

THE STATE, THE CHURCH, AND THE SCHOOL.

WE have referred to the contribution which America is making to the conception of Christianity in its separation of the functions of church and state, in its heroic use of the voluntary system, in the enlargement of religious freedom. Yet no one can take note of this momentous fact without observing also the existence in the United States of an ecclesiastical power which in its history, its official utterances, and its alliances stands opposed to the interpretation of Christianity which is denoted by American Protestantism. The Roman Catholic Church has thriven under the enormous advantages which our liberty has given it. No state alliance could afford it such an impetus as it has received from occupying the same privileges with other religious bodies in America. It lies within the great circle of American religious freedom, but by the very charter of its organization, so to speak, it is a protest against the life which nourishes it.

It is inevitable that in one form or another a conflict should arise between this body and American Protestantism, nor is it strange that the conflict should appear first and most emphatically in an arena of education. The theory of the Roman Catholic Church makes the prime element in education to consist in loyalty to the Church of God as interpreted by its tenets. The theory of Protestant Christianity makes the prime element in education to consist in the formation of right character. Hence the former says to the child, whatever else you may or may not learn, you shall first of all know your catechism and become familiar with the ritual of the church; the latter says: You shall learn all you can in school, but the end in view is always your character.

The Roman Catholic Church has begun to put its theory into systematic practice by the general adoption of the policy of parochial schools, into which are withdrawn pupils who would otherwise receive their training in the public schools. A test through results may therefore be looked for. By their fruits ye shall know them. I do not say that the parochial schools fail to give a thorough training in character and the development of the faculties, though I hear many complaints of the inferiority to the neighbouring public schools; we must bear in mind also that they collect boys and girls whose antecedents do not make the best material of them, and they deprive these pupils of contact with minds quickened by inheritance of generations of freedom. Nor do I say that our public schools necessarily produce boys and girls of a high type of character; on the contrary, those most familiar with the public schools are most sharp in their criticism of the results in this respect. What I assert is that we have the spectacle of two antagonistic systems, and that the issue will prove which of the two is more vital. In other words, we are witnessing a trial between two phases of Christianity—the Christianity of Hildebrand and the Christianity of Protestantism.

We who heartily believe in this later phase have a task before us which may well inspire us with enthusiasm. We have to convince an apparently securely entrenched Church that the God whom they worship is not, as each nation of antiquity fancied, their own peculiar divinity, inaccessible to the voice of any beyond the pale. We have to build an invisible temple, whose true catholicity shall render a material assumption of catholicity ignoble and self-destructive. The