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DISCOURSE

ON

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ASSOCIATION OF THE ALUMNI OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE,

AT THEIR ANNIVERSARY,

OCTOBER 9TH, 1833.

By WILLIAM EDWARD WYATT, D. D.

Rector of St. Paul's Parish, Baltimore.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE ASSOCIATION.

BALTIMORE:
PRINTED BY JOS. ROBINSON,
No. 2, N. Calvert-street.



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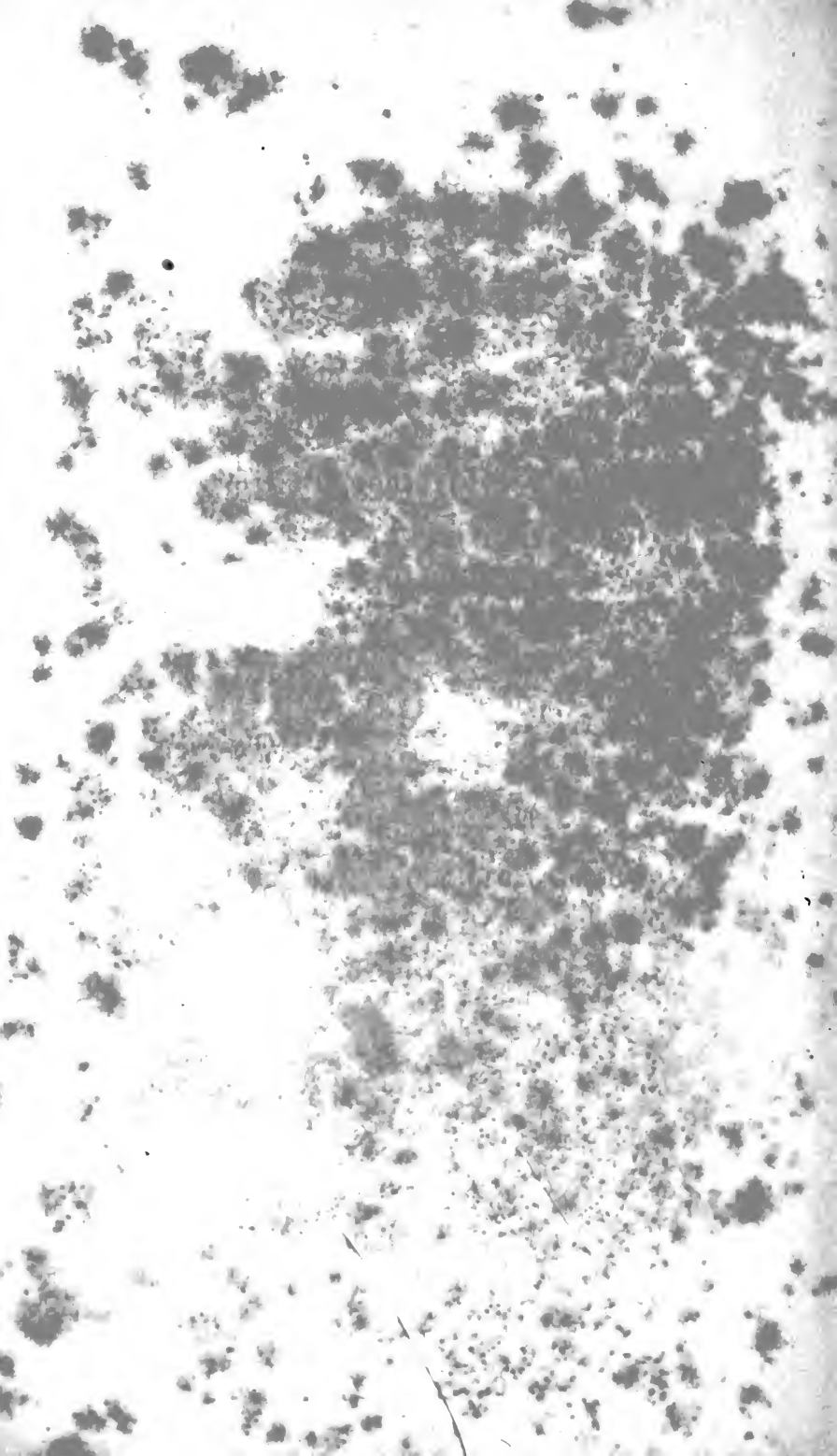
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NEW-YORK, October 9, 1833.

REV. AND DEAR SIR:

The subscribers, as a committee of the Alumni of Columbia College, appointed for the purpose, hereby respectfully tender to you the thanks of the Alumni, for the address delivered before them, by you, this morning, and request a copy of the same for publication.

We are, Rev. and Dear Sir,

Very sincerely,

Your friends and associates,

BENJAMIN T. ONDERDONK,
JAMES R. MANLEY,
JOHN I. IRVINE.

To the Rev. WILLIAM E. WYATT, D. D.



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DISCOURSE.

GENTLEMEN, ALUMNI OF COLUMBIA COLLEGE :

UPON such an anniversary as ours,—before this assembly,—it will not occasion surprize, that I find the office with which you have honoured me this morning, one of almost painful interest. More than four and twenty years have elapsed since I last stood within these walls. What changes do I behold in you, my friends, in myself, in the venerable institution from whose maternal guidance many of us were then just going forth with conflicting hopes and fears! After a period which covers a large portion of one's active life, through the flattering remembrance of me by your executive committee, I return from the comparative retirement of my professional home; and meet in your assembly those, whose integrity and talents are contributing to sustain the commercial prosperity of this vast metropolis; and others whose names have often reached me, as, in the various halls of justice, of science, and of legislation, the distinguished friends and ornaments of our country. With them I find many of the companions of my boyhood; and especially, those who are

ministering as guardians of public morals, and of the altars of our religion. The known influence of such recognitions will at least secure for me your indulgent consideration.

