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ARTICLE I.

THE SYMMETRY AND BEAUTY OF GOD'S WITNESSING CHURCH.*

"The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold."—
Psalm 45: 13.

In the ordinary ministrations of the pulpit, and meditations of God's people, Christ the Saviour holds, and ought to have, the pre-eminent place; and exhibitions of doctrine respecting his person and work constitute the staple of every evangelical discourse, and the characteristic and leading theme of contemplation and faith to every believer. But there are other themes unfolded in the Scriptures besides those which are immediately conversant with the person and work of the Son of God—themes which indeed derive all their interest from Christ, and concentrate all their light to irradiate his glorious and adorable person, but which do not come into the category

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among the first religious writers of the age. His reputation warrants a presumption, that he has done justice to the cause he has attempted to defend. We think he has. In discussing other subjects, he has been led to notice texts which, taken in their obvious import, teach that, before the consummation of all things, the moral state of the world is to become better than it now is. To these texts his general theory required him to assign some other meaning; and thus he has been betrayed into most of the extravagances to which we have adverted. He has interpreted Scripture absurdly; but it was because he has adopted an unscriptural theory.

This discussion has grown to a length which we did not anticipate; and yet we are far from having said all that we originally intended to say. We should like to point out the practical tendencies of the doctrine, that the world is to be converted. We should like, too, to show how it serves to illustrate some other precious doctrines of the Gospel. Perhaps we may find some future opportunity for the discussion of these topics. For the present, we will not trespass further on the patience of our readers.



ARTICLE VI.

CHRISTIANITY—A DISCIPLINARY ELEMENT IN AN EDUCATION.

It is a very prevalent, but very erroneous impression, that religion is valuable only as a preparation for another world. Some, however, admit that it has an indirect bearing upon what may strictly be termed our *temporal* interests, in that it restrains vice and strengthens patience. But valuable as Bible religion is in these respects, yet there is still another, superior to the last, and inferior only to the first, that is not yet sufficiently appreciated—we refer to *Christianity as a disciplin-*

ary element in an education—which it shall be our humble effort, in some degree, to set forth and illustrate in the present article.

The human mind is composed of—or rather is, characterized by a certain number of capacities called faculties—such as memory, reason, judgment, imagination, taste, &c. No education is perfect in which *all* these faculties are not equally and proportionately developed. If, for example, the memory be developed to the neglect of reason and judgment—as is done to a lamentable degree by the wide-spread use of a certain class of “labor-saving” school books, in which science is reduced to a catechism, so that the only essential qualification of a teacher is to be able to read in order to ask the questions, and the only required proficiency of the scholar is to have memorized the answers!—there is a want of mental harmony—there is something like intellectual distortion. Or, if imagination be unduly indulged without a corresponding cultivation of taste—as is done by indiscriminate novel-readers, and devourers of silly fiction—its creations will become grotesque and morbid, and its influence, which is powerful upon mental action, will be obstructive. Hence a perfect education requires all the mental faculties to be equally and proportionately developed in order to mental symmetry.

Some branches of human knowledge are calculated to cultivate one class of faculties, some another. The pure Mathematics, for example, cultivate the powers of attention and mental concentration—Metaphysics, the reasoning faculties—Languages and History, the memory—and the Belles Lettres, the taste, or æsthetic faculties. But something is still wanting—the noblest constituents of the soul are yet dormant. Man’s moral faculties and genuine affections remain undrawn out; and will so remain till religion—and by religion we mean Christianity, the religion of the Bible—becomes the magnet that will draw out and cultivate these noblest ingredients of our moral and intellectual being—we say *noblest*, from the fact, that they elevate our thoughts from earth to heaven, and become the ties and tendrils that attach our souls to the throne of God, and assert our kindredship to Divinity!

We have, 'tis true, what are strictly earthly affections, which are drawn out and cultivated by the earthly circumstances in the midst of which we are placed—such, for example, as paternal and filial affection, conjugal love, pity, sympathy, and such like, which many mistake for piety. These, however, are earthly affections, developed by earthly things, and designed for our earthly existence, and may belong to the brute heart, for ought we know, as well as to man. They are not, therefore, the distinguishing and ennobling lineaments of soul, that elevate the mind of man infinitely above mere earthly things—these, as already intimated, can be drawn out and properly cultivated only by religion. It follows, therefore, that no education is perfect in which the religious constituents of our nature have not been developed *pari passu*, with the other faculties of the mind—and that no system of mental training is complete that does not embody Christianity as a *disciplinary* element.

