

The Sentinel OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

VOL. XVIII

WASHINGTON, D. C., NOVEMBER 19, 1903

NO. 46



I warn you, and all who hear my words, and all who read them, that there is a great conspiracy going on in this country, working underhand, pressing, crowding in every direction, taking advantage of every turn of the tide, against our public schools. Pressure is being exerted all the time in favor of sectarian religious education; and I warn you that this is one of the great battles of American civilization that has got to be fought out before a great while. If you take public money for the education of the children, you have no right to use it except to educate those children in such a way as will most benefit the public. The only excuse for public education is the public weal. The public schools, then, should be devoted entirely to educating people for fitness for good American citizenship. Let the Catholics, the Unitarians, the Baptists, the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, educate their children into their own ideas in their homes and their churches and their private institutions just as much as they will—they have a perfect right to do it; but do not let them dare to ask for public money to carry on sectarian education. I beg you to think of this important question; for we shall have to think of it, and think of it seriously, before a great while.

— Dr. Minot J. Savage in discourse in New York on October 18.

PUBLICATION OFFICE: 222 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Entered as second-class matter October 12, 1903, at the post-office at Washington, D. C., under
the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

The Sentinel

OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

A weekly publication devoted to the maintenance and defense of liberty of conscience, and therefore opposed to any violation or compromise of the principle of separation of church and state. Non-sectarian and non-partisan in the application of principles.

JOHN D. BRADLEY, Editor.

Published by
REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSN.,
222 N. Capitol St., Washington, D. C.

To whom all communications of a business nature should be addressed.

We believe in the religion taught and lived by Jesus Christ.

We believe in temperance, and regard the liquor traffic as a curse to society.

We believe in supporting civil government and submitting to its authority.

We believe that human rights are sacred, and that they indissolubly inhere in the moral nature of the individual.

We deny the right of any human authority to invade and violate these inalienable rights in any individual.

Therefore we deny the right of any civil government to legislate on matters of religion and conscience.

We believe it is the right, and should be the privilege, of every individual to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, free from all dictation, interference, or control on the part of civil government or any other external authority; or not to worship at all if he so chooses.

We also believe it to be our duty, and no less the duty of all others, to oppose religious legislation and all movements tending toward the same, to the end that all the people may freely enjoy the inestimable blessing of liberty, which is theirs by virtue of the unbounded wisdom and beneficence of the Author of their being.

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six months.....	.50
three months.....	.25
To foreign countries in Postal Union, one year.....	1.50

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VOL. XVIII

WASHINGTON, D. C., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1903.

No. 46

The Religion and Public Education Issue

The Recent Discussion

WHEN two months ago two numbers of *The Sentinel* were devoted to the matter of religion and the public schools, or state support of religious teaching, and we declared that on no other point was the principle and practise of separation of church and state being so openly and persistently attacked and so seriously menaced in the United States to-day, and that the question was already a live one and was sure to become more of a live question in the future, we did not anticipate that the matter was immediately to come prominently to the front and to be earnestly discussed. But such has been the case since that time. This has been caused by two expressions on the subject which confirm and emphasize our statements that the Roman Catholic Church in this country is resolutely set against the public educational system as it now exists and is determined to bring about such a change in it as will make it include definite religious teaching and instruction, and that side by side with Catholicism in this opposition to and determination to overthrow the practise and principle of separation of church and state in the public educational system is a considerable and evidently increasing element of Protestantism. One of these expressions was from Cardinal Gibbons, following closely upon his re-

turn from Rome, and the other was from the pen of Rev. Montague Geer, Vicar of St. Paul's Chapel of the great Trinity parish of the Episcopal church in New York City. The latter was a communication to the *New York Sun*, published on October 1, and which that paper pronounced "a notable, a very significant, letter." As an exceptionally earnest and able expression on the subject from the ranks of the Protestant element referred to, this letter, together with another from the pen of Mr. Geer which was published on October 25, is important, and we think it well in giving the substance of this recent discussion which it has in large part provoked, and to a report of which we devote this number of *The Sentinel*, to quote the essential portions of these lengthy communications:

There is nothing so topsy-turvy in the country to-day as our treatment of the subject of education; yet there is nothing so vital to the safety and perpetuity of our institutions. And the cause is not far to seek. In a country like this, with a mixed population, it is not the right and not the duty nor the policy of the state to educate. The state is too big and unwieldy and organization to do such delicate work. To allow the state to carry on this kind of ethical and spiritual warfare is as absurd as to intrust to the church the duty of managing a military campaign against a foreign foe. It is simply a

