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THE  
CATHOLICS  
AND THE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCUDDER

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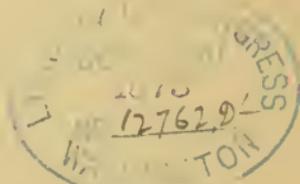






THE CATHOLICS  
AND THE  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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# THE CATHOLICS

AND THE

# PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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Is it best to retain the Bible in our public schools? This is a momentous question; evidently felt to be so, for the mere mention of it moves men deeply; it stirs their very blood.

How can it be decided? The answer is plain. In this country the people are sovereign. Their sentiment soon crystallizes into law. What the people resolve upon will be done. This question must find its solution at the bar of public opinion.

In some other countries it may be an open question whether the State shall make provision for the education of its boys and girls. With us it is not. Education has become a part of the machinery of the American Republic.

The method, also, as well as the purpose, is settled. A definite scheme has been originated and

put into operation. They who were before us, our fathers, sagacious, patriotic, possessed of comprehensive views, animated by a passionate love of liberty, opening the doors of this country to all people, cordially inviting them to enter and incorporate themselves with the American nation, and honestly desirous of securing equality for all, did devise and establish a scheme of common schools as a means of attaining the end which they so ardently contemplated. They did not entertain the chimerical idea of instituting a scheme which should suit the notions of all men, but one which should be for the good of all: and they were governed by two ideas; they recognized two foundations upon which alone their edifice could be reared and upheld, viz., intelligence and virtue. They saw that the Republic could not stand at all if it did not stand upon these two. Bare intellectual knowledge seemed to them insufficient. They reasoned thus: We cannot have a good government without good citizens; and we cannot have good citizens without good schools; and we cannot have good schools unless in them we teach that which pertains to morality, as well as that which pertains to knowledge.

Leave out the morality, and the education becomes one-sided, distorted, monstrous, breeding curses instead of blessings. This was the view they took.

Next consider their action. In order to inculcate morality, they must needs choose a book. They chose the Bible. Why should they choose any other book? When a man is looking for light, shall he reject the sunlight? Shall he shut up his house, close his shutters and kindle tallow candles, or shall he open his windows and choose sunlight? If he wants light, is not sunlight the best light? This book seemed to them worthy on many accounts. Its history, its poetry, its models, its manly English, its inimitable narrative, its healthful stimulus, and, above all, its pure morality commended it to them. They looked over the world, and saw that wherever the Bible was not, there the moralities were confused; even, in some cases, so far confused, that men were to be found who thought it quite right to kill, roast and eat each other. They also surveyed those countries where the Bible, though existing, is suppressed and the people are forbidden to read it, and there, also, were moral disorders and dark-

nesses ; and they came back with still firmer confidence to the Bible, assured that in it they possessed a standard of morals which was certain, fixed and unchangeable. So they introduced it into the public schools, in order that the children might read it, and thus drink of the stream of unadulterated morality which flows from this clear fountain. This was the scheme they formed.

Well, thus far, how has it worked? Has this scheme of education, which includes the Bible, been a success? Has it injured any one? Has it inflicted a single social, civil, or religious disability on any person? Has it trampled on any man's conscience, oppressed any one, persecuted any body? Is there a place on the globe where the Jew is so free and so happy as in the country where the Bible is taught in the common school? I once spoke to a Jew about returning to the Holy Land, and he answered: "Sir, I do not wish to go there; this country is good enough for me." Has the Israelite ever been able to say that in a land where the Bible is unread? Is the Papist not free here? Does the public school, or the Bible in it, teach the children that persecution is laudable? A race that does not read the

Bible may easily become narrow, bigoted, and persecuting; but a race that reads the Bible from its schoolboy days, becomes large-hearted and tolerant, and learns to cherish freedom for others as truly as for itself. Has not the public school proved a blessing to the poor children in lifting them up into companionship with the richer children, and has it not been a blessing to the rich children in bringing them to realize the brotherhood of the common school, to recognize the equality of all boys and girls who play and quarrel with each other, who study and grow up together? In Boston, in the same class in one of the city's schools, was a woodsawyer's son and a son of an ex-President of the United States. A much coveted prize lay between these two, and the woodsawyer's boy got it. Is such an institution—one in which such facts are not only possible, but natural—of an illiberal tendency? Is it not a mighty instrument in the unification of our heterogeneous populations? Is it not justly our joy and our pride, and rightly the admiration of the world?

