

THE STATE FREE SCHOOL SYSTEM IMPOSED UPON VIRGINIA BY THE UNDERWOOD CONSTITUTION.

DR. DABNEY,

He Has A Few Words to Say in Reply to Dr. Ruffner.

Repelling the Charge of Inconsistency—An Advocate of Universal Education, Provided it is True Education—The Old Virginia Plan—School Houses and Jails—Educated Criminals—A Few Comparative Figures—Drenching and Drinking—Home Education.

I.

Hampden Sidney, Va., April 18, 1876.

To *W. H. Ruffner, Esq., Superintendent of State Schools:*

Dear Sir:—You have undesignedly done the cause of truth a service by so assailing the Virginia doctrines as advanced by me in the *Southern Planter* as to awaken the public curiosity to their defence. That defence I propose to continue in a brief reply to you by facts and arguments alone. I do not propose to follow you into any personalities. I am perfectly aware that my person is, to the people of Virginia, too unimportant for them to feel interested in a squabble over its consistency or credit. I presume that their feeling for your private person also is not very different. For an important principle they may care. While my humble sphere as a minister and teacher may render the great public indifferent to me personally, my employers and neighbors, who know me, need no defence of my personal credit from any disparagement from what quarter soever. They know that my position is thoroughly consistent and independent; that in my own education I never received from Church or State one dollar of eleemosynary aid; and that I have neither neglected nor abused any official trust committed to me.

You think it inconsistent in me to disapprove any free school because, you say, I am a professor in a "free school"—a theological seminary. This seminary is indeed truly "a free school." "I thank the Jew for that word." Founded and sustained by the *spontaneous, unforced gifts* of good men, it gives free tuition in divinity to young men *of all denominations*—even the most opposed to the donors—seeking the ministry. It is honestly and really a "free school"—supported by free gifts, attended by free, voluntary pupils. No penny of the salary of its teachers is exacted by the tax-gatherer from unwilling hands to pay for a project or an inculcation which they disapprove. Your "free schools," like not a few of the other pretensions of Radicalism, are in fact exactly opposite to the name falsely assumed. The great bulk of those who pay the money for them do it, not "freely," but by compulsion. They are virtually thrust down our throats by the bayonet. And the exemplars you most boast and imitate not only make the payment compulsory, but the attendance also, as your consistency will doubtless cause you to do in Virginia also in a few years. The only freedom of your system is *your freedom* to compel other people's money.

Your attacks on me breathe a great glorying in the strength of your party. Their tone seems to cry: "Oh, vain man; seest thou not that thou resistest the inevitable? With us are all Kaisers, and all demagogues, and all their minions, and all tax-gatherers, and all tax-consumers. Who art thou against so many?" Well, perhaps, nobody. But it is precisely in this that every prudent, reflecting Virginian sees the conclusive argument against your plan. Our true statesmen always taught us that government should not be allowed to go into any project aside from its direct, legitimate ends, especially if that project would subsidize many persons and create for them a motive of personal advantage to uphold it. Because whenever that project might be wrested to mischief, these interested motives might prevent a wholesome and necessary repeal. Such is precisely the case with your project. It has become mischievous and tyrannical, in that it forces on us the useless, impracticable, and dishonest attempt to teach literary arts to all negroes, when the State is unable to pay its debts and provide for its welfare, and has just been despoiled of its pos-

sessions by violence. And just so soon as a feeble voice is raised against this wrong, you flaunt before us this fact, that the vicious system has corrupted and subsidized so many minds that the friends of right are powerless! Why, this is the very demonstration that I am right. This is the crowning condemnation of your system.

You seem also to think I wrote with great severity. I did write with great severity in one sense. How came you to overlook the fact, which every dispassionate reader saw, that my severity was all aimed, not at Virginia, but at her conquerors and oppressors? Was it because you found yourself in fuller sympathy with those conquerors than with your oppressed fellow-citizens? Take heed, lest some, less your friends than I, should conclude so.

Notwithstanding your glorying, then, I mean once more to assert the unfashionable truth. Truth is never out of date. It has sometimes happened that a tentative experience has thrown so much light upon a bad system as to re-open the discussion with better guidance than the previous. If the American people, after enjoying this bepraised system, are so deficient in candor and intelligence that they cannot review and amend wrong action, this is sufficiently convictive of the worthlessness of the plan.

Let me also, at the outset, arrest all invidious outcry by saying that I am an advocate of the most universal education possible, provided it be true education. I heartily recognize all the teachings of the golden rule, of philanthropy, and of equality (so far as equality is righteous), which prompt us to desire for all our fellow-creatures, so far as possible, all the advantages of culture we value for ourselves—and that without distinguishing against classes. Let me say, once for all, *I am an advocate for the State's providing, if necessary, all the aid for poor children's schooling which is really desirable and will be really utilized by them—that is,* UPON THE OLD VIRGINIA PLAN. I wish to satisfy the most overweening by the express admission that universal education would be a good thing, were it practicable. The argument is that under that providential order which God has imposed upon society, the effectual literary education of all is impossible, and therefore the promise of it is delusive and mischeivous, and that when the State is an American demo-

cracy, especially, it is no safe or suitable agent for doing the work.

We begin by reasserting the familiar objection, so often contemptuously dismissed, that the principle upon which the State intrudes into the parental obligation and function of educating all children, is dangerous and agrarian. It is the teaching of the Bible and of sound political ethics that the education of children belongs to the sphere of the family and is the duty of the parents. The theory that the children of the Commonwealth are the charge of the Commonwealth is a pagan one, derived from heathen Sparta and Plato's heathen republic, and connected by regular, logical sequence with legalized prostitution and the dissolution of the conjugal tie. The dispensation of Divine Providence determines the social grade and the culture of children on their reaching adult age by the diligence and faithfulness of their parents, just as the pecuniary condition of children at that epoch is determined. The desire of procuring for their children a desirable condition in all these respects is the grand *stimulus* which Providence has provided for the efforts of parents. It is His ordination that youth shall inherit the *status* provided for them by their parents, and *improved it by their own exertions* as aided by the Christian philanthropy of their fellow-men. Now, by what apology does the State (not an evangelical, nor an eleemosynary institute by its nature) justify itself in stepping in to revolutionize that order? By the plea that it (the State) is so vitally interested in the intelligence of the citizens that this entitles her to take effectual means for preventing their ignorance. See, now, whether this assumption leads. The morality of the citizens is far more essential to the welfare of the State; and the only effectual basis for morals is the Christian religion. Therefore the State would be yet more bound to take order that all youth be taught Christianity. And this is just the argument by which Dr. Chalmers and Mr. Gladstone (before his political somersaults began) strenuously defended church establishments. Again, physical destitution of the citizens is as dangerous to the State as ignorance; therefore the State would be entitled to interfere for her own protection and repair that calamitous condition of destitution which their own and their parents' vices and laziness have entailed on a part of the people, by confiscating, for their relief, the honestly-

earned property of the virtuous and thrifty and their children. The last two inferences are precisely as fair as the first. Principles always bear their fruits; and the friends of this principle will in due time become consistent, and claim at least the last inference, along with the first. They are not likely to adopt the second, because the culture and ethics of the "common school" will leave them, after a time, too corrupt and atheistic to recognize the value of morality or its source—the Christian religion.

