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SECTARIAN
INDIAN SCHOOLS,

OR

*THE RELATION OF THE CHURCHES TO THE GEN-
ERAL GOVERNMENT IN THE EDUCATION
OF THE INDIAN RACES,*

BY

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ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

LAKE MOHONK CONFERENCE OF FRIENDS OF THE
INDIANS, OCTOBER 9, 1890.

It affords me great pleasure to have the opportunity of taking part in the discussions of the Mohonk Conference, because my study of the proceedings of the Conference for a few years past convinces me that the character of the national legislation and the character of the private benevolent work in the interests of the Indian races are both largely here determined.

The platforms of this Conference from year to year have marked a steady, intelligent, and conscientious advance. The platform of the Lake Mohonk Conference for 1888 said :

“ We call upon the Department of the Interior to inaugurate at once a thorough and comprehensive system, providing at national expense on principles analogous to those which experience has incorporated in our public school system for the education of all Indian children in its ward and care in all the elements of education essential to civilized life and good citizenship, the use of the English language, the common industrial arts and sciences, the habits and properties of domestic life, and the ethical laws which underlie American civilization.”

The platform of the Lake Mohonk Conference for 1889 said :

“ We welcome heartily the presence of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at this session, and indorse heartily the general principles embodied in the paper presented by him, outlining a proposed policy for the organization of a comprehensive system of Indian education by the Federal Government. We urge upon the administration the organization of such a plan, and upon Congress the necessary appropriations for its execution ; and the chairman of this Conference is hereby authorized and instructed to appoint a

committee of seven, of whom he shall be one, to render to the Commissioner of Indian affairs, such co-operation as he may desire in preparing such a system as shall be best to promote the universal and compulsory education of all Indian children in harmony with the principles of our government, and with the concurrent work of the churches, missionary boards and societies and philanthropic organizations, and to urge upon Congress such increased appropriations as may be necessary to carry this into effect."

It was hoped that the new and thoroughly American policy of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs would be accepted by Congress as it had already been accepted by the administration ; but the United States Senate overruled the action of its Committee on Appropriations, and restored in the Indian Appropriations Bill appropriations for three new sectarian schools which had been provided for by the bill as it came from the House of Representatives, thus increasing the number of sectarian appropriations. This action caused extended protest from the press and from varied organizations throughout the country. The *Independent* of New York, July 31, 1890, said :

"While having full sympathy with the work done heretofore by the contract schools, and while believing fully in the necessity of moral and religious training, in order to the highest civilization of the Indians as well as of whites, we believe the time has come for the work of secular education, carried on by men and women of high moral and religious character on a non-sectarian and non-partisan basis, to be done chiefly, if not entirely, by the Government ; while the work of evangelization should be prosecuted by the Church.

"The last week has seen an onslaught on the Indian Bureau from a number of Catholic papers, apparently having one common inspiration. Nevertheless, it is hard to persuade the people that the Catholics have anything to complain of, so long as they control three-fifths of the appropriations for contract schools."

The *Churchman* of New York, August 2, 1890, said :

"Commissioner Morgan was right in calling a halt. Senator Reagan was right in declaring against Government aid to religious denominations. The Government has drifted into a wrong position in this matter. A temporary expe-

dient has been rapidly growing into a vicious system, and it is now determined, against the advice of the Commissioner, to extend it and fasten it upon the Government. If anything could open our eyes to the evil of it, it would be the spectacle of the Catholic Bureau pushing by the Commissioner and forcing itself into the Senate chamber, and with whip and spur driving over the Senate committee. The Commissioner should be backed by every American citizen. Religious societies should carry on their mission in entire independence of the Government."

