N.B. This article was originally published in the *Southern Presbyterian Review* VII.3 (January, 1854): 403-446, from which it has been digitally scanned and to which minor emendations have been made for the purpose of presentation on the The Geneva School website. Pagination of the original is indicated by bracketed numbers inserted within the text.

As a preface to this wide-ranging and valuable opinion-piece about education in South Carolina, several contextual keys must be kept in mind as one tries to understand Dr. Thornwell's views. First, this letter is "antebellum," and so Dr. Thornwell's appeals to and approval of "state" involvement in education does not carry the same connotation that it does today. When Dr. Thornwell writes of "the state," he means South Carolina, not the United States. Taking into consideration his time and the overall political philosophy of his day, this makes a great deal of difference. Second, while there are a number of prescriptions for what we would call "secondary schools" toward the end of the letter, Dr. Thornwell writes as the president of South Carolina College (now the University of South Carolina) and therefore his main concern is *college* education. Nevertheless, it is in his ruminations about college education that Dr. Thornwell most eloquently articulates an educational philosophy that is largely consistent with those of the present-day classical education movement. Third, Dr. Thornwell's views of church and state will surprise some. There is no doubt that his political and ecclesiological views are at odds with much of the present-day classical education movement. This does not, however, negate the fact that there are many extremely valuable articulations of an educational philosophy and pedagogy that is fundamentally friendly to present-day classical education. Those who find his political and/or ecclesiological views less than meritorious must therefore extract his educational philosophy from the political philosophy and ecclesiology with which it is intertwined. This is an exercise, however, that promises great rewards.

ARTICLE VII.

LETTER TO GOVERNOR MANNING.[1]

South Carolina College,

November, 1853.

To His Excellency Governor Manning:

I ask the favour of presenting to your Excellency a few reflections upon the subject of Public Instruction in South Carolina. As I feel that I am addressing one whose interest and zeal in the prosperity of letters will induce him to weigh with candour, to estimate with charity, and even to invest with disproportionate value, the crudest hints which spring from the desire to increase the educational facilities of the State, I shall dismiss all apprehensions of being suspected of an officious obtrusion upon your notice. You are the man, above all others, to whom the head of this Institution should look with confidence, to give fresh impulse to the general cause of education; and you will excuse me for saying, that if the suggestions which shall fall from me, or the maturer recommendations which shall come from yourself, shall terminate auspiciously to the wishes of us both, there will be furnished a beautiful instance of Providential retribution, in connecting the name of the first conspicuous benefactor of the South Carolina College with the establishment of an adequate system of common schools. A proud distinction in itself to be the friend and patron of learning, the honour is increased in your case, in that it has been preëminently your care, in its higher and lower culture, to dispense its blessings to the poor. Apart from fellowship with God, there cannot be a sweeter satisfaction than that which arises from the consciousness of being a father to the fatherless; and [404] if the ends which I know are dear to your heart can only be achieved, every indigent child in the State, looking upon you as its real father, may address you in the modest and glowing terms which the genius of Milton has cannonized [sic], as fit expressions of gratitude for the noblest of all gifts.

---

[1] This document, from the pen of one of the Editors of this Periodical, and recently published at the expense of the State, is deemed by those associated with the author in the Editorial control of the Review, worthy of a still wider circulation. The subject discussed in it is one which stirs deeply the public mind, both in Church and State, and is, in fact, the great question of the age. This will be deemed by our readers a sufficient reason for its re-publication in our pages.

At tibi, chare pater, postquam non æqua merenti
Posse referre datur, nec dona rependere factis,
Sit memorasse satis, repetitaque munera grato
Percensere animo, fidæque reponere menti.

I am not insensible to the dangers and difficulties which attend the discussion of this subject. It is so seductive to the fancy that the temptation is almost irresistible to indulge in schemes and visionary projects. In the effort to realize the conception of a perfect education, we are apt to forget that there is no such thing as absolute perfection in the matter, that all excellence is relative, and that the highest recommendation of any plan is, that it is at once practicable and adjusted to the wants and condition of those for whom it is provided. A system of public instruction, like the form of government, must spring from the manners, maxims, habits and associations of the people. It must penetrate their character, constitute an element of their national existence, be a portion of themselves, if it would not be suspected as an alien, or distrusted as a spy. The success of the Prussian scheme is ascribed by Cousin to the circumstance, that it existed in the manners and customs of the country before it was enacted into law. It was not a foreign graft, but the natural offshoot of popular opinion and practice. It is an easy thing to construct a theory, when nothing is to be done but to trace the coherences and dependencies of thought; but it is not so easy to make thought correspond to reality, or to devise a plan which shall overlook none of the difficulties and obstructions in the way of successful application. In the suggestions which I have to offer, I shall endeavour to keep steadily in view the real wants of the citizens of this commonwealth, and avoiding all crotchets and metaphysical abstractions, shall aim exclusively at what experience, or the nature of the case, demonstrates to be practicable. I have no new principles to ventilate, but I shall [405] think myself happy if I can succeed in setting in a clearer light, or vindicating from prejudice and misconstruction, the principles which have already been embodied in our laws. It is, perhaps, not generally known that the legislation of South Carolina contemplates a scheme of public instruction as perfect in its conception of the end, as it is defective in its provision of the means. The order, too, in which the attention of the

Legislature has been turned to the various branches of the subject, though not the most popular or the most obvious, is precisely the order of their relative importance. It began where it ought to have begun, but unfortunately stopped where it ought not to have stopped. To defend what it has already done, and stimulate it to repentance for what it has not done, is the principal motive of this communication.

Permit me, in pursuance of this design, to direct the attention of your Excellency to the nature, operation and defects of the system among us. This system consists of the South Carolina College, established in 1801, of the Free Schools, established in 1811, and of the Arsenal and Citadel Academies, which have crept into existence by the connivance, without any statute, of the Legislature, defining their end and aim. This series of institutions is evidently adjusted without, perhaps, any conscious purpose of doing so, to the three-fold division of education, in so far as it depends upon instruction, into liberal, elementary and professional. The College is to furnish the means of liberal, the Free Schools of elementary, and the Arsenal and Citadel Academies of that department of professional education which looks to the arts of practical life, especially those of the soldier. For the liberal or learned professions, those of law, physic and divinity, no provision has been made. The College undertakes to give the same kind of instruction which is given by the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy in the Universities of Europe. Our Military Academies, with a slight change in their organization, might be converted into scientific schools; and free schools are, or were designed to be, substantially the same as the elementary and grammar schools of England. The scheme, as here developed, though far from fulfilling the logical requirements [406] of a complete system of public instruction, is amply sufficient, if adequately carried out, to meet the real wants of our people. The kind and degree of education, for which there is any serious or extensive demand, is what is provided for. To make the system logically complete, there would have to be a succession of institutions, individually perfect, and yet harmoniously coöperating to a general result, which, taking the man at the very dawn of his powers, shall be able to carry him up to the highest point of their expansion, and fit him for any employment in which intelligence and thought are the conditions of success. It should supply the means to every individual in the community of becoming trained and prepared for his own peculiar destiny—it should overlook no class—it should neglect no pursuit. It may be doubted whether a scheme so comprehensive in its plan is desirable—it is quite certain that it is not practicable. The Legislature has done wisely in confining its arrangements to liberal and elementary education. It has aimed, by a preliminary discipline, to put the individual in a condition to educate himself for the business of his life, except where his calling involves an application of scientific knowledge which does not enter into the curriculum of general instruction. In that case it has made a special provision. I see then no improvement that can be made in the general features of our scheme—it is as perfect in its conception as the wants and condition of our people will justify. All that the Legislature should aim at is the adjustment of the details, and the better adaptation of them to the end in view.

I. The first in the order of establishment, as well as the first in the order of importance, is the College. Devoted to the interests of general, in contradistinction from professional education, its design is to cultivate the mind without reference to any ulterior pursuits. "The student is considered as an end to himself; his perfection, as a man simply, being the aim of his education," The culture of the mind, however, for itself, contributes to its perfection as an instrument, so that general education, while it directly prepares and qualifies for no special destination, indirectly trains for every vocation in which success is dependent upon intellectual exertion. [407] It has taught the mind the use of its powers, and imparted those habits without which its powers would be useless. It makes meet, and consequently promotes every enterprise in which men are to act.

General education being the design of a College, the fundamental principles of its organization are easily deduced.