The public school, then, with the Bible in it, has proved successful. No man can truthfully say that it has been a failure.

Now comes a demand that the Bible shall be excluded. We are called upon to reverse a national policy which has endured for years, and produced the most beneficent results; and the question arises before the American people: Shall the Bible be expelled from our common schools?

Four points should be considered:

I.—FROM WHOM DID THE DEMAND ARISE?

It is notorious that it arose under the instigation of the authorities of the Papal Church. This demand is not so much the voice of the Catholic laymen as of the Romish priesthood. The Catholic laity in this country become gradually emancipated from many of their prejudices, and, if they were let alone, no such demand would be made; but they are moved to it by the priests,—concerning whom we may be permitted to inquire: Are they men who love this country and its institutions? Are they in sympathy with its hopes and aspirations? Do they wish it to become among the nations that which it aims to be, the bright example of the largest civil and religious liberty? Nay, the Romish priests are

not of this nation. Their allegiance is not to this government, but to another that is outside of this. They hold that the Pope is not only the head of the Papal Church, but the lord of the world, the sovereign of kings, the one potentate who is above all secular governments. More than this, they hold him to be the lord of the human conscience, lately also made infallible. Their loyalty is not an American, but a Papal loyalty. Their flag is not our flag. Their history is not our history. Their sympathy is not with the Republic, nor with its purposes of liberty. It is not strange that they should incite the Catholic laymen to object to the Bible in the common schools.

## II.—ON WHAT GROUNDS HAS THE DEMAND BEEN MADE.

On several :

First: It is affirmed that the Bible is a sectarian book, and, therefore, the State has no right to put it in the schools.

Here a jumbled issue is made. Mud is thrown into the stream of argument, and it runs with a turbid flow. Stop, and let it clear. The argument assumes—and this assumption is the mud

cast in—that the reading of the Bible in the schools is equivalent to the teaching of sectarian dogmas. This is untrue. Creeds, catechisms, confessions, theologies and denominational formulas may be sectarian; but the simple Bible is not sectarian. From the nature of the case this appears, for if it were a sectarian book, how could all the sects accept it? If it were sectarian, there would be only one sect, the sect whose doctrines it taught. The fact that there are many sects, and that they all equally accept it, proves that the sectarianism is in them and not in the Bible. There is no sectarianism in the Bible. It is in men's heads and hearts. It is their addition to the Scripture, and is not in it. Hence it cannot be a sectarian book.

Moreover, this book is read in the schools, without printed note or verbal comment.

The Lord's Prayer also is repeated in some of the schools. Whose conscience can be damaged in the use of that prayer? Not the Deist's, for the name of Christ does not occur in it. Not the Jew's, for it is a Jewish prayer, uttered before the Christian Church was founded. Not the Papist's, for it is the prayer which he oftenest repeats; it

is the "Paternoster" which he so much reveres. Nor is this all. If the Catholic children wish it, they can read their own version of the Scripture, the Douay Bible: and if the Hebrew children wish it, they can read only the Old Testament: and if this arrangement is not considered complete, there can be a total exemption in favor of children whose parents desire that they should abstain from reading the Bible. This rule has been observed in some of the schools. The Catholic and the Hebrew children have been excused altogether in the few instances where the parents have made the request. This course can be followed in all the schools. Then of whose conscience can it be said that it has been trampled upon? Will it not suffice that they are excused? Is the conscience of the objector so scrupulous that it cannot be satisfied with this; cannot be satisfied as long as the Bible is in the building, as long as anybody is allowed to read it? Where does this conscience derive its authority to lord it over all the other consciences? Do not the vast majority of those who send to these schools desire that their children should read the Bible? Are they the only persons in America who have

