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## STATE EDUCATION.

AN ADDRESS, DELIVERED IN NEW YORK, BY J. A. M'MASTER, ON MONDAY EVENING, JAN. 3.  
(From the N. Y. Freeman's Journal.)

Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is my satisfaction to feel that the success of the cause which I love above all other causes—the cause to which I have devoted my life—does not depend upon my arguments this evening, nor upon my ability, generally, to advocate them. It is my satisfaction to feel, that you, ladies and gentlemen, who have honored me with your presence this evening, have the same deep convictions upon this subject that I have, and that your presence here is the argument and the eloquence of the evening; and I confess that this thought relieves me from all embarrassment that I must otherwise feel from the consciousness of my own multiplied imperfections and feebleness. It is a satisfaction to me to feel that to-night I stand in the house of my friends—that I stand here to utter sentiments that I know the great majority of you already entertain, and that I stand here to utter words that you are accustomed to utter one to another, and therefore I have no fear of hostile interpretations of my words, or of unfriendly criticism. I have asked your presence this evening to hear some little discussion upon the subject of "the bearings of State schools upon the Religious Education of our People."

In addressing myself to this subject, it seems proper, first, to consider what right the State has to meddle in this business of education. Who has given to the State any right to turn nurse and school-master, and to take under its charge the care of our children? In examining this question, we must consider the State under its different conditions, and we must examine what is the condition of the State with which we have to do. The State has existed heretofore as a Theocracy. It has existed under the condition of Paganism. It has existed in Catholic times as the Christian State, and it has there afterwards existed in certain countries as a Protestant State. But in none of these respects have we to do with the State. The State with which we have to do, is a neutral, indifferent, or incompetent State, in matters of the soul and the immortal interests of man. If we had to do with a State that was a Theocracy, there would be no trouble in matters of education, because there all power comes directly from God—His voice, immediately and directly, governs every act of the State, and, therefore, God having the right to educate, as He has the right to do everything, there could be no difficulty in reference to the question of education by the State. The Pagan State is a corruption of the theocratic. The chief difference is, that as in the theocratic State God governs immediately and directly, so the Pagan State makes gods of its own, after its own image, presents them to its people for adoration and worship, that worship and the reverence of those gods upon them. The service of God we know to be perfect liberty, and so in like manner the worship of the State is perfect slavery; and as the State assumes the position of master and makes its subjects slaves, so whatever education the Pagan State may afford to its people is that which the master gives his slaves.

Christianity introduced liberty into the world. It would be a pleasant and delightful thing to dwell upon the terms of that liberty, and of the emancipation of man which Christianity brought into the world. First of all, by the regeneration of Baptism a dignity was conferred upon the soul of man which was before unknown; so that by the baptism of the infant the parent was taught to reverence in it a gift, not of his giving. A being and rights springing not from his jurisdiction. Here is the origin of personal rights. Hence springs personal liberty. But liberty to be efficacious must be under the dominion of law! What law then is to regulate and perpetuate the liberty of the individual, especially in the period of nonage? The Catholic Church comes in and establishes by another Sacrament the family, through Marriage. What does family mean under Paganism? Do you not know? Open your Dictionary of classical Paganism and read! It means a household of slaves. What does it mean under pure Christianity? The Catholic Church alone can answer you:—It means a one husband, a one wife, and the children of this single pair, so indissolubly bound together that death alone can separate them. Search Paganism through—search Protestantism through.—Search all that was before the coming of Christ, and all that has gone out of the Catholic Church, and everywhere the same brand of ignominy is stamped on all besides—there is no indissolubility of marriage—there is no impossibility of divorce;—therefore there is no sanctity in marriage—there is no family in that holy, perpetual sense that Christian tradition has handed down to us.

It is in the holy perpetuity of the Christian family

that God has provided for the liberty and for the rights of the child. God has never said to the State to take care of the child; nor to educate the child! He has given it no charter for such a charge. He has said to the family—to parents—to bring up their children—and He has specified the necessary learning—"Educate them in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."—(Eph. vi.)

The State, under the high direction of the Catholic Church, is subjected to the checks and safeguards of all true liberties; and the vested rights of the family is one of the most wonderful and beautiful of them. The family stands between the State and the child. It prepares the child to act afterwards its part in the State, and it guarantees the State from all injury meanwhile from want of good morals in the child. If the Church came in to take charge, in part, through her Hierarchy, of the education of the child, it was by the free act of the parent in each particular case. For the Catholic Church is, of the necessity of her being, most respectful of all other real rights.

But I must not dwell so long on this theme of beauty and of order. I must pass from the Christian or Catholic State to consider the State in its fourth condition, under Protestantism. The Protestant State is to the Catholic State nearly what Paganism was to Theocracy. As the Pagan State made gods after its own image, and forced men to worship them, so the Protestant State made a Church of its own, into which its will was the Baptism, and in which its interests the real presence. In Protestantism there is no supernatural power, such as is indispensable to giving rights to the individual, or holy sanction to the family. The soul and the conscience are again subjected to slavery; and the religion is again arbitrarily given by the master to the slave. The child loses its Christian guardianship, and its education, following the lot of religion, is either neglected, or managed by the State.