1. The selection of studies must be made, not with reference to the comparative importance of their matter, or the practical value of the knowledge, but with reference to their influence in unfolding and strengthening the powers of the mind; as the end is to improve mind, the fitness for the end is the prime consideration. "As knowledge," says Sir Wm. Hamilton,[2] ("man [*sic*] being now considered as an end to himself,) is only valuable as it exercises, and by its exercise, develops and invigorates the mind; so a university,in its liberal faculty, should especially prefer those objects of study which call forth the strongest and most unexclusive energy of thought, and so teach them too, that this energy shall be most fully elicited in the student. For speculative knowledge, of whatever kind, is only profitable to the student, in his liberal cultivation, inasmuch as it supplies him with the object and occasion of exerting his faculties; since powers are only developed in proportion as they are exercised; that is, put forth into energy. The mere possession of scientific truths is, for its own sake, valueless; and education is only education, inasmuch as it at once determines and enables the student to educate himself." Hence the introduction of studies upon the ground of their practical utility is, *pro tanto*, subversive of the College. It is not its office to make planters, mechanics, lawyers, physicians or divines. It has nothing directly to do with the uses of knowledge. Its business is with minds, and it employs science only as an instrument for the

---

[2] Discussions on Philosophy, &c., p. 677.

improvement and perfection of mind. With it the habit of sound thinking is more than a thousand thoughts. When, therefore, the question is asked, as it often is asked by ignorance and empiricism, what is the use of certain departments of the College curriculum, the answer [408] should turn, not upon the benefits which, in after life, may be reaped from these pursuits, but upon their immediate subjective influence upon the cultivation of the human faculties. They are selected in preference to others, because they better train the mind. It cannot be too earnestly inculcated that knowledge is not the principal end of College instruction, but habits. The acquisition of knowledge is the necessary result of those exercises which terminate in habits, and the maturity of the habit is measured by the degree and accuracy of the knowledge. But still the habits are the main thing.

2. In the next place it is equally important that the whole course of studies be rigidly exacted of every student. Their value as a discipline depends altogether upon their *being* studied, and every college is defective in its arrangements which fails to secure, as far as legislation can secure it, this indispensable condition of success. Whatever may be the case in Europe, it is found from experience in this country, that nothing will avail without the authority of law. The curriculum must be compulsory, or the majority of students will neglect it. All must be subjected to catechetical examinations in the lecture room, and all must undergo the regular examinations of their classes, as the condition of their residence in College. The moment they are exempted from the stringency of this rule, all other means lose their power upon the mass of pupils. Much may be accomplished by rewards, and by stimulating the spirit of competition, and great reliance should be placed upon them to secure a high standard of attainment; but in most men, the love of ease is stronger than ambition, and indolence a greater luxury than thought. For, whilst mental effort is the one condition of all mental improvement, yet this effort is at first and for a time painful; positively painful, in proportion as it is intense, and comparatively painful, as it abstracts from other and positively pleasurable activities. It is painful because its energy is imperfect, difficult, forced. But, as the effort is gradually perfected, gradually facilitated, it becomes gradually pleasing; and when, finally perfected, that is, when the power is fully developed, and the effort changed into a spontaneity, becomes an exertion absolutely easy, it remains [409] purely, intensely and alone unsatiably pleasurable. For pleasure is nothing but the concomitant or reflex of the unforced and unimpeded energy of a natural faculty or acquired habit; the degree and permanence of pleasure being also in proportion to the intensity and purity of the mental energy. The great postulate in education is, therefore, to induce the pupil to enter and persevere in such a course of effort, good in its result and delectable, but primarily and in itself irksome.[3] The

---

[3] Hamilton’s Discussions, p. 676.

argument of necessity helps to reconcile him to the weariness of study—what he feels that he must do he will endeavor to do with grace, and as there is no alternative, he will be more open to the generous and manly influences which the rewards and distinctions of the College are suited to exert. There are always causes at work, apart from the repulsiveness of intellectual labor, to seduce the student from his books; and before his habits are yet formed and the love of study grounded into his nature, it is of the utmost consequence to keep these causes in check. No other motives will be sufficient without the compulsion of law. Coöperating with this, there are many others which, if they do not positively sweeten his toil, may help to mitigate the agony of thought.

I have insisted upon this point, because it is the point in regard to which the most dangerous innovations are to be apprehended. Two changes have at different times been proposed, one of which would be absolutely fatal, and the other seriously detrimental, to the interests of the College as a place of liberal education. The first is to convert it into a collection of independent schools, each of which shall be complete in itself, it being left to the choice of the student what schools he shall enter. The other is to remit the obligation of the whole course in reference to a certain class of students, and allow them to pursue such parts of it as they may choose. In relation to the first, young men are incompetent to pronounce beforehand what studies are subjectively the most beneficial. It requires those who have experienced the disciplinary power of different studies to determine [410] their relative value. Only a scholar can say what will make a scholar. The experience of the world has settled down upon a certain class and order of studies, and the verdict of ages and generations is not to be set aside by the caprices, whims, or prejudices of those who are not even able to comprehend the main end of education. In the next place, if our undergraduates were competent to form a judgment, their natural love of indolence and ease would, in the majority of cases, lead them to exclude those very studies which are the most improving, precisely because they are so; that is, because, in themselves and in the method of teaching them, they involve a degree and intensity of mental exercise, which is positively painful. Self-denial is not natural to man; and he manifests but little acquaintance with human nature, who presumes as a matter of course, that the will will choose what the judgment commends. *Video meliora proboque deteriora sequor*, is more preëminently true of the young than the old. They are the creatures of impulse. Permit them to select their own studies, and the majority will select those that are thought to be the easiest. The principle of choice will be the very opposite of that upon which the efficiency of a study depends. Experience is decisive on this point. What creates more trouble in the interior management of our Colleges than the constant desire of the pupils to evade recitation? And is it not universally found that the Departments which are the most popular, are those which least task the energies of the student? I do not say that the Professors who fill these Departments are themselves most respected. That will depend upon their merits, and in matters of this sort the judgments of the young are generally right. But easy exercises are preferred, simply because they do not tax the mind. The practical problem with the mass of students is—the least work and easiest done. Is it easy, is it short, these are the questions which are first asked about a lesson. I must, therefore, consider any attempt to relax the compulsory feature of the College course, as an infallible expedient for degrading education. The College will cease to *train*. It may be a place for literary triflers, but a place for students it cannot be. [411]

There is much in a name, and the change here condemned is delusively sought to be insinuated under the pretext of converting the College into a University. This latter title sounds more imposingly, and carries the appearance of greater dignity. But the truth is, there is hardly a more equivocal word in the language. "In its proper and original meaning," as Sir Wm. Hamilton[4] has satisfactorily shown, "it denotes simply the *whole members of a body* (generally incorporated body,) *of persons teaching and learning one or more departments of knowledge*." In its ordinary acceptation in this country it is either synonymous with College, as an institution of higher education—and in this sense we are already a University—or it denotes a College with Professional schools attached. It is clear, however, that the introduction of the Faculties of Law, Medicine and Theology, necessitates no change in the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts. It is not necessary to make general education voluntary, in order to provide for professional instruction. There is consequently nothing in the name, or in the nature of the case, which demands a fundamental change in the system, in order that the South Carolina College may become the South Carolina University. For myself, [412] I am content with our present title, and if it promises less, I am sure that it will accomplish more, than the new title with the corresponding change. As to the expediency of adding the Faculties of Law and Medicine (Theology is out of the question) to the present organization, I have only to say, that it will multiply and complicate the difficulties of the internal management of the Institution, without securing any increased proficiency in these departments of knowledge; that is, if there is to be any real connection between the Faculty of Arts and those of Law and Medicine. I dread the experiment. I think it better that the Professions should be left to provide for themselves, than that a multitude of inexperienced young men should be brought together, many of whom are comparatively free from the restraints of discipline, and yet have an easy and ready access to those who are more under law. The very liberty of the resident would be a temptation to the under-graduates. I have no objection, however, to the founding of Professional Schools by the State. All that I am anxious for is that they should not be so connected with the College as that the members of all the schools should reside together. To be under a common government is impossible, to be under a different government would breed Interminable confusion and disorder. That sort of nominal connection which requires that all medical and law degrees should be conferred by the authorities of the College, and which is perfectly consistent with the law and medical schools being established in a different place, would, of course, be harmless. But this difficulty might arise; the College would be unwilling to confer *any* degree without a liberal education—it could not, without abjuring the very principles of its existence, grant its honours upon mere professional attainment.

---

[4] Discussions, p. 479. To the quotation in the text may be added the following passage from the same page: "The word *universitas,* in the common language of Rome, is equally applicable to *persons* and to *things.* In the technical language of the civil law, it was, in like manner, applied to both. In the former signification, (convertible with collegium,) it denoted a plurality of persons associated for a continued purpose, and may be inadequately rendered by *society, company, corporation;* in the latter, it denoted a certain totality of individual things, constituted either by the mutual relation to a certain common end, *(universitas facti,)* or by a mere legal fiction, *(universitas juris.)* In the language of the middle ages, it was applied either loosely to any understood class of persons, or strictly (in the acceptation of the Roman law) to a public incorporation, more especially (as equivalent with *communitas)* to the members of a municipality, or to the members of a 'general study.' In this last application it was, however, not uniformly of the same amount; and its meaning was, for a considerable period, determined by the words with which it was connected. Thus it was used to denote either (and this was its more usual meaning) the whole body of teachers and learners, or the whole body of learners, or the whole body of teachers and learners divided, either by faculty or by country, or by both together. But no one instance can, we are confident, be adduced, in which (we mean until its original and proper signification had been forgotten) it is employed for a school teaching, or privileged to teach, and grant degrees, in all the faculties."

