adapt itself to the progress in culture, refinement, and morality of those for whose benefit it properly exists."¹

In this broad sense, then, the nation is a Christian nation. It is more than a nation in which a preponderating number of the inhabitants are Christians. It is itself Christian. Its institutions are Christian. The morality which it needs to maintain itself is a Christian morality. And when it teaches by the use of the Bible and prayer and moral exhortation and the singing of hymns a "general Christianity" in its schools, it is fulfilling its duties in instructing the youth in that which is essential to their usefulness as members of the state.

We may pause long enough in our discussion to fix clearly in mind the fact already mentioned in the quotation from Judge Dwight, that the religious character of our government appears in many other ways than in the maintaining of the Bible in the schools. Infidels object not only to this, but also to our exemption of churches from taxation, to the employment of chaplains, to the appropriation of public money for charitable purposes, to the appointment of religious fasts and feasts, to the use of the judicial oath, and to the Sabbath laws, and their objection but exhibits the extent to which the religious idea has permeated the system. Thus the Bible in the schools is but part of a system all of which rests upon a great idea, that we are a Christian people. Nor is this idea a mere idea, but it is indisputably a fact. It is

¹ Letter to Dr. Schaff, "Church and State," (N. Y. 1888) p. 61.

a fact of government exemplified and confirmed by facts as to the population. With more than one in five of the population in the communion of the various churches, and with a great multitude of others in a formal connection and a considerable sympathy with them, the common Christianity of the nation is too patent to be denied.

The school system of the State of Ohio stands in immediate connection with that of New England. The earliest settlers were from that portion of the country, and they began church and school in the settlements at Marietta and on the Western Reserve upon the New England plan and under the guidance of New England ideas. But these ideas had received a new character in consequence of those remarkable provisions in the ordinance of 1787, constituting the Northwestern Territory, which have given to it a special importance in the history of this nation. It was enacted by Congress that "Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education should forever be encouraged." The end of the state considered in itself is nothing more than good order and the welfare of its citizens; but this could not be attained except religion, which is "necessary to good government" should be promoted. The maintenance of religion is thus declared to be a duty of the state, and the encouragement of schools is a means to that end. Hence it follows that the schools were required by the ordinance to teach religion. The Constitution of the new state of Ohio, formed in 1802, reduced this provision of the ordinance to the following terms: "Religion, morality, and knowledge being essentially necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of instruction shall for ever be encouraged by legislative provision, not inconsistent with the rights of conscience." The Constitution of 1851 slightly varied the phraseology as follows: "Religion, morality, and knowledge, however, being essential to good government, it shall

be the duty of the General Assembly to pass suitable laws to protect every religious denomination in the peaceable enjoyment of its own mode of worship, and to encourage schools and means of instruction." All this rests upon the and embodies the general principles and facts already brought out as to the nation, and establishes again for Ohio what is true for the Union at large, that it is a Christian State, and that the religious instruction given in its schools is thus given in fulfillment of its duty to fit the successive generations for the responsibilities of citizenship upon which they are to enter. And thus it came about that till about the year 1869 throughout the entire state, the practice of reading the Bible, of singing suitable Christian hymns, of prayer, and of moral instruction was as common as the schools themselves.

We are brought with this date (1869) into the midst of a struggle which it will be our duty to portray at length in a later portion of this paper—the struggle with the Catholic church upon the subject of the common schools. But divesting the distinguishing event of this year of its special connection with that contest, we may treat it here in its general aspects, inasmuch as it has entered in seriously to modify the legal status of Bible-reading in the schools. This event is the case of *John D. Minor et al. vs. the Board of Education of Cincinnati*.