We often hear this apology for the State's wholesale intrusion into education advanced with the exactness of a commercial transaction. They say: "It costs less money to build school-houses than jails." But what if it turns out that the State's expenditure in school-house is one of the things which necessitates the expenditure in jails? The fruits of the system show that such is the result, and hence the plea for the State's intrusion is utterly delusive. The regular result of the kind of education which alone it can give is to propagate crime. Allison's History of Europe states that forty years ago two-thirds of the inhabitants of France could neither read nor write. In Prussia, at the same time, the government had made secular education almost universal, by compelling parents to send their children to school from seven to fourteen years of age. Statistics of the two countries show that serious crime was at that time *fourteen times as prevalent* in intelligent Prussia as in ignorant France—volume V., page 15. Again it has been found from the official records of the 86 departments of France that the amount of crime has, without a single exception, been in proportion to the amount of scholastic instruction given in each. Again, we are told that much the largest number of the lewd women of Paris come from those departments where there is most instruction. In Scotland the educated criminals are to the uneducated as four and a half to one. M. De Toqueville remarked of the United States that crime increased most rapidly where there was most instruction. The ancients testify that the moral condition of the "Barbarians" was comparatively pure beside that of the Greeks and Romans, and that the most refined cities were the most corrupt. But let us bring the comparison nearer home. The Northern States of the Union had previously to the war all adopted the system of universal State schools,

and the Southern States had not. In 1850 the former had thirteen and a half millions of people, and twenty-three thousand six hundred and sixty-four criminal convictions. The South (without State schools) had nine and a half millions, and two thousand nine hundred and twenty-one criminal convictions—that is to say, after allowing for the difference of population, the “educated” masses were something more than six times as criminal as the “uneducated.” The same year the North was supporting 114,700 paupers, and the South 20,500. The “unintelligent” South was something more than four times as well qualified to provide for its own subsistence as the “intelligent” North! But Massachusetts is the native home of the public school in America. In Boston and its adjacent county the persons in jails, houses of correction or refuge, and in alms-houses bore among the whites the ratio of one to every thirty-four. (Among the wretched, free blacks it was one to every sixteen.) In Richmond, the capital of “benighted” Virginia, the same unhappy classes bore the ratio of one to every one hundred and twelve. Such are the lessons of fact. Indeed, it requires only the simplest ocular inspection to convince any observer that the economical plea for State schools is illusory. In the South State school-houses were unknown, and consequently jails and penitentiaries were on the most confined and humble scale. The North is studded over with grand and costly public school-houses, and her jails are even more “palatial” in extent and more numerous than they.

All such promiscuous efforts to educate the whole masses by any secular authority must disappoint our hopes, and result in mischief, for a second reason. It finds its illustration in the homely proverb, that “while one man may lead a horse to water a hundred cannot make him drink.” True education, taken in any extent of its meaning, broad or narrow, is so greatly a moral process that a certain amount of aspiration and desire in its subject is an absolute prerequisite. The horse may be drenched, but that is not drinking; and the drench is not nourishment to be assimilated, but medicine. So, a knowledge of letters may be “exhibited” (as the medical men phrase it) to the resisting or apathetic mind; but there is no assimilation of the mental *pabulum* and no recruitment of spiritual strength. Something else must be first done, then, besides building and equipping a school

for souls which are in this State; and that is something which the State can never do—at least not by its schools. The moral aspiration and virtuous aims must be present, which alone will utilize a knowledge of letters. This is very plain. Now, it will be found generally true that in this country it is precisely the children of those who are presumed to need State education, and for whom the provision is chiefly designed, who are in this unprepared condition. If the State contained no children save those of parents who had the intelligence, the virtue, the aspiration, and also the property, or else the industry, which would make them resolved and able to educate their own, then, of course, it would be wholly superfluous for the Government to interfere. But these are the only children to whom letters are, in the general a real means of culture or elevation. Separate those who, in our fruitful land have neither aspiration, nor industry, nor property enough to insure that they will educate their own children, and in those children we usually find precisely that apathetic and hopeless condition, which renders this means nugatory, or worse. The parents are the real architects of their children's destiny, and the State cannot help it. There are, of course, exceptions. There are meritorious parents reduced by exceptional calamities to destitution, and there are a few "rough diamonds" unearthed in the unlikely mines of grovelling families. Such exceptions should be provided for; but wise legislators do not make universal systems to reach exceptional cases.

The law which we assert is accounted for by several practical causes. Parents who remain too poor and callous to educate their own children are so because they are ignorant, indolent, unaspiring, and vicious. The children's characters are usually as much the progeny of the parents as their bodies. Again: The aspiration, virtuous desire, and energy of the parents are absolutely essential to supply that impulse, which the child's mind requires to overrule its youthful heedlessness, and to impel it to employ and assimilate its otherwise useless acquisitions. And once more: The home education is so much more potential than that of the school, that the little *modicum* of training which a "common-school" system can give to the average masses is utterly trivial and impotent as a means of reversing the child's tendency. That which costs nothing is never valued. Old Judge

Buell, of Albany, placed a sack of a new variety of beautiful wheat upon the counter of the pavilion at a great agricultural fair, with a label inviting every farmer to take one quart as a gratuity, for seed. At night the sack was almost untouched. The old gentleman fretted at this result, took it the second day to the booth of a seeds man, and directed him to sell it at two dollars per quart. It was at once bought up greedily. One of the best teachers we ever knew determined to devote his latter years to the philanthropic work of teaching a gratuitous school for his neighbors. In a few months it had dwindled to five pupils, and died a natural death within a year. There is a natural humiliation also in being compelled to accept the provision of charity, or of the State, for that which conscience tells parents is obligatory on them. These reasons account for the fact, which the advocates of public schools so desire to hide, that the children do not attend, and the parents do not care to make them attend. He who goes "behind the scenes" in the Northern States knows how extensively this is true. *The rising movement for a "compulsory education" is a confession of this fact.* The unwilling disclosure of the failure of the system is the only thing this new movement will effect; for its folly is clear from this simple thought, that it contravenes, worse than all, the axiom: "One man can lead the horse to water," etc. Hence it results, that the class which is low enough to need this State aid, is one which usually cannot be elevated by it. But the abortive effort will awaken other influences, as we shall see, which are likely to make the children more miserable and less innocent than their ignorant parents.