1. This it becomes, in the first place, by its influence in training the mind to that most difficult, and yet most essential of all mental accomplishments—*abstract* thought and reasoning. This is the first step towards that species of mental action that distinguishes the cultivated from the uncultivated classes. So far as the mere exercise of the *senses* is concerned, all stand on the same level, and, indeed, not much above the brute beast—because all can see and hear, and taste and smell, and feel—and, in this respect, there is not much difference between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, except that some may survey wider fields than others, and therefore may possess a larger stock of ideas derived from sensible objects. It is the power of *abstract* thought that makes the great difference. This is difficult to attain—it is hard to wean the mind from its first sources of nutriment—sensible things. Religion, however, is admirably calculated, and tends to effect this object. All its truths are invisible to, and unperceived by, the bodily senses, if we may so express it. God is invisible, the soul is invisible, the spiritual world is invisible, moral qualities are invisible, even heaven must be realized to the mind by the power of abstraction. The

first thing, therefore, a child thinks of, independent of the aid of the senses, is God, heaven, and the spiritual world; hence the great value of religious ideas in an education, in order to discipline the mind to that most indispensable of all mental attainments—the power of abstract thought and reasoning.

2. In the next place, the religion of the Bible is eminently disciplinary, in that its truths transcend the grasp of human minds,—and, we might add, of angelic minds, also,—fully to comprehend them. They constantly stimulate the mind to renewed exertion, whereby it constantly gains new strength and additional power! We are told in ancient story of Milo, the celebrated athlete of Crotona, in Italy, who could carry an ox on his shoulders, and kill him with a single blow of his fist; that he gained his prodigious strength by constantly increasing, in a small degree, the weight of each succeeding burden that he bore. That, in the case of the ox, he began by lifting the calf when it was but a day old, and repeated the act every day until it was a fully grown ox! Thus his strength grew, as the burden increased in weight, by exertion. Thus the mind of man also grows in strength and power, by repeated exertion, and constantly grappling with ideas a little beyond its present intellectual ability. It is easy to understand, that when a truth or an idea has once been fully grasped by the mind, it ceases any more to expand or strengthen it. For example: In learning “the multiplication table,” the mind of the child is constantly strengthening until the labor is accomplished—then nothing is gained by simply repeating over and over again what is already mastered. If the mind would continue to *expand* and strengthen, it must continue to *labor*. This constant tax upon thought is imposed by the religion of the Bible.

It is confessed that this disciplinary effect upon the mind is produced by any and all the human sciences to a certain degree, and for a certain time, and *only* for a certain time. All can understand the illustration of the “multiplication table.” At first it is disciplinary, but after it is completely memorized, it ceases to be so any longer. The same is true with regard to

any other human science—even of Astronomy, the greatest and sublimest. For after the astronomer has once thoroughly mastered the laws and machinery of the stellar worlds, the simple multiplication of worlds and systems of precisely the same sort, and governed in precisely the same way, ceases to enlarge the mind, or to be disciplinary, any more than counting the sands of the sea-shore would be! But not so with the thoughts and themes presented to mental view by the religion of the Bible. These, into which angels desire to look, multiply endlessly! The standards of intellectual gradation, contained in Christianity, are infinite! Infinite power—infinite goodness—infinite wisdom—infinite justice—infinite holiness—infinite truth—an infinite God—an infinite Saviour—an immortal existence—an eternity of duration! Themes ever developing, ever unfolding!—themes the most incomprehensible, and yet the most exciting!—that ever rise above the power of the mind, yet ever beckon it on to renewed exertion! Like the swelling ocean, whose surges are rolled against its own rocky battlements—the higher they reach, like the pendulum, the farther back they recede, but to renew the charge with increased volume and power! The more the sanctified mind knows of God, the more it wants to know, and the more it is capable of knowing. Therefore, we hesitate not to affirm, that there is no science, theme or thing, in all the wide universe of God so well calculated to discipline the mind, expand and strengthen its powers, and restore it to its primeval excellence as Bible religion!

3. But, in some respects, the most important part of an education—certainly that which is most conducive to our enjoyments, purely of a *temporal* kind—consists in the proper development and cultivation of *taste*, or the *æsthetic* capacities of the soul. In a world of so much beauty and sublimity, notwithstanding it bears the marks of God's curse, pronounced on account of sin—associated with beings like ourselves, still retaining some traces of angelic nature, in spite of the blight of depravity with which it is sadly marred; and, coming frequently in contact with the fine arts—products of human advancement and civilization—we should be cut off from a very

pure and high degree of earthly enjoyment in the absence of a developed and cultivated taste.