"The National League for the Protection of American Institutions," an organization wholly unsectarian and non-partisan in character, containing among its adherents thousands of the formers of public opinion in every State, whose objects are stated to be "to secure constitutional and legislative safeguards for the protection of the common school system and other American institutions, and to promote public instruction in harmony with such institutions, and to prevent all sectarian or denominational appropriations of public funds," has taken pains to test extensively the most enlightened public sentiment on the question of sectarian appropriations by Congress as well as by the States. The responses from thoughtful and liberal Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Jews, and from those of no professed religious faith, have shown all but a unanimous consensus of opinion against such appropriations, as both perilous in precedent and harmful in result. The outline of the plan carefully elaborated in the Commissioner's report, looking to the assimilation of the Indian to our national life by a system of schools non-partisan and non-sectarian, related to each other and forming a connected whole, with uniform studies and patriotic teachings, conformed, as far as practicable, to the common school system, presents in great part the national question on which the nomination of General Morgan was by many sustained, and by others opposed, in the contest before the Senate. The plan reported by the Indian Department had been carefully considered by many philanthropic and educational citizens, who had devoted themselves to the solution of the Indian problem under the lead of distinguished experts in educational and Indian affairs, both of

the States and of the nation. After diligent scrutiny and discussion, it was regarded as marked by the caution, moderation, and wisdom demanded by the difficulties of the situation, and tending to avoid the interruption and antagonism incident to discordant systems by bringing all the schools founded or employed by the Government into harmonious relation, on the model of the public school system, into which the Government schools might, in time, be readily absorbed. Influential presses, secular and religious, gave it their approval, as a gentle and judicious mode of solving a national problem by a simple and easy return to American principles, the forgetfulness or disregard of which had led to the complication of adverse and antagonistic systems in defiance of the Constitutional rule of an absolute separation of Church and State.

If, while the Indian appropriation bill was before Congress in discussion, the same energy and ability had been put forth by the secular and religious press in opposition to its obnoxious features as were exercised in attacking these features after the passage of the bill, the result might have been different.

There is no lesson taught by the history of the republic that is better understood by the American people or the world at large than the admirable adaptation of the public school to fit the children of all nationalities for the exigencies of American life and to encourage an intelligent devotion to American institutions. The attempt to defeat the appointments in the Indian Department of the Commissioner and Superintendent, who favored governmental schools, was openly based on opposition to the common-school policy, and by those who make a demand for new schools to be controlled by ecclesiastics and not by the Government, but said schools to be supported by the National Government from the National Treasury.

In order that the work might be uniform the office prepared recently a new contract, in which it was provided that the Indian office might "prescribe the course of study and designate the text-books, and require the same evidence of the qualifications of the employees in contract schools as in

the Government schools." It was held, as we think justly, that, if the Government furnishes the money for the education of Indian children for American citizenship, it has a right to say how this work shall be done. These contracts were sent out to the various religious bodies who carry on these contract schools, namely: Roman Catholics, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, Friends, Methodists, Menmonites, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Unitarians. All of these bodies, with one exception, accepted the new contracts without objection. The Bureau of Catholic Missions, however, declined to accept them, refused to allow the Government to prescribe the course of study or designate the text-books, and objected to submitting the required evidences as to the qualifications of school employees. On the amendment of the Senate, both houses of Congress, however, finally incorporated in the Indian appropriation bill the following section: "That the expenditure of the money appropriated for school purposes in this act shall be at all times under the supervision and direction of the Secretary of the Interior, and in all respects in conformity with such conditions, rules, and regulations as to the conduct and methods of instruction and expenditure of money as may from time to time be prescribed by him."

