

HOME,  
THE SCHOOL,  
AND  
THE CHURCH;  
OR THE  
PRESBYTERIAN EDUCATION REPOSITORY.

EDITED BY  
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ARTICLE I.

DEFICIENCIES AND MEANS OF SUCCESS IN  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.\*

BY THE REV. E. BICKERSTETH.

CHRISTIAN education is a most important part of every parent's duty, and the root of innumerable future blessings. It is common to hear complaints, that the children of pious parents disappoint the expectations which are usually, and not unnaturally formed; and it is true that this is too often the case; and that in some instances children piously educated, will, when they break through the restraints of education and habit, become excessively wicked; and they may even, like Eli's and David's children, perish in their wickedness. In these extreme cases, there has probably been either some serious neglect of parental duty, or the formation of unhappy connexions with others; at least every Christian parent is dumb before God under such awful dispensations, and is feelingly alive to the conviction of his own sinfulness.

But, after all, the mass of Christian piety in a country will be found to be in the generation of the pious; and though God shows his own sovereignty in raising up, sometimes, an eminent instrument of good from among the most wicked, he also shows the riches and the faithfulness of his own promises: "The generation of the upright is blessed: Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

It may be useful briefly to notice some causes of want of success, and also to touch upon the means of a successful Christian education.

I. In considering the causes of want of success we must first notice the *disregard of one of the most important religious principles*, a due knowledge of which lies at the root of all success in this work—that all children are by *nature* born in sin, and the children of wrath; that they inherit from their parents a carnal mind, which is enmity against God. However pious the parent, his nature is cor-

\* Part of the *Introduction to DOMESTIC PORTRAITURE* of Legh Richmond, &c., by the Rev. E. BICKERSTETH. Republished by R. Carter and Brothers, N. Y. 1850.

Am I willing—nay, more than willing—he should be lent to the Lord as long as he liveth. Where are our Hannahs? Did they abound more, we should have more Samuels, Elijahs, and Elishas. Ask if you have ever told your son how it is the duty of every one to serve God in the most effectual manner? If he be already a professed child of God, and endowed with requisite bodily and mental vigour, tell him that, while no Christian can have too much, no one ought to have too little, piety to become a minister of his Master. Tell him that it is a great work, in its obscurest form, and a good work, and (in Heaven, at least) a well-rewarded work;—for “they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.”



ARTICLE XX.

THE YOUNG MEN IN OUR LITERARY INSTITUTIONS.

AN ADDRESS, BY JAMES W. ALEXANDER, D.D., NEW YORK.\*

It has been computed that the young men in the colleges of the United States amount to about ten thousand. Here, on this single fact, the thoughts of every reflective Christian must rest and ponder. When imagination presents this great and interesting portion of our people, severally gathered in larger or smaller groups, the heart of fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers begins to beat in response to the resolution of our Church, which invites us on this day to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit of God, that many of these may be called and qualified by divine grace for the work of the ministry.

This is the class out of which the levy is to be made for the army which our times demand. Having spent most of my life either within a college, or very near to it, I declare with confidence that there is not on earth a more engaging collection of persons than such an academical corps. Their very frailties and follies have the freshness of spring; their mind and heart are at the precise point of intellectual bloom; and, when grace comes in, the result is a spiritual loveliness, which, in spite of inexperience and occasional excess, wins the admiration even of the aged. Hence, the more mature we grow in knowledge and religion, the more solicitous are we that God would, out of these beloved youth, seize on an elect host to carry forward the standards which begin to tremble in older hands.

Confining our view to any one seminary of learning, we observe in it some who *have already confessed Christ* and given themselves to his ministry. I wish I knew how to communicate something of the

\* This Address was delivered by appointment of the Presbytery of New York, in the First Church, New York, on the last Thursday in February, 1852, being the day of special prayer for colleges. Published here by request of Editor.

touching character which belongs to such a little church embosomed in such a little world! There may be wiser, graver, stronger disciples; but I am bound to testify, even in full remembrance of exceptions, that the world cannot show more simplicity, docility, zeal, confidential love, courage, and joy, than are visible in the young Christians of a college, in times of spiritual revival. Our best missionaries and pastors look back to the closet-devotions, the social praise, and the brotherly communion of college life, as among the most blessed favours of their whole spiritual career. To pray for such brethren, is to intercede for the hope of the land and of all nations. Around these centres the influence begins to act, which goes forth to numbers as yet in darkness.