Must the philanthropist, then, submit to the conclusion that ignorance and its consequences must needs be hereditary, and that knowledge, culture, and virtue are not to be extended beyond the fortunate youth for whom their parents secure them? We reply: this sad law does hold, and must hold to a far wider extent than our over-weening zeal is willing to acknowledge. Yet its rigor may be relaxed but not by the meddling of the civil magistrate or the arm of legislation. The agency must be social and Christian. The work must be done by laying hold of the sentiments, hearts, and consciences of parents and children together—not through their grammatical and arithmetical faculties. The agents for this blessed work are *the neighbor and*

the church. Christian charity and zeal, with the potent social influences descending from superiors to inferiors, in a society which is practically a kindly and liberal aristocracy; these may break the reign of ignorance and un aspiring apathy. The State cannot; the work is above its sphere.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. L. DABNEY.

DR. DABNEY AGAIN.

Universal Education as Involving the Idea of the Leveller—All cannot Aspire to the Highest Stations—Manual Labor or Savagery the Destiny of the Major Part—Fancy Philanthropists—The Common School Alumni—Theological Quacks—A Little Learning a Dangerous Thing.

II.

Hampden Sidney, Va., April 22, 1876.

To W. H. Ruffner, Esq., Superintendent of State Schools:

Dear Sir.—In the third place this theory of universal education in letters by the State involves the absurd and impossible idea of the Leveller, as though it were possible for all men to have equal destinies in human society. It is a favorite proposition with the asserters of these so-called American ideas, that “every American boy should improve himself as though he might some day be President of the United States.” That is to say, the system supposes and fosters a universal discontent with the allotments of Providence, and the inevitable gradations of rank, possessions and privilege. It is too obvious to need many words, that this temper is anti-Christian; the Bible, in its whole tone, inculcates the opposite spirit of modest contentment with our sphere, and directs the honorable aspiration of the good man to the faithful performance of its duties, rather than to the ambitious purpose to get out of it and above it. It may be asked, does not the Bible recognize that fact, so pleasing to every generous mind, that the lower ranks now and then produce a youth worthy of the highest? Yes, David was taken from the sheep-folds to be Israel’s most glorious king. But the Bible-idea is (and David’s was a case precisely in point) that the humble boy is to exhibit this fitness for a nobler destiny, not by discontent and greedy cravings, but by his exemplary performances in his lower lot; and that Providence and his fellow-citizens are

to call him to "come up higher." For these instances of native merit, which are usually few, the State has no need to legislate. They will rise of themselves. They cannot be kept down, provided only we do not legislate against them, but leave them the *carriere ouverte aux talents*; or, if they will be the better for any provision, it should be exceptional, as they are exceptional cases.

With this exception, it is utterly false that every American boy may aspire to the higher stations of life. In the lottery of life these prizes must be relatively few—only a few can reach them. Nor is it right or practicable to give to all boys an "even start" in the race for them. The State, of course, should not legislate to the disadvantage of any in this race; but we mean that Providence, social laws, and parental virtues and efforts, do inevitably legislate in favor of some classes of boys in their start in that race, and if the State undertakes to countervail that legislation of nature by levelling action, the attempt is wicked, mischievous, and futile. The larger part of every civilized people is, and ever will be, addicted to regular, manual labor. The idea that the diffusion of intelligence and improvement of the arts are so to lighten the doom of labor, that two or three hours' work daily will provide for the wants of all, and leave the lowest laborer the larger part of his day for intellectual pursuits, is a preposterous dream. Let experience decide. Does the progress of modern civilization tend to exact "shorter hours" of its laborers than the barbarous state? Human desires always outrun human means. If this Utopian era is ever to come, when two or three hours of the artisan's time will be worth a day's work, the artificial wants of him and his family will have outrun him, in demanding the expenditure of five or six days' wages in one. The laborer will still find a motive for working all day as now—unless he turn loafer! And the last words remind us, that the inexorable law of nature we have just pointed out is, on the whole, a beneficent one; for it is necessary to prevent mankind from abusing their leisure. The leisure conferred by wealth is now often abused. So would that secured for the poor, by this fancied wealth of intelligence, be yet more abused; and the six or eight hours redeemed from manual toil would be devoted, not to intellectual pursuits, but to wasteful and degrading vices. And these vices would soon rivet again the yoke of constant labor upon their necks, or the fetters of the jail or

house of correction. We repeat: The destiny of the major part of the human family is the alternative of manual labor or savagery.

Now, no people will ever connect a real pursuit of mental culture with the lot of constant manual labor. The two are incompatible. Neither time, nor taste, nor strength, nor energy of brain will be found for both. Have not all manual-labor schools been failures? The man that works all day (usually) does not study. The nerve-force has been expended in the muscles, and none is left for mental effort. Hence, we care not how universally the State may force the arts of penmanship and reading on the children of laborers, when these become laboring men they will cease to read and write; they will practically disuse the arts as cumbersome and superfluous. This is a fact at which your enthusiast for common schools is very loath to look; *but it is a stubborn one.* The laboring classes in States which profess to give a universal education do not make any more beneficial use of letters, than those elsewhere. Prussia has for more than a generation compelled all her peasantry to go to school; but she is full of middle-aged peasants who have forgotten how to read, and who, in fact, never read. In boasted Massachusetts herself the very superintendents of the free schools lament that the State has more than ever of laboring poor, especially among the agricultural laborers, who neither know nor care anything concerning letters, for themselves or their children. The deniers of these stubborn facts are only the flatterers, not the friends, of the laborers.

Again our fancy-philanthropist will raise his out-cry, that if these views are admitted they condemn more than half of our fellow-creatures to a Boeotian stupidity and mental darkness. We might answer, first, that his expedients are futile to reverse that doom. The only difference between him and us is, that he is too quixotic, or uncandid, or interested, to admit the fact. God has made a social sub-soil to the top-soil, a social foundation in the dust, for the superstructure—the utopian cannot unmake it, least of all by his patchwork. But there is a second answer; he forgets that *the use of letters is not education*, but only one means of education, and not the only means. The laboring classes find their appropriate mental and moral cultivation in their tasks themselves, and in the example and in-

fluence of the superiors for whom they labor. The plough-man or artisan cultivates his mental faculties most appropriately in acquiring skill and resource for his work. He trains the moral virtues by the fidelity and endurance with which he performs that work. He ennobles his taste and sentiments by looking up to the superior who employs him. If to these influences you add the awakening, elevating, expanding force of Christian principles, you have given that laborer a true education—a hundred fold more true, more suitable, more useful, than the communication of certain literary arts, which he will almost necessarily disuse. Let the reader recall that brilliant passage of Macaulay, as just as brilliant, in which he shows, against Dr. Johnson, that the Athenian populace, without books, was a highly-cultivated people. Let him remember how entirely the greatness of the feudal barons in the middle ages, was dissociated from all “clerkly arts;” yet they were warriors, statesmen, poets, and gentlemen. So, our own country presents an humbler instance in the more respectable of the African freedmen. Tens of thousands of these, ignorant of letters, but trained to practical skill, thought, and resource, by intelligent masters, and imitating their superior breeding and sentiments, present, in every aspect, a far “higher style of man” than your Yankee laborer from his common school, with his shallow smattering and purblind conceit, and his wretched newspaper stuffed with moral garbage from the police-courts, and with false and poisonous heresies in politics and religion. Put such a man in the same arena with the Southern slave from a respectable plantation, and in one week’s time the ascendancy of the Negro, in self-respect, courage, breeding, prowess and practical intelligence, will assert itself palpably to the Yankee and to all spectators. The slave was, in fact, the educated man.