Fathers of the youth who are now just starting forward in the career, which, at this goal, once filled us with such emotion, we have arrived at a point whence we must look forward to the coming events in their life, and back upon the important occurrences of our own, with an emotion deep, perhaps sad, but not altogether unpleasing. Retrospection with us derives additional interest from the fact, that the period since we met, has also been an eventful one to the world. We have lived in an age familiar with illustrious transactions; and we may date almost every important social or domestic occurrence, by some convulsion in the great social system of nations, some signal discovery in science, some practical advancement in the useful arts, some obvious extension into the old world, of the spirit of the institutions which have conferred so much prosperity on this. But amidst all the attending activity and tumult, while alertness was demanded to accommodate the interests of communities as well as individuals to the ever changing position, and while our eye has been diverted from the passage of time, it has left painful memorials of its achievements; and our anniversary appeals powerfully to the heart, in bringing up the recollection of friends, alumni of the institution, whose names would have honoured the occasion, and whose sympathy would have responded warmly to the call. But where are they? We have seen some of them, separated from the stream of life, like waters abruptly falling with tumultuous roar and impressive sublimity over a rocky bed; and

others wending their way by secret and silent outlets, to mingle with the former in the same ocean; having in their course thither, only betrayed their existence by the peculiar verdure and brightness of the shrubs which covered their quiet banks. I cannot refrain from adverting here to the memory of one in particular,* who having lived long enough to extend our high estimation of him in his youth, to many others whom his mature virtues drew into the most sacred relation to him, was faithful unto death—for us, alas! too soon. And he has left his name inscribed upon a venerable pile in this city,† which is equally a monument of his practical talent, his pure devotion, his sublime zeal, and of your just and affectionate appreciation of him. How honourable, and how blessed the repose of the righteous beneath a mausoleum thus reared! How that edifice consecrates the name of Duffie! And now let the marble perish. Let the walls of that temple crumble as successive winters roll over them. There is a spiritual edifice there whose corner-stone he laid in faith, and which, like the temple of the Hebrews, shall be built without clamour or violence,—piled and cemented by the ceaseless, noiseless agency of aspiring devotion.

Scarcely any train of thought is more alluring, upon such an occasion, than that to which we should be led in pursuing similar recollections. They wear to the heart the aspect of a grateful tribute to worth and affection; and they animate our ambition in the same career. And in correspondence with the presumed object of the appointment with which I am honoured, I might recall to your mind traits of the history and

* Rev. C. R. Duffie.

† St. Thomas' Church.

virtues of some of the distinguished sons of our academic mother, if several who have preceded me here, had not in some degree indulged in a similar design. One especially,—himself amongst the most worthy and able,—“laying under contribution to his subject, the examples of theological learning, classic lore, and the literature of the day, which have emanated from these halls,” while he exhibits the opulence of his own mind, and the profusion of his resources, forbids so humble an attempt as mine would be, to follow him.

There is however another matter of common interest left for me, not inappropriate to the present occasion. And I avail myself of it readily, because it allows me to yield to the influence of associations, never, I trust, to be obliterated from my heart, while endeavouring to urge a profitable subject in the city of my earliest remembrances and affections. I allude to the necessity and the means of imparting christian education.

I am acquainted with no subject more important than that of christian education. And I can scarcely imagine any which receives from the great mass of society, less systematic attention. Next to his peculiar professional duties, the most urgent consideration with almost every man appears to be the measures of government, national relations and transactions. The exercises of religion occupy no small portion of time, even with many who disclaim an experience of its hallowing power. The successful management of societies, literary, benevolent, religious,—in this age of associations,—appears to be a matter of general concern. How many are the weeks, days, or hours, in the course of a year, employed to ascertain, and

practise, and disseminate, the most effectual system of training the young for virtue here, and glory hereafter? I do not ask the question merely in relation to the duty of parents. If the interests of science be of common concern; if national prosperity, refinement in social intercourse, the prevalence of sound morals, the influence of christianity, be matters which without exception, have a hold upon the sympathy and affection of every individual; then just views of christian education have a claim upon the head and heart of every man. The subject requires a close attention, because there is often much that is deceptive in the first development of the youthful character. There may be fair fruits, and valuable fruits, in a worldly point of view, in which however the heart of the parent and philanthropist would find no cause to rejoice. Weeds are often beautiful to the eye; more varied in their tints than the bursting grain. But men gather them into bundles to burn them. And so it is with the passions. They spring spontaneously in the rank soil of this world. And they are fair as patriotism, lofty as ambition, thirsty as avarice, or gay and flaunting in their colours as pride. But if not pruned of their luxuriance by the careful hand of education, and sanctified by the dews of heaven, God will root them out in the time of his displeasure.

I shall offer some remarks upon this subject, with an honest conviction that it involves consequences more deeply affecting human happiness, than the prosperity or existence of any nation under the sun.

