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# Biennial Address

before the

## Southern Christian Convention

### Elon College, N. C.

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# Christian Education

By Rev. W. W. Staley, President

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Humanity made progress solely by self-instruction till God revealed Himself and Jesus became the Teacher of mankind. The early ages reveal the faults of self-made men and self-taught nations. They are always imperious. They lead in rule and religion and, like Confucius, found empires and cults more human than divine. Yet education permeates all history, sustains all enterprises, and fixes all standards. Its worth is recognized by the expenditure of money, the numbers engaged in its conduct, and the variety of subjects with which it deals. The United States alone has a quarter of a million schoolhouses, worth one billion dollars, instructing twenty million pupils with one hundred thousand male and four hundred thousand female teachers, who receive two hundred million dollars in salaries. The whole public school system proves the estimate the nation places upon education. Yet the ten declarations of the forty-seventh annual convention of the National Educational Association in Denver contains no reference to "Christian Education." Democracy, commerce, culture, citizenship, physical education, better trained teachers, and consolidation of rural schools make up the list of requisites. As the State universities are heads of the public schools we cannot look to them for Christian training. It remains, therefore, for denominational colleges to do this work, if done at all. But as the education of the child is the education of mankind, public schools ought to read the Bible and be taught by Christian instructors. The only way to make public school teaching Christian is for denominational colleges to turn out more Christian teachers.

Religious leaders have always led in education, and it might be safely said that education and religion are co-related in history. This truth lies at the bottom of Christian education, though obscured in past centuries by the processes of its evolution. From the earliest times religion has been the silken thread in the currency of human thought and progress, and it is now

proofs of the truth of the Scriptures. The purpose of this address will be achieved, if it lead others to carry the investigation to a full understanding of this great and growing subject. I shall come to what I wish to present better, perhaps, by a series of five steps or propositions which show the course leading up to "Christian Education."

## **I. First Step—Religious Education.**

All nations and races prove that man is religious. His concepts may be vague and his life coarse, but man has spiritual longings the world over. All men have gods and worship. The priests of mankind were originally charmers, soothsayers, magicians, seers. The High Priest of Memphis was a Master Craftsman; the High Priest of Heleopolis was a Great Seer. The priestly class was the cultured class. Rulers consulted them. Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh called in the sorcerers and magicians when disturbed by dreams. Egypt, China, Babylonia, and India looked to their religious priests for council, and the shrines ruled the thrones, the priests ruled the kings, armies obeyed the voice of priests and priestly amulets were mightier than the crowns of kings. Religion ruled the world. It is true it was crude in concept, corrupt in practice, tyrannical in administration, and immoral in results; but nations bowed in its temples and sacrificed themselves upon its altars. The temples of Ur and Erech on the Tigris; of Luxor and Karnak, on the Nile; of Baalbec, on the Orontes; of the parthenon, in Athens; the temple on Moriah; and the Pantheon by the Tiber, all tell the story of religion and the education of centuries. Architecture sprang from religious emotions and became a fine art under religious aspirations and devotion. The education of Mohammedanism today is almost wholly religious. Modern times may blame the crude religion of myths, but it was better than no religion. All art and progress expressed themselves in terms of religion. It carved out of Parian marble the Olympian Jupiter and crowned the Athenian capital with the temple of Theseus. Religious education achieved great things for the human race and made the trowel, chissel, and brush work out masterpieces which subsequent ages cannot surpass.

## II. Second Step—Literary Education.

At this stage the art of expression was supreme. Greece taught all nations the art of expression. Intellect reached its summit. Books, oratory, architecture, sculpture, painting reached their height. Culture ruled the world. Her mythology was great and inspiring. Mountains and seas, plains and rivers had their deities. Beauty was goodness. Culture was the largest possession. Greece made human speech classic. Greek learning entered all nations, captured all schools, refined all institutions, and controlled all peoples. No man was great unless he was great author, great sculptor, great orator, or great painter. Homer and Phideas, Demesthenes and Apelles stand in the galaxy of Grecian worthies. No nation has equaled Greece in the art of expression, the portrayal of beauty, and the genius of her creations. Every line was strength, every curve was grace, every color was beauty, and every poem was music. But even then her temples were places of debauch. The temple of Neptune at Corinth had a thousand priestesses who were courtesans.

