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Address of Board of
Agency of the Presbytery
of Orange



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ADDRESS
OF THE
BOARD OF AGENCY
OF THE
PRESBYTERY OF ORANGE, N. CAROLINA,
IN BEHALF OF
AN INSTITUTION
FOR THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH:
WHICH IT IS PROPOSED
TO ERECT IN OR
NEAR GREENSBOROUGH,
IN THE COUNTY OF GUILFORD.

CHAPEL HILL,

PRINTED BY ISAAC C. PATRIDGE,

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1833.

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ADDRESS.



To the Friends of Christian Education.

THE relations you sustain as parents, guardians and patriotic citizens, will, we trust, secure your earnest and dispassionate attention to the views and arguments embraced in the following Circular. It consists of facts and observations, demonstrating the indispensable necessity of an improved system of education.

The main object of every good system of Education it will be conceded by all, is the thorough qualification of youth for the faithful discharge of the relative duties of life. Any system which aims at less, or limits its attention to only a part of these duties, is radically defective. Practical evidence of this will be afforded daily in the lives of those whose instruction has thus been neglected, to the poignant distress of the individual, and the loss to society of uncultivated talent. Even collegiate credentials and literary distinctions will be inadequate to supply the want of unfinished, ill directed or misimproved studies, when the young man assumes his station in active life. The expectations of parents and friends, the necessity of his circumstances, the natural ardour of youth, *all* will soon concentrate his attention on the study of some learned profession, or the pursuit of some civil avocation: While the busy scenes of life with its incidental anxieties will engross all the time and attention which he has at his command. Unless then he has laid a good foundation in the golden period of life, the probability is great, that the deficiencies in his education will never be supplied. How many young men do we see who thus set out in life with brilliant hopes glowing in their bosoms, animated by the fond anticipations of relatives and friends, and their cheering predictions of future eminence and usefulness—But when we follow them for a few years, and witness their bearing under the rude shock of competition, or see them grapple with the details of practical business, our hearts sink within us as we behold them lost by the way or surpassed by men whom we know to be in general far inferior to them in intellectual power. Whence we are led to inquire the reason of this painful result? Upon investigation we ascertain that our young friend has left

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some important branch of education unfinished or superficially studied: Or there are traits of character or habits arising from his principles, temper or disposition which prove that the *heart* rather than the *head* constitutes the obstacle to his eminence and usefulness.

We would, therefore, lay down as a fundamental principle, the position, *that any system of instruction, which does not contemplate the improvement of the heart, as well as the cultivation of the mind, is inadequate to attain all the ends of a good education.* There is no necessary connexion between science and virtue, as the history of the world can attest: And unless the seeds of virtue be sown, as well as those of knowledge, it is perfectly vain to look for their spontaneous spring or development in the youthful heart. Talents unsanctified, although conjoined with the loftiest intellect, promise no blessing, but rather a curse to all within the circle of their influence. The richest endowments of a beneficent Creator have in hundreds of instances been perverted by pride and unhallowed ambition to the impious and ungrateful attempt to dim the ineffable glories of God, and to blast the happiness of mankind by opposing the progress of benevolence and virtue! Here it is evident beyond a doubt, that the education of such a man has been wofully neglected. And such will, we believe, ever be the natural tendency, so long as unregenerate youth, even under the superintendence of Christian instructors of unquestionable piety, have their minds directed solely to literary and scientific studies.

The Professors of a College take it for granted that the youthful mind has been early imbued with the elements of religious knowledge in the nursery and preparatory schools. They stand ready to lead the tyro further into the recesses of the temple of Science. But generally speaking the religious foundation has never yet been laid. The study of Mathematics and Philosophy, the Classics and polite literature (all preliminary qualifications to worldly eminence) are the principal studies of a College course. The history of heathen gods and goddesses is pondered over and mastered by a pupil, who knows nothing scarcely of the true God or of Jesus Christ whom he has sent, although to know them aright is eternal life! Not to know them, is to live without God and without hope in the world. The important principle "Know thyself," is, strictly speaking, equally neglected. Instead of storing the retentive memory with the simple and sublime truths, which would cause the young to "remember their Creator in the days of their youth." God is not set before them *in such studies*, or at least scarcely ever, in such a way as to interest their attention or engage their affections. Prone at all times naturally to love the world, their imaginations and affections are suffered to run out inordinately after the