We may infer the importance of christian education, from the present moral condition of our country, and of the civilized world. When, within no very remote period, moral and political freedom, brought in their train a host of minor corresponding privileges, it seemed that the benevolent purposes of heaven were about to be suddenly and gloriously accomplished. And this era of new hopes and privileges, which half a century ago was thought to have attained its utmost lustre, has continue rapidly and steadily to advance. Institutions of every kind, for the promotion of science, religion, and the arts, are multiplied beyond all former example. And about the period of the Reformation, if with prophetic spirit one had exhibited the state of things now actually existing; the ruin in which whole systems of ancient prejudices and opinions are seen to lie; the ease with which many luxurious accommodations are reached by the middle and lower classes; the speed of the countless barges, which virtually unite sections of country hitherto strange and hostile; the combinations to defend and raise the tone of moral conduct; the sums almost incalculable that are brought by fraternal nations, and placed upon the great altar, as a tribute of affection to the human family, and of reverence to the common parent of all; the number of pages which are borne by every wind over the earth, in the form of journals of news, journals of science, and of religious tracts; the multiplication of copies of the scripture, disseminated by foreign bible societies, and by our own, both national and sectional—if all this could have been foreseen two or three centuries ago, as characteristic of the present age, it would have been supposed that we were destined to live in a day of millennial felicity. But

what does experience prove to be the result of all these singular privileges, these combinations in the cause of religion? What is the true condition and character of society? Is knowledge universally disseminated? Is vice driven in confusion from the higher circles? And does profligacy hide its head, abashed by the sobriety and industry which so much knowledge of true religion ought to produce among the lower? Are nations regenerated?

The prevailing impression at the present moment appears to be that there is an alarming augmentation of crime,—alarming, because it suggests the idea of personal insecurity, and because it is the failure of means which, we might almost say, had exhausted every ingenious device, for bringing back an erring race to the holy pursuits, and bland dominion originally designed for them. How abject wretchedness still exists among the lower classes, where prudence and diligence would introduce competency and enjoyment! What an appalling exhibition does the daily register afford in every section even of this country, of the most ferocious crimes, of the most daring combinations of iniquity! To what cause can all this be assigned? Is it inseparable from our condition on the earth? Can religion do more, without encroaching on our freedom? Can science be much more distinctly identified with morals? Will much larger sums be appropriated to purposes of philanthropy?

It would seem that no subject had derived as little aid from the general diffusion of knowledge, as that of christian education: that no institutions had been as far from keeping pace with the moral progress of every thing else in society, as those which have a direct bearing upon the devout affections of the youthful

mind. The spirit of the times, bewildered with enterprize, has not yet reached so far. Education in the nursery, in the family, in the schools and universities, while extended to multitudes who some centuries ago would have been deemed not fit subjects for intellectual improvement, continues in itself in a great measure what it was at that time. Germany and France, have, it is true, long since revolutionized the ancient collegiate systems; and, expanding the plan of instruction, they offer to all, the pleasures and advantages of science, as their peculiar pursuits can render science profitable. But much progress in the moral condition of those countries, seems not to have been attained, nor even distinctly aimed at. The Universities of England, refusing to adopt the more popular form of similar institutions on the continent, independent institutions under the denomination of lyceums, lectures, and institutes, were very extensively formed. But the sole aim of these is to afford the mercantile and mechanical professions an acquaintance with the mathematical and physical sciences. They look only at man as a denizen of this world. These new and extended modifications of the system of training the young in the paths of usefulness and respectability, leave untouched the primary object of education. And it may often prove, that all the refinements of society, all the discipline of the schools, all the enlargement of mental resources, which the much vaunted age of the march of intellect affords, if not accompanied by the restraining spirit of christianity, has only supplied a power of doing evil, with more certainty and to more fatal extent. The Sunday school alone, among modern institutions, is of a different character: and it is difficult to say enough in praise of the

self-sacrificing zeal and piety of those who conduct and sustain these nurseries for the young. But christian education is a great work. It is the gradual transformation of a radically perverted and guilty nature, into a nature, free, benevolent, pure, devout. It is not so much the communicating of ideas, as the implanting of principles, and the establishment of habits. And when we reflect that the instructions of a couple of hours on Sunday, may be, and in many cases are, in direct hostility to the whole force of example, and the whole tone of the maxims, and the whole influence of the circumstances, to which the child is exposed during the rest of the week, it will appear obvious that the Sunday school alone can never effect all that is necessarily comprehended in christian education.

Even within the last half century, new temptations and responsibilities are acting upon large masses in society. Every condition has been lifted into a higher grade of privileges; and the human character is under an artificial or novel excitement, which would render more active devotion, greater control over the passions, a clearer perception of the nearness and paramount importance of eternal things, necessary to spiritual safety. And in these respects only, there has not been a corresponding advancement. So much time, it will be seen, is consumed in qualifying children to take advantage of the open avenues to distinction which the state of the world affords, that not even as much time is allotted to their religious training, as formerly when their dangers were much less.

The importance of christian education may be inferred also from the spirit manifested and the measures employed by parents in qualifying their children for usefulness, distinction

and success, in their present stage of being. And if this were their only field of action nothing could be more judicious than many of these measures. With the first development of the faculties, a spirit of rivalry is studiously awakened. Children are rewarded for excelling their companions: they are reproached for being less acute, less diligent, less decorous; and not for positive degrees of faithfulness or negligence. A succession of teachers affords a constantly renewed excitement; and many branches are laboriously inculcated, which scarcely any contingency can bring into direct application, merely because they enlarge the views, afford means of rational entertainment, and place the youth in a position as reputable as that of his companions. If neither a fondness, nor a talent, for the fine arts spontaneously appears, it is hoped that with culture it may be elicited, because they polish the mind. And to shed a grace over the demeanour, is the object of as systematic instruction as the sciences. To invigorate frames not yet possessed of fibre and energy enough for these continued toils, and to recruit the youthful spirit, liable to be quenched in the gloom of the academy, recreations, athletic sports, are introduced, under the skilful guidance too, of a master; and the muscular powers are artificially developed, at some bodily risk, and some pecuniary sacrifice, during the remaining vacant hour, or half hour of the day, as anxiously, as if nature had ever failed to teach her unsophisticated offspring to sport with gladness and alacrity. I do not say that this system of training so rigorous, this discipline so austere and repulsive to the youthful character, is *all* wrong, nor that it is enforced by the parents without much sympathy and commis-