With respect to the other change, that of allowing students, under certain circumstances, to pursue a partial course, it is evidently contradictory to the fundamental end of the College. These students are not seeking knowledge for the sake of discipline, but with reference to ulterior uses. They come not to be trained to *think*, but to learn to act in definite departments of exertion. It is *professional*, not *liberal* education which they want. The want [413] I acknowledge ought to be gratified—it is a demand which should be supplied. But the College is not the place to do it. That was founded for *other* purposes, and it is simply preposterous to abrogate its constitution out of concessions to a necessity, because the necessity happens to be real. What, therefore, ought to be done is not to change the nature of the College, but, leaving that untouched to do its own work, to organize schools with special reference to this class of wants. We have the elements of such an organization in the Arsenal and Citadel Academies. Let these be converted into seminaries of special education—which will only be an extension of their present plan—and they will form that intermediate class of schools betwixt the elementary and the College, which the circumstances of every civilized community, in proportion to the complication of its interests, demand.

These changes in the College have been favoured on the ground that they will increase its numbers. But the success of the College is not to be estimated by the numbers in attendance, but by the numbers educated. It should never include more than those who are seeking a liberal education, and if it includes all of these, whether they be fifty or two hundred, it is doing the whole of its appropriate work. No doubt, by the changes in question, our catalogue might he increased two or three fold, but we should not educate a single individual more than we educate now. Numbers in themselves are nothing, unless they represent those who are really devoted to the business of the place. What real advantage would it be to have four or five hundred pupils matriculated here, if some remained only a few months, others remained longer in idleness, and out of the whole number, only four or five applied for a degree. That four or five would be the true criterion of success. The real question, I insist, is how many graduate. That is the decisive point. As long as we receive the whole number of young men in the State, who are to be liberally educated, whether that number be greater or smaller, we are doing all that we were appointed to do, or that we can be legitimately expected to do; and a decline in numbers is not a necessary proof of the declension of the [414] College, it may be only a proof that the demand is ceasing for higher instruction. The work, however, to be done loses none of its importance in consequence of the failure to appreciate its value; and the remedy is not to give it up and yield to empirical innovations, but to persevere, in faith and patience, relying upon time as the great teacher of wisdom.

3. Another cardinal principle in the organization of the College is the independence of its teachers. They should be raised above all temptation of catering for popularity, of degrading the standard of education for the sake of the loaves and fishes. They should be prepared to officiate as Priests in the temple of learning, in pure vestments, and with hands unstained with a bribe. It has been suggested that if the stipends of the Professors were made dependent upon the number of pupils, the strong motive of personal interest, added to the higher incentives which they are expected to feel, would increase their efficiency, by stimulating their zeal and activity. They would be anxious to achieve a reputation for the College which would enable it to command students. This argument proceeds upon a hypothesis which, I am ashamed to say, my own experience pronounces to be false. In the state of things in this country there is a constant conflict between the government of the College and the candidates for its privileges, the one attempting to raise, and the other to lower, the standard of admission, and every effort of the Faculty in the right

direction is met with a determined resistance. It is not to be presumed that young men, at the age of our under-graduates generally, should have any steady and precise notions of the nature of education. A College is a College, and when they are debating the question, whither they shall go, the most important items in the calculation are, not the efficiency, but the cheapness of the place, and the shortness of the time within which a degree may be obtained. The consequence is that no College can resist the current, unless its teachers are independent. In that case they may stand their ground—and though they can never hope to equal feebler institutions in numbers, they will still accomplish a great work, and confer a lasting benefit on society. The South Carolina College [415] has raised her standard. She has proclaimed her purpose to be, TO EDUCATE WELL, and I should deplore any measure that might remotely tend to drive her from this position. The true security for the ability of the professional corps is not to be sought in starving them, or in making them scramble for a livelihood, but in the competency, zeal and integrity of the body that appoints them, and in the strict responsibility to which they are held. An impartial Board of overseers, to elect faithful and turn out incompetent men, a Board that has the nerve to do its duty, will be a stronger check upon indolence and inefficiency, than an empty larder. The motive of necessity may lead them to degrade instruction to increase their fees; the motive of responsibility to a body that can appreciate their labours, will always operate in the right direction.

"Let this ground, therefore," says Bacon,[5] "be laid that all works are overcome by amplitude of reward, by soundness of direction, and by the conjunction of labours. The first multiplieth endeavour, the second preventeth error, and the third supplieth the frailty of man. But the principal of these is direction." So far as the undergraduates are concerned I think that all these conditions of success are measurably fulfilled in the present arrangements of the College; as much so as the general state of education will allow. No changes in this respect are desirable. But the interests of higher education demand something more than that culture "in passage," as Bacon expresses it, which is all that is contemplated in provisions for undergraduates. Our work stops with the degree. We have no foundations upon which scholars may be placed, "tending to quietness and privateness of life, and discharge of cares and troubles." We are wanting in facilities for "conjunctions" of learned men; and consequently the only persons whose business it is to keep pace with the higher intelligence of the age, are the few professors who are employed in the work of instruction. With only such means we must fall behind in the march of improvement. There must be more competition, more leisure, more freedom from distracting [416] cares. "This I take to be," says the great writer from whom I love to quote,[6] "a great cause that hath hindered the profession of learning, because these fundamental knowledges have been studied but in passage. For if you will have a tree bear more fruit than it hath used to do, it is not anything you can do to the boughs, but it is the stirring of the earth, and putting new mould about the roots, that must work it."

---

[5] Bacon's Works, vol. 2nd, p. 90. Montagu's Edition.

I do not look to the Legislature to supply this deficiency. Other demands more immediate and urgent must be met, and to meet them adequately will make a heavy draft upon its resources. But I do look to *private liberality*. Many of the foundations in Oxford and Cambridge have arisen from this source. The Northern Colleges are indebted for the largest part of their funds to the same cause. Why should not some portion of the Southern wealth take the same direction? Are we wanting in the love of knowledge, in the spirit of charity, and in zeal for the honour and prosperity of the State? I cannot account for the remissness and apathy of our rich planters and merchants, and professional men, in any other way, than that this form of generosity has not been the habit of the country. I had hoped that your example, and the example of Col. Hampton would have given an impetus to this matter, and I shall not despair until I see the result of the festival which is proposed to be celebrated in honour of the 50th anniversary of the College. A body of learned men, devoted to the pursuit of fundamental knowledges, is what more than everything else is now needed, to complete our system. There is wealth enough in private coffers, and liberality enough in the hearts of our citizens, to supply the want, if public interest could only be elicited in the subject. There prevails an impression that the annual appropriations of the Legislature are amply sufficient for all the ends of a College—it is forgotten that these appropriations contemplate it entirely as a place of teaching, and not the residence of scholars. In this latter aspect we are wholly dependent upon private generosity.

The advantages to the College, and to the State, and [417] to the whole country, of such a body of resident scholars, cannot be estimated. They might, in various ways, assist in the business of discipline and instruction—they would furnish a constant supply of materials for new professors—they would give tone and impulse to the aspirations and efforts of the young men gathered around them, and diffuse an influence, which, silently and imperceptibly concurring in the formation of that powerful and mysterious combination of separate elements called public opinion, would tell upon every hamlet in the land. "For, if men judge that learning should be referred to action, they judge well; but in this they fall into the error described in the ancient fable, in which the other parts of the body did suppose the stomach had been idle, because it neither performed the office of motion, as the limbs do, nor of sense, as the head doth; but yet, notwithstanding, it is the stomach that digesteth and distributeth to all the rest; so if any man think philosophy and universality to be idle studies, he doth not consider that all professions are from thence served and supplied."[7] This homely illustration sets the question of utility in its true light, and if I could impress upon the community, as it exists in my own mind, the deep and earnest sense of the importance of this feature in the organization of the College, the lack of means would soon cease to be an impediment in keeping pace with the highest culture of the age. It would soon be found that wealth has no more tendency to contract the mind in South Carolina, than in Massachusetts and New York, and that there are merchant princes in Charleston as well as in Boston. Who will begin the work? Who shall set the first example of a foundation of ten or twenty thousand dollars, devoted to the support of genius in reflecting light and glory upon the State? It is devoutly to be hoped that something more substantial than echo will answer who.

---

[6] Bacon's Works, vol. 2nd, p. 93. Montagu's Edition.

But as there are those who admit, in general, the advantages of a high standard of liberal education, and the consequent importance of such institutions as the College, and yet doubt the wisdom of the policy which directly [418] connects them with the State, a more distinct consideration of this question will not be out of place here. The grounds of doubt are twofold.

1. The College, it is said, is for the benefit of the few, and therefore, should not be supported by the taxes of the many—what comes from all should be for all. What is for a class should be by a class. This is the substance of the clamour, by which, ignorance and vulgar ambition, and above all, a pretended regard for the rights and interests of the masses, are constantly endeavouring to steal away the hearts of the people from what, justly considered, is the bulwark of their liberties, and the strongest safeguard of their honour and respectability. Hence the cry that the College is an aristocratic institution; a resort for the rich, exclusive of the poor.

The other ground is, that education, in its very nature, belongs to the church, or to private enterprise—that it includes elements which lie beyond the jurisdiction of the State, and that, therefore, the State has no right to interfere with it. These objections, I think, embody the strength of whatever opposition is expressed or felt to the College as a public foundation.