I have touched in a few words, and sufficiently, on the State in four of its conditions, as Theocratic, Pagan, Christian, and Protestant. It remains to speak of it under its last aspect, as neutral, or indifferent. Of this form of the State the world presents but the example of these United States; and, let me say for my country, that this condition is not of its choice, but a necessity of its conformation. This new condition of the State has come late in the series of ages; and is the result of circumstances. Nevertheless it must hold in its posture by the traditions of human society. With us the State is not Protestant, because the Protestant State is one that makes up a religion and a Church, and imposes it by force on its people. Neither with us is the State Catholic, because the Catholic State, is one not simply that guarantees freedom to the Catholic Church but that acknowledges the supremacy of the Church over all that affects or interferes with the soul and religion. Here the State is neutral, indifferent, or incompetent, because it is not submitted to the Catholic Church.

But the Catholic Church has taken its place as a fact, and as a philosophy, in the human and secular history of the world; and it is not possible that civilized and educated men can shut their eyes to it, any more, or that a people that have known its teachings can live and legislate as if it had never been. Its social traditions are planted too deep in human needs, and accord too well with the traditional reason of mankind! The State may decree and facilitate divorce; but the idea of the family is not buried, and its ghost still starts up beside all the hearths its gentle influences were wont to hallow.

The State disclaims any power of discriminating the true from the false in religion; but the soul of man has heard the story of a Redeemer, and an immortality; and it cannot submit itself thereafter to rest quietly in any such matter, as the slave of the State, or in the incompetency of the State. Liberty has come down to earth, and man will claim the right to seek it.

It is of this State, then, ladies and gentlemen, it is not of the Theocratic nor Pagan, nor Catholic nor Protestant State, but of the State as it is with us; the State neutral, indifferent, or incompetent in matters of the soul, that I said we might first ask whence comes its right to assume the office of teaching and educating children, and particularly of a people where the Christian tradition of the family is still recognised and cherished?

For my own part I am free to confess that, before I part with any iota of liberty, I am disposed to question closely the claims of the powers that would assume it. And I equally confess my distrust of every civil Government that seeks to centre in itself all the possible organic functions of social life. State centralisation is by no means a danger peculiar to monarchies, as the Jacobins of the French Infidel Republic could testify. And I have no disposition to conceal the apprehension I have of a too close copying of the ways of French Democratism by some men

who have had the direction of public affairs, especially in this State of New York.

If there were no such question up as the exclusion or admission of religious teaching from schools, I would have the same objection to giving up education as a business to the State, on political grounds. If I understand aright the principles of our best and honestest Statesmen; if I understand the truly national sentiment of this country in matters political; it is, that the safe course of our Government is to confine itself to the fewest and simplest duties possible for the management of public affairs, and to leave to the people themselves as many as possible of the functions of social life. To this principle, for a Government especially such as ours, I most cordially subscribe, as a lover of my country. The experience of the world and the experience of our own country teaches us that the accumulation of patronage, and the direction of the forces of civil life gathered into the hands of political rulers tend to their corruption, and lead them to use corrupt means, and corrupt instruments, if for no other purpose, at least for the sake of consolidating their power, fortifying themselves against opposing parties, and retaining in their own hands the possession of political power.—Such is our national experience, and such is the experience of the world. And therefore we may with reason be alarmed when we see what we have seen growing upon us year by year in the State of New York. When we see a powerful political combination of men arranging a subtle network of offices and of officers under the specious name of Educating the People, to be spread throughout the whole of the State; districting, indeed, our cities and large towns; but more formidable yet in the agricultural regions of the State, where local efforts to throw off the system are more difficult of preparation and of success. We may well be alarmed at it when we see the wires that sustain this network connecting, link after link, the districts with town offices, town offices with county superintendence, and all the counties with a one Bureaucratic Centre hard by the door of the State Department. When we notice that the links of these wires grow stronger at each conjunction, handing over neighborhoods bound to the town, towns to the county; while the State Bureau encompasses the whole with chains so strong that no local or particular oppression can avail to do more than supplicate the State power that has become its master,—and know that there is no effectual appeal, if the State Superintendent treats, as he has treated, the remonstrances with contempt! When we see the rapid strides that this scheme is making despite the partial remonstrances of a people who feel here and there the galling of the yoke, but have not penetrated the deep-laid plot that is working out beneath, nor the gigantic proportions that the system is hastening to attain. When we see a system of Normal schools for the exclusive training of teachers under State patronage; when we see these located at places where the influences pervading them may be easiest controlled by the State; when we know that the end of the plan will be the requiring as a qualification for a teacher the brevet or patent of this Normal school; when we know how certain and how powerful will be the political influences communicated from the wire-pullers for the time-being at the head of the Government to the teachers in training in the Normal schools; and through these on all the district schools; and through these again, on the whole of our rising youth, and on their parents in the villages, and hamlets, and on their farms, and beside the quiet hearths of our people, I am sure there is cause for distrust and alarm; and standing as I do this evening in the presence of so many men whose deep interest in the subject of the proper education of the young has brought them hither; and who, I know, have no higher earthly aspiration than to provide well for the perpetuity of our political institutions, and for the true welfare of the country that they love with such pre-eminent and real patriotism, I would not be true to my trust if I let the opportunity pass by, without declaring to them, what is the conviction of some of the most eminent jurists and of the best Statesmen of this country, that this whole scheme of absorbing, providing, and controlling by the State the education of the children of the people "is unconstitutional; is repugnant to the spirit and fundamental laws of this nation; is fraught with revolutionary danger to our political institutions; is a frequent source of corruption to our rulers and moral debauchery to our people; and is of the very essence and operation of despotism."