question of adaptability and equipment. . . . What is the result of our malpractise? Why, we are bringing up all over this broad land a lusty set of young pagans, who, sooner or later, they or their children, will make havoc of our institutions. Lynchers, labor agitators and law-breakers generally are human guide posts, with arms, hands, and fingers wide extended and voices at their loudest, pointing us to the ruin which awaits society if we persevere in the road which we are now taking. Foreign war would make a unit of as brave, as resourceful a people as ever knew existence; but let severe pressure come from within, and we shall see, to our silly surprise, how little the average American cares for his country as a sacred, God-made institution. . . . We have problems of appalling magnitude before us, and our preparation is wholly insufficient in character. We need powers of assimilation such as no other country ever needed; yet we are making ready for a solution of our difficulties with a sort of spiritual dyspepsia. Nothing ever was so haphazard, happy-go-lucky as our well-meant national system of education. It is openly and, I believe, justly charged that this city, for fifty or sixty years past, through its schools, has been corrupting the immigrants, not the immigrants the city; and the same might be said with equal truth of the country at large. What crass mismanagement! What fatal blundering! We pride ourselves on our successful separation of church and state; but the attempt is the worst kind of failure. No such separation is possible as long as the state has almost a monopoly in educating the children. The truth is, we have an established religion, for the support of which the people are heavily taxed. Our richly endowed established religion (so to call it) is that of agnosticism, running down into atheism. . . . Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Hebrews have struck a compromise by which God and Christ — yes, and with them pagan ethics at their best — are eliminated from the education of the child life of the nation. What is the result? Why, surely, the virtual enthronement of forces that dis-

believe in God and Christ and are antagonists to them. How can those who know what Christianity is and what the nature and needs of children are believe otherwise? There can be no education in these days without religion, or its negation or opposite. . . . We are dishonoring every form of religion known to our people by our colossal and well-meant but wholly stupid meddling with the nursery of the nation. And the inevitable result, which is becoming more and more evident, is that no one is satisfied. . . . What, then, is the right, the duty and the policy of the state in this vitally important matter? The situation calls loudly for an answer, which is easily given, hard, indeed, though it be to put it into practise. The state, for its own protection, is to see that the children are educated, and only to take action where it is necessary to do so, by providing the simplest, most elementary kind of an education for those children who would otherwise be neglected. . . . In this way an open field and no favor would be given to every religious body to provide proper education for its own children or take the consequences of its neglect of duty. Private schools, large and small, differing in ethics and patriotism, would again spring up and multiply all over the land, and education would again be on a proper and safe basis. The children, or most of them, would be Christianized as well as Americanized. Pagans might be instructed in pagan ethics; Jews would be instructed in Jewish ethics; Protestants and Roman Catholics in Christian ethics. Every religious body would provide for the education of its own children; and the exceptions to this salutary rule would see their children state educated and made thereby the easy prey of some stronger form of religion, or the victim of agnosticism, indifferentism or atheism and consequent immorality. This means division in part, at least, of the school moneys, and troublesome enough it is likely to prove; but it is sailors' snug harbor in comparison with the stormy seas which we are now steering the ship of state for. Here is the opportunity for Protestants of all kinds to cry aloud,

"This would be playing into the hands of the Roman Catholics; it is what they have been demanding and working for, for many years past." Granted, but it would not be playing into their hands nearly as much as we are now doing by allowing them a substantial monopoly of the whole field of Christian education, and of all the blessings which are sure to flow from the noble self-sacrifice they are making rather than wantonly expose their children to the inroads of unbelief. If the writer is not greatly mistaken, unless our affairs take a turn for the better in the sight of Him whose parting commission to His church was, "Feed my lambs"! for the rehabilitation of our institutions, we will be flying, as frightened doves to the windows, to the Roman Catholic Church as the greatest power which, in troublous days, will stand for law and order and for the highest morality. . . . This question has ceased to be a point at issue between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, and has become one between Agnosticism, established and endowed, and Christianity, disestablished and disendowed. State education touches for harm every one of our most disturbing national problems. . . . It is not enough to say that the system is vicious. We must show why, and how, it is vicious. 1. State education touches the negro problem for harm. . . . No nation was ever guilty of wilder folly than we are now guilty of in attacking this discouraging problem with an almost secularized and Godless education. . . . 2. State education touches the divorce problem for harm. It does little in itself to strengthen the moral fibre of our children, and it deprives the church of one of her best opportunities to do that kind of work so effectively as to reduce the divorce evil to the lowest possible point. The public school system comes between the church and her children for harm. The gospel, as a result, has not free course in this country, and until it has, the divorce evil will increase, and church life and home life will continue to deteriorate, admittedly to the peril of our existence as a nation. 3. State education touches the industrial problem for