In reference to the first, let it be admitted that the number of those who participate in the privileges of the College is, and must necessarily be, limited. It is, of course, impracticable, even if it were desirable, that *every* young man in the State should receive a liberal education. Some must be excluded. The very notion of their being excluded implies that they do not share in the immediate advantages of the College. But then the question arises, what is the *principle* of exclusion, so far as the College is concerned? If that principle is directly based upon difference in fortune, then there is ground of complaint; otherwise none. Does the College reject any *because* they are poor; does it *admit* any *because* they are rich? Does it recognize any distinction between rich and poor? Who will venture upon such an allegation? And yet it is only by making wealth the ground of admission, and poverty the ground of exclusion, that the College can be justly charged with aristocratic tendencies. It is notorious that the only question which the College asks, as the qualification for admission to its immunities, [419] is in relation to the fitness of the candidates to enter upon its pursuits. All who are prepared to comply with its requisitions are welcome to its halls, whether rich or poor. Poverty may, indeed, be a remote and accidental cause of exclusion, as it incapacitates for acquiring the fitness which the College exacts, and which is absolutely indispensable to the ends it has in view. But in these cases, it is not the *poverty* which the College considers, but the *ignorance* and want of preparatory training. There are also *expenses* incident to a College course which put it out of the power of those who are absolutely without funds to pursue it. A man must be fed and clothed and warmed; and the comforts of life do not usually come without money; and if he cannot afford the necessary expenses himself, and his friends will not afford them for him, all that can be said is, that Providence has cut him off from a liberal education. He is not in a condition to reap the advantages of personal residence within the College walls. But the principle of exclusion, so far as the College is concerned, is not a class principle, but one which necessarily results from the nature and end of its institution. It is founded exclusively for a certain kind and degree of education, and it opens its doors to all, without exception, who are prepared for its instructions, and can sustain the expenses necessarily incident to a residence from home. It shuts its doors upon none, but upon those who shut them upon themselves, or against whom Providence has closed them.

---

[7] Bacon's Works, vol. 2nd, p. 93, Montagu's Edition.

A free College means a College absolutely without expense. We must wait for the realization of such a dream until the manifestation of that state in which our bodies shall cease to be flesh and blood, and such homely articles as food, raiment and fuel, be no longer needed. But if an institution is not, *ipso facto*, aristocratic, because the members of it have to pay for their victuals and clothes, then the South Carolina College is not an aristocratic or class institution. It might not be improper to inquire whether in those institutions, whose glory it is to be par eminence institutions for the vulgar, it is pretended that the pupils have absolutely nothing to pay. Can a stark beggar get through them without help? If not, poverty and wealth have the same remote and indirect [420] influence in determining who shall participate in their privileges, as they have in the

South Carolina College.

From a somewhat careful inquiry, too, I am inclined to the opinion, that none, however poor, ever fail to get through College, who have been enabled, either by their own exertions or the assistance of others, to prepare for College. I am sure the number is very small. Hence of all charges that the imagination can conceive, that of educating only the rich is the most idle and ridiculous. Most of our students, as a matter of fact, are from families in moderate circumstances; many are absolutely poor, either expending their whole living upon their minds, or toiling in vacations to acquire the means of defraying their expenses, or sustained by the eleemosynary foundations of the College, or by the assistance of the College Societies, or by private liberality. The public sentiment of the students speaks volumes upon this point. If there were anything in the genius or organization of the Institution which distinguished it as the College of the *rich*, there would be a corresponding pride of aristocracy among the young men, and the poor would be avoided, insulted or shunned as a *profanum vulgus*. They would be branded by public opinion as men who were out of their place; as upstarts, who were aspiring to the privileges of their betters. This would be necessitated as the common feeling by the organic principle of the body. But what is the truth? I have no hesitation in affirming, that if there be a place more than any other where the poor are honoured and respected, where indigence, if coupled with, any degree of merit, is an infallible passport to favour, that place is the South Carolina College. It may be preëminently called the poor man's College in the sense that poverty is no reproach within its walls—no bar to its highest honours and most-tempting rewards, either among professors or students. On the contrary, if there is a prejudice at all, it is against the rich; and from long observation and experience, I am prepared to affirm, that no spirit receives a sterner, stronger, more indignant rebuke within these walls than the pride and vanity of wealth. Let any young man presume upon his fortune and undertake to put on airs, and the whole College pounces down upon him with as [421] little mercy and as much avidity, as the jackdaws in the fable, upon their aspiring fellow, who was decked in the peacock's feathers.

No doubt there are many whose circumstances preclude them from the first steps of a liberal education, and who, yet, have the capacity to receive it, and who, if educated, might reflect lasting honour upon the State. But, unfortunately, from the imperfect and inefficient condition of the free schools, these poor children can never be distinguished. One advantage of a more adequate scheme of public instruction will be that of bringing indigent merit to the light. For such cases there ought to be the most ample provision. "This," in the words of Cousin, "is a sacred duty we owe to talent—a duty which must be fulfilled, even at the risk of being sometimes mistaken." The State should either endow scholarships, or extemporize appropriations to meet the cases of those who, when public schools shall have been established, shall be reported as worthy of a liberal education by their earlier teachers. And beyond this, as the same writer observes, it is not desirable that it should provide for the higher instruction of the poor.

So much for the limitation of the immediate benefits of the College. They *are* confined to comparatively a few, simply because it is comparatively a few that are in a condition to receive them. But then the important point is—and it is a point which ought never to be forgotten, though it is systematically overlooked by those who are accustomed to decry the College—that these benefits are imparted, not for the sake of the few, but for the interest of the many—the good of the State at large. Those who are educated, are educated not for themselves, but for the advantage of the Commonwealth as a whole. Every scholar is regarded as a blessing—a great public benefit—and for the sake of the general influence that he is qualified to exert, the State makes provisions for his training. It is because "the proper education of youth contributes greatly to the prosperity of society," that it "ought to be an object of legislative attention." The many, therefore, are not taxed for the few, but the few are trained for exalted usefulness and extensive good to the many. If the Legislature had in view only the [422] interests of those who are educated, and expended its funds in reference to their good, considered simply as individuals, there would be just ground of complaint; but when it is really aiming at the prosperity of the whole community, and uses these individuals as means to an end, there is nothing limited or partial in its measures. It is great weakness to suppose that nothing can contribute to the general good, the immediate ends of which are not realized in the case of every individual. Are light-houses constructed only for the safety of the benighted mariners who may be actually guided by their lamps? or are they reared for the security of navigation, the interests of commerce, and through these, the interests of society at large.

There is no way of evading the force of this argument but by flatly denying that an educated class is a public good. If there are any among us who are prepared to take this ground, and to become open advocates of barbarism, I have nothing to say to them; but, for the sake of those who may be seduced by a sophistry which they cannot disentangle, I offer a few reflections.

In the first place, the educated men, in every community, are the real elements of steady and consistent progress. They are generally in advance of their generation; light decends [*sic*] from them to their inferiors, and by a gradual and imperceptible influence emanating from the solitary speculations, it may be, of their secret hours, the whole texture of society is modified, a wider scope is given to its views and a loftier end to its measures.—They are the men who sustain and carry forward the complicated movements of a refined civilization—the real authors of the changes which constitute epochs in the social elevation of the race. Pitt could not understand, and Fox refused to read the masterly speculations of Adam Smith upon the Wealth of Nations. He was ahead of his age. The truth gradually worked its way, however, into the minds of statesmen and legislators, and now, no one is held to be fit for any public employment, who is not imbued with the principles of Political Economy. The thoughts of a retired thinker, once set in motion, if they have truth in them, have a principle of life which can never be extinguished,—they may, [423] for a season, be repressed and confined, but they, finally, like disengaged gases, acquire an intensity and power which defy all opposition. They spread through society, leavening first its leading members, and extending in the shape of results, or maxims, or practical conclusions, to every fireside in the land. The solitary scholar wields a lever which raises the whole mass of society. It is a high general education which shapes the minds and controls the opinions of the guiding spirits of the age; it is this which keeps up the general tone of society—it is at once conservative and progressive.