The State of Ohio created by a law dated Feb. 5, 1825, a system of common schools, which were reorganized by a statute passed Mar. 1, 1853. These laws gave to the boards of education of townships the power of prescribing the studies to be pursued and the text-books to be used in the schools under their charge. Under this authority the school board of Cincinnati passed in the year 1852 the following rule: "The opening exercises in every department shall commence by reading a portion of the Bible by or under the direction of the teacher, and appropriate singing by the pupils. The pupils of the common schools may read such version of the sacred Scriptures as their parents

or guardians may prefer; provided that such preference of any version, except the one now in use, be communicated by the parents and guardians to the principal teachers, and that no notes or marginal readings be allowed in the schools, or comments made by the teachers on the text of any version that is or may be introduced." This rule was a mere recognition in a formal manner of the custom which had obtained since the first organization of the Cincinnati schools in 1829, and under it, all continued to go well for many years more. It is interesting to remark, as an evidence of the general satisfaction given by the system, that about the year 1856 the Israelites of the city, after examining the school system, discontinued their own, and sent their children to the public schools, and that their Rabbis sat upon the board of education and never manifested any dissatisfaction with them, and that a prominent Israelite voted against the resolution which banished the Bible from them. This resolution was passed Nov. 1, 1869 in the following terms: "That religious instruction and the reading of religious books, including the Holy Bible, are prohibited in the common schools of Cincinnati, it being the true object and intent of this rule to allow the children of the parents of all sects and opinions, in matters of faith and worship, to enjoy alike the benefit of the common school fund" etc. etc. Mr. Minor and his associates immediately applied to the Superior Court for a perpetual injunction upon this new rule, and the case was decided in their favor. The opinion of Judge Hagans in the case is interesting and conclusive. He maintained that the question before the court was "Whether religious instruction can be prohibited from the common schools of Cincinnati by the school board," and "that this issue must be judged by the constitution of the State." This decision is in substance that the articles of the Constitution already quoted in this paper. direct that religious instruction shall be given in the schools. The judge says: "For like reasons, the constitution enjoins the encouragement of schools

and the means of instruction, and that the system of schools shall be made thorough and efficient. While the innate sense of right and wrong is in the human soul, as the power to solve mathematics or any other science is common to all, they confessedly need development and direction for the good of the State, and the highest civilization and happiness of the people; and that is education, instruction. If religious development and direction, then it is 'religious instruction.' And it is instruction in the subject Religion which the state has declared essential to good government, and the means of it, which the Legislature is to encourage, that these resolutions prohibit. The State proposes to employ both instrumentalities mentioned in the constitution, to secure its ends—instrumentalities so closely and intimately connected that they may never be divorced; but the one protected and the other encouraged by a paternal legislation. And this is strictly according to the canons of constitutional interpretation." And he closes by saying: "Our common schools cannot be secularized under the constitution of the State of Ohio. It is a serious question whether as a matter of policy merely, it would not be better that they were, rather than offend the conscience. With this, however, we have nothing now to do. But in the view of the Constitution we have taken in its application to this case, the resolutions passed by the school board are unconstitutional and void."

Judge Taft submitted a minority opinion against the decision of the court, and the case was appealed to the Supreme Court of the State by which it was tried in the December term of 1872. This court reversed the decision in an opinion delivered by Judge Welch. The court viewed the case differently from the Superior Court of Cincinnati, and presented the point at issue in the following language: "The real question is, Has the Court jurisdiction to interfere in the management and control of such schools, to the extent of enforcing religious instructions, or the reading of religious books therein?" Upon

the question thus presented the decision was as follows: "If the supposed injunction to provide for religious instruction is to be found in the clauses of the constitution in question, it is one which rests exclusively upon the legislature. In both sections the duty is expressly imposed upon the 'general assembly.' The injunction is to 'pass suitable laws.' Until these 'laws' are passed, it is quite clear to us that the courts have no power to interpose. The courts can only execute the laws when passed. They cannot compel the general assembly to pass them." Accordingly the original petition was dismissed, and the prohibition of religious exercises still stands among the rules of the board of education of Cincinnati.