The following table shows the amounts appropriated to the various religious bodies for Indian education during the fiscal years 1886 to 1891:

	1886.	1887.	1888.	1889.	1890.	1891.
Roman Catholic.....	\$118,343	\$194,635	\$221,169	\$347,672	\$356,957	\$363,349
Presbyterian	32,995	37,910	36,500	41,825	47,650	44,850
Congregational	16,121	26,696	26,080	29,310	28,459	27,271
Martinsburgh, Pa.....	5,400	10,410	7,500	Dropped.		
Alaska Training School.....		4,175	4,175			
Episcopal.....		1,890	3,690	15,700	24,876	29,910
Friends.....	1,960	27,845	14,460	23,383	23,883	24,743
Menmonite.....		3,340	2,500	3,125	4,375	4,375
Middletown, Cal.....		1,523	Dropped.			
Unitarian.....		1,350	5,400	5,400	5,400	5,400
Lutheran, Wittenberg, Wis.....			1,350	4,050	7,560	9,180
Methodist.....				2,725	9,940	6,700
Miss Howard.....				275	600	1,000
Appropriation for Lincoln Institution.	33,400	33,400	33,400	33,400	33,400	33,400
Appropriation for Hampton Institute.	20,040	20,040	20,040	21,040	20,040	20,040
Total.....	\$228,259	\$363,214	\$376,264	\$530,905	\$562,640	\$560,218

The significance of these figures indicates the tendency

of the existing system to arouse, not simply disputes between the Government and the authorities of any denomination that may claim a right to control in the matter of Indian education, under authority given or assumed to be given by acts of Congress, but to arouse throughout the Nation the denominational rivalries, jealousies, and animosities which it was the aim of the first amendment to the National Constitution to prevent, and which every departure from its spirit is sure to awake. The dissatisfaction may be the greater among the various denominational bodies which have a National organization which recognize allegiance to our Constitution and laws, and which are devoted to American principles and institutions, if they find that the National Government is appropriating so large a proportion of public moneys for Indian education to an ecclesiastical body which represents no national church organization in America, and avows no allegiance to the American Government. The proposition seems hardly to admit of dispute, that a race whose education is assumed by the National Government should receive an instruction and training fitted to imbue them with the American spirit, to fit them for the exercise of their rights and duties by a right understanding of our political system, based on the sovereignty of the American people and the supremacy of American law, with liberty of conscience to all, and that protection to all in their constitutional rights which entitles the Government to their loyal devotion and exclusive allegiance, shutting out all allegiance to any other power, prince, or potentate whatsoever. Apart from these National considerations, it is respectfully submitted that the Indian children are vested with Constitutional rights which the Government, in the exercise of a reasonable guardianship over the wards of the Nation, is honorably bound to protect.

The President in his message to Congress, Dec. 3, 1889, in speaking of Indian education, said :

“The national schools for Indians have been very successful, and should be multiplied, and, as far as possible, should be so organized and conducted as to facilitate the transfer of the schools to the States or Territories in which

they are located, when the Indians in a neighborhood have accepted citizenship, and have become otherwise fitted for such a transfer. This condition of things will be attained slowly, but it will be hastened by keeping it in mind. And in the meantime that co-operation between the Government and the mission schools, which has wrought much good, should be cordially and impartially maintained."

It certainly cannot be contended with justice that, while we give to the Episcopalians, for instance, whose work among the Indians has been noteworthy for its extent and value, and whose claims upon the Government are as reasonable as those of the Roman Catholics, only \$29,910, the Government could give to the Roman Catholics either the sum asked for, \$531,996, or the sum received, \$363,349, and still administer the system "impartially."

Many learned jurists and statesmen think that the first article of the first amendment to the national Constitution, which ordains that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof," does not permit Congress to make a law establishing for the Indians, or any other class in America, one or more schools belonging to a particular religious denomination and where the doctrines of that denomination are to be taught, for the reason that such a law is a law respecting an establishment of religion, and that the Constitutional provision that Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion equally forbids Congress making a law that will empower any other body to prohibit the free exercise of religion; and these principles are applicable alike to all religious denominations whatsoever, native or foreign, that now exist or may hereafter appear in our States and Territories. The debate in the United States Senate on July 14, 1890 on the Indian appropriation bill, developed a strong sentiment in this direction, and in no instance was an effort made to answer the Constitutional argument. Expediency and local political interests seemed to be the motives controlling the action.