The conservative tendency requires to be a little more distinctly pointed out. The case is this—the universal activity which general intelligence imparts to mind, must be prolific in schemes and theories, and these are likely to be sound or hurtful, according to the completeness of the inductions or the narrowness of the views, on which they are founded. A half truth, or a truth partially apprehended, always has the effect of a lie. A high order of culture, with occasional exceptions, (for profound thinkers are sometimes eccentric,) is a security against the ill-digested plans and visionary projects, which they are peculiarly tempted to originate, whose vision is confined to a contracted horizon, and who are deceived, simply because they do not perceive the bearings of a principle in all its applications. An educated class expands the field of vision, and serves as a check to the irregular impulses and the impetuous innovations of minds, equally active, but less enlarged. It protects from rashness, from false maxims, from partial knowledge. It is a security for public order which can hardly be over-estimated—it is the regulator of the great clock of society. General intelligence, without high culture to keep it in check, will exemplify the maxim of Pope—

> “A little learning is a dangerous thing,”

and will prove a greater curse to the State than absolute ignorance. It is not ignorance, but half-knowledge, that is full of whims and crotchets, the prey of impulse and fanaticism, and the parent of restless agitation and ceaseless change. It is in the constant play of antagonist forces, the action and reaction of the higher and lower [424] culture, that the life, health and vigour of society consist. General intelligence checks the stagnation of ignorance, and a thorough education, the rashness of empiricism. Where these prevail there is all the inspiration without the contortions of the Sibyl.[8]

In the next place it should not be omitted that general education is the true source of the elevation of the masses, and of the demand for popular instruction. Every educated man is a centre of light, and his example and influence create the consciousness of ignorance and the sense of need, from which elementary schools have sprung. Defective culture is never conscious of itself until it is brought into contact with superior power. There may be a conviction of ignorance in reference to special things, and a desire of knowledge as the means of accomplishing particular ends. But the need of intellectual improvement on its own account never is awakened spontaneously. We never lament our inferiority to angels. The reason is, we are not brought into contact with them, and are consequently not sensible of the disparity that exits. If we had examples before us of angelic amplitude of mind, the contrast would force upon us a lively impression of the lowness of our intellectual level. If we had never been accustomed to any other light but that of the stars, we should never have dreamed of the sun, nor felt the absence of his rays as any real evil. The positive in the order of thought is before the privative. We must know the good in order to understand the evil; we must be familiar with day to comprehend night and darkness. Hence it is that civilization never has been and never can be of spontaneous growth among a people. It has always been an inheritance or an importation. If men had been originally created savages, they would all have been savages today. Those ingenious theories which undertake, from principles of human nature, to explain the history of man's progress from barbarism to refinement, are nothing better than speculative romances. They are contradicted by experience, as well as by the laws of the human [425] mind. Philosophy coincides with the Bible, man was created in the image of God, and the rudeness and coarseness of uncivilized communities are states of degration [*sic*] into which he has apostatized and sunk, and not his primitive and original condition. Civilization has migrated from one centre to another, has found its way among barbarians and savages, and restored them to something of their forfeited inheritance, but, in every such instance, it has been introduced from without, it has never developed itself from within. Where all is darkness, whence is the light to spring? What planet is the source of the rays that shine on it? Hence it is knowledge which creates the demand for knowledge—which causes ignorance to be felt as an evil, and hence it is the education, in the first instance, of the few, which has awakened the strong desire for the illumination of the many. Let knowledge, however, become stagnant—let no provision be made for the constant activity of the highest order of minds in the highest spheres of speculation, and the torpor would be communicated downwards, until the whole community was benumbed. The thinkers in the most abstract departments of speculation keep the whole of society in motion, and upon its motion depends its progress. Scholars, therefore, are the real benefactors of the people—and he does more for popular education who founds a University, than he who institutes a complete and adequate machinery of common schools. The reason is obvious—the most potent element of public opinion is wanting where only a low form of culture obtains—the common schools having no example of any thing higher before them, would soon degenerate and impart only a mechanical culture—if they did not, which I am inclined to think would be the case, from their want of life, if they did not permit the people to relapse into barbarism. Colleges, on the other hand, will create the demand for lower culture, and private enterprise under the stimulus imparted would not be backward in providing for it. The college will diffuse the education of principles, of maxims, a tone of thinking and feeling which are of the last importance, without the schools—the schools could never do it without the college. If we must dispense with one or the other, I have no hesitation in saying, that on the [426] score of public good alone, it were wiser to dispense with the schools. One sun is better than a thousand stars. There never was, therefore, a more grievous error than that the college is in antagonism to the interests of the people. Precisely the opposite is the truth—and because it is preëminently a public good, operating directly or indirectly to the benefit of every citizen in the State, the Legislature was originally justified in founding, and in still sustaining, this noble institution. It has made South Carolina what she is—it has made her people what they are—and from her mountains to her seaboard there is not a nook or corner of the State that has not shared in its healthful influence. The very cries which are coming up from all quarters for the direct instruction of the people, cries which none should think of resisting, are only echoes from the college walls. We should never have heard of them, if the state of things had continued among us, which existed when the college was founded. The low country would still have sent its sons to Europe or the North, and the up-country would have been content with its fertile lands and invigorating hills.

---

[8] See some excellent remarks on this subject in President Walker's Inaugural Discourse.

The second ground of objection does not deny or diminish the importance of the College, or the general advantages of higher education. It only affirms that the State is not the proper body for dispensing them. The advocates of this negative opinion divide themselves into two classes, one maintaining that Colleges should support themselves—the other that they should be supported by endowments under the control of private or ecclesiastical corporations. The first was the doctrine of Adam Smith, who may be reckoned among the ablest opponents of the policy of public education in the higher branches of learning. He lays down the thesis, that the demand will infallibly create the supply—that in science, literature and the arts, as in the commodities which minister to the physical comfort and conveniences of man, what is wanted will be procured. The double operation of private interest, on the one hand to obtain, on the other to furnish, will present inducements enough to originate all the schools that may be needed to teach all the arts that may be desired. This ingenious reasoner [427] forgot that, in the matter of education, as Sir Wm. Hamilton justly remarks,[9] "demand and supply are necessarily coexistent and coextensive—that it is education which creates the want which education only can satisfy. Those again," says the same writer, "who, conceding all this, contend that the creation and supply of this demand should be abandoned by the State to private intelligence and philanthropy are contradicted both by reasoning and fact." The expensiveness of the machinery which is necessary to put in motion a higher seminary of learning, renders it hopelessly impossible to make such institutions self-supporting bodies, and the attempt to do so would have no other effect than to degrade them into professional or scientific schools, in which knowledge is the end, and not the instrument. Hence there is not a College or University worthy of the name, either in Europe or America, that is capable of sustaining, much less of having founded, its various departments of instruction by the patronage it receives. Education has always lived on charity. Foundations and endowments, partly from individuals, partly from the State, have always been its reliances to supply the apparatus with which the machinery is kept in motion.

As to private corporations, it is certain that the degree of interest which is taken in learning for itself, will never be adequate to meet the exigencies of higher education. There must be some stronger principle at work, an impulse more general and pervading, in order to touch the chords of private liberality and awaken a responsive thrill. There may be extraordinary efforts of single men, but these spasmodic contributions will be too rare, besides that they may be hampered by unwise restrictions and limitations, to answer the ends of a College. The only principle which has vitality and power enough to keep the stream of private charity steadily turned in the direction of education is the principle of religion. And hence the true and only question is, does education belong to the Church or State. Into the hands of one or the other, it must fall or perish. This, too, is the great practical question among us. The most formidable war against [428] the College will be that waged on the principle of its existence.

---

[9] Discussions, &c., p. 537.

I respect the feeling out of which the jealousy of State institutions has grown. A godless education is worse than none; and I rejoice that the sentiment is well-nigh universal in this country, that a system which excludes the highest and most commanding, the eternal interests of man, must be radically defective, whether reference be had to the culture of the individual, or to his prosperity and influence in life. Man is essentially a religious being, and to make no provision for this noblest element of his nature, to ignore and preclude it from any distinct consideration, is to leave him but half-educated. The Ancients were accustomed to regard theology as the first philosophy, and there is not a people under the sun, whose religion has not been the chief inspiration of their literature. Take away the influence which this subject has exerted upon the human mind, destroy its contributions to the cause of letters, the impulse it has given to the speculations of philosophy, and what will be left after these subtractions will be comparatively small in quantity and feeble in life and spirit. We must have religion, if we would reach the highest forms of education. This is the atmosphere which must surround the mind and permeate all its activities, in order that its developement may be free, healthful and vigorous. Science languishes, letters pine, refinement is lost, wherever and whenever the genius of religion is excluded. Experience has demonstrated that, in some form or other, it must enter into every College and pervade every department of instruction. No institution has been able to live without it. But what right, it is asked, has the State to introduce it? What right, we might ask in return, has the State to exclude it? The difficulty lies in confounding the dogmatic peculiarities of sects with the spirit of religion. The State as such knows nothing of sects, but to protect them, but it does not follow that the State must be necessarily godless; and so a College knows nothing of denominations except as a feature in the history of the human race, but it does not follow that a College must he necessarily atheistic or unchristian. What is wanted is the pervading influence of religion as a life; the habitual [429] sense of responsibility to God and of the true worth and destiny of the soul, which shall give tone to the character, and regulate all the pursuits of the place. The example, temper, and habitual deportment of the teachers, coöperating with the dogmatic instructions which have been received at the fireside and in the church, and coupled with the obligatory observance, except in cases of conscientious scruple, of the peculiar duties of the Lord’s day, will be found to do more in maintaining the power of religion than the constant recitation of the catechism, or the ceaseless inculcation of sectarian peculiarities. The difficulty of introducing religion is, indeed, rather speculative than practical. When we propose to teach religion as a science, and undertake by precise boundaries and exact statutory provisions, to define what shall and what shall not be taught, when by written schemes we endeavor to avoid all the peculiarities of sect and opinion without sacrificing the essential interests of religion, the task is impossible. The residuum, after our nice distinctions, is zero. But why introduce religion *as a science*? Let it come in the character of the Professors, let it come in the stated worship of the Sanctuary, and let it come in the vindication of those immortal records which constitute the basis of our faith.