eration. And unless the child has been placed at such a distance from the paternal roof, that the voice of his lamentations may not reach their ear, every species of indulgence, every modification of pleasure is promptly afforded; and to atone for the bondage of the day, the most uncontrolled liberty is granted in the choice of associates, in the occupation of a leisure evening, in the employment of a great part of the sabbath. And when childhood has glided into more mature youth, and the second stage of preparation for the active duties of life is about to be assumed, then with how much solicitude is a station sought for the young aspirant for honor and wealth! No sacrifices are too great, no perseverance in labour is deemed too severe, if it only furnish a favourable introduction to paths of worldly prosperity. And, for what, I pray you, has all this labour been endured, all this pecuniary cost sustained? If neither the constitution be worn down to premature decrepitude, nor the intellect jaded to a state of irremediable languor and imbecility;—if the heart have not assumed a character, selfish, unamiable, and mercenary, from a long series of instructions, calculated to stifle every benevolent impulse; and if dishonour and ruin do not follow, from the early indulgence of passions, which there was no time found to control and sanctify;—if the youth escape all snares, and acquire every desired accomplishment of body and intellect, and enter triumphantly upon a career the most dazzling to the parent's ambition;—what is the utmost degree of enjoyment and success that can be anticipated?—The result of all the vicissitudes of a period of forty, fifty, possibly sixty successive winters and summers. But what follows? When, for him alternate

seasons no longer visit the earth,—when the globe itself, which has scarcely seemed wide enough for the field of his ambition, for the fabric of his glory, has fallen into disorganization and ruin, what will be found to have been done for that principle within the youth which can never die; whose destiny, —infinite in joy, or wretchedness,—is only *now* capable of being modified, is left now to receive its indelible character from the impressions which the parents' love and wisdom may move them to make upon it? Can the conscience of christian parents be silent under the appeal? If the prosperity of the short, precarious, often troubled day, of our offspring's sojourn upon the earth, deserve, in the estimation of a rational being, all this discipline,—what is demanded of us to educate them for a perfect state,—for God,—for immortality?

Let me now briefly show the characteristics of christian education, which is education for eternity, in contradistinction to education for the world.

It may be remarked here, that the object being of universal importance, the means of effecting it must be attainable by all, must be adapted to the condition of all. I do not say, that the circumstances of some men's condition are not peculiarly favourable to the right training and nurture of their children: but that the great outline, the general principles, all that is essential, must be practicable in all the common conditions of life. And if this be so,—if God, in his mercy, has made the means of religious education co-extensive with the necessity, let no parent venture to decide, that the care, vigilance, and perseverance demanded, surpass his power and opportunity;

and that the moral principles of his children must be left to the natural course of things. Let him remember that, at least, his domestic quietude, the amiable and happy temperament of his children, their worldly prosperity, his security from public censure, can with certainty be secured only by a faithful discharge of these duties. And that having the divine promises to rely upon; if the work be undertaken and accompanied throughout with prayer; if the example of the parent be a living illustration of the qualities which he would have his offspring imbibe; if both parents coincide in carrying on the endearing task; and if, next to the business of their own salvation, it be mutually regarded by them as the great business of their existence upon the earth, they are privileged to hope, that, sooner or later, it will be found happily accomplished.

The first general observation that I will suggest, relates to the time of commencing this important work. Much is lost if it be not undertaken early. It is difficult to determine at what period of infancy, a tone of voice, an expression of countenance, may not impose a sense of restraint. However, long the commencement may be postponed, it must be attended with difficulty, which, a habit in the child of deriving pleasure from the indulgence of its own will, only increases. And whether you consider the absolute power of the parent at that period, the warmth of the infantile affections, its comparative freedom from strong and bad passions, or its pliability of character, it will appear that very few months of its life can elapse without furnishing an opportunity of laying the foundation of parental government. There is something criminally selfish in allowing the years of infancy to escape unimproved, because, during

that period, its wrong propensities cannot very much disturb us, and its characteristic attractions amuse, and engage our hearts; and when these attractions begin to decay, and our unmingled indulgence begins to render the innate faults vexatious deformities, then suddenly to change smiles into frowns, and to reproach as crimes, what a few months before, we had almost admired as the promise of engaging qualities. In some measure, as clay in the potter's hand, is the heart of an infant in the hand of a mother. And she may take a lesson from the artisan, who allowing many minutes to escape, that he might admire the fanciful forms into which accident had thrown the material of his work, and dilatory in commencing the process, would find that it had lost its pliant nature, and refused to receive the finer impressions of the mould into which it was cast.