Looking more closely, we observe by the side of these, in every great school or college, a band hardly less interesting; the sons of prayer, *baptized members of the Church*, remembered in the daily devotions of godly parents, objects of more trembling anxiety because of their separation, including a remarkable proportion of the children of ministers and elders. Removed from home, bereft of parental inspection and guidance, exposed to new temptations, at the period of haste, false-shame, vanity, and turbulent passion, they enter on a perilous conflict; in which many fall, and most would be ruined for ever, were it not for those influences which have often been graciously vouchsafed, and which we are met to implore. If it is desirable that the gentle, praying boy should not cast off all the devout habits of his childhood, or that the studious, modest brother should not return idle, intemperate, profane, and licentious, or the cherished hope of the Christian house be transformed into the arrogant scoffer—then are we rightly met, to seek God's direct blessing on literary institutions.

But around the classes now indicated, we behold another, perhaps equal to the other two, and not less marked out for influence. It is composed of those who come to college from *families where there is no fear of God*; sometimes from distant States, sometimes heirs of great worldly wealth, sometimes endowed with genius and fitted to wield their learning and science energetically in behalf of the Gospel or against it. And here I must be allowed to remark, that when, as is common, bitter complaints are made of the corrupting effects often wrought during a college life on young men, who, at their entrance, were comparatively pure, it is seldom acknowledged that there is a gracious reverse to the picture, and that in numberless instances youth have gone to the place of education from homes where, instead of prayer, scriptural training, and holy example, they had known profaneness, luxury, gambling, irreligion, if not contempt of God, and have had their very first lessons of divine truth in a Christian seminary. The occasion would not permit it, or I could support this statement by numerous well-remembered instances, including some of the most favoured and successful ministers. When strong impulses of feeling, either good or evil, begin to move freely in a col-

lege, such is the constitution of the little commonwealth, and such the singular *esprit de corps*, that they diffuse themselves with unexampled force and rapidity. Hence a mimic insurrection will sweep away hundreds in a night. But, by a happy providence, channels of evil may be made channels of good; and so, when a profound religious awe, and a solemn conviction of guilt, and dread of judgment and hell, and seeking after Christ, become the absorbing exercises of ten or twenty, as observation shows, they often pervade the whole; and to such a degree, that in every institution thus visited, there have been times when there was not a room, there was scarcely an individual, unreached by the religious anxiety. And afterwards—if you would know what the joy of social prayer is, or if you would learn true songs of thanksgiving, you must mingle in the worship of a converted college. Such are the precious years which some of us can recall; and in these God has been pleased to give bent and impress to the whole subsequent being of eminent preachers and pious laymen.

These, my Christian brethren, are not merely things that may be; they have been, and in repeated instances. And their abiding fruits are standing in the fields of the Lord, ripened by age, or gathered into the heavenly garner. Not to repeat what has been said of ministers, a large number of pious statesmen, lawyers, physicians, soldiers, merchants, and husbandmen, are ready to acknowledge that, but for their college, they would never have known the sound of the pure Gospel.

It is within three years of being a complete century since the Rev. Samuel Davies, not yet president of Princeton College, wrote to a friend in England, after returning from that country, in the following words: "The best news that perhaps I ever heard in my life I lately received from my favourite friend, Mr. Samuel Finley. . . . I had sent him some extracts of my British letters, giving an account of the revival of religion in sundry parts of England, particularly among the clergy; in answer to which he writes thus:—'April 16, 1757. I greatly rejoice that the Lord Jesus has put it in my power to make you a large compensation for the good news you sent me. God has done great things for us. Our glorious Redeemer poured out his Holy Spirit upon the students of our college, not one of all who were present neglected; and they were in number sixty. The whole house, say my correspondents, was a Bochim. Mr. William Tennent, who was on the spot, says he never saw any in that case who had more clear views of God, themselves, and their defects, their impotence and misery, than they had in general; that there never was, he believes, in any house more genuine sorrow for sin and longing after Jesus; that this glorious work was gradual, and spread like the increasing light of the morning; that it was not begun by the ordinary methods of preaching, nor produced by alarming methods. Yet so great was their distress, that he judged it improper to use any argument of terror in public, lest some might