no rights? Is there no trampling upon conscience, when the Bible is banished entirely? The conscience which demands not only that itself shall not read the Bible, but that none else shall do it, is a conscience that takes everything and gives nothing. Such supersensitive consciences had better leave the country, or, still better, never enter it. This, clearly, is not the place for them.

The truth is, the Papal Church objects to the Bible, not because it is sectarian, but because it is unsectarian; not because it encroaches on any one's liberty, but because it promotes the liberty of all: because it creates the condition in which men learn to think and act for themselves, and also to bear with the diverse thoughts and actions of others. And this the Papal Church desires not, for it wishes to subjugate the minds, hearts, wills, consciences, imaginations, bodies and lives of all men and women to itself, so that they shall think, feel and act as it dictates; and this never can be carried into effect where a Bible-atmosphere and a Bible-sunlight prevail.

Having thus exhibited the groundlessness of this plea of sectarianism, let us see what the real position of the State is. While the American

government is not a sectarian, neither is it an atheistic, nor a pagan, nor a Mohammédan government. This is a Christian country, and the people who live in it are a Christian people, and the State which they have erected is a Christian State, and the history of this nation thus far is the history of an avowedly Christian nation. This government was founded as a Christian government by our forefathers, who did it with tears and prayers, with fastings and struggles, amidst conflicts many and sore that tried their souls; and we, their descendants, are a people who acknowledge the Bible and adhere to it. While in the matter of religion our government interferes with none, intimidates none, imposes disabilities on none, forces none, proscribes none, and ostracises none; while it leaves every man free to worship as he likes, or not to worship; it is nevertheless itself a Christian government, and why should it cast the Bible from its schools? In what department of the government is the Bible not found? Tell me, when the President of these United States enters upon his high office, does he not take his oath on the Bible that he will be faithful to his duty? Do not the officers of his cabinet take

a similar oath? If you pass from our Executive to our Legislative branch, do you not find that the daily conventions of the State Legislatures, and the daily sessions of the National Congress, are opened with prayer by chaplains appointed for that purpose; and do not all our legislators swear by the Bible that they will be good and true men in the making of laws? Enter our Judiciary. Are not our judges initiated into their office in the same way; and tell me, in our courts on what book does the witness lay his hand and promise to tell the truth; and what book does the juror kiss when he declares that he will render a righteous verdict; and tell me also whether perjury—the false kissing of that book—is not reckoned in our courts as one of the major crimes. Go into our army and our navy. Who appoints the chaplains, to read, to preach, to pray, and to comfort? Who, but the government? In our late war, in camp and on board ship, what book was brought to the bedside of the dying soldier and sailor? Was it not this Bible? How is it with our holidays and sacred days? How came Christmas, the day of Christ's birth, to be a holiday by law? Does the President of the United States appoint an annual

national thanksgiving? Do the governors of the States echo it? What about the days of fasting in times of the nation's trouble? Are they not appointed by the State? Are there not, on our Statute books, laws to protect the Sabbath, and laws against blasphemy? Go down lower; walk into the penal institutions, the penitentiaries, the jails, and the houses of refuge, and pass up thence to the sanitary institutions, the government hospitals; is not the Bible there by the act of the State? Look, too, on the formal documents issued under Federal or State authority. Do you not see on them the words *ANNO DOMINI*, the year of our Lord? Whose Lord? Our Lord, the Lord of us individually and the Lord of us all in the aggregate, the Lord of the American State, the Lord of the Bible. I repeat the question, in what department of the American government is the Bible, and the Christian religion that flows from it, unacknowledged? Verily, though our government is not a sectarian, yet it is a Christian government. If the Bible may be in the White House, in the Legislatures, in the courts, in the army, in the navy, in the penal, the reformatory, and the sanitary institutions, why may it not re-