Christian education also is studious to present right motives of action. No fact is more universally admitted than that there is in extreme youth, a susceptibility of receiving the most lasting impressions. And yet a vast majority of men act towards their children, on totally opposite principles. And the motives which are suggested to govern a child's conduct, and the impressions thus cherished, if carried into a future period of life, are such as would create the strongest resistance to the spirit of the gospel. The wildest reveries of the imagination, superstitious notions having no warrant or correspondence in any thing known to them, take a powerful hold upon the imagination of children. Why may not right notions of God, the Saviour, and an universal providence; of an admonishing Spirit; of an omnipresent judge; of death, which

more frequently overtakes infancy than manhood ; of a future state, through whose hidden chambers of joy or of sorrow, the imagination may rove, without fear of surpassing the things prepared for us ;—why may not these be employed habitually and familiarly in forming the youthful character ? Look for a moment, at the nature of the three great means of excitement, resorted to in the prevailing systems of education. First, there are rewards and punishments ; which, brought in as subsidiary to the influence of christian motives, and as the sanctions of christian principle, are always important, sometimes indispensable. But when the duty is to be performed, and the evil to be suppressed, merely because reward follows the one, and pain the other, the tendency of the whole must be to create a grovelling, selfish, character, acted upon by no noble aims, but making the present gratification of sense and self, the great criterion of right and wrong. Then follows emulation, which, I have already said, is cherished with the greatest assiduity, and yet, (if it be not paradoxical) is indolently relied upon, as the great spring to regulate the whole scheme. And what are the true ingredients of emulation, as it acts upon a heart not yet purified and elevated by the spirit of christianity ? They are, a malicious satisfaction in the defeat and humiliation of a competitor, combined with pride and vanity, on account of one's own greater merit and success. We may imagine that the bosom of perfect beings might swell with desire to utter the noblest song of praise, to be penetrated with the most profound abasement in its adoration, and to rival the rest of the sacred throng in the warmth of its love, and in the zeal of its service. And it would be

humility, and not pride, that would urge to the competition. But to foster a spirit of rivalry in a child, not chastened, not fortified, by experience of the hallowing power of religion, is assiduously to make him what, the alienated friendships, and the exasperated enmities of his social circle, will soon prove it least desirable that a man should be. And the third great principle of conduct inculcated by those who are careless about christian education, is regard to worldly success and admiration. Study is to be endured, because it is necessary to professional distinction. For this, the taste is to be refined and polished. An insinuating gentleness of demeanour is to be adopted, because it secures attachment, and co-operation, and praise. Genius and labour are employed just so far as wealth and honour seem to him to demand the price. And flattery, falsehood, and hypocrisy, are unhesitatingly resorted to, to open his passage, and smooth his path, as he selfishly urges his measures through the tumultuous rivalry. And what is the result of such lessons? To enthrone the world in his slavish and sensual spirit. Christian education, on the contrary, suggests as motives to the youthful mind, the favour of that perfect Being, with whom is no caprice, "neither shadow of turning;" accountability for talents graciously bestowed; the peaceful and honourable pleasures of a mind which delights in doing good; the salutary influence even upon worldly success of virtuous industry; the gradual qualifying, in spiritual attainments, for those promises, which soon, very soon, will be the only remaining possession of all, whether lofty or obscure. If the affections of early youth be pure and unsullied, as many delight to imagine them, then such views

harmonizing with their innate feelings, must be readily adopted. And if, on the other hand, the organized germ of passion and crime be there, the principles which I would repudiate, as belonging to systems of worldly education, must bring them forth with frightful precocity, or impart to them a malignant energy.

To christian training or nurture, the exercise of uniform and inflexible decision, is highly important. Revelation is distinguished throughout by this feature. Though full of gentleness to the humble, it has not the faintest shadow of compromise. It never recedes from its decisions. Its author exhibits it prominently, as among his characteristics, "I change not;" and the whole government under which he has placed man, from his earliest decree, is designed to exercise in him a spirit of implicit submission. The effects of this are happy every where. In all the relations of life, in the largest, as well as in the smaller communities, a cheerful and prompt submission to lawful authority is conducive, not only to good order and safety, but to the contentment and enjoyment of the governed. Now, we must admit, that a quality which revealed religion, and social order, equally demand, should be carefully fostered in the infant mind. Implicit submission to the authority of the parent, prepares the way for the subsequent exercise of the authority of the gospel. It is not meant to recommend severity, but firmness. Not the adoption of many and austere rules of conduct, but a steadfast adherence to those few and mild principles which have been judiciously chosen. A single conflict will very often establish such authority. To rebuke a fault is a solemn duty, and should be discharged as such, with-

out fickleness or passion, but with calmness and gravity. But when this is done, avoid a tantalizing recurrence to it. No character was ever improved by fretful and frequent reproaches. They destroy the sensibility of the child, and diminish his respect and affection, both of which are indispensable to successful parental government. To cherish these, manifest an interest in his concerns, and confidentially discuss with him your own. Identify yourself with his amusements, particularly if they are of a scientific character, and aid him in them. Seek familiar conversation with him, without obtruding, as a restraint or check, upon hours or engagements, in which he would obviously prefer to be alone. While such a deportment is maintained, the knowledge that severity may be resorted to, will generally effect all that discipline requires. And where it fails, a deep and anxious enquiry should arise, whether appeals to the heart and the understanding, with all the ingenious devices which religion and affection dictate, have been faithfully employed.

Perhaps in vulgar minds, superstition is esteemed as a lower species of religion, and rather auxiliary to its aims. Nothing can be more erroneous. It not merely shares that influence which the supreme being should have undividedly over the heart, but it is hostile to his control. A fear of the agency of disembodied spirits, a belief that certain days are ill-starred and disastrous, an observation of omens in the common occurrences of the world, every thing that would represent a supernatural agency, apart from God's system,—every thing that would represent the interposition of His providence as guided and carried on upon other principles, than those

which he has revealed, is inconsistent with the reverence due to his attributes. The manly vigour of the intellect is impaired by superstition. Fear and hope, directed towards God as the sole governor of the world, are enfeebled by superstition. The decision with which we would engage in any worthy enterprise, is liable to be impaired by superstition. Many an hour of rational enjoyment may be clouded, many an effort may be misguided or abandoned, through the power which a weak and mischievous tradition may acquire over the credulous. It is not enough to strive to disabuse the infant mind of superstition: the discussion of every corresponding topic, by servants or others, should be sternly prohibited; or when unfortunately introduced, dismissed with some brief explanation, as frivolous and discreditable. It is not irrelevant to this point to add, that parents themselves, sometimes transmit to their offspring an inheritance of absurd aversions, unavailing fears, and irrational theories, which the mere exhibition of their timidity, has insensibly fixed in the susceptible imagination of the child.