Let it be granted, as we have just implied, that there is a certain use which this *alumnus* of the common school may continue to make of his knowledge of letters. This gives us our strongest argument. Then the common schools will have created a numerous “public” of readers one-quarter or one-tenth cultivated; and the sure result will be the production for their use of a false, shallow, sciolist literature, science, and theology, infinitely worse than blank ignorance. “Wheresoever the carcass is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” This will

be the sure result of the law of supply and demand inspired by a mercenary spirit. Formerly literature was for the educated; it was their occupation, and they formed the constituency for whom the producers of literature labored; consequently the literature of the civilized nations was characterized by all that was most decent in manner, elevated in sentiment, and thorough and just in argument, of which their society could boast. The uneducated or quarter-educated formed no direct constituency for authors and publishers; they did not bid for them, or cater to them. These unlettered classes received their ideas of literary, political, philosophical, and theological subjects (the most ignorant virtually have their politics, philosophy, and theology), from their social superiors, through social channels. And this was a source much safer than the present "literature for the millions," because much higher, purer, and more disinterested. The consequence was, that the unlettered classes reflected the opinions, sentiments, and elevated tone of the uppermost *stratum*; now it is those of a class lower and more sordid than themselves. Thus the Southern overseer, who read little but his Bible, had a judgment infinitely better trained, a moral tone far higher, and a social, political, and religious creed far sounder than the modern *alumnus* of your "common school," with his Leveller's arrogance and envy, and his armful of cheap newspapers. The overseer had the landed gentry who employed him as his instructors and models, and through them drew his speculative opinions from the noblest minds of the South; the Crawfords, Cheves, Madisons, Barbour, Randolphs, Calhouns. The common-school *alumnus* has the wretched sciolists and theological quacks, who drive their sordid trade in cheap periodical literature. The advocates of the Yankee system boast in it, and revile the old one in that the latter made letters the prerogative of the few; theirs of the many. But letters of what sort? Here we have "given them a Roland for their Oliver."

We appeal to facts. Has not the creation of this large reading (but not truly educated) public occasioned a flood of mischievous, heretical, sciolistic, corrupting literature? The result is that the book and newspaper-making trade has, for sordid purposes, brought down to the lower classes a multitude of speculations on the most dangerous subjects, with which no mind is prepared to deal for itself and independently, until it is

very thoroughly trained and informed. That thorough mental discipline and full learning the common schools can never give to these masses. They may as well promise that every agrarian among them shall be an Astor or a Rothschild in wealth. The state of European and Yankee society under this new impulse illustrates the facts we assert. The smattering which State education has given the masses has but been to them the opening of Pandora's box. It has only launched them in an ocean which they are incompetent to navigate. Every manufactory is converted into a debating club, where the operatives intoxicate their minds with the most licentious vagaries of opinions upon every fundamental subject of politics and religion; and they have only knowledge enough to run into danger, without having a tenth part of the knowledge necessary to teach them their danger and incompetency. It was this system which prepared the way for the "International Society," and the horrors of the Paris *Commune*. So far are these nations from being healthily illuminated, they are an easy prey to the most destructive heresies, social and religious; and their condition is far more unwholesome and volcanic, with a more terrifying prospect of social dissolution, anarchy, and bloodshed, than was ever presented by the ignorance of the "middle ages." So obvious was this tendency to thoughtful minds thirty-five years ago that the great historian Heere, with his intimate acquaintance with all the defects of mediæval society, announced the deliberate opinion that the art of printing was destined to be more a curse than a blessing to Europe. It is not necessary for us to espouse that opinion; here is, at least, a fair instance for the application of the maxim of Pope, now so universally and disdainfully ignored:

"A little learning is a dangerous thing,
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring;
 For shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
 But drinking deeply sobers us again."

The amount of this grave objection is that when the State interferes in the work of common school education, it inevitably does not enough, or too much. To give that large learning and thorough discipline necessary for setting the mind to deal inde-

pendently with the corrupt labyrinth of modern current opinion is beyond the State's power. What she does give usually prepares the victims for the literary seducers.

It is one of the most important and best established maxims of social science that *influence descends*. Hence, if you would permeate the whole popular mass with any wholesale influence, the wisest plan is to place the element of good at the top, that it may percolate downwards. The engineer, when he wishes to supply the humblest, lowliest lane or alley of a city with pure water, establishes his reservoir upon the topmost hill; and thence it descends, without any other force than its own gravity, to every door and every lip. So the most effectual, the most truly philanthropic mode for elevating the lower classes of society is to provide for the rise of the superior class. This is nature's process; she elevates the whole mass by lifting it from above so that all the parts rise together, preserving that relation of places on whose preservation the whole organism depends. The fashionable plan is to place the lever under the bottom stones and prize them to the level of the cap-stones of which the result is that the whole structure tumbles into rubbish. The establishment of the University of Virginia for giving the most thorough training to advanced scholars has been the most truly liberal measure for the cultivation of the masses ever adopted in the State. It teaches only a few hundred of young men, and those only in the highest studies? True, but in giving them a higher standard of acquirement it has elevated as well as multiplied all the teachers of every grade; making the instruction better, down to the primary schools where the children of the poor learn the rudiments of reading. And what is better still, it has made thorough culture respectable, and diffused honest aspirations to the lowest ranks. Your very obedient servant,

R. L. DABNEY.

ANOTHER DABNEY BOLT FOR DR. RUFFNER'S BENEFIT.

Overweening Philanthropists—Decent and Vile Children—The Danger of Disease—What Dr. Dabney Thinks of Southern Negroes as Compared with Northern Poor Whites—Demagogues and Politicians and Their Relation to the Free School System—The Testimony of Webster, Not the Dictionary Man—An Alternative Horrible to Contemplate.

III.

Hampden Sidney, Va., April 25, 1876.

To W. H. Ruffner Esq., Superintendent of State Schools:

Dear Sir.—In the objections thus far set forth there are premises which, however true and impregnable, are now so unfashionable that with many they will meet no response but an angry outcry. The application of them would demolish so many vain idols, now much cherished, that the writer cannot hope for a hearing even, from many minds. Time must be the only teacher for these overweening philanthropists. When they are taught by him that this system of State education has utterly failed to produce the benefits they designed, and has fixed on us the mischiefs above described, they will learn that these are the words of truth and soberness. But we purpose to present three other points of objection not involving the principles expounded in the previous part of this discussion, more practical and indisputable; and either one of these is sufficient for the utter condemnation of the system.