harm. The less religion a people have the more quarrelsome, unreasonable, discontented, and suspicious of each other they become; more and more watchful for self-interest, without regard to the public good. Religion binds the classes and the masses together, and makes them more considerate of each other's feelings. . . . 4. State education touches on political problems for harm, by multiplying the number of those whose votes go to the highest bidder, because they have not had principles of honesty instilled into their hearts and consciences in any effective way. 5. State education over-educates and over-stimulates countless numbers of people whose after lives give no adequate play for their enlightenment and unhappily acquired ambition. Hence, deserted farms, overcrowded cities, widespread and ever-increasing discontent. . . . 6. State education touches for harm the problem involved in the marked falling off in the number of candidates for the Christian ministry. Our boys are growing up without feeling any deep sense of obligation to the church. Their enthusiasm is chilled, or rather it is not called into existence. 7. State education touches for harm the problem involved in the falling off in church attendance, largely for the same reason. I do not find that the Roman Catholic Church, which provides parochial schools for its children as far as it can, has complained of any falling off, either in the number of candidates for the priesthood or in the attendance of people on divine worship. That church is, therefore, surely wise, yes, and patriotic, in putting her children under the highest spiritual obligations to her as their divine mother. 8. State education is going to touch for harm our problems in Porto Rico and the Philippines, for the same reason that it has been a source of injury to us in the home country. Nor is there a single ethical or spiritual problem that we have in common with other countries which state education does not touch for harm. . . . Can there be any surprise that one burdened with this belief is not to be silenced by fear lest the Roman Catholic Church should profit by a modification of our system

of education? The logic of Bible, Prayer Book and tradition in the Church of England, and in the daughter church which we call Protestant Episcopal in this country, is, and always has been, Christian education at its best for her children, and on every day in the week, in the school as well as in the home. If others will not say so, the present writer is not to be blamed. But "when one ox will lie down, the yoke bears hard on him that stands up." . . . Nor is it enough to say that the church and the home must attend to the religious influence of the young; because, in their influence over children, both church and home are being weakened and slowly undermined by our "madly-perverted" system of secularized education. . . . Why make an effort to honor Christianity in the councils of the nation, in our courts and halls of legislation, if it is to be so grossly dishonored in the education of the child life of the nation, where it is most needed? The honor given to the Christian religion is based on the belief that it is the one hope of the country to-day. The dishonor heaped upon it is the expression of bad management; and very costly it is proving. . . . The church (and for convenience let that word stand for every religious body which is working in the field of ethics in any large organized way) is not allowed to put her children under sufficient obligations to her. This is one of the greatest evils in the land to-day; and it is the crux of this whole vexatious situation. The children's love and devotion are not being won by that powerful organization, almost always auxiliary to the state, almost always the best friend of the state, which can do the most good with it. The state is winning the love of the children; and that will prove splendidly efficacious against foreign foes, but it is sure to prove worthless against internal trouble. Should the time ever come for grinding taxation, for conscripting recruits, for defending property rights in a large way, on behalf of the rapidly increasing number of very rich corporations and individuals, against the interests and rights, real or imaginary, of the poor, love of country

will vanish; and then there will be no great power to control the people. The Roman Catholic Church is winning and holding the love of her children by reason of her great sacrifices for their moral and religious as well as for their mental training. How is this shown? By the record of the attendance of her people on divine worship, which is far ahead of that of Protestant churches.

A point of much significance in this expression from a Protestant source is the inclination to turn to the example of the Roman Catholic Church for instruction and guidance in the matter of education. As we stated two months ago, the newspaper in which the foregoing was published is one that gives attention to the question discussed as does no other newspaper in the country. Indeed, we know of no religious paper in the country that manifests more interest in the matter in its bearing upon the relation of church and state and in its relation to society in general. Not only does it at frequent intervals give attention to the matter editorially, but its columns seem to be open especially to correspondence upon this subject, and it frequently publishes communications bearing upon it. But never, at least not at any time in very recent years, has it devoted more of its editorial space to the matter or published more correspondence on the subject than since the publication of Mr. Geer's first communication. We shall give some quotations: First, from *The Sun's* own comment upon the communication:

"The Sun's" Comment and Response

Dr Geer puts himself flatly on the ground held by the Roman Catholic Church as affording the only hope for the future of our republic and of our social organization — the ground that the only true and safe basis for education, either for the state or for the individual, is religion. He takes, too, the position of the hierarchy of that church, that the school fund, or a great

part of it, should be divided so as to provide support for religious schools conducted in accordance with the varying tenets and convictions of the religious believers who make up something like a quarter of the population, if the attempts at their enumeration are to be credited as authentic. For the remainder, described by Dr. Geer as agnostics, indifferentists and atheists, he would provide the purely secular education they desire. This is a scheme which has been advocated generally by many of our correspondents, but almost wholly by Roman Catholics. It could not be introduced except by a constitutional amendment, the proposal of which would be likely to excite one of the bitterest political conflicts in American history. Dr. Geer's discussion, therefore, may be said to be academic rather than of a practical or even a practicable question of politics. It is not even to be assumed that Roman Catholics would be united in the support of so radical a revolution of our American school system as it exists and has existed in the States generally, with the passionate support of many generations of Americans and as their proudest boast. The argument of Dr. Geer proceeds on the assumption that "in a country like this, with a mixed population, it is not the right and not the duty nor the policy of the state to educate." In the full sense of the term "educate" that may be true; but the policy on which the public school system is based is that, for self-protection, the state must give to the children to whom its government will be intrusted as citizens the instruction that is necessary to fit them for that responsibility. The more mixed the population, therefore, literate and illiterate and of diverse races and inheritance of political conceptions and prejudices, the more necessary is it that the state should exercise this function. Never was this need so imperative as it is now, when this country is receiving the greatest accession of foreigners of an alien speech in its history. First of all, the children of these newcomers must be taught our language and something of our history to fit them for the prime duty and privilege of citizenship to