I have dwelt on this topic of the incompetency of the State in the matter of education far longer than I had intended. My deep conviction, of the importance of the views I have uttered do not permit me to regret having done so, but to discuss it as the interests of the State and of the people demand is not within the compass of time permitted to a lecturer. If the right government of the State were indeed

the object most considered in the Legislature of this great State, we might hope that some voice therein could be found to arouse the virtuous jealousy of the encroachments of administrative power that becomes a free and republican people, to consider the system that gives at present to the State Superintendent of Common Schools a power over all the public schools of the State, as unlimited and despotic as the Czar of All the Russias possesses over his people. As it appears that the true interests of the State and of the people must be looked after elsewhere, I can only say that with any competent and able advocate of the State school system of New York, such as are some honorable gentlemen I have the pleasure of recognising here to-night, granting him all the advantages he may have from his diplomas as Counsellor-at-Law, or from his Legislative experience, I will most cheerfully discuss with him, in any fair way he may propose, this great question of the competency and right of the State in the matter of popular education, in any or in all of its bearings.

But, for this evening, and before this audience, I must now pass on to other and dearer themes of discourse. I have said what I think of the right of the State to play schoolmaster; and that I would dislike it as a usurpation of a right vested in the family, although the method and matter of the education were in itself altogether free from blame. But I will now go on to show that our grievance is not at all a theoretical antipathy to a system that practically is working well.

Popular education is the work and the offspring of the Catholic Church. Dislike the truth of the statement! Hate it as men may; they are not able to dispute it. Before the Catholic Church established in her Monasteries, and along side of her Cathedral and Parish Churches, schools for the children of the people, of the poor as well as of the rich,—nay of the poor rather than of the rich who could be otherwise provided for—there was no such thing as an education for the people. In Paganism there was a discipline that looked like education, but every scholar knows that it was only for a class, who were expected afterwards to govern the State. If you would know how the Catholic Church educated the children of her people, go to Digby, the beautiful and erudite Catholic scholar, and read it in those marvellous books of his, his Ages of Faith, and his Compendium. Or, if any of you are foolish enough to distrust the testimony of a Catholic in this matter, go to Maitland, the Protestant bookworm of Canterbury Library. Read in his work, which in irony he called the Dark Ages, and learn the irrefutable proof of what I say. And, if you would learn that the Catholic Church is alone and pre-eminent in this work, go to the laborious compilations of the German Dollinger, and read in the very words of the first followers of Luther and of Calvin, the disorder, the decline, and the contempt into which learning and education was brought among the people by the Protestant Apostasy. Referring you to these ample testimonies, I content myself with the assertion of the fact that the Catholic Church, and no other, has generated popular education.

And the use I make of this fact is this: The basis and the great object of the Catholic Church, in bringing forth this education of the people, which under a perverted and monstrous form is now applauded as the special work of other agencies, was the deeper inculcation, the more intelligent appreciation, and the more thorough knowledge, of the doctrines of divinely revealed and positive religion!

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, there may be an honorable and fair difference of opinion as to the point I have been discussing hitherto. Men may honorably question whether, as I think, the interference of the State in matters of education is a usurpation and an injury. Men may have the opinion that as almsgiving is no normal function of the State; and yet, in this country the citizens agree together to let the State tax them for the support of the poor, and be their almoner; so, the people may, without danger or wrong, agree to give the State power to tax them for schools, and be their schoolmaster-in-chief.

But there is a thing that I deny that any man can honorably maintain;—and it is that the State, assuming such a right, or having it granted, can come in and pervert the fundamental idea and object of education; can substitute another and antagonistic end to be accomplished, and give back to the families that have a right to manage the education of the children, what those families know to be a useless or a pernicious education. The State with which we have to deal is not a Theocratic, nor a Pagan nor a Catholic, nor a Protestant, but let us not fall into the error of some Protestants of granting that it is an Infidel State. It is simply, not from choice but from necessity, a State, neutral and incompetent in matters concerning the soul.

Now what is the object of education? It is neither more nor less than, to fit man for accomplishing