The first is, that if a system of universal common schools is to be carried out in good faith, there must be a mixture of the children of the decent and the children of the vile in the same society during the most plastic age. The boast is: that the ed-

ucation is to be for all, and most prominently for the lowest and most ignorant, because they need it most. Then, if this boast is to be faithfully realized, all the moral lepers among the children of a given district must be thrust into the society of our children at school. In order to receive the shallow *modicum* of letters there dispensed, they must be daily brought into personal contact with the cutaneous and other diseases, the vermin—(Yes, dear reader, it is disgusting! We would spare you if faithfulness permitted; but the foulness belongs to the plan, not to us)—the obscenity, the profanity, the groveling sentiments, the violence of the *gamins*, with which our boasted material civilization teems in its more populous places. This must be done, too, at the tender and imitative age of childhood. The high, sacred prerogative of the virtuous parent to choose the moral influences for his own beloved offspring must be sacrificed to this ruthless, levelling idol. Every experienced teacher knows that pupils educate each other more than he educates them. The thousand nameless influences—literary, social, moral—not only of the play-ground but of the school-room, the whispered conversation, the clandestine note, the sly grimace, the sly pinch, the good or bad recitation, mould the plastic character of children far more than the most faithful teacher's hand.

Now, there are some quarters of our towns and cities, and some rural neighborhoods, where this difficulty is little felt; either because the limited population is nearly homogeneous, or because the poor are decent and virtuous. Especially has the latter case been realized in many country communities of the South, where such was the cleanliness, propriety, good breeding, and moral elevation of the poorer families, imbibed from their kindly dependence on cultivated superiors, that a neighborhood school could be made to include all the white children, without serious injury to the morals of any. But the levelling policy, of which State common schools are a constituent member, now claims to make the blacks equal, socially and politically, to the most reputable whites. Against the collection of white children into the same public schools with Negroes, the very principle which we are illustrating, has made a protest so indignant and determined that, although the protest of the conquered, it has been heard in all the Southern States, except Louisiana. The refusal to hear it there resulted in the absolute

banishment of the children of the white citizens from the schools supported by their money. And this protest has not been, as the enemy and conqueror deems it, the mere expression of caste-prejudice, but the conscientious demand of the natural right to our children from moral contamination. Here, then, we have a broad, a recognized application of this potent objection to the State system. The whole Southern people make the objection; nearly all the friends of State education admit its force in this case. But on this conceded case there are two remarks to be made. First, the concession is inconsistent with the whole theory of State schools and of the levelling system to which they belong. This is so clearly felt, that even now the determined advocates of State education are candid enough to foreshadow the withdrawal of the concession, speaking of it as an arrangement "necessary for the time being." Is it your opinion that this concession should be yielded to us temporarily or permanently? Do you think that it should be withdrawn after a little, when all the staunch old Confederates like me have died out; or that the Negroes should never be admitted to the same schools as the whites? Yankeedom and Negroedom are listening for your consistent answer. Second. The Southern Negroes are a less degraded and vicious race than many large elements of the white poor, who, in parts of the North, have free entrance into the common schools there. Indeed, the force of the social objection is felt and acted on by numbers of the Northern people. Many are the blatant advocates of the system among the people of property, who yet dream not of sending their own children to the common schools. They consult their popularity by pretending to advocate the system; and yet, for their own offspring, they will not so much as touch it with a tip of their fingers. And many are the Pharisaeic negrophobists who berate and revile the Southern people for resisting this abhorrent amalgamation of their children with blacks; who would flout with foul scorn the proposal to send their own pampered brats to the common school near them along with the children of their poor white neighbors.

Sometimes it is asked, "How are the degraded classes to be elevated if they are thus to be denied all association with those better than themselves?" We reply that while we fully recognize the Christian duty of seeking the degraded and of drawing

them up to purer associations, we beg leave to demur against employing our innocent and inexperienced children as the missionaries. The braving of this moral contagion is the proper work of mature men and women of virtue; and these are to elevate their beneficiaries by holding to them the relation of benevolent superiors, not of comrades and equals in school-room and play-ground. It is claimed that it is the teacher's part to prevent those "evil communications which corrupt good manners." We reply that it is impossible; he would need more than the hundred hands of Briareus and the hundred eyes of Argus, with more moral fidelity than falls to the share of any save apostles and martyrs. Is the pittance paid to a common-school teacher likely to purchase all these splendid endowments? It is said that if a fastidious parent does not like the social atmosphere of the common school he may pay for a more select private one. But he is taxed compulsorily to support this school which parental duty forbids him to use; so that the system in this case amounts to an iniquitous penalty upon him for his faithfulness to his conscience. What clearer instance of persecution could arise? Once more it is sneeringly asked: "Have children's morals never been corrupted in private schools?" They have, alas, often been. But this only shows our argument stronger instead of weaker; for it proves that parental vigilance as to the moral atmosphere of the children's comrades needs to be greatly increased; while this system insists upon extinguishing all such conscientious watchfulness, and provides the punishment of a mulct for its exercise.

The second objection is yet more damning as against the system of State schools in this country. They are, and will inevitably be, wielded by the demagogues, who are in power for the time, in the interests of their faction. Here is a danger and a curse which must not be estimated by the results of the system in any other country, such as Scotland or Prussia. In the former kingdom the Presbyterian system of parochial schools gave what was virtually a national primary education. But it was not obnoxious to this perversion to factious uses. Scotland is a little country, and was then almost absolutely homogeneous in religion and politics; the government was a stable, hereditary monarchy, of the change of which there was neither possibility nor desire; the schools were controlled by the parish clergy and

kirk sessions, parties whose attitude was at once independent, and dissociated from political objects and managers. In Prussia, also, we see a permanent military monarchy ruling the people with a uniformity and resistless power which has hitherto left no hope to the demagogue. It is very true that this monarchy does manipulate the State schools in the interest of its own perpetuity, and in doing so inflicts on the minds of the people no little injury. But the wrong thus done is as white as snow compared with pitch, when set against the foul perversions wrought by our demagogues in power. For an old, stable monarchy is always infinitely more decent and moderate than a democratic faction in America rioting on the spoils of party success. The teachings of the monarchy, if self-interested, are at least conservative and consistent; and they include a respectable knowledge of the Christian religion. It will be utterly delusive, therefore, to argue for the value of State common schools from Scotland or Prussia. Our demagogues will take effectual care that our schools shall not yield us even the mixed fruits which those nations have reaped from theirs.