It is true that the Court, after remarking that "this opinion might well end here," went on to the extent of ten pages to argue the case in favor of the essential justice of the decision. It does not become me to criticise this opinion except so far as to say that in the portions of it which profess to be an interpretation of the constitution it substantially reverses the decision of the highest court of the land already quoted, and that in its dogmatic part it rests upon principles by no means universally accepted. It partakes, however, of the character of "*obiter dicta*," as it is foreign to the case as stated by the judge himself, and it cannot therefore be viewed as constituting an element of the legal and historical aspect of the case which we are considering.

The general result of this decision for the State was that the matter of having or not having religious instruction in the schools was put in the hands of the local boards of education. In most of the State there are such exercises more or less extended, including the use of the Bible or excluding it. Sometimes local sentiment, without action of the board, has terrified the teachers into the disuse of religious exercises. In general the communities demand that the teachers selected should be professing Christians. Such teachers prefer to use some form of

religious service in opening their schools, and are permitted to do so at their own discretion. Without special action by the boards, the ancient law survives, and the teaching of religion in its general sense remains upon the foundation of the fact that we are a Christian people.

Such being in fact the position of the State upon the question of the Bible in the schools, we may now pass to the various objections that are made to its use, and to the reply which the American people should make to them. I select three cases as typical of all others, the objections of the Atheists, of the Jews, and of the Roman Catholics.

In reference to the first class, their objection is, substantially, that belief in God is a superstition, and that its inculcation is an obstruction of liberty. Accordingly it is against the atheist's conscience to permit a child of his to be taught the religion of the Bible, and the Bible must therefore be removed in justice from the schools which are supported with his money.

The reply is easy. We tolerate the atheist. We do not do what no government can, and descend into the sphere of opinion. He holds his opinions, and he will, despite every exercise of power. He may even propagate them, provided he does it in a peaceable manner, by means of the legitimate instruments for influencing public opinion. But the State does not countenance atheism. Its system of laws, its judicial oaths are founded upon Christianity. It regards atheism as dangerous to society, and it will not comply with any demand made by the atheist to diminish in his favor the safeguards with which it has surrounded its institutions. It may permit the atheist to withdraw his child from its schools and instruct him somewhere else, or it may grant him any other reasonable concession; but it will not substantially lower the character of the instruction which it gives in its schools to indulge his harmful theories.

The same position is to be maintained in respect to the Jews. If they should request the reading of the Scriptures

to be dispensed with, as they do not ordinarily do, though they are often quoted by the opponents of the Bible to reënforce their own efforts with some appearance of impartiality and generous consideration for the rights of others, they are to be told that the laws of this country, which have given them entire religious and civil liberty, as no other nation has done, do not profess to put Judaism upon a level with Christianity. Says Justice Story: "The real object of the amendment [to the constitution] was not to countenance, much less to advance, Mahometanism, or Judaism, or infidelity, by prostrating Christianity; but to exclude all rivalry between Christian sects, and to prevent any national ecclesiastical establishment which should give to an hierarchy the exclusive patronage of the national government." The public schools are for the people, and the people is Christian both in theory and in fact. The Jew must remove his child, if he cannot permit him to hear the Christian Scriptures, but the Christian Scriptures cannot be relinquished for his objection.

But these objections are trivial compared with that raised by another class, now numbering about 8,000,000,—the Roman Catholics. That an objection is raised by this body is generally known; but in accordance with the general plan we are pursuing in this discussion, we must first ask: What is this objection? Whence does it arise? Is it to the Bible, or to the common schools as such? And does it come from the Roman Catholic church as a great body of our fellow-citizens demanding their religious rights under our constitution, or from the hierarchy of the church, essentially foreign in its spirit, and agitating the question from an un-American point of view? Evidently such questions as these suggest points of the greatest conceivable importance, and the answer to be given to the Catholics will depend largely upon the answer to be given to them. We must again recur to history. The true character and origin of the

Catholic objection will not be found till we know the method upon which, and the agents by whom, the agitation has been conducted.