The taste is developed and cultivated by being conversant with objects of taste—that is, with sublime and beautiful, pure and elegant things, in the natural, moral and intellectual world—such as the beautiful landscape—the sublime mountains—the majestic water-fall—the starry heavens—the cultivated fields—the elaborate flower garden—the graceful temple—the finished sculpture—the elegant painting—the sweet music—the harmonious concert—the thrilling poem—the moving eloquence—the sports of innocence—the reflection of purity, of charity, of fortitude, of courage, &c., from human character—all which tend to develope and refine the mind, and thus capacitate it for the purest and highest enjoyment that strictly belongs to earth.

But all these things combined are not equal in producing this effect to the influence of Christianity alone.

1. What object in all the universe so pure, so perfect, so beautiful, so sublime, so high, so holy, so well calculated to refine and ennoble the mind, as the person, life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do we visit the galleries of Florence to see the “Venus de Medici?” Do we tread the corridors of the Vatican to behold the “Apollo Belvidere?” Do we frequent the halls of statuary and painting to contemplate the “master pieces” of famous artists, whose wonderful powers consisted in expressing upon canvass, or in marble, the attributes of human perfection? Do we read the grand efforts of poets, orators and dramatists, in their attempts to depict a perfect character—and all for the improvement of our taste and the refinement of our minds? How much more effectually is this end accomplished by the careful study of the life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ, as portrayed in the Gospel—in whose noble person were combined the attributes of humanity with the perfections of Divinity—holy, yet condescending—powerful, yet submissive—wise, yet patient with others’ ignorance—immaculate, yet indulgent—infinately above all sin, yet not above associating with sinners—persecuted, yet forgiving—“reviled, yet he reviled not again!” As a char-

acter, what can be more beautiful?—how is it possible to conceive of any thing more lovely?

But as an *actor*—in walking on the sea—in quelling the storm—in casting out devils—in raising the dead—in his transfiguration—in the dread scenes of the crucifixion—in his resurrection and ascension, what can be more grand, or better calculated to excite the emotions of sublimity and awe? These facts in the Saviour's history have furnished the rich material out of which artists and poets, in all succeeding ages, have elaborated their master pieces.

2. But even the *place* where our Saviour chose to sojourn amongst men—the local, the geographical scenes of his pilgrimage on earth, Palestine—viewed as our Saviour viewed it, is not surpassed, if equalled, by any other portion of the earth's surface, for picturesque beauty and grandeur. It combines in an eminent, nay wonderful degree, all the elements of every variety of landscape scenery. "The waste howling wilderness" on the south—the green savannahs along the sea shore—the vine and olive clad hills around about Hebron, Bethlehem and Jerusalem—the robber-infested desert, wild and rent and rugged, between Jerusalem and Jericho—the mephitic waters of the Dead Sea, enclosed by sea-walls, whose terrible grandeur defies pen or pencil to depict—the rich fields of Moab and Gilead on the east; the Jordan, the inimitable Jordan, gleeful as a school-girl let out from school, jumping, skipping, plunging over precipices, (twenty-seven in number,) whirling, reeling, waltzing, frisking and frolicking, until it plunges into the stagnant bosom of the dark Dead Sea, and is absorbed and lost in its bitter waters! Then comes, on the west, the exceedingly picturesque plain of Esdraelon, or Jezrael, the battle-field of nations; north of that the mountainous region of Galilee and the beautiful views about Nazareth, the Great Ocean, the Mediterranean Sea on the west, seen from every high hill top—the lovely Sea of Tiberias, like a gem in the richest setting, surrounded with gentle hills and olive groves, and vineyards and villages; and last, the great mountain ranges on the north, Hermon and Lebanon, with his hoary head wreathed with everlasting cedars, celebrated in poetry and song, looking down

from an altitude of thousands of feet upon the grand and beautiful and thrilling scenes around him! This is PALESTINE—a land which, for beautiful, for thrilling, for variegated scenery, stands unrivalled by any other land in the world! This is the land of our Saviour's nativity—here he was born—here he lived, here he died—here he arose again and ascended on high!—whose hills and valleys his feet trod—whose seas obeyed his commanding voice—whose mountains his eyes beheld—whose dark and terrible deserts witnessed his fastings, his tears, his conflicts! Whosoever, therefore, will study the Saviour's history, follow him in all his wanderings through the length and breadth of this picturesque region, conceive accurately and vividly of the scenes with which he was familiar, will thereby store the mind with landscape pictures and visions, which, for varied beauty and sublimity, cannot be surpassed, if equalled, by any other portion of the earth's surface!