For what is it on which American politicians do not lay their harpy hands to get or to keep the spoils of office? On the offices themselves, which the law has instituted for the public service; on finance; on commerce; on the railroads; on the productive industries of the citizens; on taxation; on our holy religion itself! And, like the harpies, whatever they touch they contaminate! That the school system of the States is perverted to factions and sordid ends is so notorious that we shall not insult the intelligence of our readers by many testimonies. Has not the supreme official of the school system in the State of Indiana, for instance, been seen to publish to the world his unblushing boast that he had successfully arrested the whole machinery to inculcate upon all the children of that State the malignant and lying creed of Radicalism? And this man, after satisfying his masters, the Radical Legislature, of his success in placing this gospel of hate and murder, and these utter falsifications of history and fact and constitutional law, in the tender hand of every child in Indiana, only intimates, in the most gingerly and apologetic way, a faint inclination to give them the Word of God: which yet, he hastens to assure them, he had not presumed to attempt! Again, these omnipotent school

boards, under the plausible pretext of uniformity of text-books, enter into alliances with capitalists who are publishers of books (for what solid consideration, who can tell?), giving them the monopoly of manufacturing American history, ethics and politics for the children of a whole State, without leaving any option to the parent. This single feature, presented by the alliance of the "Book-Trade" with the Education Boards, is sufficient to condemn the whole in the judgment of every independent mind. If it is not corrected the liberty of the citizens is gone. In some of those Southern States where the Conservatives have been so fortunate as to retain control of the State governments the advocates of State education are openly heard attempting, in their new-born zeal, to reconcile the people to the measure forced upon them by promising that it shall be so manipulated as to train the next generation of negroes to vote with the Conservatives. Now the temptation of the oppressed to foil their oppressors may be very strong; and they may be inclined to be rather unscrupulous in the means of defense against enemies so unscrupulous and abhorred as the carpet-bag horde. It may be very alluring to us to employ this tyrannical system, which is forced upon us against our will, to the ruin of its inventors, and thus to "hoist the engineer with his own petard." But the foreseeing man cannot but remember that it is a dangerous force which is employed, and that on any change of the faction in power what we hope to make sauce to the (Radical) goose may become sauce to the (Conservative) gander. It is a hazardous game for good people to attempt to "fight the devil with fire."

This perversion of a pretended system of education is as intolerable as it is certain. It is hard enough to have a triumphant faction rule us in a mode which outrages our sense of equity and patriotism—shall they also abuse their power to poison the minds of our own children against the principles which we honor, and to infect them with the errors which we detest? Is it not enough that our industries must all be burdened and our interests blighted by the selfish expedients of demagogues grasping after power and plunder? Must the very souls of our children be made merchandise and trafficked with in the same hateful cause? What freemen can endure it? These practices have already disclosed their destructive fruits in preparing a

whole generation, by a pupilage of lies, for a war of plunder and subjugation against the South. For years before the war the sectional and aggressive party had control of the State education in New England and the Northwest. They used their opportunity diligently; and the result was that when the chance to strike came, they had a whole generation trained to their purpose in hatred of the South and in constitutional heresies. Such was the testimony of Daniel Webster. Two gentlemen from Virginia—old collegemates of mine—were visiting Washington during Mr. Filmore's administration. Webster's return towards an impartial course had then gained him some respect in the South, and my two friends paid their respects to him. While conversing with them he fixed his dark eyes on them, and with great earnestness asked: "Can't you Southern gentlemen consent, upon some sort of inducement or plan, to surrender slavery?" They replied firmly: "Not to the interference or dictation of the Federal Government. And this not on account of mercenary or selfish motives, but because to allow outside interference in this vital matter would forfeit the liberties and other rights of the South." "Are you fixed in that?" asked Webster. "Yes, unalterably." "Well," he said, with an awful solemnity, "I cannot say you are wrong, but if you are fixed in that, go home and get ready your weapons." They asked him what on earth he meant. He replied, that the parsons and common-school teachers and school-marms had diligently educated a whole Northern generation into a passionate hatred of slavery, who would, as certainly as destiny, attack Southern institutions. So that if Southern men were determined not to surrender their institutions they had better prepare for war. Thus, according to Mr. Webster, the crimes, woes, and horrors of the last fifteen years are all partly due to this school system. The only condition in which free government can exist is amidst the wholesome competition of two great constitutional parties, who watch and restrain each other. The result of this system of State schools is that the successful party extinguishes its rival, and thus secures for itself an unchecked career of usurpation. For it aims to extinguish all the diversity and independence which the young would derive from parental inculcation, and to imprint upon the whole body of coming citizens its own monotonous type of political heresies and

passions. This is virtually done in America. For the Northern Democratic party is only a little less radical than the Radicals, and really separated from them chiefly by the craving for party spoils. If the triumphant faction, wielding this power of universal education, happens to be one as able, patriotic, and honest as the party of Knox and Melville, then there may result the marvelous homogeneity and thrift of Presbyterian Scotland. But the ascendant faction may happen to be a ruthless and unprincipled Radicalism, armed with this power of universal corruption of future opinion and morals! And what then? *All is lost*; the remaining alternatives are Chinese civilization, or savagery. Your very obedient servant, R. L. DABNEY.

DR. DABNEY'S BATTERY.¹

HE OPENS FIRE ON DR. RUFFNER FROM ANOTHER
QUARTER.

His Fourth Letter—The Bible in the Public Schools—The Difficulty not Limited to America—Is Religious Training Essential?—The Human Spirit a Monad—The Duty of Parents.

IV.

Hampden Sidney, Va., May 4, 1876.

To W. H. Ruffner, Esq., Superintendent of State Schools:

Dear Sir.—The third objection to education by the State is, if possible, more conclusive still. It is one which looms up already in such insuperable dimensions that we freely acknowledge the hope that the whole system may be wrecked by it at an early day. This is the difficulty, especially for American Commonwealths, of the religious question. What religion shall be taught to the children by the State's teachers as the necessary part of the education of reasonable and moral beings? We have only to mention the well-known facts that the citizens of these American States are conscientiously divided among many and rival sects of religion, and that our forms of government tolerate no union of Church and State, and guarantee equal rights to all men irrespective of their religious opinions, to show to any fair mind how impossible it is for the advocates of universal State education to do more than evade the point of the difficulty. It has been made familiar to every reader of the newspapers in America by recent events in this country—in New York, in Cincinnati, and elsewhere. The teaching of King James's version of the Christian Scriptures even has led to violent protest and even to actual riot and combat. The most numerous and determined complainants are, of course, Roman Catholics; but the Jews, now becoming increasingly numerous and influential, and the Unitarians and Deists must

¹—Appeared in *Richmond Enquirer*.

claim similar grounds of protest. Their argument is that this version of the Scriptures is, in their sincere judgment, erroneous; and therefore they cannot conscientiously permit it to be taught to their children. But as they are taxed to support these schools, they cannot be justly perverted to teach their children an obnoxious creed without a virtual establishment of the Protestant religion at public expense; which is an outrage against the fundamental principles and laws of the State. The special advocates of the common schools, who are usually also zealous Protestants, try hard to flout this objection as captious. But while we are very far from being Romanists in religion, we feel that this difficulty cannot be justly disposed of in this way. If the State, through its teachers, taught the children of us Protestants that version of the Bible which makes the Redeemer say: "Except ye do penance ye shall all likewise perish," we should make a determined resistance. No power on earth would force us to acquiesce in such inculcation of what we devoutly believe to be religious error. And we should feel that it was an inexcusable injustice to tax us for the purpose of teaching to our beloved children what we could not, at the peril of our souls, permit them to learn. Now, the common-school advocates of New York and of Ohio would say, our objection is just, because the Latin vulgate is really an erroneous translation; the objection of the Romanists is unjust because King James's is a substantially correct version of God's word. As theologians, and in an ecclesiastical *arena*, we assert that this is true; and are confident that we can establish it. But this is not the point. We have covenanted that in our political relations as citizens of the Commonwealth, all shall have equal rights irrespective of their religion. In that sphere we are bound to be impartial; "our word is out." The very point of the covenant is, that so far as civic rights and privileges go, our Romanist fellow-citizens' opinions (erroneous though we deem them, in our religious judgment) shall be respected precisely as they are required to respect ours. The weight of the Romanist protest, then, cannot be consistently evaded by American republicans.