main in our common schools? Is its exclusion thence to be the beginning of a movement which is to result in a complete expatriation? Again, if the Bible—which, by reason of the liberty and the toleration which it inspired, was the real author of our noble scheme of government—is to be cast out to please the caprice of men who have no sympathy either with that Bible or the State that grew out of it, then why not go farther? Let those who believe in the divine right of kings come here and say, “The American constitution does not hold to kings, it is an offence to my conscience; down with the Constitution:” and let the criminals of all lands flock hither, and exclaim, “The American laws do not suit me, they do not allow me the freedom that I desire; I wish to do as I like: down with the law.” Be sure of this, if you begin by driving the Bible out of the American commonwealth, you will end by attending the funeral of republicanism.

Secondly: The exclusion of the Bible is demanded on the ground of unjust taxation. Those who make this plea say: “The reading of the Bible in the public schools injures our conscience, and it is not just to make us pay taxes

for the support of these conscience-offending schools.”

One cannot help, at the outset, asking, How many of these objectors do pay taxes? The objection springs mostly from a class of people who do not pay taxes, who are not property owners. These are they who make the loudest outcry. If they will only suffer the schools to go on, if they will cease meddling with them, these schools will do one good thing: they will so educate the children of these non-tax-paying objectors, that in the coming generation a great many of them will attain unto the dignity of tax-payers. The children will learn to read, write and keep accounts; they will catch the spirit of American enterprise, gain property, and begin to do what their fathers didn't—pay taxes.

But leaving this, the objection itself is based on an assumption which falls to pieces as soon as it is examined. It is assumed that the only equivalent given by the public school to the tax-payer is a certain amount of Bible reading; whereas, as I have shown, this element need not enter into the matter. If a parent requests that his child should be excused from reading the Bible, he

can be excused ; and then the Bible reading has nothing to do with the tax. The parent receives a full equivalent for the tax in the common school education which is bestowed on his child. He sends the child for this purpose, namely, to receive a common school education, and the child gets that, and the parent is taxed for it, and the Bible question is eliminated from the controversy. He pays a small tax and receives an inestimable benefit. What is there unfair in this transaction ? No inroad is made either upon his purse or his conscience.

Thirdly : A demand for the suppression of the Bible is made upon the ground of universal satisfaction. They who put this forward say : “ Let us have no controversy with the Papists about the schools ”—the controversy is with them ; Jews and infidels do not enter largely into it—“ Let us have no dispute with the Roman Catholics. The question of Bible or no Bible is not so important as the question of school or no school. The public school itself is in peril of life. The retention of the Bible is the creation of a line of breakers all along the shore of our commonwealth : upon it this goodly ship, the public school, is in danger of being wrecked. Suppress the Bible and the

breakers will disappear, the storm will be hushed, there will be a calm. The bone of contention will be ground to powder, and everybody will be satisfied."

This is a great mistake, and the fulfillment of it would be a prodigious blunder. The Papists have filled the air with clamors against the Bible in the schools. They boast of what they have already accomplished. The Irish Catholics held a convention in St. Louis, on October 17, 1873. I quote from their proceedings as reported in the *New York Times* of October 18, 1873 :

"Mr. Harley said that the Catholics had gained a great victory in driving the Bible out of the public schools."

This is a little premature. They have not yet quite done this. They cry out, however, against the Bible, and this outcry has an ulterior end. They do not intend to stop at the exclusion of the Bible. Their hostility runs deeper than that. They are enemies to our public school system as a system, whether it has the Bible in it or not. Nothing short of the demolition of the public school will satisfy them. This they now openly avow. I quote again from the report of the pro-

ceedings of the Convention of Irish Catholics in St. Louis.

