

**THE FAMILY, THE STATE
AND THE SCHOOL,
JUNE 24, 1912**

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The Family, the State and the School, June 24, 1912 by P. C. Yorke

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With the author's compliments

The Family, the State and the School

By REV. P. C. YORKE, D. D.

A PAPER READ AT THE ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE CATHOLIC EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION,
AT PITTSBURG, PA., JUNE 24, 1912

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IT is with great reluctance that I approach the consideration of this subject. In the first place, I remember the domestic controversy that raged some twenty years ago over its theoretical aspect, and I should be very sorry if any word of mine might lead to a revival of that unhappy dispute. In the second place, a consideration of the extrinsic and intrinsic principles that must determine our practical attitude towards present tendencies, involves questions that are very much in evidence at the moment, and it might appear to the captious that our discussion of them in this gathering is not without ulterior motives. In the third

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Facing Conditions, Not Theories.

place, I must confess that I am not sufficiently conversant with the literature of the subject to offer you a learned paper, nor have I the opportunity now for that research which the importance of the matter and the dignity of this assembly demand. At the same time I know your kindness will make allowance for my shortcomings, because I am writing, as it were, under obedience, and because I do not intend to enter on the thorny road of rights and duties. We are, as Cleveland said, facing conditions, not theories, and my object is to give you a plain description of those conditions, to discover the causes that produce them, and finally to suggest the practical, matter-of-fact attitude we, as Catholics and Americans, should take toward the Family, the State and the School.

I. THE CONDITIONS.

That our present conditions in the United States are very different from what they were twenty years ago, is evi-

The Magnification of the State.

dent to the most superficial observer. Indeed, it would be strange if they were not, for human conditions are always changing, not in America alone, but the world over. The very name we bestow on our civil society, the State, is a witness to this truth. Its significance therefore lies not in the fact of the change, but in the direction of the change. Whither are we drifting? or if we are pursuing a set course, by what stars do we sail?

I think you will all agree with me that the general trend of public opinion in this country today is towards an exaltation of the idea of civil society, an enlargement of its powers, and a more frequent exercise of its activities—a process which, for the want of a better word, I will call the “magnification” of the State. By the “magnification” of the State I do not mean that natural political growth of the central power at the expense of the local units which began at the first confederation and was made secure by the results of the Civil War; that is, I am not

The Normal Trend in America.

speaking of the growth of the National or Federal Government as against States' Rights. I mean rather a change in the idea of the State itself, whether it be represented by the President at Washington or by the humblest trustee of a village school.

It is especially significant that this "magnification" of the State is looked upon, not as something exceptional, but as something natural and normal. Just as we say, "*Inter arma silent leges,*" so we know that there are abnormal conditions in which the State may undertake enterprises that in ordinary circumstances it will leave to private initiative. In a famine or a flood, in a fire or an earthquake, in a plague or a panic, the State has to act, and to act quickly. In such cases the individual withers and is lost in the general need. Moreover, in States that are composed of superior and inferior races or are made up of various classes or strata of differing degrees of prosperity and culture, usually the results of one or

Among the Freest of Peoples.

more military conquests, we expect to find a modern government in its just desire to benefit all classes of its citizens, adopting measures that savor of paternalism. But here in America we are dealing with a homogeneous people that has enjoyed freedom for nearly a century and a half. We are dealing with a race which (neglecting the colored population) has had during that time a government the most democratic that has ever existed. We are dealing with a country where one man is as good as another, and where popular education has been worshipped as the palladium of popular liberty. We are dealing with a Constitution in which free thought and free speech have been maintained as in no other form of civil society. We are dealing with citizens whose franchises are of the broadest description and who sit in their curule chairs, not only as the kings the barbarian saw in the Roman Senate, but also as philosophers, the decision of whose wisdom is the court of last resort. Let the people rule, let the people decide,