## III. Third Step—Military Education.

The reign of power followed the reign of beauty and the art of fine expression. Rome conquered the world. Armies, navies, captives, obeyed Rome's commands. Her language and her art constructed on the lines of force. The parts of speech and cases of nouns take their place like soldiers in Roman language and obey their chief. Greatness was martial. Heros and hero-worship appealed to men. None was great unless he bore the marks of strength. The tramp of armies, the sound of martial music, the mailed soldier, the glittering spear, the triumphal procession, had mankind in their grasp. Nothing was worthy that was not strong. The clank of chains, the grinding of prison doors, quarternions of soldiers, the criminal and lion in the arena; anything that ruled with iron hand was worthy of honor and praise. Their sports, their conquests, their religion, all told of force and resistless power. The gladiator, the general, the fearless man, the daring spirit was honored in story and song, in painting and monument. No age has equalled the Roman age in power. The Roman eagle flew to the ends of



the earth, and her banner waved triumphantly over a conquered world. But like Samson, Rome's strength became her weakness and her shame. Lust polluted her palaces and her temples and power had no strength to save. Power alone breaks in pieces like the Titanic on a berg of ice. It takes more than religion, art and power to save a world from ruin and death.

#### **IV. Fourth Step—Scholastic Education.**

The Mediaeval Age found men in great universities trying to solve the problems of philosophy and theology. The objective world had few charms for men who sought the cloister to investigate all sorts of abstruse subjects—physics and metaphysics, the Bible and God. The continent and England produced great scholars, great authors, and great teachers. Learning ruled the mankind. No man was great unless he was a great scholar. Men had a passion for knowledge, deep as the earth, high as heaven, broad as the human race, boundless as God. No age has made such profound study of the Scriptures and God; yet the age was low and sad. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" The world cannot be saved by learning. Philosophy has no power to cleanse the heart. Theology cannot take away sin. Culture may exist in basest lives. Antony and Cleopatra had culture, but were victims of self-destruction. We have found, so far, that religion, polished and artistic expression, military power, and scholastic learning do not rescue the perishing, nor educate the whole man. One other step must be taken to make education.

#### **V. Christian Education.**

Christian education embodies all antecedent steps and culminates in the attainment and expression of character. All that was true in religion, in classics, in military power, and in learning, has its fruit in character. In a word, all the foregoing elements enter into Christian education, which is the full education of all human faculties and powers; and this includes faith of the heart in, and the devotion of the Will to Jesus Christ. There is not one grace or virtue in all the realm of being that did not reside in Jesus Christ. He was a Priest for-

ever, never man spoke like this man. He feared no foe. He was the wisest of the wise, and His character was without flaw. All education has its perfection in Jesus, and no education is complete till the soul knows Him. There is no complete education in the schools of mankind till we reach Christian education. As the priest stood out in Egypt and Babylon; as the classic touch shines in Grecian art; as the legion stood for power in Rome; and as the scholar towered in the Mediaeval Age, so real Christian stands out in this age, and must rule the world.

We may never equal Poti-Pherah, the priest of On; the arts of Greece; the power of Rome; nor the learning of the scholastic age, but we can excel them all in character, and that is the crown of education. Christian education is the development of Christian character, through educational processes, in those who have been born again. Nothing is so mighty in this age as character. This age demands character in politics, business, legislation, literature, art, schools, and social life. The age is far from perfection in character; but all criticisms, investigations, agitations, make the demand for character. Christian education examines matter, mind, morals, history, law, races, nations, science, Bible, God; but counts all things loss for Christ. The church college is the heart of modern education, and Christian character is the goal. Nothing but character can balance and conserve the interests in the gigantic institutions of this twentieth century life. Most of the great industrial and commercial institutions are so organized that they can run in safety if manned by men of character. Honesty is the chief thing, for the institutions are schools in themselves. There is education enough in the United States to run a world, if we had character enough to govern a State. Jesus Christ is the Model Teacher and all education should end in Him. The danger of education is that it will train the body and the mind, and neglect the heart. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