which they will attain on their reaching manhood. The state has no right to interfere in the vexed problem of the religion they shall profess, but, for its own protection, it must give them elementary secular instruction sufficient to save it from the dangers of an illiterate electorate. That is the ground on which state support of public education is justifiable and requisite. This function of the state, says Dr. Geer, requires only "the simplest, most elemental kind of an education for those children who would otherwise be neglected." He raises the question — well worth debate — whether education supported by public taxation ought to go further than the merely elementary instruction necessary to save the state from the perils of an ignorant and illiterate electorate. As to providing this instruction only for those whose education would be wholly neglected otherwise, may it not be said that already that is done by the public school? So long as children go to school the state exercises no compulsion as to the character of the schools they shall attend. Many thousands of them in New York are pupils of the Roman Catholic parochial schools, of schools provided by the Jews, or are in private schools. The state offers no interference with religious education of any kind whatever and no discouragement to it. Dr. Geer argues that our society, even our whole political system, is going to the devil, is becoming "paganized," because our children are growing up without a religious education. Ought not the churches and synagogues, then, to make it their first duty to supply this omission? They must provide it, the constitution directs, without support from the state; and is the burden of cost too heavy? How can it be too heavy if the obligation is to God? The churches are compelled to support their worship by free will contributions only, except so far as concerns the help they get from the state in their statutory exemption from taxation as institutions exclusively for "the moral or mental improvement of men or women," or for religious, charitable and educational purposes; yet, enormous as is the aggregate cost of their maintenance, they

flourish here more than in countries where state and church are united. . . . As to the point made by Dr. Geer, that the absence of religious education is responsible for social and political evils from which we suffer grievously and that those evils would be prevented by such education, there is room for wide disagreement. Practically, are the graduates of religious schools better morally than the graduates of the public schools? Infidelity is widespread, undoubtedly, but is it not among those who received a religious education in as great a ratio as among those whose education was in the schools conducted by the state? This is a question which can only be answered by statistics which it is difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. The practical question, after all, so far as concerns religious education in the public schools, is as to the possibility of getting rid of this prohibition of the constitution of New York, in principle similar to that of the States generally, and the expediency of raising an agitation for its excision:

"Article IX., section 4. Neither the State nor any subdivision thereof shall use its property or credit or any public money, or authorize or permit either to be used, directly or indirectly, in aid or maintenance, other than for examination and inspection, of any school or institution of learning wholly or in part under the control or direction of any religious denomination, or in which any denominational tenet or doctrine is taught."

If there is to be a constitutional amendment radically revolutionizing the school system it must first be passed by two successive legislatures. Then it must be referred to the votes of citizens the majority of whom are hostile or indifferent to religion, or are opposed to its introduction in the schools, on the ground that the only proper place for it is the home or the church. Which political party, as a matter of practical politics, would run the risk of championing such a cause and of the violent agitation which it would so surely provoke in the State?

The interest of *The Sun* in this matter is evidently due largely to interest by

it in the principle and policy of true Americanism in the matter. Its attitude toward Mr. Geer's position and arguments is in harmony with that principle and policy. Immediately following the publication of Mr. Geer's communication and its comment upon it there began to pour in upon *The Sun* "a great stream of correspondence on the subject," which it pronounced "an amazing exhibition," and which evidently has not yet ceased. The letters came "from people of every phase of religious belief and religious infidelity," and were "uniformly distinguished by great earnestness and much ability." It was *not possible to print all or even more than a very small part" of the correspondence. But many letters and extracts from letters "typical of the views of each of the considerable schools of thought" have been published by *The Sun*. The longest communication published was one representing the Roman Catholic school of thought. It was from the chaplain of the Roman Catholic "Convent of Mercy" in New York City, which institution is located in the midst of the wealthy residence section of the city. We cannot forbear quoting from it at length, for it also is significant and important:

**How the Scheme Is to Be Carried
Through—A Bold Statement from
a Roman Catholic Ecclesiastic**

We Catholics have been deeply impressed with two incontrovertible facts: First, when the public school was Protestant, a quarter of a century back, Catholic pupils were Protestantized more or less by attending it; and, second, now that for ten years the public school system has been made neutral or colorless, the children suffer from the prevailing indifference in religion. Indifference is an influence of the hour, affecting all departments of human activity. It may be called

the current of the time, and the public school system runs with the current, not by intention, but simply because all things run that way, and also by making no stand against the prevailing error. It seems the constitution of the State will not permit the system either to oppose religious error or to favor it. Therefore all true Christians must sooner or later remove their children from the public schools. . . . This exodus will create a situation with which the state, willy nilly, must deal. In spite of the theorists, and their speeches and arguments, when the state faces a condition, and not a theory, it must act. While Mr. Geer's interesting letter is of moment to Christians, it fails to touch the core of the question. It cannot interest agnostics, for example, or the indifferent, or such Christians as confine religion to a church building and one day of the week. These people do not believe in religious training in the schools. . . . Moreover, they are all firm believers in the dissociation of church and state; they are firmly persuaded that it would be a union of church and state to teach religion to those that desire it; and, if agnostics, they are happy in the conviction that public school training is doing very much to banish the ancient superstition called religion. Since Mr. Geer's letter does not appeal to these people, it fails to handle the question vitally. His opponents simply deny his conclusions, refer him to the constitution, and ask pointedly: What are you going to do about it? In this question is the very heart of the whole matter. What are all they who believe as Mr. Geer does going to do about it? The Catholics and some Lutherans and many others have taken one method of action—by public protest for the general benefit, and by building their own schools for the children's benefit. The vital point is: How many American citizens want religious training for their children in the public schools? Let them stand up and be counted. My own opinion is that one-third of our population are in favor of that proposition; that is, about 25,000,000 of believers would vote substantially to rescue a great system of public education

from the control of indifferentism or agnosticism. If so many favor the proposition, if they can be organized to make their influence felt, then, all theories to the contrary and in spite of all opposition from any source, the thing can be done. One-third of the population, acting in concert for a certain end, create a situation—a situation which enables them to ask the other thirds pointedly: What are *you* going to do about it? This is the only way to present the matter to the opposition, which will not accept Mr. Geer's sound and forceful facts and reasonings. There are really no difficulties in the way of teaching religion in the schools except the one which I have suggested, namely, that the proper numbers have not asked for it. The difficulties put forward by the theorists are purely artificial. Some declare that the insuperable objection is the unconstitutionality of the matter. You can convince no acute lawyer of that fact; personally, I have never been able to see it; and, if it be true, an organized minority of one-third can amend the constitution quite easily. Others maintain that with the different beliefs it would be a sheer impossibility to provide the peculiar instruction needed by the various denominations. Nothing is impossible to Americans; and if it be necessary to convince our educational authorities that the measure can be easily and well done, let them be sent to Canada, to England, to Germany, where they will find working models. In Canada, for example, any sect may have its own school, board, teacher, text-book and method at the expense of the state; the same in England; in Germany the government pays the clergy to attend the schools after school hours and instruct the children in the faith of their parents. Surely we can improve on European methods. The most powerful, because the most popular, difficulty to religion in the public schools is the belief that it would bring about that dreaded union of church and state which the constitution forbids—and just one man in seventy-five thoroughly understands. Of the writers and speakers who wax fluent and wrathy on the subject of this

union, I doubt if ten of them could describe what the union means and upon what their fears are based. Of the Americans who know what it means, none would want it; least of all they who have suffered most from its modern forms, the Catholics, to whom this union, as illustrated by the governments of Italy, Austria, France, Spain, Portugal, Brazil and some South American republics, stands for the basest tyranny or the most insidious form of persecution. It is an absolute certainty that no established church can be foisted on Americans; it is equally certain that Americans could not be driven into accepting the European union of church and state. Where, then, is the force of the objection? But while no one wants union of church and state, every Christian citizen wants harmony of church and state; or, to put it in a fashion comprehensible by men of all beliefs, we all want harmony of state and conscience. If the state physician and the church priest can exercise their offices on the patient in the city hospital; if the general or admiral and the priest can both rule in particular domains the soldier and the sailor, why cannot the same thing be done in the public school for the state pupil? If one says that not even accidentally can the state pay for teaching religion, then I reply that not even accidentally can the state pay for the turning out of agnostics. There must be harmony between the state and the individual conscience. If that cannot be, then you have produced exactly the same condition peculiar to European countries—hostility begotten of injustice and persecution. More plainly, French rulers, under the guise of church-and-state union, have driven out Catholic teachers, suppressed Catholic schools and forced citizens to pay for two systems of education; in the United States, on the plea of keeping church and state apart, Catholics and other Christians are forced out of the public schools and must pay a double educational tax. Where is the harmony between state and conscience? However, this reply to objections, or this solution of difficulties, is only a minor affair. The vital point for all parties, for the supporters

of Mr. Geer, for his opponents, for educators and for statesmen, is the number of those who desire religious training in the public schools, no matter what form the scheme might take—the separate school of Canada, payment by results, as in England, the adopting of church schools by the state. If one-third of our population demand such a reform, and organize effectively to formulate their demand, nothing more need be said; the agnostic and the indifferent, the chronic objector and the would-be patriot, must take a back seat and be quiet while the practical statesman and the competent educator together arrange the details of the scheme. The vital question which Mr. Geer offers must be considered next: Christians, what are you going to do about it?