Leave creeds and confessions to the fireside and church, the home and the pulpit. Have godly teachers and you will have comparatively a godly College. But what security have we that a State College will pay any attention to the religious character of its teachers? The security of public opinion, which, in proportion as the various religious denominations do their duty in their own spheres, will become absolutely irresistible. Let all the sects combine to support the State College, and they can soon create a sentiment which, with the terrible certainty of fate, shall tolerate nothing unholy or unclean in its walls. They can make it religious without being sectarian. The true power of the church over these institutions is not that of direct control, but of moral influence, arising from her direct work upon the hearts and consciences of all the members of the community. Is it alleged that experience presents us with mournful examples of State institutions degenerating into hot-beds of [430] atheism and impiety? It may be promptly replied that the same experience presents us with equally mournful examples of church institutions degenerating into hotbeds of the vilest heresy and infidelity. And what is more to the point, a sound public opinion has never failed to bring these State institutions back to their proper moorings, while the church institutions have, not unfrequently, carried their sects with them and rendered reform impossible. In the case of State institutions, the security for religion lies in the public opinion of the whole community; in the case of church institutions, in the public opinion of a single denomination, and as the smaller body can more easily become corrupt than a larger, as there is a constant play of antagonisms which preserves the health in the one case, while they are wanting in the other, it seems clear that a State College, upon the whole, and in the long run, must be safer than any sectarian institution. As long as the people preserve their respect for religion, the College can be kept free from danger.

The principle, too, on which the argument for church supervision is founded, proves too much. It is assumed that wherever a religious influence becomes a matter of primary importance, there the church has legitimate jurisdiction. "This," it has been well said,[10] "puts an end to society itself, and makes the church the only power that can exist; since all that is necessary is for any officer or any power to be capable of moral effects, or influences, in order to put it under the dominion of the church. The moral influence of governors, judges, presidents, nay, even sheriffs, coroners, or constables, is as real and may be far more extensive than that of school-masters. The moral influence of wealth, manners, taste, is immense; that of domestic habits, nay, even personal habits, often decisive." The truth is, this species of argument would reduce every interest under the sun to the control of the church. It is just the principle on which [431] the authority of the Pope over Kings and States has been assumed and defended. The argument, moreover, is one which can be very easily retorted. If, because education has a religions element, it must fall within the jurisdiction of the church, *a fortiori* because it has multiplied secular elements, it must fall within the jurisdiction of the State. The church is a distinct corporation—with distinct rights and authority. She has direct control over nothing that is not spiritual in its matter and connected with our relations to Jesus Christ. She is His Kingdom, and her functions are limited to His work as the mediator of the covenant and the saviour of the lost; and if education, in its secular aspects, is not a function of grace, but of nature, if it belongs to man, not as a christian, but simply as a man, then it no more falls within the jurisdiction of the church, than any other secular work." The duties of the State are civil, not sacred: the duties of the church are sacred, not civil. To exclude the church from the control of general education, and to exempt it from the duty of providing the means thereof, it must be shown that education is of the nature of religious things, and that the duty of superintending it is, in its nature, spiritual. Is not a man bound to educate himself as an individual person? Is not every family bound to educate each other, and the head of the family peculiarly bound to educate the members? If so, are these obligations which arise out of our individual personality and out of our family relations, in any degree at all, or do they spring solely and chiefly, out of our obligations as members of Christ? Is a christian more bound, or is he chiefly bound, or is he exclusively bound—they are three degrees of the same proposition—to acquire and to impart knowledge, which has nothing to do with religion, but much to do with temporal success, and temporal usefulness; all the positive sciences, for example; simply or mainly as a christian, or because he is a christian? Or is he bound chiefly, or at all to do so, from any considerations drawn from his individual position, or his relations to his family or his country? These are considerations, and there are many more like them, that require to be deeply pondered before we arrive at the sweeping generalities which assume and assert that denominational [432]

---

[10] Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. 3, p. 6. The article from which this extract is taken was written by Dr. R. J. Breckinridge, and is the most complete refutation of the manifold assumptions on which the theory of church

---

education proceeds, that I have ever seen. It sets the question at rest.

education is the only safe and true conclusion of this ‘high argument.’”[11]

Apart from the principle involved, I have other objections to sectarian education. I say sectarian education, for the church as catholic and one, in the present condition of things, is not visible and corporate. What she does can only be done through the agency of one or more of the various fragments into which she has been suffered to split. In the first place, it is evident, from the feebleness of the sects, that these Colleges cannot be very largely endowed. In the next place, they are likely to be numerous. From these causes will result a strenuous competition for patronage; and from this, two effects may be expected to follow. First, the depression of the standard of general education, so as to allure students to their halls; and next, the preference of what is ostentatious and attractive in education to what is solid and substantial. It is true that there can be no lofty flight, as Bacon has suggested, “without some feathers of ostentation;” but it is equally true that there can be no flight at all, where there are not bone, muscle and sinew to sustain the feathers.

It is also a serious evil that the State should be habitually denounced as profane and infidel. To think and speak of it in that light is the sure way to make it so; and yet, this is the uniform representation of the advocates of church education. They will not permit the State to touch the subject, because its fingers are unclean. Can there be a more certain method to uproot the sentiments of patriotism, and to make us feel that the government of the country is an enormous evil to which we are to submit, not out of love, but for conscience sake? Will not something like this be the inevitable effect of the declamation and invective which bigots and zealots feel authorized to vent against the Commonwealth that protects them, in order that they may succeed in their narrow schemes? Instead of clinging around the State, as they would cling to the bosom of a beloved parent, and concentrating upon her the highest and holiest influences which they are capable of exerting; [433] instead of teaching their children to love her, as the ordinance of God for good, to bless her for her manifold benefits, and to obey her with even a religious veneration, they repel her to a cold and cheerless distance, and brand her with the stigma of Divine reprobation. The result must be bad. “The fanaticism which despises the State, and the infidelity which contemns the church, are both alike the product of ignorance and folly. God has established both the church and the State. It is as clearly our duty to be loyal and enlightened citizens, as to be faithful and earnest christians.”

I think, too, that the tendency of sectarian Colleges to perpetuate the strife of sects, to fix whatever is heterogeneous in the elements of national character, and to alienate the citizens from each other, is a consideration not to be overlooked. There ought surely to be some common ground on which the members of the same State may meet together and feel that they are brothers—some common ground on which their children may mingle without confusion or discord, and bury every narrow and selfish interest in the sublime sentiment that they belong to the same family. Nothing is so powerful as a common education, and the thousand sweet associations which spring from it and cluster around it, to cherish the holy brotherhood of men. Those who have walked together in the same paths of science, and taken sweet counsel in the same halls of learning, who went arm in arm in that hallowed season of life when the foundations of all excellence are laid, who have wept with the same sorrows, or laughed with the same joys, who have been fired with the same ambition, lured with the same hopes, and grieved at the same disappointments, these are not the men, in after years, to stir up animosities, or foment intestine feuds. Their college life is a bond of union, which nothing can break; a Divine poetry of existence which nothing is allowed to profane. Who can forget his college days, and his college companions, and even his college dreams? Would you make any Commonwealth a unit, educate its sons together. This is the secret of the harmony which has so remarkably characterized our State. It was not the influence of a single mind, great as that mind was—it was no tame submission to [434] authoritative dictation. It was the community of thought, feeling and character, achieved by a common education within these walls. Here it was that heart was knit to heart, mind to mind, and that a common character was formed. All these advantages must be lost, if the sectarian scheme prevails. South Carolina will no longer be a unit, nor her citizens brothers. We shall have sect against sect, school against school, and college against college; and he knows but little of the past who has not observed that the most formidable dangers to any State are those which spring from divisions in its own bosom, and that these divisions are terrible in proportion to the degree in which the religious element enters into them.

---

[11] Southern Presbyterian Review, vol. 3, p. 3, Dr. Breckinridge’s article.

I shall say no more upon the College. I have spoken of its end, its organization and its defects; and have vindicated the policy upon which it was founded. What I have said I believe to be true, and I am sure that it is seasonable. And nothing would delight me more, as a man, a Christian, and a patriot, than to see all jealousies laid aside, all sectarian schemes abandoned, and the whole State, as one man, rally to its support. It would find ample employment for all the funds which private liberality is pouring into the coffers of other institutions; and when charity had done its utmost, and the government still more freely unlocked its treasury, we should have a splendid institution, beyond doubt, but one which was still not perfect. Education is a vast and complicated interest, and it requires the legacies of ages and generations past, as well as the steady contributions of the living, to keep the stream from subsiding. Let it roll among us like a mighty river, whose ceaseless flow is maintained by the springs of charity and the great fountain of public munificence. Let us have a College which is worthy of the name—to which we can invite the scholars of Europe with an honest pride, and to which our children may repair from all our borders, as the States of Greece to their Olympia, or the chosen tribes to Mount Zion. How beautiful it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

II. The next part of our system in the order of Legislation is the Free Schools. And here I am sorry to say that the law is not only inadequate, but there is a very [435] extraordinary discrepancy between the law and the practice, which increases the difficulty and has added to the inefficiency of the standing appropriation. It is clear from the face of it that the Act of 1811 was designed as the first step towards the establishment of a system of Common Schools, that should bring the means of elementary education within the reach of every child in the State. It was not intended to be a provision for *paupers*. Throughout our statutes *Free* Schools mean *Public* Schools, or schools which are open to every citizen. The first act in which I find the expression is that of the 8th of April, 1710, entitled an act for the founding and erecting of a Free School for the use of the inhabitants of South Carolina. This act created and incorporated a Board of Trustees for the purpose of taking charge of such funds as had already been contributed, or might afterwards be contributed for public instruction in the Province. In it the epithet free is synonymous, not with *pauper*, but *public*, or *common*. The same is the case in the act of the 7th June, 1712, entitled an act for the encouragement of learning. Although the School was a *Free* School, every pupil was required to *pay* for his tuition. But the meaning of the phrase is made still clearer by the extended act of the 12th December of the same year. There the School was manifestly open to *all*. Special inducements were held out to patronize and encourage it, and provisions made for educating a certain number free of expense. The act of 1811, which is the basis of our present system, is so clear and explicit as to the kind of Schools to be founded, that I am utterly unable to account for the partial and exclusive interpretation which has been put upon its words. The third section provides, "that every citizen of this State shall be entitled to send his or her child or children, ward or wards, to any Free School in the District where he or she may reside, free from any expense whatever on account of tuition; and where more children shall apply for admission at any one School, than can be conveniently educated therein, a preference shall always be given to poor orphans and the children of indigent and necessitous parents."