The common defects of education are violations of an obvious expediency. And it is difficult to account for many of them, except through the mingled slothfulness and indecision which cause men to submit to prevailing evils, until the extremity of the oppression stirs up a desperate energy in throwing it off. If a youth destined, under what were deemed propitious circumstances, to the conflicts and rewards of public life—to an intercourse with courts and cabinets—were left during his first twenty years engrossed in the pursuits of the agriculturist, with no other means of intellectual improvement

than the associations of a village—or if he were doomed for the same period, to the duties of a seaman before the mast,—who would fail to censure the ill-judged arrangement? If one whose condition, it was foreseen, would demand much capacity to endure hardships and toil, were permitted to pass his youth amidst the refinements and artificial indulgences of an opulent city,—what individual would not scoff at the cruel impolicy! Yet there is a much grosser absence of forecast, and practical discretion, in the mode of training youth for their eventful christian career. What is the condition of a boy, whose preliminary education had been conducted amidst the sheltered and safe associations of his father's house, when first introduced into the halls of a public academy! Who can justly delineate, without offending the ear, or shocking the moral sense, the profane and obscene conversation, the unfeeling boisterousness, and the deep-engendered profligacy of spirit, which characterize many public schools. I speak not without observation, nor without the knowledge that teachers themselves often mournfully reiterate similar sentiments. This however is but the first stage in the young pilgrim's journey. Let a parent, with but slight reflection upon the outline of life, with but moderate sensibility to the moral excellence and genuine happiness of his offspring, look forward to the trials and duties to be anticipated in every one's lot. That child, now so helpless, so amiable, so fragile, must go out,—perhaps when your voice hushed in the tomb, can no longer utter either admonition or consolation,—he must go out into a selfish world, to encounter snares and perplexities; to sustain toils and disappointments; to resist passions within, and com-

petitions without; sometimes to be borne down by bodily disasters; sometimes to have the heart withered, and crushed, under the weight of bereavements; and, at length,—when this long day of trials begins to decline, to see and feel the gradual loosening of all that he has thus toiled for, and the gradual but certain approach of a state, dark, mysterious, from which, without other support than nature or friends can give, the soul recoils in sadness and terror. Something of what I have delineated is inevitable in the case of every one. To more than I have delineated, an inscrutable providence may have destined your child, however brilliant his prospects now are. How may a single early association, a single early disastrous attachment, give a tone to the whole earthly allotment; and doom to sorrow and humiliation one that seemed born to virtue and prosperity! But if such are confessedly the perils and sorrows, which your offspring may encounter, how far is the usual plan of what is esteemed the best academical education, adapted to qualify them for the conflict,—to qualify them for endurance, for resistance,—and to render them through all vicissitudes, cheerful, and firm, and triumphant?

Admitting, as I do, the tendency of an intimate acquaintance with many of the Greek and Roman classics, to improve the taste, and inspire elevated sentiments, to perfect the knowledge of modern languages, and to afford a rich and refined source of entertainment, yet I must acknowledge, that the time allotted to these authors in the universities of Europe, in a christian point of view, seems indefensible. Putting aside moral considerations, many have thought that there is an obvious in-

congruity between the academical pursuits, and the future prospects, of those large classes of youth among ourselves, who though destined to active vocations, are instructed during their earlier years, as if born to labour in the cloisters of a college. And, while with a morbid sensibility, we aim in trivial matters at an independence of European control, it would be humiliating, should we be found, in one of wide and real moment, submitting to an intellectual vassalage so much at variance with the state of things existing in this country. Practical utility is the characteristic aim of all our other institutions. The distinguished men of the country are all practical men. And it is a matter to be carefully weighed, whether such a community should bind their offspring, almost exclusively for a long and important period, to the study of authors sometimes sensual and contaminating, when so many other departments of knowledge, equally fascinating, and to us, as a nation, much more directly useful, must be slightly attained, or left wholly untouched.

Now, if this be a plain, common-sense position, in which most will concur, how much more just is the ground of astonishment, that the whole system of worldly education, exhibits so imperfect an analogy to the spiritual destiny of the pupil! I would not so far weary your patience, as to detail here, minutely, the means of cultivating religious affections. But to represent the study of christian doctrine, not only as an appropriate, but as the first and indispensable duty of youth; to cherish in them love and admiration of the Bible, not by associating it in their minds with hours of weariness and rebuke, but by employing it to awaken their noblest affections; to train

their youthful spirit in the exercise of prayer, as the refuge of the trembling, the consolation of the sad, the guide of the perplexed, and the inexhaustible delight of the hopeful believer ; to guard their sabbath hours from waste and profanation ; and their hours of leisure and sport, from the snares which unprincipled companions might cast in the way ; to habituate them to mingle ideas of God, of his providence, and Spirit, with every occurrence,—with all that they behold,—and to find in such a recognition, a source of pleasure and virtue ;—these are means which cannot fail to exert an important influence over the destiny of the young, and should be prominent features in every system of education. If many of the studies of youth are pursued merely for the development of the intellect,—without a positive interest in them,—under the influence of authority,—upon the assurance of others, that mature years will discover their utility,—there can be no rational objection to the exercise of the same influence in behalf of religion, nor to employ similar docility and leisure, in the attainment of truths of immediate application, and of everlasting importance.