This is indeed "a striking argument," as described by *The Sun*. It is also a very bold "argument." In a sense it is far more significant than either of the expressions to which we referred at the beginning. With bold frankness it exhibits the Roman Catholic position and program with regard to the present public educational system which is not permitted "either to oppose religious error or to favor it," and invites all "other Christians" to unite with Catholics in rescuing it from this terrible plight by main force of numbers, regardless of constitution, principles, or anything else. "There are really no difficulties in the way of teaching religion in the schools," except "that the proper numbers have not asked for it." All other difficulties are "purely artificial." The constitution, the "dreaded union of church and state," the "different beliefs"—none of these things stand in the way of "religious training in the schools" if a sufficient number will "demand such a reform and organize effectively to formulate their demand." This is the only "vital point." "The thing can be done"—and it will be done in

just the way indicated. When those who "favor the proposition" have become sufficiently numerous and powerful all objectors will have to "take a back seat and be quiet while the practical statesman [the politician to whom votes are of more consequence than principles] and the competent educator [the priest and ecclesiastic] together arrange the details of the scheme" for overthrowing the principle and practise of separation of church and state in the public educational system. Americans, and Christians, too, what are you going to do about it? And no bones whatever are made about pointing "to Canada, to England, to Germany," for "working models" for the public educational system of the United States. "Surely we can[*not*] improve on European methods" if such advice is followed. The idea of "harmony of church and state" is a shrewd one, and worthy of the cause in behalf of which it is advanced. All the mischief of church and state union is in it. "Harmony of church and state" is all that the Roman Catholic Church has ever wanted at any time in its history. There cannot be harmony between it and the state unless the state yields to its every demand. In commenting on this communication *The Sun* indicated that it had no belief that "any such concert of Christian believers" as was proposed could be brought about, although admitting that if it did come "such an organization would be so powerful that the political parties would be compelled to take serious account of it." There may be little prospect for an organization of "Christian believers" for the purpose proposed, but there can be no doubt as to the possibility of an organization of Roman Catholic believers for that purpose among others, for it is already here in the American Federation of Catholic

Societies, which, if not already, will very soon "be so powerful that the political parties" will "be compelled to take serious account of it." *The Sun* said of the declaration that "Americans could not be driven into accepting the European union of church and state," that it "is simply common sense." They may not be driven into it, but they will certainly be led into it if they hearken to such counsel as is being given them constantly by such persons as Mr. John Talbot Smith of the "Convent of Mercy."

An Attempt to Tone Down New York's Constitutional Prohibition

But according to another representative of the Roman Catholic school of thought in this matter (Thos. McMillan, Director of St. Paul's School, New York, a Paulist) it is unnecessary, so far as New York State is concerned, to wait for an amendment to the constitution in order to begin the work of uniting church and state in the public educational system. According to him, all that is needed in order to make it constitutional is a "correct interpretation" of the constitution as it now stands. In a communication in which he pronounced Mr. Geer's letter to be "a forcible statement deserving of profound consideration," he said:

The so-called "prohibition of the constitution of New York" (Article IX, section 4) has these words: "Other than for examination and inspection." It is important to state that there is considerable scope for a legal argument on the exact meaning of this expression, which must be taken in conjunction with the discussion that led to their insertion. What was chiefly in the mind of the constitutional convention had for its objective point the prohibition of the use of public money for any form of religious or denominational teaching, and some of the delegates were surprised to find after they had voted on the matter that the choice of

language was at least ambiguous, and might be twisted to mean something opposed to their convictions. It would seem that examination and inspection are clearly authorized by the constitution, even for schools "wholly or in part under the control or direction of any religious denomination." This examination must necessarily be limited to the secular studies required for intelligent citizenship. When the select committee appointed at the close of the last legislature is prepared to listen to suggestions for improving the educational laws of New York State, there will be an excellent opportunity to take up the question here suggested concerning the correct interpretation of Article IX, section 4, of the constitution. Mr. Geer and his powerful friends in the Episcopal Church may discover that there is still a way to enlarge the public system of education without discouragement to the advocates of religious training. By removing legal barriers certain antagonisms may be obliterated which are now kept alive by unjust discriminations. . . . May we hope that the legislature of 1904 will approach this question with a larger wisdom and a more effective purpose to do justice to all classes of citizens?

