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I. PRESBYTERIANISM AND EDUCATION.

“EDUCATION” is that word which names for us whatsoever is gotten by means of instruction; and where this instruction is of the best, its outcome is found in a rightly-shaped understanding, in a widened scope of thought, in the safe direction it imparts to the affections, in the proper determination it impresses upon the will, and in the various treasure it furnishes for enriching the entire life: making life, by that much, more worth the having. Well, with such an education—such in all its degrees—Presbyterianism stands identified.

There is a sense in which education—of a sort—comes to multitudes without the use of books or of schools. Countless influences are at work, some of them as silent as they are resistless, to whose moulding touches all minds are subject, with or without their consent: those potencies which move in the atmosphere of home, or emerge from those rivers of humanity, the streets, or are awakened amid the voices and noises of the workshop, or are borne upon the wide-winged newspaper that flies everywhere, or that get shape and momentum at the platform meeting where speech burns upon its hottest anvil, or that dart about and about in the circlings of conversation. Character is ingrained and tempered, for good or ill, by the action and re-action of those nameless currents which, with no traceable law, flow turbid or pure through all the conditions of human living. Sometimes even *high* character is thus insensibly builded, where there has been no opportunity for acquiring letters. God’s great works have perhaps constituted the university

wherein it has grown, and nothing has been heard by the listening soul more articulate than mountain sceneries or ocean swellings.

But the training of such a mighty agent as the human spirit ought not to be left to the chance winds that shift through each day's happenings. An orator of instruction is needed, of greater eloquence even than that which impresses in the speakings or the silences of nature. Accordingly the Supreme Father, who cares for his children with the wisest love, ordained his *church*, and endowed her to be the foremost of all this world's teachers, in the use of processes of discipline which are elsewhere unknown. So that, were this stupendous institute of learning now removed from its dominating place, a night that might be felt must fall upon the race, confusing, if not obliterating, every path of progress, both in mind and morals. It is, therefore, in this thought that we derive a view of things with which to explain the wording of our present subject, to justify the blending into a single idea the two cognate themes, "Presbyterianism and Education," and to illustrate the proposition that Presbyterianism is precisely such a leading representative of the church as to be, in all its make-up, an educational power than which there is none mightier.

Along with its many and honored co-representatives, to whom on every side it extends the warm fraternal hand, its *main* errand is, indeed, to recover lost souls, and this weighty errand it discharges, all will agree, with successful zeal. Other ecclesiastical organizations there are, however, which gloriously *rival* and sometimes may *outdo* our own in this most important respect, and palzied be the hand which would lay the touch of arrest upon *their* efforts to win spiritual triumphs, more plentiful than the stars, for the glory of the common Lord. Here there is abundant room for all, of every Christian name, and in the race for preëminency, with *salvation* as the watchword, echoing among the hills of Zion, "Let not the Ephraims and Judahs envy one another."

Meanwhile, the several denominations of Christendom, if they *also* present, each in its own special way, the means for *educating* the minds it addresses—is it going too far when we affirm that this is signally the case with Presbyterianism? Why, we might refer for proof to its mere *history*, so replete with instructive matter

for all who love to trace great influences to their sources, or to observe the conspicuous rise of men and of communities, whose exploits in behalf of mankind and of the glory of God have never been excelled, or to note the sway of truths for whose maintenance tough men and tender women were willing to die when death was the most tragical, a history which, taken altogether, possesses an enchaining interest and a preceptive power, such as, by itself alone, constitutes a very school wherein all the world may study lessons which cannot fail to invigorate the mind and improve the heart.

But whilst in this single respect Presbyterianism is truly an education, it has likewise proved to be so even in its form of churchly *government*, by which it furnishes a tuition that explores the profoundest principles of human freedom, and at the same time discovers these in the play of a most healthful activity. Here the people rule, not without a *supreme Lord*, indeed, who alone enacts every law to which obedience is in conscience due, nor without visible officers, representative at once of the unseen Head and of the body that composes his dependent church; the whole, however, so adjusted and harmonized, by means of lower and higher courts, as to signalize an authority of limitations and balances, under which no right which the humblest may claim is infringed, and no privilege which the obscurest may demand is withheld; the whole presenting a structure of representative democracy which, as almost nothing else ever served to do, has taught an observing statesmanship how best to govern in civil affairs; so that, as such men as Mackintosh and Froude and Bancroft have admirably noted, it proved a most powerful instrument in revolutionizing western Europe and in inaugurating modern history; whilst, as we all know, it constitutes the model upon which our own American liberties might have been framed.