Perhaps with a still more anxious appeal to the conscience, should a parent ascertain what influence over his offspring, his own intercourse must exert ;—not only his observations to them,—for these they may regard as his lecture,—but his whole conversation, in their presence. Enquire what impression your characteristic habits, tone of feeling, weight of example, by its close and constant application to their eye, and ear, and heart, will leave upon their character. You are their earthly providence. They must grow up under the shadow of your wing. How blessed the child,

whose growing virtues prove that he has found the bosom of his parent, at once an emblem, and an agent, of the kind providence of God! Supremely anxious for their safety and happiness; hovering over them with a tenderness which scarcely any other relation in life can create; in the midst of the companions, and conversations, and pleasures, and the sorrows of the world, do you draw them around you, with a sense of your awful accountability to your common Father?—Or, placing those children at a distance, purchasing for them mercenary guardianship, striving to shake off your responsibility, and careless of cherishing their affections, do you fill the proper seats of those offspring with strangers; and waste your warm sympathies, your hours of gladness, the instructive fruits of your experience, upon the heartless companions with which the world will supply your prosperous fire-side? Surrendered to an impetuous love of pleasure, and impelled by a blind indulgence of your offspring, do you conduct them with you, into scenes at least questionable for a fallible being,—which cannot foster the purity that religion inculcates? Or, conscious of the madness of such a training of the youthful character, do you refuse to let them accompany you; and, by such a prohibition, only inflame their zeal to partake of pleasures which are thus represented, as too pungent for their tender age? Tempering their awe of the unseen sovereign of nature, by allowing them to witness the cheerful and affectionate confidence with which you approach his mercy seat, do you encourage them to carry, day by day, their fears and their hopes, their conflicts and their follies, their desires and their regrets, and to surrender all to his holy disposal? Or,

are they left to suspect, from all that they see of your example, that religion is merely a code of prohibitions, which we are taught for half an hour on Sunday, and which it is a penance to think of at any other time? Little, I am aware, need be said, to prove, that in the example and intercourse of the parent, consists a radically important part of christian education.

Allow me to offer one other suggestion, as highly conducive to the success of every other means. I allude to the expediency of greatly multiplying in this country, sub-collegiate schools, like those of Eton and Westminster in England, for the purpose of allowing primary classical education to be more frequently conducted at home,—at home, affording the security and enjoyment of your own roof, and your own table, if possible,—within frequent access to such privileges, if, from peculiar circumstances, more cannot be had. Were the advantages of liberal instruction justly appreciated, there would remain small necessity for legislative aid. Well would it be, that from the public treasury, funds were supplied to cherish genius, and to elicit eminent worth from poverty and obscurity. Noble would be the task of a legislative body, to train, perhaps for their own halls and offices, those whom adverse circumstances had doomed to a more humble vocation. But the citizens of any populous town, must be blind to their own honour, and pleasure, as well as interest, in failing to establish, within their own precincts, a school exclusively devoted to the cause of literature and science. Half the sums lavished in a vain ostentation, in aping foreign follies, and importing foreign vices, would introduce into almost every town, all those de-

partments of science, which refine, and exalt, and bless human kind. From the wide extent of our territory, instead of a liberal education being now attainable by large classes of the community, but a small portion of it enjoys such privileges;—at much pecuniary sacrifice too, and at the risk of much moral evil. Local attachments are weakened, which in those especially, who must be the future guardians of the public interests, ought to be cherished. And, instead of endeavouring to correct and exalt the prevailing taste, and literary character, of every city, by inviting into it a body of eminent men, great expense is often actually incurred to maintain such men abroad; thus banishing from their own society, that class of persons, whose intercourse, and labours, and example, would enlighten and dignify them.

I mentioned a purely collegiate institution, because it is deemed a duty solemnly to protest against the careless exposure of children, in academies and colleges, to the influence of such religious bias, prejudices, or principles, as the teachers may happen to approve. Morals have no sure basis but religion. The pure doctrines of christianity must be admitted to exert a happier control, than erroneous, and unscriptural doctrines, over the conduct and affections. What is pure christianity, is a question which it must be supposed every parent has conscientiously asked, and decided, for himself. And what he has thus embraced, as in strictest conformity to revelation,—as the safest guide to eternal life,—he is enjoined by every sacred obligation to inculcate, and have inculcated, upon his children. There is a spirit of reckless infidelity often manifested by parents, in the indifference, or rashness,

with which they place their offspring at schools, without regard to the danger of imbibing, what they must conceive to be an erroneous view of God,—his nature, his worship, and his will. No academical advantages can justify a parent, in exposing his children to the influence of principles, from the adoption of which his own conscience would revolt, and which, an experience of their practical tendency, declares to be unsound.