Under the heading, "The Roman Catholics and the Constitution," *The Sun* responded to this, and took occasion to warn the representatives of the Catholic Church that it would not be prudent for them to force this matter to a political issue:

Father McMillan's theory seems to be that the clause, "other than for examination and inspection," affords a loophole for legislation to admit religious schools to participation in the distribution of the school fund. He finds something "ambiguous" in the clause; but to us it is open to no such interpretation. It simply authorizes expenditures for examinations and inspections conducted by the regents to determine the fitness of sectarian institutions of learning to confer degrees, and also for inspections conducted by various other public officers for other purposes. The

Roman Catholic Church is staggering under a burden of maintaining its parochial schools which was voluntarily assumed by it, and, naturally enough, it desires to shift the load on the State, in whole or in part; but such support from the school fund is plainly prohibited by the constitution. That church can get nothing more than examination and inspection of its institutions, unless the constitution of the State of New York shall be amended by the votes of the people. Now, is it advisable for that church or for any other to force this question before the people? Undoubtedly, Catholics now have the sympathy of individual Protestants in their principle that religion should be made the basis of public education and that, accordingly, religious schools of the various denominations should be allowed to participate in the distribution of the school fund. The Rev. Mr. Geer has expressed that sympathy very decidedly. But if there came a political campaign to amend the constitution in accordance with it, how much of Protestant support would the Catholic hierarchy receive practically? In our opinion, it would be very little. Of all the different religious denominations, the only one which has an extended system of religious parochial schools is the Roman Catholic. Protestants, therefore, would argue against the amendment that practically only the Roman Catholics would profit by it, and probably the question would be fought over with Protestants squarely on one side and Catholics on the other. It is not for the interest of the Roman Catholic Church or for the interest of religion generally that any such conflict should be precipitated. It would cause no end of bad blood. Correspondence we have printed indicates that any attempt to divert the school fund to denominational schools of any kind would be bitterly resented by Protestants, by Jews and by that great majority of the people made up of infidels and those indifferent to religion or distrustful of the organized churches. It would be a lamentable conflict, and our advice to the Roman Catholic Church is to keep out of it. The attempt, we are

confident, would be unsuccessful, and the making of it could only serve to revive the now happily dispelled animosity against that church and distrust of its motives which inflamed passions so violently fifty years ago.

The Catholic Church will abide by this counsel only so long as it is absolutely necessary for her to do so, and it is evident that she believes that the time is almost here when she may safely disregard it. The recent utterance of Cardinal Gibbons on this subject, which, together with responses that it has evoked, we shall have to leave until our next issue, shows this.

The Other Side of the Discussion

The most of the communications published by *The Sun*, and evidently the great majority of those received, were in decided opposition to any compromise of the principle of separation of church and state in this matter of religion and public instruction. This is gratifying, but it would be a great mistake to conclude from this that there is little danger in this direction. The danger is great and is becoming greater all the time, and it is because of this that so many are stirred to write in opposition to such an expression as that coming from Mr. Geer. If the issue were not real and pressing there would be no such stream of letters in opposition as has flowed to *The Sun* since the publication of Mr. Geer's communication. From the letters of this class that have been published we select the following quotations:

"Let the churches look after religious instruction; that is what they are for. They should not try to burden the state with their own duty."

"For the government to support schools of the various denominations would create endless jealousy, bickerings and exorbitant claims from the various sects."

"Something positively startling

would happen should any serious attempt be made to tamper with the system of public education in the interest of sectarian instruction."

"I reside two blocks from a large parochial school, and the profane and obscene language of the pupils as they pass to and from school compels us to close the windows frequently. Yet we are told that the religious school is the great and only conservator of morals that we have. Does its output justify these claims?"

"Our common school system is not on trial. From its inception it has proved to be the most beneficial institution of our entire form of government. . . . Any attempt on the part of any sect or combination of sects to bring about the removal of the constitutional separation of church and state will only bring sure disaster to themselves."

"Teach religion? Which religion? Before asking us to teach religion in the schools let each sect send a representative to a conference to frame a creed that will be satisfactory to all, and then submit it for popular adoption. In the meantime let us go along as at present, giving secular instruction in the public schools and religious instruction in the denominational schools."

"The lack of religious training in this country is a serious evil, but I do not believe it is due to our educational system. Religion can be taught best and most thoroughly in the home, and there is where the church should reach and influence the "young pagans." What the church needs is workers who will carry the religious teaching to the homes, where it will bear the best fruits. This is the problem the church must meet manfully, and it cannot throw the blame upon the state."

"What reason is there to suppose that the church could do more than it is doing for the betterment of human conditions, even if all the public money were turned over to the multitude of sects to propagate their particular religion? This would come of it, at least: Instead of the wholesome, tolerant and democratic spirit fostered, as nowhere

else, in the public schools, we should have a narrow and bigoted people thoroughly distrusting, if not hating, each other. . . . The 'lusty set of young pagans' which Mr. Geer so much fears are no more the product of the public schools than they are of the church."

"I firmly believe in the Christian religion as the best thing in the world spiritually and materially, but the public school isn't the place to offset the neglect of church and home—that's where religion is to be taught, and children should be grounded in the spirit of religion before they are old enough to be admitted to the public schools. Mr. Geer says that 'lynchers, labor agitators and law-breakers generally are the human guide posts, . . . pointing us to the ruin which awaits society if we persevere in the road which we are now taking.' Did the good parson ever look up the statistics on the classes he mentions and find out how many of them are members of some religious denomination and therefore supposed to have accomplished the limit of religious training?"