vanities and allurements, which will infallibly end in the bitterest disappointment. Secular aggrandizement is held up before their eyes as the prize of excellence, and the chief and greatest good of man, directly in the face of the question "What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" If a youth, thus half taught, on his entrance into life, escapes from the dangers and vices which beset him on every side, it will be by sovereign grace that his feet are saved from falling into death, his soul preserved from ruin! The restless desire of happiness will urge him on from one scene of untried worldly enjoyment to another, and all are dressed in the most alluring guise, to his young imagination and weak judgment. What hope can his more enlightened friends have, that his frail bark shall escape shipwreck, amid the breakers of life's perilous ocean, or will not be dashed to pieces against the half concealed rocks in his course, or lost forever in the quicksands of the grossest vices?

Among the perils to which the youthful student is exposed during his college life, may be enumerated, 1. The danger of corruption by the studies of his classical course. So thoroughly convinced are we of the pernicious effects of many standard classical authors *not expurgated*, that we would hail their extinction with joy rather than see them studied as they now are. It is absurd to expect that the mind will not be contaminated by the foul and disgusting details of heathen mythology, and by the licentious narratives and corrupt sentiments of many profane writers. The very process of decyphering, word by word, an impure allusion of a Latin or Greek author, in order to evolve its meaning, is one of the most powerful methods of impressing it on the mind. Nor can any Christian instructor palliate the turpitude of such passages. His explanations merely serve to gild the insidious poison and give it a securer lodgment in the carnal heart.

Another peril in this crisis of life is the kind of general reading to which the student has access. The imagination and memory are now the prominent faculties of the mind. They therefore select its food, and like the food of the body it will produce a healthful nutriment or baneful influence according as it is selected and digested. If the youthful mind be disciplined by a judicious course of reading, the mental constitution will be invigorated and receive a bias to wisdom and refinement. If novels, impure poetry, trashy productions, or curious and idle speculations engross the time, another licentious coxcomb will be palmed upon society. But besides these there are many books easy of access which abound with the most pernicious errors; and others valuable in the main, but interspersed here and there with false conclusions the more insidious and dangerous on account of their con-

taining many useful truths. It is, hence, a thing of constant occurrence, that many graduates of a good Institution have to employ often much time in unlearning errors they have insensibly imbibed during their collegiate course. We therefore express it as our deliberate conviction that the course of general reading from the Libraries of an institution ought to be specially pointed out, and a paternal supervision exercised over those engaged in pursuing that course.

Again another source of peril arises from the influence of association (for association necessarily implies influence) with corrupt and badly trained youth. The immense power this circumstance exerts in moulding the character of the young it is almost impossible to estimate. It is faintly shadowed forth in the aphorism, "Tell me with whom you go, and I will tell you what you do." The pleasures of friendship are the most congenial emotions, which, at this time, play around the youthful heart. The selection of his friends, to a young man, will then be of momentous importance. He will form an alliance with young men who "think of and do whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report," and thus be rendered amiable, wise and useful. Or he will choose for his friends young men of idle and corrupt habits. His external conduct will be disgraced by profaneness, gaming, intemperance, dissipation and bullying. While his heart is the seat of guile, malice, envy, ambition, pride, lust; and worse than all, *infidelity* enthroned in the midst, waves its baleful sceptre over the infant empire of dark passions and malignant vices. The above is no fancy sketch but a faithful representation of the perils to which youth are liable at almost every public Literary institution in our country. What parent does not tremble for the early moral principles of his children, exposed as they must be to such great and manifold temptations, as soon as they leave the parental roof, even with the laudable design of obtaining a good education?