sink under the weight. That what makes the gracious visitation more remarkable was that, a little before, some of the youth had given a greater loose to their corruption than was ordinary among them,—a spirit of pride and contention prevailing, to the great grief and even discouragement of the worthy President [Burr]. That there were no outcries, but a decorous, silent solemnity. That before he came away, several had received something like the spirit of adoption, being tenderly affected with the sense of redeeming love, and thereby disposed and determined to endeavour after universal holiness.’” In regard to results, I perceive in the catalogue of alumni (without attempting the almost hopeless task of determining how many of these were converted in college), that, out of the graduates of the four classes then in the house, more than one-half became ministers. The same is true of the work of grace in 1762. Of the first series were Dr. McWhorter, John Strain, Joseph Treat, Samuel Blair, and Dr. John B. Smith. Of the second were President Manning, of Rhode Island, Dr. John Lathrop, Dr. Theodore Romeyn, and President Edwards the younger. May I pardonably add that I witnessed, as a boy, the wonderful tokens of Divine presence, in 1815, when the late venerable Dr. Green rejoiced over the accession of forty young men to the communion of Christ's people. Of the classes recorded for these four years, forty became ministers of the Gospel. Twelve students only were communicants when the awakening began. Of the living I say nothing; but we perceive the value of the divine gift in some who have gone to give account,—William J. Armstrong, John S. Newbold, Samuel Darrach, Thomas Kennedy, and John Breckinridge. At least two members of this presbytery look back to a less extensive college revival, in 1820, as the time of their first effectual calling.

If these observations seem too much confined to one seminary, let it be my apology that, if my information were adequate, I would gladly recount similar harvests, in yet greater frequency, in other schools and colleges, especially in those of Yale and Williams, Jefferson and Oglethorpe.

When we consider how critical that period of adolescence is in which ardent minds are commonly tending to the choice of a profession, and how, in such instances as have been cited, the balance has turned in favour of preaching Christ's Gospel, we are mightily drawn to sympathy with the injunction of our Assembly, in prayer that many in our literary institutions may be called and qualified for the work of the ministry. We, beloved brethren, who are now labouring (ah! how imperfectly!), must presently give place. Shadows begin to pass over us; and there are warnings within and without that we must shortly put off this tabernacle. Among such tokens, not the least startling is to see our own sons shooting up beside us. To what sort of ministry shall we leave our work? What hands shall seize the plough which we shall presently let drop in the midst of the furrow? Thousands have the means of learning;

and never was learning more demanded, than at a time when worldliness, error, and infidelity, are combining to prostitute the literature of the day, and when the popular ear is itching for every mocking counterfeit and rival of the Gospel. Never was there a time when there was greater demand for a thoroughly-trained and regular and authorized ministry,—for which no hasty substitutes, however zealous, active, or multiplied, can ever be safely introduced. But learning may rise to any conceivable height, and only hinder the work of God. How vehemently should we pray that God would “apprehend” our educated sons, and the sons of the Church, and the sons of the alien, and make them chosen vessels! If false fire is sometimes thrust into God’s censers,—if revivals sometimes occur which are only the kindlings of bitter zeal, fanatical contention, and enthusiastic or licentious heresy,—the reason is all the more urgent for us to ask the true baptism of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And this we may do with lively hope, remembering the seal of the sacrament conferred on the children of promise.

When the excellent and venerable Dr. Proudfit was dying, and when articulate speech was gone, he made an effort to cite a chapter and verse of a passage in Isaiah. His family turned to it,—Isaiah 59: 21. It was this: “*As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed’s seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.*” The dying saint inclined his head in token of assent; and these were his last words.

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#### ARTICLE XXI.

### SOWING AND WEEPING: TEARS AND SHEAVES.

BY THE REV. GEORGE B. CHEEVER, D.D., NEW YORK.\*

THERE are great promises connected with personal effort to win souls to Christ. First of all, for its combination of place and grace, is that precious passage in the Psalms, “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him!” How full of sweet encouragement is this! Whole sheaves of souls shall the man bring with him, to present before the Saviour in glory, whose life has been a faithful sowing of this precious seed. Sheaves and tears! This kind of spiritual husbandry is exceeding profitable; there is no kind of labour on earth that yields so rich in return. Nor is it subject to any of the uncertainties of an ordinary harvest. The season itself may be unfavourable or unfruitful; there may be severe frosts or

\* Extracted from “*The Independent*,” New York; and referred, from the signature, to Dr. Cheever.—Ed.