"Can Mr. Geer prove that the army of 17,000,000 pupils in our schools would be better intellectually or morally, or both, if they were under the control of the various churches? Can he establish the fact that the pupils educated in schools conducted by religious sects are better men and women than those trained in the public schools? . . . In the early history of Massachusetts may be seen the effects of Mr. Geer's idea. The theocratic government did not make either the morals or the intellects of the people any better. . . . It is unfortunately true that the spirit of agnosticism is widespread, but how is this the fault of state education? Is not Germany a great seat of infidelity—Germany, where Mr. Geer's plan of special school teaching for Catholics, Protestants and Jews prevails? . . . That the state has not always succeeded in training young men and women to ideal citizenship cannot be gainsaid; but can any or all denominations guarantee better results? Denominational schools have had full swing in France, Italy and Spain, but have they made better men and women than

has the state in the United States?"

"The American government is not an ecclesiastical institution. It is a 'secular republic.' The First Amendment to the Federal Constitution settles that. That great amendment, the sheet-anchor of American liberty, while guaranteeing perfect religious liberty for all, at the same time decrees entire separation of church and state. There can be no more dangerous form of union of church and state than religion (be the religion what it may) in the public schools. The public schools should be free. . . . This issue is worldwide. It is now convulsing France. The very life of the French Republic is involved in it. In Germany Bebel, the leader of the Social Democracy, has raised the banner of free secular public education, with taxation of church property. Every one is entitled under our free institutions to his or her religious convictions, be they what they may. But he or she has no right to call in the law to force their religious opinions, however honestly entertained, down the throats of others. Churches may occupy a useful place in the social fabric, but politics, government, diplomacy, the public schools and the administration of our public libraries are no places for them. . . . Guard well our public schools, for out of them, for good or for evil, are to come the issues of life or death for the republic."

"No greater danger menaces this republic to-day than the effort of the church to obtain control of the education of our school population. The church has no business in this field. As a member of the church I know that the church is not fitted to undertake the task. The polity and organization of the church, more especially in the Anglican and Roman communions, are aristocratic and medieval and wholly out of touch with republican government. . . . The public school system is the bulwark of free institutions; and it is the duty of all patriotic citizens to support and strengthen it. Defects or no defects, it has come to stay. The people are capable of making and will make improvements wherever needed in the system. The people, not the clergy, are the proper judges of what

constitutes a proper school system for the youth of this nation. Republican institutions exist not on account of, but in spite of the church to-day. Ecclesiastics and the church may clamor until doomsday for the division of state educational funds among the parochial and private schools of various sects, but it is not conceivable that the American people will listen to such a propo-

sition. The triumph of the church in this matter would mean the ultimate downfall of the republic. Mr. Geer and those who agree with him are treading upon dangerous ground, and their views should be fought against by all loyal and dutiful citizens. The public schools must be preserved. There must be no division of public money among sectarian schools."

"The Catholic religion triumphs in all countries that have not a state religion," says some one who writes to the *Washington Post* that "when this country has become mainly Catholic, as it surely will in fifty years, then, with the exception of Canada, this Western Hemisphere will be an unbroken chain of Catholic republics from Cape Horn northward to Canada," and that these republics will then, "on a religious basis of affiliation, unite under the United States flag (Catholic) as the great United States of North and South America." However it may be as to the Catholic religion triumphing in all countries that have not a state religion, it is certain that no country in which the Catholic religion triumphs will long be without a state religion. The coming of this un-American and dangerous thing with the triumph of the Catholic religion seems to be taken for granted by this correspondent who undertakes to prophecy such great things for that religion. It requires no gift of prophecy to predict that however; all that is necessary is a knowledge of that religion and its history. This correspondent closes his prophecy by saying that the time will come when Canada "will have also become a Catholic country," and that "Catholic Canada will then be willing to join hands with Catholic America under one flag and one religion, extending from Cape Horn to the Arctic Ocean."

Next week, besides concluding the report of the very interesting debate or agitation of the great and pressing question of religion and the public educational system that has brought the question so prominently to public attention during the last six weeks, we shall endeavor to say something on the subject ourselves, as we had planned to do in connection with the matter presented this week. But the readers of *The Sentinel* are capable of thinking for themselves in this matter, and what this number contains certainly affords material for a great deal of thought.

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"A resolution providing for a constitutional amendment to the effect that no money raised by taxation shall be expended for any purpose by sectarian institutions," was one of several bills introduced in the House of Representatives on the 11th inst. by Representative W. W. Kitchin of North Carolina.

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A religion or church which looks forward to its "triumph" in a country as including its union with and control of the state is a religion or church whose triumph may well be dreaded by all who have the welfare of the country at heart.

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The inevitable fruit of religious teaching, or support of religious teaching, by the state will be sectarian strife and antagonism.

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