I only wish to be understood as protesting against National grants to such contract schools as are purely under sectarian control. The organization of citizens

whom I represent is now preparing its appeal to all the religious denominations, asking them to withdraw all applications for appropriations and to refuse to receive appropriations from the National Treasury for their work of religious instruction among the Indian races.

Let us not make an attempt at the solution of the question of Indian education which embarrasses the solution of the broader questions. Let us not make him the prey of denominational bickerings. Give him the American public school, or its equivalent, and then let religious denominations prove their faith by their works and try to Christianize him. The controversy concerning sectarian appropriations will continue, because a vital and fundamental principle animates it; and the welfare of the Indian will be prejudiced unless this partnership of the Government with religious denominations is dissolved. These Indians are the wards of the nation, and we cannot escape the responsibility for their education. When we provide in a given place only a contract school under sectarian control, we force them under an establishment of religion and pay the bills for their religious education, which is both establishing a religion and abridging the free exercise thereof on the part of the individual.

Where the Government has encouraged by its appropriations the investment of private funds drawn from private beneficence, for the purpose of promoting denominational schools, of course perfect business honesty must be adhered to and good faith be kept when the Government determines to withdraw from the support of sectarian contract schools; and I urge that the attitude of the churches ought to be that, after timely notification to the parties interested, Government appropriations for denominational schools among the Indians shall cease.

Confusion will necessarily result unless there is uniformity in the educational system. Let the nation do its work of education, and trust to the churches, as it does with other classes of the population, for Christianization. It is a notable fact that the results of the sectarian contract system have been very questionable in many places. We believe

that General Morgan has the right view of things, for two reasons: first, in the best interests of the Indians; and, second, in the best interests of the American principle of the entire separation of Church and State. The question of economy as between the expense of maintaining the contract and the government schools has no force as an argument; and it is unworthy of consideration by the United States Government, when we consider the historic relationship of the Government to the Indian races.

It seems to me that it would be a wise course for this Conference to ask, in the near future, all the religious denominations now receiving funds from the national treasury for Indian education to withdraw their applications for funds, and to refuse to receive them in case appropriations should be made. The National Government, introducing the common-school system among the Indians and making attendance compulsory, recognizes, as it ought, the free public school system as a national American institution. And it would seem that the churches ought to encourage the National Government to take such desirable action by refusing a partnership which makes such action impracticable.

If the churches in matters of Indian education accept sectarian appropriations from the National Government, while using the moiety of money they get undoubtedly for worthy purposes, they do great damage to the entire cause of public education by sanctioning a step in the direction of the union of Church and State, by imperilling the integrity and indivisibility of the school fund in the several States. In several of the States the question has already reached a dangerous and critical stage. The enemies of the school system are watching with great solicitude the movement made by the churches for appropriations from the national treasury; and some of them openly rejoice in what they believe to be the solution of the entire problem of the support of denominational schools in the States by a division of the school funds on denominational lines.

Again, the churches accepting appropriations to aid them in their efforts to educate the Indians are putting a premium on the use of ecclesiastical power for political purposes in

the shaping of legislation; and that power in these very lines has been used most relentlessly in high places. It would seem that the Church of Christ ought not to be a party to this kind of work in a Republic.

Again, the churches ought not to consent to such a relationship to the National Government that workers in the field dare not tell the facts coming under their observation, lest their own work will be imperilled and their path of usefulness hedged up. If it is claimed that this money in the Treasury is the property of the Indians, what right, then, has the General Government to say that it shall be filtered through sectarian sieves on its way to the owners?

In answer to the question, then, "What should be the relation of the churches to the Federal Government in the work of the education of the Indian races?" we would respond, The same relation as they sustain to the Government in the work of the education of other races of our composite population, in case the churches desire to see the Indian races civilized, Christianized, and Americanized. And this means, let the Government do thoroughly its work of industrial and intellectual education by teachers competent in both character and culture; and let the free church in a free State press its distinctly Christian religious work side by side with the Government, furnishing its own motive powers, both spiritual and material.