It may be urged by some, that their sons are no more exposed than those of others to the perils of a collegiate course at a public seminary. It is granted—and this aggravates the danger—for there is not only *action* but *reaction*. But even conceding that their sons are better than those of others as to morals, does this blot out the truths of the word of God? "Ye must be born again." "Except ye repent ye shall *all* likewise perish." "Remember *now* thy Creator, in the days of thy youth." "Get wisdom"—"The *fear of the Lord* is the *beginning of wisdom*." If these truths are to have their proper weight, the conclusion is irresistible, that the *beginning* of every correct system of education will be the instruction of youth in *their relative religious duties*. But we may again be met, by the inquiry, "Does it

not require ordinarily the most powerful minds to comprehend those relative duties? We reply, "It does not," and in proof of our position adduce the Holy scriptures and experience. The plan of salvation is distinguished by great simplicity, so that "he that runs may read:" and to the docility of children in early youth, the most precious promises are annexed. Undeniable facts also demonstrate, that the elementary instruction of youth in our Sabbath Schools in the pure, simple truths of the Gospel, results in the conversion of thousands of them every year. If there be any difficulty of comprehension, it arises mainly from this, *that the critical period of religious instruction* has been overlooked or neglected, the heart has been filled with the world and its maxims, and the strong man armed has usurped the throne of the affections, and will not be dislodged, except by a stronger power.

The cardinal duties of religion "*love to God and love to man,*" can be easily understood and practised by youth. In proof of this we may adduce examples in youth (of both sexes,) not yet discharged from scholastic discipline, who do understand these relative duties and fulfil them in a manner lovely and exemplary. It is not the want of scientific knowledge that prevents all others from being, in like manner, children of God, but the carnal opposition of their hearts, the wrong bias of their wills, and the *tendency of the habit of repugnance to truth, to harden the heart.* On the other hand, the docility of youth, their amiable pliancy, their unaffected humility, the tenderness of their affections, the clearness of their minds, (unclouded by violent passions, unaccustomed to wilful self-deception unsophisticated by subtle falsehoods, above all uncorrupted by vice and unfettered by habit,) present a series of circumstances most favourable to religious susceptibility. This is emphatically the auspicious period, and this neglected or lost the consequences may be inconceivably dangerous and eternally ruinous!

We further maintain that the best interest of society call loudly for such a reform in the systems of education as shall insure the more thorough religious instruction of youth. Literary men always command the homage of the majority of their fellow citizens. If they are infidel or profligate their example must exert a pernicious influence on society. As to the youth themselves ignorance of the Bible, or unbelief of its tenets is found invariably to be the first step in a licentious, immoral and degrading course of life. Thus we perceive that without the religious education of youth, there is no well-founded hope of their being distinguished either by purity of mind or stability of character. This leads us irresistibly to the conclusion that the study of the plain, pure and practical truths of the Bible has been

most injudiciously overlooked or neglected, in the ordinary systems of education. Truth is the grand aim of every one who aspires to the possession of a well cultivated intellect. A Book then which has God for its author—sublime beyond all human writings, a most authentic history extending over a period of 4000 years—a complete rule of faith and practice—and lastly the only guide to eternal salvation, ought surely to be the most intensely interesting of all studies! But strange as it may seem, so much, at present, is this most important branch of study neglected, that it would appear that Christian parents and guardians acted under the impression, that if the youthful mind were imbued with scientific learning, the principles of religion would in some extraordinary way be superadded as a thing of course. But the Holy Scriptures themselves, sustained by facts of daily occurrence, warn all men that the strait gate is found by few, while thousands throng each other in the broad road to destruction. Religion will never come without effort. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” We have no hesitation, therefore, in concluding, that the elementary principles of sound religious education are the only solid foundation stone of all true greatness, lasting reputation, efficient usefulness, and real happiness in the world.

In many parts of our country the public attention has been directed to the necessity of combining with the ordinary system of education, a regular course of bodily exercise. That a proper cultivation of the *physical* powers of man by well regulated *exertion* is essential to their full *development*, none we presume will deny. That this development is necessary to robust health, from the mutual sympathy and dependence of mind and body, is equally true, though not so generally known. Yet facts and observations multiply, daily, in support of the important position, that every system of education is defective, which does not include, with a practical reference, the whole range of mental and physical discipline. The virtuous and wise only can be really great or truly useful. And the healthy and vigorous only can be useful long. A sound mind cannot exist long, in its clear and energetic exercise in a delicate and enfeebled body. The very exertions of such a spirit will soon shatter and destroy the earthy mould which surrounds it. Such persons, therefore, we perceive, speedily after their entrance upon the important duties of life are compelled to suspend all exertion for long intervals or perhaps for life; or, with melancholy self-immolation, persist in their office, and go down, declining gradually, through a routine of painful efforts, to an untimely grave.