This difficulty is not limited to our democratic land. In Great Britain and Ireland, where the government is moving for national education, all the denominations of Christians are hopelessly involved in it. For the settlement of this matter,

there are, if the State educates, but three possible alternatives. One is to force the religion of the majority on the children of the minority of the people. The injustice of this has already been proved. A second solution is what the British call the plan of "concurrent endowment." It consists in aiding the citizens of different religions to gather their children in separate schools, in which religious instruction may be given suited to the views of the parents, and all paid for by the State alike. The clamors of the Romanists in New York have been partially appeased by acts falling virtually under this plan. The city government, in view of the fact that Romanists cannot conscientiously send their children to schools which they are taxed to support, make appropriations of public money to some of their schools, which are in every respect managed after their own religious ideas. This "concurrent endowment" is justly as odious to the great Protestant body, both in this country and Great Britain, as any plan could be. It offers its seeming solution only in places populous enough in the several rival religions to furnish materials for a school to each. In all other places it makes no provision for the difficulty. It is a dereliction from principle in a State prevalently Protestant in its population thus to place contradictory systems of belief upon a complete legislative equality, teaching both alike, when the truth of the one inevitably implies the falsehood of the other. It outrages the rights of Protestants by expending a part of the money they pay in propagating opinions which they regard as false and destructive, and it gives to erroneous creeds a pecuniary and moral support beyond that which they draw from the zeal and free gifts of their own votaries. For these reasons the plan of "concurrent endowment" is reprobated by all the stronger denominations on both sides of the Atlantic. The Irish and American Catholics profess to approve it, because they expect to gain something by it, but most inconsistently. Who dreams that if they held the power, and were in the majority in either the British or Yankee empire (as in the French), they would be willing to see "good Catholic money" appropriated by the State to teach "Protestant heresies?"

The third alternative proposed is, to limit the teaching of the State schools in every case to secular learning, leaving the parents to supply such religious instruction as they see fit in

their own way and time, or to neglect it wholly. Of this solution no Christian of any name can be an advocate. We have seen how utterly the Pope and his prelates reprobate it. All other denominations in Europe regard it as monstrous; and indeed no adherent of any religion can be found in any other age or country than America who would not pronounce it wicked and absurd for any agency undertaking the education of youth to leave their religious culture an absolute blank. Testimonies might be cited to weariness; we will satisfy ourselves with a few, two of which are of peculiar relevancy, because drawn from unwilling witnesses, earnest advocates of State schools. In an annual meeting of the Teachers' Association of the State of Maryland a well-considered piece was read by a prominent member, in which the immense difficulty of the religious question in State schools was fairly displayed. The author, on the one hand, admitted that the rights of conscience of parents could not be justly disregarded. He held, on the other, that a schooling devoid of moral and religious teachings ought to be utterly inadmissible. The best solution he could suggest was, that the State should get up a course of moral and theological dogmas for its pupils, embracing only those common truths in which all parties are agreed, and excluding every truth to which any one party took exception. And he admitted that, as we have Protestants, Papists, Unitarians, Jews, Deists, etc., (not to say Mormons and the heathen Chinese), the Bible and all its characteristic doctrines must be excluded! It is too plain that when the State school's creed had been pruned of every proposition to which any one party objected, it would be worthless and odious in the eyes of every party, and would be too emasculated to do any child's soul a particle of good.

In a meeting of the Educational Association of Virginia four years ago a pious and admirable paper was read by one of the most eminent citizens in the State (Dr. J. B. Minor) on this theme: "Bible instruction in schools." After some *exordium* it begins thus: "It must be acknowledged to be one of the most remarkable phenomena of our perverted humanity that among a Christian people, and in a Protestant land, such a discussion should not seem as absurd as to inquire whether school-rooms should be located *under water* or in *darksome caverns*. The Jew, the Mohammedan, the follower of Confucius

and of Brahma, each and all are careful to instruct the youth of their people in the tenets of the religions they profess, and are not content until, by direct and reiterated teaching, they have been made acquainted with at least the outline of the books which contain, as they believe, the revealed will of Deity. Whence comes it that Christians are so indifferent to a duty so obvious, and so universally recognized by Jew and Pagan?" The absolute necessity of Bible instruction in schools is then argued with irresistible force. Yet, with all this, such is the stress of the difficulty which we are pressing, it betrays this able writer into saying: "I do not propose to allude to the agitating question of the introduction of the Scriptures into *public schools* conducted under authority of government." But why not? If other schools so imperatively need this element of Bible instruction, why do not the State schools? Its necessity is argued from principles which are of universal application to beings who have souls. Why shall not the application be made to all schools? Alas! the answer is: the right conclusion *cannot* be applied to State schools. We claim, then, this is a complete demonstration that the State is unfit to assume the educational function. The argument is as plain and perfect as any that can be imagined. Here is one part which is absolutely essential to the very work of right education: the State is effectively disabled from performing that part. Then the State cannot educate, and should not profess it. The argument is parallel to this: In order to be a country physician it is essential that one shall ride in all weathers. A. cannot ride in bad weather. Then A. cannot be a country physician, and if he is an honest man he will not profess to be.

Whether the religious training is essential to all right education, let us hear a few more witnesses. Said Daniel Webster, in the Girard will-case, commenting on the exclusion of clergymen from the proposed orphan college: "In what age, by what sect, where, when, by whom, has religious truth been excluded from the education of youth? Nowhere; never. Everywhere, and at all times, it has been and is regarded as essential. *It is of the essence, the vitality of useful instruction*" Says Sir Henry Bulwer: "I do not place much confidence in the philosopher who pretends that the knowledge which develops the passions is an instrument for their suppression, or that where

there are the most desires there is likely to be the most order and the most abstinence in their gratification." The historian Froude (a witness by no means friendly to orthodoxy), quoting Miss Nightingale, a philanthropist as Christian as wise, emphatically endorses her opinion, that the ordinary and natural effect of the communication of secular knowledge to youths whose destiny is labor is only to suggest the desire for illicit objects of enjoyment. Says Dr. Francis Wayland: "Intellectual cultivation may easily exist without the existence of virtue or love of right. In this case its only effect is to stimulate desire; and this unrestrained by the love of right must eventually overturn the social fabric which is at first erected." Hear John Locke: "It is virtue, then, direct virtue, which is the hard and valuable part to be aimed at in education. * * * If virtue and a well-tempered soul be not got and settled so as to keep out ill and vicious habits, languages, and science, and all the other accomplishments of education, will be to no purpose *but to make the worse or more dangerous man.*"

We propose now to substantiate these views of the wise and experienced, by arguing that tuition in Christianity is essential to all education which is worth the name. And we claim more than the admission that each man should at some stage of his training, and by somebody, be taught Christianity; we mean in the fullest sense that Christianity must be a present element of all the training at all times, or else it is not true and valuable education. Some one may say that this broad proposition is refuted at the outset by frequent instances of persons who received, at least during a part of their youth, a training perfectly non-Christian, and who yet are very useful, and even Christian citizens. The answer is easy: It is the prerogative of a merciful Providence, and the duty of His children, to repair the defects and misfortunes of His creatures and to bring good out of evil. But surely this comes far short of a justification for us if we willingly employ faulty methods which have a regular tendency to work evil. Surely it is not our privilege to make mischief for God and good Christians to repair!