Father Phelan, of St. Louis, said : "The public men of America were educated in the public schools, and were exhibitions of the system, and they were the most corrupt and dishonest of any country in the world. Men can steal in this country with impunity, provided the amount is large enough. That the children of the country go heels over head to the devil must be attributed to the education they receive in the public schools, which does not fit them for the temptations of the world. In these schools men of science are honored and eulogized, but the name of Jesus Christ is not allowed to be mentioned with reverence. These children turn out to be learned horse-thieves, scholastic counterfeiterers, and well posted in all schemes of deviltry."

Further on in the discussion, Father Phelan again spoke, and said : "He thought the delegates from the East had not studied this subject enough. He frankly confessed that the Catholics stood before the country as the enemies of the public schools, and the reasons therefor should be stated. He considered those reasons were en-

bodied in the resolution. They must say they would as soon send their children into a pest-house, or bury them, as let them go to the public schools. They were assured they would lose the faith. They were afraid the child who left home in the morning would come back with something in its heart as black as hell."

: After Father Phelan had thus spoken, Father Mangin arose, and said: "The public school system is a nuisance."

First their cry is, "Out with the Bible! out with the Bible! it hurts our conscience!" but as soon as they perceive that the American public are weakening on that point, and that there is some probability that the Bible may be excluded, then they cry out, "Godless schools, godless schools, they defile our conscience, we cannot send to them!"

The removal of the Bible, then, will not be the removal of the difficulty. Yield the Bible and you have simply surrendered the outworks, and they, rejoicing, will immediately proceed to assault the citadel. If we expel the Bible, we shall only effect two things: we shall make an exhibition of our own silliness, shortsightedness and cowardice,

and we shall allow them to run their gunpowder mines under our fortress and blow it into the air.

Fourthly: The banishment of the Bible is urged on the ground of reciprocation. It is said: "If when we have the majority we keep the Bible in, when they have the majority, if that should ever be, they will put in the Roman Catholic Catechism, the Virgin Mary, the saints and the holy water; but if we now are kind enough, in view of their prejudices, to keep the Bible out, they, if they should ever attain the power, will be noble enough to remember our courtesy and reciprocate it, and will keep out the Catechism and the Mass. Are we silly flies to be caught in such a spider's web? Are we ignorant of history? The Roman Catholics will establish their religion in the public schools the instant they get the power to do so, and will not give one moment's thought as to whether we kept the Bible in or out. And since this is so, we had better keep the Bible in as long as we can. The plea is—for I cannot dignify it with the title of argument—if we do not cast out the Bible now, they will cast it out when they have the chance. The answer is, if they ever have the chance, they will cast it out anyhow,

and for that reason we should hold on to it as long as possible. When they do cast it out, it will be cast out, but we will wait until they do ; and this especially since the retention of the Bible will itself be a means of defeating them in their design of abolishing our public schools.

Having thus seen who the demanders are, and on what grounds they make their demand, we are prepared to consider

### III.—THEIR OBJECT.

I have already proved by the testimony of Romish priests, that our common school system finds a relentless foe in the Papal Church. The public school creates an atmosphere of freedom. It radiates the light and warmth of liberty. It is a republican institution. It is hostile to the narrowness, the exclusiveness, the bigotry, and the superstition of the Romish Church. It confronts the inherent disloyalty of that church to all civil governments. Therefore it is hated and conspired against. The design of the Romish hierarchy is this : to abolish our public schools and establish sectarian schools ; to demand a part

of the public school fund that it may be used to support schools which shall be exclusively Roman Catholic; and their greater design is, by this, in connection with all other possible instrumentalities, to subordinate the American State to the Papacy. This can never be accomplished, unless first the free schools of the Republic are demolished. Yes, *free* schools: FREE: a significant title; a bulwark against the incursion of a thousand superstitions; a protest against the bringing back of mediæval darkness; a protest against the confessional in the family, the inquisition in the State, and the enthronement of priestcraft over all in the person of the Pope. FREE schools! No wonder that the little monosyllable sends a tremor of disgust and dread to the heart of every Catholic priest. Yes, free schools; free up to this hour. Even so, let them be free forever, with a free open Bible in them that no rude fingers shall close and no ruthless hands shall cast out.