But Presbyterianism wields an educational directorship in quite other ways and by quite other means. The didactical *history* to which our church can point, and her illustrative government, would be hardly worth the learner's trouble, were it not for her *theology*, without which her almost romantic memorials of trial and of triumph could have little value, indeed could never have

been ; nor could her methods of administering rule have had any distinctive place in the world. This theology, describe it as Augustinian, designate it Calvinistic, or distinguish it by a far higher term than either of these, *Pauline*, is and always has been, we boldly aver, the chief guiding light of mankind, having for its originating source *no man* or combination of men, but that immense spirit of truth who inspired revelation itself ; a theology, therefore, which, because of its closer agreement with holy Scripture than that of the very best of its rivals, can have no superior as a divinely delegated instructor. We of course do not forget that this same theology has been well illustrated in the teachings of many who cannot be called Presbyterians. We are thankful to remember that among its eminent expounders are found the names of noted Baptists, such as Hall and Spurgeon ; of memorable Episcopalians, such as Toplady and Scott ; of distinguished Lutherans, such as Kurtz and Muhlenberg, to say nothing of him who illustrated the earlier Methodism, the renowned Whitefield, and of not a few who have adorned the annals of Congregationalism. Nevertheless, it is a theology which is most commonly associated with Presbyterian distinctiveness, and not seldom, as all are aware, in the way of objection, if not of derision, by such as do not know what they are prating about. And *how* this conspicuous body of doctrine comes to be a school of education we need not stop to explain, any more than one might be expected to show how it is that when the sun shines the earth is illumined, or when rains descend it is revived. *All* truth is indeed educational, just as all lamps are designed for emitting light ; but especially is this the case when the truth in question, like our peerless theology, makes the strongest appeal that is possible to the reason, as it also does to the principle of faith, and which stirs the affections as mightily as it stimulates the *will*—at once the highest of the sciences and the widest of the arts ; the science that contemplates the entire nature of God, the art that comprehends the whole duty of man. Moreover, it is a theology which has always acted the part of a true educator by encouraging in all who come under its control the spirit of freest inquiry, and limiting the researches of speculative thought only where these must consent to be bounded by a “thus

saith the Lord ;” but nowhere does it interpose the repellent or restraining authority of a merely human dogma. Stern it is with divine command ; none the less is it strong with divine entreaty ; yet at every point this injunction is heard : “ Think, O man, for yourself ; be not *compelled* ; understandingly assent.”

And for proof of its training power, see what a people this theology, generation after generation, has served to rear ! The world through (enemies being the judges) well-instructed Presbyterians have had no superiors in point of manly intelligence ; none for masterful enterprise, or for magnanimous patriotism ; none for courage and endurance amid storms of war, or for submission to law in the sunshine of peace. And surely this might have been expected ; for when you rightly estimate the doctrines which our pulpits are appointed to elucidate, doctrines which, in duly exalting God, do not unduly debase man, and which track to their origin, whilst tracing all the lines of their free interaction, the relations which God and man sustain to each other, the one as absolute sovereign, the other as dependent subject, the surprise is that ever there can be a stated hearer of its lessons who does not become a thinker of such sort as not only enlarges him as a Christian, but also emphasizes him as a citizen. For it is a vast mistake, the mistake of supposing that one may be taught a shallow *theology* and yet reach as firm a manhood as if he were being influenced by a theology which is more profound. The theology of *heathenism*, even when represented by the philosophy of a Cicero, or by the morality of a Confucius, or by the integrity of a Cato, has failed to impress the obligations of virtue or improve the advantages of reflection. The theology of an Arius, or a Socinus, or a Kant, has had well-nigh no power upon conscience, and has availed almost not at all, either to quicken or to deepen the love of truth. The theology, too, of *Rome* ! What has it achieved in enlarging or invigorating the human understanding ? What could it do so long as it tolerated the monstrous idea that “ *ignorance* is the mother of devotion ” ? No ; give to any people a theology which meets every demand of inquiring thought, after having freed thought from all its shackles, and which contents every yearning of the heart, after having delivered the heart from all its

prejudices, and satisfies every want of practical life, after having shown this life's true connection with a solemn hereafter, and you have given to that people a theology which at all points builds them up both sure and high.

Then, too, mark the *literature* to which this theology has given existence, than which there is none more valuable, or that is more likely to last; and although it is a literature that is sometimes dry, it is seldom dreary; and whilst it is occasionally ponderous, with its loads of erudition, it is never misleading. Inspired by this theology, Bunyan dreamed so truly; Butler drew out his great Analogy; Charnock wrote on the Attributes as never before had been done; Chalmers prepared his eloquent works; Edwards set the world to thinking anew; the Erskines revived the heart of Scotland; not to mention our own Alexanders, and Hodges, and Masons, and Thornwells, and those hundreds of others who, both in Europe and America, have enriched all libraries and enthralled innumerable readers, young and old, everywhere.

But the literature to which we are calling attention is by no means confined to subjects that are strictly religious. Space would utterly fail us were we to attempt a complete exhibition of the fact that minds whose powers have been disciplined in our theology have entered into *all* departments of human knowledge, and done much to illustrate and to enlarge them. Knowing well that there is no branch of study which has not its value; knowing, too, that because Christianity occupies the very throne of truth, all lower truths are her subjects and supporters, not a few of our divines, in many instances our elders, and more numerous our private members, have succeeded in opening upon all sides the widest doors possible through which whosoever will may freely pass for ascertaining the utmost that can be known throughout the manifold kingdoms of the universal Lord: being sure that to his feet the least as well as the largest of the acquisitions that shall be made, must, sooner or later, be brought for reflecting his glory; and to this end labor untold has been expended, wealth unmeasured has been poured out, as well as original contributions of scholarship not to be reckoned, have augmented the sum of human knowledge and added to the glories of discovery.