I have no doubt that if this act had been executed [436] according to its true intent and meaning, and Public Schools had been established in every District of the State corresponding to the number of members in the House of Representatives, the advantages would have been so conspicuous that the Legislature could not have stopped until the means of instruction had been afforded to every neighborhood, to every family, and to every child. The law was wise—it was strictly tentative and provisional, but its benevolent intention has been defeated by a singular misconception of its meaning. As a provisional law, it was defective in unity of plan. The Commissioners in each District were absolutely independent and irresponsible. There was no central power which could correct mistakes and which could infuse a common spirit and a common life into the whole scheme. The consequence is that, after all our legislation and all our expenditures, we have not even the elements in practical operation of a system of Public Schools. We have the whole work to begin anew.

You will permit me to suggest a few reasons why we should begin it heartily and at once, and then to intimate the nature and extent of our incipient efforts.

1. In the first place, it is the duty of the State to provide for the education of its citizens. Even Adam Smith, who, we have seen, was opposed to the direct interference of the government in higher, or liberal education, is constrained to admit that the education of the common people forms an exception to his principle. He makes it the care of the government upon the same general ground with the cultivation of a martial spirit. We should be as solicitous that our citizens should not be ignorant as that they should not be cowards. The whole passage is so striking that you will excuse me for quoting it in full. "But a coward, a man incapable either of defending or revenging himself, evidently wants one of the most essential parts of the character of a man. He is as much mutilated and deformed in his mind as another is in his body, who is either deprived of some of his most essential members, or has lost the use of them. He is evidently the more wretched and miserable of the two; because happiness and misery, which reside altogether in the mind, must necessarily depend more upon [437] the healthful or unhealthful, the mutilated or entire state of the mind, than upon that of the body. Even though the martial spirit of the people were of no use towards the defence of the society, yet to prevent that sort of, mental mutilation, deformity and wretchedness, which, cowardice necessarily involves in it, from spreading themselves through the great body of the people, would still deserve the most serious attention of government; in the same manner as it would deserve its most serious attention to prevent a leprosy, or any other loathsome, and offensive disease, from spreading itself among them; though perhaps, no other

public good might result from such attention besides the prevention of so great a public evil.

"The same thing may be said of the gross ignorance and stupidity which, in a civilized society, seem so frequently to benumb the understandings of all the inferior ranks of people. A man without the proper use of the intellectual faculties of a man is, if possible, more contemptible than even a coward, and seems to be mutilated and deformed in a still more essential part of the character of human nature. Though the State was to derive no advantage from the instruction of the inferior ranks of the people, it would still deserve its attention that they should not be altogether uninstructed. The State, however, derives no inconsiderable advantage from their instruction. The more they are instructed, the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An instructed and intelligent people, besides, are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant and stupid one. They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are, therefore, more disposed to respect those superiors. They are more disposed to examine, and more capable of seeing through, the interested complaints of faction and sedition; and they are, upon that account, less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of government. In free countries, where the safety of government depends very much upon the favourable judgment which the people may form of its [438] conduct, it must surely be of the highest importance that they should not be disposed to judge rashly or capriciously concerning it."

"If the community wish to have the benefit of more knowledge and intelligence in the labouring classes," says Say, "it must dispense it at the public charge. This object may be obtained by the establishment of primary schools, of reading, writing and arithmetic. These are the groundwork of all knowledge, and are quite sufficient for the civilization of the lower classes. In fact, one cannot call a nation civilized, nor consequently possessed of the benefits of civilization, until the people at large be instructed in these three particulars: till then it will be but partially reclaimed from barbarism."

I might multiply authorities to an indefinite extent, showing that it is the general opinion of political philosophers, that popular instruction is one of the most sacred duties of the Commonwealth. The opinion obviously rests upon two grounds—the importance of education in itself and in its relations to the State, and the impossibility of adequately providing for it without the assistance of Legislature. The alternative is, either that the education of the people must be abandoned as hopeless, or the government must embark in the work. Surely, if this be really the state of the case, South Carolina cannot hesitate a moment as to which branch of the proposition she will choose. When it is remembered that education makes the citizen as well as the man—that it is precisely what fits a human being to be a living member of a Commonwealth, we cannot hesitate as to whether our people shall be cyphers or men.

And that this is the alternative, is clear, both from the nature of the case, and from fact. Whoever considers what it is to provide an adequate system of instruction for all the children of a country, the amount of funds necessary to erect school-houses, to found libraries, to procure the needful apparatus, to pay teachers, and to keep the machinery, once set in motion, in steady and successful operation, will perceive the folly of entrusting such a task to the disjointed efforts of individuals, or the conflicting efforts of religious denominations. In either case, there will be no unity of plan, no competency of [439] means—what is done must be done partially, and because partially, must be done amiss." All experience," says Sir William Hamilton, "demonstrates the necessity of State interference. No countries present a more remarkable contrast in this respect (in regard to popular education) than England and Germany. In the former the State has done nothing for the education of the people, and private benevolence more than has been attempted elsewhere; in the latter, the Government has done everything, and left to private benevolence almost nothing to effect. The English people are, however, the lowest, the German people the highest, in the scale of knowledge. All that Scotland enjoys of popular education above the other kingdoms of the British Empire, she owes to the State; and among the principalities of Germany, from Russia down to Hesse Cassel, education is uniformly found to prosper exactly in proportion to the extent of interference, and to the unremitted watchfulness of Government. * * * The experience of the last half century in Germany, has, indeed, completely set at rest the question. For thirty years no German has been found to maintain the doctrine of Smith. In their generous rivalry, the Governments of that country have practically shown what a benevolent and prudent policy could effect for the university as for the school; and knowing what they have done, who is there now to maintain, that for education as for trade, the State can prevent evil, but cannot originate good." There are those among us who admit that no complete system of popular education can be instituted without the intervention of the State, and yet maintain that the true method of intervention is simply to supplement individual exertions; that is, they would have those who are able to do so educate their children in schools sustained by themselves, and solicit the aid of the Legislature only for paupers. It is obvious, in the first place, that in this there is no system at all; the schools are detached and independent; they have no common life, and the State knows nothing of the influences which may be exerted within them. Education is too complicated an interest, and touches the prosperity of the Commonwealth in too many points to be left, in reference to the [440] most important class of its subjects, absolutely without responsibility to the Government. The homogeneousness of the population can only be sustained by a general system of public schools. In the next place, the scheme is invidious. It makes a reproachful distinction betwixt the children of the Commonwealth; and in the last place, it must, from this very circumstance, be inefficient; parents will scorn a favour rather than permit their children to be stigmatized as the condition of receiving it. The true policy of the State is to recognize no distinction betwixt the rich and the poor; to put them all upon the same footing; to treat them simply as so many minds, whose capacities are to be unfolded, and whose energies are to be directed. The rich and the poor, in the school-house, as in the house of God, should meet together upon the ground of their common relations, and the consequences of this promiscuous elementary training would soon be felt in harmonizing and smoothing all the unevenness, harshness and inequalities of social life.

2. In the second place, the State should make some speedy provisions for popular education in consequence of the unusual demand which, in some form or other, is indicated as existing in every section of the country. There never was a greater cry for schools; the people are beginning to appreciate their importance, and at no period within my recollection have such strenuous efforts been made to establish and support them. The extraordinary exertions of the various sects—exertions, too, which deserve all praise considered as attempts to satisfy an acknowledged public want—and the success which has attended them, are proofs that public opinion is ripe in South Carolina for the interference of the Legislature; and if it should not speedily interfere, this great and mighty interest will pass completely out of its hands, and be beyond its regulation or control. It is a critical period with us in the history of education. The people are calling for schools and teachers; and if the State will not listen to their cries, they will be justified in adopting the best expedients they can, and in acceding to the provisions which religious zeal proposes to their acceptance. Our people are not, as a body, in favour of sectarian education. They prefer a general and unexclusive system; [441] and if they adopt the narrower, it will be because their own Government has been inattentive to their interests.