FOURTHLY AND LASTLY: I PUT THE QUESTION, SHALL  
WE EXPEL THE BIBLE?

Our fathers planned this public school system,

and placed the Bible in the centre of it: shall we revoke their deed?

Moreover, it is to be considered that the Bible is really the parent of the common school. They who read that book, and love it, and whose characters are formed by it, are the sort of persons that originate such a benign institution as the public school. No such institution ever grew up in pagan lands, or in countries where the Bible is a sealed book. Our public school is begotten and bred of the Bible, and shall the child now turn upon the parent and choke it to death? That would be like the act of the Hindu parricide, who takes his venerable parent down to the banks of the Ganges, and pours its mud down his throat till he suffocates and dies.

Besides, the Bible is the parent of liberty. The ancient republics of Sparta and Athens, in their palmiest days, were not genuine republics. Always in them the citizens were the few, and the slaves were the many. No more atrocious barbarities were ever inflicted by man upon his fellow-man than those which the so-called freemen of Sparta inflicted upon their wretched helots. A free Bible is the real author of free institutions. In the dark

ages, when the Bible was a sealed book, priests and popes, emperors and oppressors had all things their own way; but when the Reformers unlocked the Bible, when they gave it to the common people in their own vernaculars, when they taught the right, the privilege, and the duty of private judgment, then men began to think for themselves; then civil and religious liberty found birth: and for a free State to suppress the Bible is to enter upon a suicidal policy. Shall a free people set themselves against the book that made them free? Shall they proscribe the Bible and disband the public schools, and, levying taxes, raise money in order to distribute it to sects? Shall the State set up sectarian schools, schools in which the children will be taught that their primal allegiance is to a foreign power, schools suited to breed disaffection to a republican form of government? Surely it is not the business of any government to cut its own throat.

Since our republican institutions are founded on the Bible, every child trained in our Republic ought to have the opportunity to know that the Bible exists, and that it is the basis of our rights and our liberties. A conscience kept in the dark

is not a free conscience. Children have consciences as well as grown-up people, and it is the right of every child in America that it should know of the existence and the character of the Bible; and the American State should never allow itself to be coerced into a position where it cannot point to its public schools, and say to all the children of the Republic: "Here is the Bible, the source of our freedom and happiness." As much as this is due to the consciences of the children. A brand put upon that book, by the expulsion of it from the public schools, would be an act of unfaithfulness to all the children; it would be a deed of folly and of infamy.

The question whether the Bible shall be cast out of our public schools is one that must profoundly engage us all, for it is of vital interest to our commonwealth. It is a question that affects our domestic, social, political and religious career. The demand made is only initiative. Yield this, and demand will follow upon demand. We must take our stand somewhere. Let us take it here. Let us not give the first inch. Let us say calmly and resolutely: "Here are our schools. We teach no sectarianism. We endeavor to train the chil-

dren in intelligence, in good morals, in the principles of civil and religious liberty. If you do not like this, you need not come to this country, or if you have already come, you can go back; you were free to come, you are equally free to return, and you shall have our best wishes and prayers for your welfare." When the hosts of Xerxes fell upon Greece, Leonidas and his brave soldiers withstood them at the gateway of the land, at Thermopylæ, and Greece was saved. Here is our Thermopylæ in this conflict: it is at the door of the free, common school. Thermopylæ! Remember what it means: *Θερμαὶ Πύλαι*—WARM GATES, HOT ENTRANCE.

Let us make it very hot for any who attempt to pass it.











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