Finally, we are actuated by another consideration of the necessity of the proposed institution, which must strike the minds of all who

have carefully observed the state of education in North Carolina for many years. It is a fact well known and which cannot fail to excite general regret, that the present expenses at literary institutions, exclude virtually great numbers of young men, whose moral and mental qualities render them eminently worthy of patronage. Promising as their early indications of talent may be, the path to useful and laudable distinction is closed to hundreds of youth by the high scale of expenses in our public schools. It is, hence, a *prominent object*, in founding and locating such an Institution, *so to diminish its expenses*, (Board, Tuition and other incidental expenses) as that parents may secure for their children, and industrious youth attain for themselves, at a moderate expense, all the advantages of a sound, thorough, practical education.

The extensive moral influence of schools established on the plan contemplated, would be incalculably beneficial. They would powerfully affect the interests of the rising generation, the civil and domestic relations of life, the state of the church and the world. What might not our country have a right to expect from her young men, returned to the bosoms of their parents and friends, thus thoroughly educated in virtue and knowledge? What a field of usefulness and true glory would be opened to these vigorous and intelligent youth, for disseminating sound learning and good examples? How eminently blest would be that state which could number many such men in her commonwealth?

The Presbytery of Orange having at its late session passed a resolution to establish an institution, (which shall be conformed to the principles contained in this address,) and determined its location at or near the town of Greensborough, Guilford county, N. C. appointed the undersigned a Board of Agency, to promote, as far as practicable, this desirable object. The Board met and after mature deliberation, suggest the following outlines* of a plan of such an Institution, as to them appears to accord with the views of Presbytery, which they proceed forthwith respectfully to lay before that body and the public.

1st. The BIBLE, with the evidences of christianity, shall form an indispensable part of the system of instruction, in this Institution.

2d. That provision shall be made for the regular performance of pastoral duties and devotional exercises, as well as for a diligent attention to the morals of the pupils under the care of the Institution.

3d. That none other than *expurgated editions* of the Classics shall be studied; and a parental supervision shall be exercised in regard to the books for the general reading of the students.

* The details of the above plan will be hereafter presented to the public.

4th. That a manual labour department* shall be attached to the Institution on principles of convenience and utility, as shall accord with the views of Presbytery and those of an enlightened public.

5th. That the expenses for Board, Tuition, and other contingent fees shall be so reduced, as to place the attainment of a good education within the reach of young men of moderate circumstances.

In closing this address to the public, we conceive that justice to others, as well as ourselves, requires the explicit avowal, that the general strictures we have hazarded on the existing modes of instructing youth, were, we believed, imperiously demanded by the wants of the age. These strictures are aimed at systems of education, not at any man or set of men. Of their truth and justness, an enlightened christian public must decide. We frankly admit that perfection is not to be expected in any human institution. But that the present state of our literary Institutions is radically and essentially bad, we are thoroughly convinced. Some of their defects we have alluded to, but there are others the insertion of which would be precluded by the limits of this address. We appeal to the enlightened candour and experience of every christian and patriot, as to the truth and importance of the views we have presented, and the highly beneficial results, which may be expected to follow the adoption of the system we have respectfully suggested. Relying on the assistance of God, and conscious of the purity of our motives, we cheerfully submit the model of this great enterprise to the liberality and piety of a discerning public, and earnestly solicit their aid and co-operation.

Signed,

SAML. L. GRAHAM,
ALEX. WILSON,
DANIEL L. RUSSELL,
WILLIAM NEIL,
E. W. CARUTHERS,
WM. A. SHAW.

*We think it important to observe that it is not the design of the Presbytery to suspend the existence of the proposed Institution on the failure or success of the manual labour department. This department is intended merely as an appendage to the Institution, which may be either continued or dispensed with, as experience shall decide. Nor will its operation materially affect the accomplishment of any of the objects specified in this address.



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