3. In the next place, the *doctrinal* pictures, if we may so express it, presented by Christianity to mental vision, are refining and ennobling beyond anything that man can create, or earth furnish. What can be so refining to the mind as the contemplation of HOLINESS—holiness in saints, holiness in angels, holiness in God? What so grand as the idea of creative power, that which can create "the heavens and the earth," and call a universe into existence? What so awful as the judgment scenes, as portrayed by the pen of inspiration? What so beautiful—what so pleasingly, nay thrillingly grand, as the allegorical representations of Heaven—the "New Jerusalem"—with its "pearly gates" and "golden streets," and the glorious effulgence of the Divine presence? How can the mind and soul of man repeatedly and earnestly contemplate these scenes without being elevated, ennobled and refined by them?

Therefore we conclude, that simply as an *aesthetic* element in an education, Christianity takes the precedence of all other things that belong to the sphere of human knowledge.

4. But there is another aspect of this subject which we are unwilling to pass by unnoticed. It relates to Christianity as a *Base*, around which all our other knowledge and attainments

may, as it were, crystallize—or, as a *nucleus*, around which all our thoughts and all our desires, and all our acquisitions, and all the exercises and operations of our ever-developing and ever-expanding minds may, with fitness and congruity, cluster; which is not the case with regard to any other science, profession, theme or thing, in the whole range of human thoughts or pursuits. For illustration; if Medicine be the profession, then all that pertains to the science of Physiology and Natural History, &c., will be appropriate and subservient. But there will still remain a large domain of human knowledge inappropriate to this profession. Or, if Law be the calling—a certain other department of knowledge will be in quest, whilst many rich regions of human learning will be left out. So of the pursuit of any one of the sciences:—there is no one of them around which all our intellectual acquisitions can rally. Let us, for illustration, take Botany or Physiology;—What affiliation has this science with Mathematics or Astronomy? Or, if Astronomy be the “*Base*,”—What affinity will it have for Mental Philosophy, History and Civilization? Or, if the Belles Lettres be the “*nucleus*,”—What attraction will they have for Chemistry and Comparative Anatomy, or the pure Mathematics? what fellowship between Mineralogy and Morals, Mechanics and Metaphysics, Medicine and Mensuration?—Thus it is perceived that there is no one science, theme or thing, that will serve as a base, or a nucleus, around which all our thoughts, emotions, imaginations and acquired knowledge, can crystallize into one beautiful and glorious form, but Christianity alone! All the sciences in the world, like the concentric radii of a circle, may centre, and ought to centre, and *will* centre, upon Bible religion. Christianity is to them what the trunk of a noble tree is to its branches, leaves, fruits and flowers—the source of their support and strength, and beauty and glory! Is *Astronomy* the theme? “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge!” Is *Anatomy* the subject of investigation? Then we can adopt the language of the psalmist, “I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;—marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right

well!" Is *History* your study? It will illustrate the astonishing providence of God, "who works all things together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Are you a devotee of *Mathematics*? This science will reveal to you the wonderful, the amazing wisdom of God, as well in the structure of the plant and the mineral, or in the planetary system! Is *Taste* your favorite theme, the æsthetic departments of nature, if it may be so expressed? Then you may indulge a continual anthem of praise; for where will you look, and where can you turn, without being regaled with some thing that is beautiful and excellent, and noble and grand, indicative of the goodness and wisdom, and glory and power of the Father and Maker of all!

As, in ancient times, at certain seasons of the year, all the inhabitants of beautiful Palestine might be seen going up to Jerusalem, "the city of the Great King," each one with an offering to the God of Israel; so now, all the sciences in the world, like grateful devotees, bring each one their offerings to the shrine of the same God, illustrative of his "Being, Wisdom, Power, Holiness, Justice, Goodness and Truth!"

Thus we have attempted to show, but very inadequately, as we are deeply conscious, that Christianity is not only eminent above all other things as a *disciplinary* element in our mental culture; but, unlike any other department or species of human knowledge, it is capable of becoming, and ought to be, and will most inevitably be, the *grand centre*, around which all the thoughts, ideas, acquisitions, hopes and aims of our ever-developing and ever-expanding minds, may cluster in their fitting and beautiful proportions like polished stones in a great temple; and, like the precious ointment that ran down upon Aaron's beard, imparting and diffusing its Divine fragrance to all, rendering them subservient to the glory of God and our own everlasting happiness!

With these views and considerations, imperfect as they confessedly are, who would not desire Christianity, even irrespective of a future state of existence, to be a distinguishing element in our education, and the *nucleus* around which all our knowledge should arrange itself, so as to reflect the image and perfections of God?