Let the candid reader, then, ponder the weight of these facts. The human spirit is a *monad*, a single, unit, spiritual substance, having facilities and susceptibilities for different modifications, but no parts. Hence, when it is educated it is

educated as a unit. The moral judgments and acts of the soul all involve an exercise of reason; so that it is impossible to separate the ethical and intellectual functions. The conscience is the supreme, directive faculty of the soul; so that knowledge bears to moral action the relation of means to end. Man fulfills the ends of his existence, not by right cognitions, but by right moral actions. Hence we are obviously correct in holding that the fundamental value of right cognitions is simply as they are the means of right moral acts—that is, the knowledge is really valuable *only as it is in order to right actions*. Again: The nature of responsibility is such that there can be no neutrality, or *tertium quid*, between duty and sin. "He that is not with his God is against him." He who does not positively comply with the ever-present obligation does *ipso facto* violate it, and contract positive sinfulness. Hence as there cannot be in any soul a *non-Christian* state which is not *anti-Christian*, it follows that any training which attempts to be non-Christian is therefore anti-Christian. God is the rightful, supreme master and owner of all reasonable creatures, and their nearest and highest duties are to him. Hence to train a soul away from him is a robbery of God, which he cannot justify in any person or agency whatsoever. He has not, indeed, committed to the State the duty of leading souls to him as its appropriate task. This is committed to the family and to his church. Yet it does by no means follow that the State may do anything tending to the opposite. The soul is essentially active, and every human being in his active powers of moral desire, volition and habit, is unavoidably exercising himself. Hence, whatever omission or neglect may be practiced as to the formation of a character, every character does inevitably form itself, for evil if not for good! Remember, also, that evil example is omnipresent in the world, and the disposition to respond to it is innate in every child. How obvious, then, that a "let-alone policy" as to the moral development must, to a greater or less degree, amount to a positive development of vicious character? Not to row is, itself, to float down the stream. Once more: the discipline of one set of faculties may leave other faculties inert and undeveloped. This result is, then, more than a negative mischief, because the balance or proportion of the character is then more perverted. Should the branches and

leaves of a tree continue to grow while the roots remained stationary it would result in the destruction of the tree, and this although the roots contracted no positive disease or weakness. The first gale would blow it over in consequence of the disproportion of its parts. In this view the conclusion cited above from Sir H. Bulwer and Mr. Froude is seen to be perfectly just. With the increase of knowledge temptations must increase. Wider circles of imagined enjoyments are opened to the desires, so that if the virtuous habitude is not correspondingly strengthened, criminal wishes and purposes will be the sure result. He who has criminal purposes is, moreover, by his knowledge equipped with more power to execute them. Locke's conclusion is just. In the words of Dr. Griffin, to educate the mind without purifying the heart is but "to place a sharp sword in the hand of a madman." Our last proposition of these premises is that practically the Bible is the source and rule of moral obligation in this land. By this we do not mean to decide that even an atheist, not to say a disbeliever in inspiration, might not be still obliged from his principles to recognize the imperative force of conscience in his own reason, if he would philosophize correctly. But practically few do recognize and obey conscience except those who recognize the authority of the Bible. This book is, in point of fact, the source from which the American people draw their sense of obligation, and of its metes and bounds, so far as they have any. This is especially true of children. Grant the inspiration of the Bible, and we have a basis of moral appeal so simple and strong that practically all other bases are comparatively worthless, especially for the young. Its moral histories have an incompatible adaptation to the popular and the juvenile mind. The Bible alone applies to the heart and conscience with any distinct certainty the great forces of future rewards and punishments and the powers of the world to come. And, above all, it alone provides the purifying influences of redemption.

There can be, therefore, no true education without moral culture, and no true moral culture without Christianity. The very power of the teacher in the school-room is either moral or it is a degrading, brute force. But he can show the child no other moral basis for it than the Bible. Hence my argument is as perfect as clear. The teacher must be Christian. But the

American Commonwealth has promised to have no religious character. Then it cannot be teacher. If it undertakes to be, it must be consistent, and go on and unite Church and State. Are you ready to follow your opinions to this consistent end?

Since religious education is so essential a part, it is obvious that a wise Providence must have allotted the right and duty of giving it to some other of the independent spheres between which he has distributed the social interests of man. *This duty rests with the parent.* Such is the Protestant doctrine—the Bible doctrine. Neither State nor Church are to usurp it; but both are to enlighten, encourage and assist the parent in his inalienable task.

A feeble attempt has been made to escape this fatal objection by saying: Let the State schools teach secular knowledge, and let the parents, in other places and times, supplement this with such religious knowledge as they please and by the help of such Church as may please them. The fatal answers are: 1st. The secular teacher depends for the very authority to teach upon the Bible. 2d. The exclusion of the Bible would put a stigma on it in the child's mind which the parent cannot afterwards remove. 3d. How can one teach history, ethics, psychology, cosmogony, without implying some religious opinions? 4th, and chiefly: The parents who are too poor, ignorant, and delinquent to secure their children secular schooling will, by the stronger reason, be sure to neglect their religious education. But these are the parents whose deficiencies give the sole pretext for the State's interference, so that the one-sided training which the State leaves merely secular will remain so in all these cases. But these cases give to the State common school its *sole raison d'être.*

I conclude, therefore, that in a country like America, at least, your favorite system is inapplicable, and will work only mischief. Our old Virginia system, besides its economy, has these great logical advantages: that it leaves to parents, without usurpation, their proper function as creators or electors of their children's schools, and that it thus wholly evades the religious question, which is, to you, insoluble. Government is not the creator but the creature of human society. The Government has no mission from God to make the community; on the contrary, the community should make the Government. What

the community shall be is determined by Providence, where it is happily determined by far other causes than the meddling of governments—by historical causes in the distant past—by vital ideas propagated by great individual minds—especially by the Church and its doctrines. The only communities which have had their characters manufactured for them by their governments have had a villainously bad character—like the Chinese and the Yankees. Noble races make their governments; ignoble ones are made by them.

I remain your very obedient servant,

R. L. DABNEY.