Why should a parent send from the shelter which God and nature designed for the young, those for whose moral principles, and means of usefulness, and cheerful and innocent enjoyment of life, he must be primarily accountable? Is it because their passions are found to be too strong or perverse, and their unformed character demanding an energy and vigour of control, which it is irksome to employ? And shall a duty towards a little endearing circle from which a parent shrinks, be performed by a mercenary agent with more effect, in behalf of thirty, or forty, or perhaps a hundred, to whom he is only bound by the ties of interest, or transient regard? I would not deny that, in some cases, it may be in the power of the principals of academies and colleges, through the influence of penalties, and of ambition to excel, and of regard for future interest, to enforce devotion to study, and a control over the public deportment of a lad. But can there be no lurking diseases when the aspect is fair,—no vice, but that which meets the eye of the world at noonday? Is every boy safe, and must he prove a blessing to his family, and an honour to his country, whom the rigid discipline of a college has rendered studious, and, so far as decorum in society is concerned, regu-

lar and upright? If the sacred influence of home, a mother's tenderness, a father's authority, the noble ambition to cherish esteem, and harmony, and enjoyment, where brothers and sisters are continually assembled about the same board—if all this fail to give an amiable and honourable impression to the character, a school-master's frown, or penalties, or admonitions, cannot effect more. Of what description are the lads that are *generally* educated at a distance from their parents? The docile, virtuous, diligent, who afford early fruit, as well as blossoms, for the delight of the cultivator? Not at all. But you send away,—I speak of ordinary practice and motives,—you send away the obdurate, and the impetuous, those that seem to have a premature bias to vice, who are not safe from contagion even within the almost monastic seclusion, if you choose to make it so, of your own walls. And whither do you send them? To an institution to which probably fifty, or perhaps five hundred, other parents have, from the same views, sent their obdurate, and impetuous, and prematurely vicious sons also. Exposed as they have been, by day and by night, to your observation, you have ascertained that there is much, or something, to fear, for their morals, and future prosperity in the world. And, *therefore*, you place them in some of the wards of such a lazar-house of moral diseases, at the distance of two or three hundred miles from you; and you lie down quietly in your beds at night, with the comfortable assurance, because you do not see the malignant symptoms of approaching ruin, that such do not exist,—that all is well,—that you have done the best for your children. The principal of the distant academy, long tried in his awfully re-

sponsible office, having proved that human agency, under such circumstances, can do no more for your sons, or daughters, writes you,—and he sees nothing in their countenances, or courteous deportment, to warrant a contrary impression,—that they are obedient, diligent, and go uniformly to church, and have accomplished a certain term or course of study. And upon the principles imbibed, and the affections cherished, during such terms of study, under such circumstances of danger to the honourable and virtuous feelings of the heart, depend the earthly career, and the immortal privileges, of the children that God has given you.

But it must be admitted that, these evils, great and deplorable as they appear, are at present in many cases unavoidable; and a liberal education can be attained by multitudes, only on condition of their encountering such risks. But what would seem to be the dictate of prudence, where education at a distance from home, is found to be inevitable? Let the distance be as small, let the alienation from your child be as often interrupted, as possible. And, instead of aiding to congregate boys in large masses, where moral or immoral impressions may be quickly, and continually, and powerfully, communicated from one to another, secure for him the privileges of a private residence, of domestic religious instruction, of pastoral care. And if nothing could prevail with you to sanction his intimacy with one unprincipled companion, when under your own guardianship, expose him not abroad to the contamination of many such, without striving to give him some equivalent for parental vigilance and counsel.

I shall conclude these strictures with a single remark. It is often objected, as at variance with mercy and justice in the Almighty, that he has threatened to recompense "the iniquity of the fathers, into the bosom of their children after them." And yet is it not incontrovertible,—that the parent himself, is often the agent in extorting, and executing, and consummating, this most awful of maledictions? When the parent has been guilty of undervaluing spiritual things in his provision for his child; of forgetting the privileges, and the perils, of the never dying spirit,—when, giving his heart's idolatry to wealth and honour, by example, as well as precept, he has trained his offspring in such paths—by this system of education, *he* draws down the penalty upon his child; *he* makes his child the victim of his impiety; while, at the same time, by all this perverted ingenuity and care, he chastises his own love of the world, with the scourge of an aching heart, which he has taught his unhallowed son or daughter to inflict upon him.

I would acknowledge an unfeigned sense of obligation, for the kindness and patience with which you have allowed me to detain you so long. The engrossing professional duties that have hitherto forbid me to participate in these anniversaries, may deny me the opportunity of meeting you here again. And I beg you accept as a memorial of cherished attachment, an effort, however humble, to awaken increased solicitude on a subject important to us, as patriots, as parents, and as christians. On such a day as this, it is as christians we are likely to allow it most weight. If every day fixes the stigma of vanity, upon the noblest acquisitions and achievements that belong to time, it is upon occasions like the present,

that we feel most deeply the admonition. They are often salutary occurrences in life. How mighty is the infatuation which, in the tumult of worldly pursuit, hides from us the instability of our condition! We are passing so nigh to the ocean which must eventually overwhelm our path, that the sullen moan of its dark waters would perpetually remind us of an inevitable doom; and yet we scheme and build as if upon a mountain which could never be shaken. The patriarchs, over whose age of primitive moderation and simplicity centuries rolled, without abating their natural force, or causing their eye to be dim, all felt that they were strangers and pilgrims. But *we* are apt to let the imagination wander over our three-score and ten years, as if we could never reach its bourn. Here, however,—upon these anniversaries,—when we have looked in vain for those who once cheered our labour, aided us in difficulty, or taught us to look upon the future with hope, a lesson is urged effectually upon the heart;—time, with its vain inquietudes and delusions,—and eternity, with its majestic and awful realities, are impressively contrasted;—and we return wiser and calmer to the duties that remain. It is under the influence of such feelings, and with grateful recollections of the ties,—endearing, and almost sacred,—that united us within the walls of our Alma Mater, that I leave you, beloved companions, respected friends, and bid you,—farewell.

ERRATA.

Page 9, line 17—after “edifice,” read “rising.”

Page 20, 8d line from the bottom,—for “imagination,” read “heart.”



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