I sincerely hope that the Legislature may be duly sensible of the delicate posture of this subject. To my mind, it is clear as the noon-day sun, that if any thing is to be done, it must be done at once. Now or never is the real state of the problem.

3. In the third place, the State should take the subject in hand, because this is the only way by which consistency and coherence can be secured in the different departments of instruction. Education is a connected work, and its various sub-divisions should be so arranged, that while each is a whole in itself, it should be, at the same time, a part of a still greater whole. The lower elementary education should, for example, be complete for those who aspire to nothing more; it should likewise be naturally introductory to a higher culture. It should be a perfect whole for the one class, and a properly adjusted part for the other. So also, the higher elementary education, that of the grammar school, should be complete for those who are not looking to a liberal education, and yet, in relation to others, subsidiary to the College or the scientific school. This unity in the midst of variety cannot be secured without a common centre of impulse and of action. There must be one presiding spirit, one head, one heart. Education will become a disjointed and fragmentary process, if it is left to individuals, to private corporations and religious sects. Each will have his tongue and his psalm, and we shall have as many crotchets and experiments as there are controlling bodies. The competition excited will be a competition, not for efficiency in instruction, but for numbers; each will estimate success by the hosts that can be paraded at its annual festivals, or the pomp and pretension of a theatrical pageant, played off under the name of an examination. This is not the language of reproach; it is a result which, from the principles of human nature, will be inevitably necessitated, by the condition in which the schools shall find themselves placed.

Let me add, in this place, that Public Education is recommended by considerations of economy. Absolutely, it is the cheapest of all systems. It saves the enormous [442] expense of boarding schools, or the still heavier expense of domestic tutors, one of which must be encountered where it is left to private enterprise to supply the means of education. If the amount which is annually expended in South Carolina upon the instruction of that portion of her children who are looking to a liberal education, could be collected into one sum, we should be amazed at the prodigality of means in comparison with the poverty of the result. The same sum judiciously distributed would go very far towards supplying every neighborhood with a competent teacher. From the want of system there is no security that, with all this lavish expenditure, efficient instructors shall be procured. Those who employ the teachers are not always competent to judge of their qualifications; and the consequence is that time and money are both not unfrequently squandered in learning what has afterwards to be unlearned. The dangers, too, of sending children from home at an early age, the evil of exemption from parental influence and discipline, are not to be lightly hazarded. The State should see to it that the family is preserved in its integrity, and enabled to exert all its mighty power in shaping the character of the future citizens of the Commonwealth. Comparatively, Public Education is cheap; as general intelligence contributes to general virtue, and general virtue diminishes expenditures for crime. It is cheap, as it developes the resources of the country and increases the mass of its wealth. It is not labour, but intelligence, that creates new values, and Public Education is an outlay of capital that returns to the coffers of the State with an enormous interest. Not a dollar, therefore, that is judiciously appropriated to the instruction of the people, will ever be lost. The five talents will gain other five, and the two talents other two, while to neglect this great department of duty is to wrap the talent in a napkin and bury it in the bowels of the earth.

2. But, after all, the practical question is one of real difficulty. What shall the State do? This is a point of great delicacy, and demands consummate wisdom. Nothing should be done abruptly and violently, no measures should be adopted that are not likely to recommend themselves, no attempts made to force an acquiescence into [443] any provisions, however salutary they may have proved elsewhere, which are not founded in the habits and predilections of the people, or obviously indispensable to elevate and improve them. The public mind should be prepared for every great movement, before it is begun. Popular enthusiasm should, if possible, be awakened by addresses and disputations—which, like pioneers, prepare the way for the law, by making rough places plain, and the crooked straight. Above all we should guard against attempting to make our system too perfect at the outset. The words of Cousin are as applicable to us now, as they were to France at the time he wrote them. "God grant that we may be wise enough to see that any law on primary instruction passed now must be a provisional, and not a definitive law; that it mast of necessity be re-constructed at the end of ten years, and that the only thing now is to supply the most urgent wants, and to give legal sanction to some incontestible points; *Festnia lente* contains a caution which it becomes States as well as individuals to respect.

What we first need is a collection of the facts from which the data of a proper system may be drawn. We must know the number of children in the State, of the ages at which children are usually sent to school, the kind and degree of education demanded, the relative distances of the residence of parents, the points at which school houses may be most conveniently erected, the number of buildings required, the number of teachers, and the salaries which different localities make necessary to a competent support. Facts of this sort must constitute the groundwork. In possession of these, we may then proceed to compare different systems, adopting from among them that which seems to be best adapted to our own circumstances, or originating a new one, if all should prove unsatisfactory. All, therefore, that in my judgment the Legislature should undertake at present, is to acquire this preliminary information, including the accumulation of facts, the comparison of different Common School systems, and the digest of a plan suited to the wants of our own people. This can be done by the appointment of a minister of public instruction, who shall be regarded as an officer of the government, compensated [444] by a large salary, and who shall give himself unreservedly to this great interest. Let him be required to traverse the State, to inspect the condition of every neighborhood, and from personal observation and authentic testimony let him become acquainted with the number, the extent and the circumstances of the children. Let him be prepared to say where school houses can be most conveniently erected, the distances at which they should be removed from each other, the kind of teacher needed in each neighborhood, and let him indicate what, sections of the State are unprepared for Schools in consequence of the dispersion of their inhabitants. Let him be able to give some probable estimate of the expense incident to the successful operation of an adequate scheme. In the next place, it should be his duty to master the existing systems, whether in this country or Europe, and to lay before the Legislature a succinct account of their fundamental provisions. Let him propose the scheme which he thinks ought to be adopted here, and let his report be referred to an able and learned Commission, charged with the final preparation of such a scheme as we may be ready to enact into law: [*sic*]

I shall not disguise from your Excellency that upon many points connected with the details of any and every scheme, my own opinion has long ago been definitely settled. The extent or degree of elementary education— the best mode of securing competent teachers—the principles which should regulate their salaries—the introduction of religion into the schools—these and many other similar topics I have investigated to my own satisfaction. But in the present condition of the whole subject, it would be obviously premature to express the opinions of any individual. The Minister of Public Instruction should, have the whole subject before him, and whatever discussions may take place upon details, should be consequent upon, and not prior to his report. All, therefore, that I would now press upon your Excellency is to have Public Instruction erected into a department of the government. That is the first, and an indispensable step, and until that is done, there never can be a plan, adequate, consistent, successful. I have only to add here, that this is substantially the recommendation which I [445] had the honour to make in concert with the Bishop of Georgia, some fourteen or fifteen years ago, and time and observation have only strengthened my convictions of the wisdom and necessity of the measure.

3. The third and last part of our system is the military schools. What I have to suggest in regard to them, is that they be made to supply a want which is constantly increasing, as the country advances in trade and the arts. It is a great evil that there should be nothing intermediate between the Grammar School and the College, and that all who wish to acquire nothing more than the principles of physical science, on account of their application to various branches of industry, should be compelled to purchase this privilege by bearing what to them is the heavy burden of a liberal education. They do not want Latin, Greek and Philosophy, and it is hard that they cannot be permitted to get a little chemistry, a little engineering, or a little natural philosophy, without going through Homer and Virgil, Aristotle and Locke. "Two great evils," I use the words of Cousin, who is deploring a similar state of things in France, "two great evils are the consequence. In general these boys, who know that they are not destined to any very distinguished career, go through their studies in a negligent manner; they never get beyond mediocrity; when, at about eighteen, they go back to the habits and the business of their fathers, as there is nothing in their ordinary life to recall or to keep up their studies, a few years obliterate every trace of the little classical learning they acquired. On the other hand, these young men often contract tastes and acquaintances at College which render it difficult, nay, almost impossible, for them to return to the humble way of life to which they were born; hence a race of men, restless, discontented with their position, with others and with themselves; enemies of a state of society in which they feel themselves out of place, and with some acquirements, some real or imagined talent, and unbridled ambition, ready to rush into any career of servility or revolt. * * * Our Colleges ought, without doubt, to remain open to all who can pay the expense of them: but we ought by no means to force the lower classes into them; yet this is the inevitable effect of having [446] on [*sic*] intermediate establishments between the primary schools and the Colleges." The remedy, as I have already shown, is not to change the constitution of the College, but to employ the elements which we confessedly have, and which are essentially suited to the purpose. I shall trespass upon the patience of your Excellency no longer. In all that I have said I have had an eye to the prosperity and glory of my native State. Small in territory and feeble in numbers, the only means by which she can maintain her dignity and importance is by the patronage of letters. A mere speck, compared with several other States in the Union, her reliance for the protection of her rights, and her full and equal influence in Federal legislation, must be upon the genius of her statesmen and the character of her people. Let her give herself to the rearing of a noble race of men, and she will

make up in moral power what she wants in votes. Public education is the cheap expedient for uniting us among ourselves, and rendering us terrible abroad. Mind after all must be felt, and I am anxious to see my beloved Carolina preëminently distinguished for the learning, eloquence and patriotism of her sons. Let us endeavour to make her in general intelligence what she is in dignity and independence of character, the brightest star in the American constellation. God grant that the time may soon come when not an individual born within our borders shall be permitted to reach maturity without having mastered the elements of knowledge.

I am, with considerations of the highest respect,

J. H. Thornwell.