Catholic agitation against the public schools begins with the career of John Hughes, the famous archbishop of New York, who was in a large degree the father of the Roman Catholic church in America. His course in relation to the schools was but a part of a widely ramified system of efforts all tending to the same end. He was the skilful manager who terminated the old system of "lay-trusteeship", whereby Catholic congregations could own and manage their own church property, and, by getting personal control of the church property in the city of New York, introduced that system by which at the present time all the property of the various dioceses is held in the name of the bishops and is thus completely removed from the control of the people. His efforts were well planned and all proceeded from a definite conception of the Roman church, namely that its system depends upon the supreme control of the hierarchy culminating in the Pope. To confirm and extend this control was the one object of his official life.

The agitation commenced in the year 1840. In that year Bishop Hughes appeared before the corporation of the city of New York with a petition that seven Catholic schools might be designated to receive a portion of the school funds. In consequence of this petition the general subject came under discussion, and Hughes invented the term "Protestant monopoly" as descriptive of the public schools, and said that the system was unfair to Catholics, and "insidious", and that the text-books used were "replete with sneers and libels against the Catholic Church". In other words he objected to the use of the Bible, and to many of the current text-books. In the emergency thus created, the public disposition was to concede all that could be safely conceded, and in accordance with the idea that a "general Christianity" should be taught,

the "Public School Society", at that time in charge of the New York schools, went so far as to agree to strike out of the text-books all passages to which the Catholics could object, and even to remove the Bible from the schools when desired. It was thus removed from more than eighty of them before the year 1853 when, upon pressure brought to bear by the Catholics, this Society passed out of existence and the schools were transferred to the State and put under its direct control. Thus the "Protestant monopoly" was broken up.

It is not our purpose here to discuss whether the schools were or were not a "Protestant monopoly"; but simply to trace the history of the agitation. A significant event had occurred the year previous to the transfer just related, in the meeting of the first plenary council of the Catholic church. Here, although under the lead of its principal prelate religious teaching had been excluded from a large number of schools, the church solemnly condemned the system of public schools where children of all denominations are admitted and religious teaching is excluded! Bishop Hughes returned to New York to adopt a new line of attack. The schools were now designated as "godless", "atheistical", and "infidel". Bishop Hughes said:—"Experience has shown that the new system, although administered with as much impartiality as could be expected under the circumstances, is one which, as excluding all religious instruction, is most fatal to the morals and religious principles of our children, and that our only recourse is to establish schools of our own, where sound religious instruction shall be imparted at the same time with secular instruction." Thus the attack was changed from one upon the management of the schools to one upon the schools themselves. First, the schools were "Protestant"; but the point which made them so had been removed. Now this removal had made them "godless", and they were "fatal to morals". Hence the next step followed rapidly in the establishment of parochial

schools for the Catholic children, and then in 1853 there was made simultaneously in eight states of the Union a demand for a portion of the school funds for the support of such schools. Thus the course of Roman Catholic agitation turned upon itself and ended where it had begun, with the demand for a portion of the school fund. Since then the course of the Catholics has been tolerably uniform, and parochial schools have been established as fast as the means have allowed, and the demand has been repeated again and again for a portion of the public money, especially in the State of New York, where the political complications of New York city give the Catholic church unusual advantages for pressing her claims. Thus it is evident that the demand of the Catholics, as voiced by their priests, is for schools entirely under Catholic management, but supported by the State.

I pause here long enough to remark that this position of the Catholics is a contradiction of our entire historical national position as to religion. It says that we are not a Christian nation, that we are not able to give a Christian education in that general sense in which we have sought to do it, unless we give a Roman Catholic education. Thus the only Christian nation is a Catholic nation, and the position we have occupied from the beginning is an entire mistake.

Such is the position and demand of the priesthood ; but is it the demand of the Catholic laity? It is exceedingly hard to arrive at the facts as to this point, and they are not accessible to the present writer in any large number. But a few significant indications may be noted which render the answer tolerably clear that the demand of the priests is not the demand of the laity. The extreme measures of the hierarchy to enforce the regulation as to parochial schools point in this direction. Bishop Gilmour, of Cleveland, has commanded Catholic parents to transfer their children to the parochial schools upon pain of loss of the sacraments. The slowness with which the erection of

the parochial schools has proceeded, is another item of importance. Schools are not erected because money is lacking, and money is lacking because the people do not feel that degree of interest in the matter that their priests do. In the city of Boston at present, about two-thirds of all the Catholic children are still in public schools. Prominent Irish Catholics have said that they preferred the public schools, and the less prominent have never been known to make much disturbance about them so long as the priests did not interfere. We believe that the testimony of all impartial observers would be the same, that the mass of of the Catholic people are not concerned in this agitation.

On the other hand the evidence is not small that the crusade against the public schools, like the ancient crusades, was Rome-inspired. The Syllabus of Errors (1865) contained an utterance strangely apropos to our condition in America. It reads: "The entire direction of public schools in which the youth of Christian states are educated may and must appertain to the civil power The most advantageous conditions of civil society require that popular schools open without distinction to all the children of the people, and public establishments designed to teach young people letters and good discipline and to impart to them education, should be freed from all ecclesiastical authority, government, and interference, and should be fully subjected to the civil and political powers in conformity with the will of rulers and the opinions common to the times." All this is a pestilential error! Cardinal Manning accepts with politely feigned reluctance an invitation to discuss the question in the *Forum* (March, 1880). A Jesuitized hierarchy is governed from abroad, and is essentially a foreign thing. And yet even this hierarchy is not agreed within itself as to the special question before us, whether the Bible shall be retained in the schools; for Cardinal Manning says: "I rejoice that it is read in the board schools of England, even without a right interpretation. It is better that chil-

dren should know the name, the character, the life, the parables of the Saviour of the world, than that they should grow up without the knowledge of his name."

Such is the history of the Roman Catholic agitation. We have now arrived at the point where the true answer to the demands of the Catholics can be indicated. It is the following, which we may remark in passing, is not only the proper answer in view of the whole history, but is the actual answer which is given in the vast majority of the public schools:—

The giving of general religious instruction in the schools is a custom founded in the character of the American State and maintained from the beginning by the Christian sense of its people. The reading of the Bible is an important and in many respects and indispensable part of that instruction. The Roman Catholic demand for its removal is crude and immature. Catholics themselves have not settled upon their final demand, as we may fairly claim they should do before we proceed to revolutionary action. Meantime, however loudly the priesthood may claim that it, as such, represents the Catholic people and that its demand is the demand of the people, we shall refuse in accordance with our established American policy to allow any such claim. It is a preposterous one, and utterly against our idea of the liberty of the individual conscience. Or, waiving this point, if the Catholic demand may be regarded in any sense as matured and settled, it is for a division of the funds. Even here their system is immature. Some Catholic people upon this continent have tried the parochial system, and abandoned it. It is evident that the Catholic church has not yet adjusted itself to the demands of such a government as ours, and we may decline to modify our institutions with reference to its desires till it is itself ready to propose a solution which it can permanently accept. Meantime every reasonable concession should be made. The Catholic version should be permitted; or even individual children

should be permitted to retire from the religious exercises, or should be excused from taking part in the reading. The instruction should be confined strictly to the general truths of our common Christianity. But the demand for the removal of all instruction of a religious nature should be resisted as un-American, destructive of morals, and corruptive of the qualifications of good citizenship.

This, we submit, is a wise, charitable, conservative position, suited to our history, sound and unobjectionable except to extremists and fanatics ; and it is safe to say that it will be substantially the position of the American people in the future as in the past.