We do not now need to occupy attention with a full description of the theology to which we have thus referred, although the task would (to ourselves at least) involve only a pleasing labor. See it in our great "Confession," and its companion catechisms, substantially unaltered since the day when the famous Westminster Assembly adjourned in 1644, and whose compacted propositions and unequalled definitions are evermore a fresh surprise to the lovers of logical statement, as well as a constant source of intellectual training to all who care to interest themselves in a study of the most important truths, the most perspicuously worded, and which, along with the King James version and Bunyan's Pilgrim, have served to preserve to our English language the full bloom of its Saxon youth.

We now, however, signalize these immortal documents, not alone for the purpose of pointing to a completed exhibition of our Presbyterian standard of doctrine, the educational influence of which through many generations cannot be estimated. We name them for the reason, also, that their mention serves to emphasize a peculiar qualification (on the part of those by whom they are properly prized,) which entitles them to the very largest place amongst the instructors of the world in spheres other than the distinctively spiritual.

All are aware of the fact that it is not a mere acquaintance with the various certainties of things, as they lie scattered upon one and another field of enquiry, that adequately informs or robustly strengthens the mind, so as to impart to it a secure and seemly independence. One has no true proficiency in the domain of history, *e. g.*, when he shall have memorized its critical *dates*, or is enabled to recite, in chronological sequence, its principal events. He is not to be credited with understanding the nature of the soul when he can enumerate its several properties, or with knowing the world around him when he has become familiar with its various phenomena. No subject of importance is thus to be learned; for the facts which belong to it are not as so many units that stand isolated, each repellent of all the others. On the contrary, they are to be viewed as a closely concatenated whole, the *principles* of whose unity must be ascertained in order to a

forceful setting forth of their *collected meaning*, and of course before any real *education* therein is possible. You have to deal with them as our symbols of faith have dealt with the great facts of revelation; you must reduce them to such system as each case will admit of, expose their mutual connections, marshal them about their common centres, put each in its fitting place with reference to its associated companions, and thus secure a hold upon the very *philosophy* that explains their combined result when taken altogether. Not until this is done is your knowledge either as secure or as serviceable as it ought to be. But who is competent to achieve such a result? Not the smatterer, with whose loosened links of pretended scholarship the world is, to its heavy cost, only too familiar. Not the mere empiric, whose opinionative charlatany serves only to darken wherever it touches. Not the mechanical pedagogue, who, himself undisciplined, would substitute *rules* of thought for its actual processes. It is rather he who, trained to accuracy and accustomed to look at the objects of his study all through, from the bottom upward, knows where the smaller parts belong, and where the larger, and what is the leading principle that binds them in one; thus giving to the intellect that upon which alone it can healthfully feed, and in which alone its powers can freely move—enduring *light*. Now, whilst Presbyterianism by no means arrogates to itself a monopoly in this style of solid instruction, yet it must be allowed that those habits of comprehensive survey which it encourages, and of which its doctrinal symbols present so eminent an illustration, ought to single it out as a chief fountain of educational power. And what thus ought to be has long actually been. For both in the old world and the new the extensive profession of teaching has, for ages, recruited its ranks and added to its leadership by constantly drawing upon those of the Presbyterian faith and training.

There is still another peculiarity of our Presbyterianism which renders a true education precious to it, and at the same time imparts urgency to its methods of mental cultivation. We allude to the fact that, in some respects, Presbyterianism is the special champion of that *Protestantism* to which all the world owes so much. By no means does it stand alone in the discharge of this

great service; this it cannot claim. Almost every other organized form of the common Christianity has a share in it; for all of the evangelical churches of all names have cause for remembering those throes of the Reformation in which was born that gigantic protest whose voice is still as the voice of lingering thunder; and so long as its echoes remain in the air, it becomes the *entire body* of the Lord's people to show a front of holy war towards his enemy and theirs, that yet enormous Romanism which is to-day as potent as it is pernicious. Whilst, however, this war is not exclusively our own, which, single-handed, we are expected to prosecute, nevertheless, it so happens that Presbyterianism presents an antagonism to popery which is broader and more positive than that of any one of its confederates. We will not stop to explain *why* this unfriendly attitude is so marked. Suffice it to say that, *doctrinally*, we are, in the main points, at one with Luther and his associates, who long ago set the battle in array; and, in respect of government, at one with Knox and his co-organizers, who, about the same time, delivered their so heavy blows upon all hierarchical assumption; and thus we occupy the very opposite extreme, at its very sharpest edge, from that towering system of error with which those heroes of the sixteenth century dealt so roughly. But as a large part of *their* armory was filled with the weapons which *education* supplied, so is it now with us; they knowing what we also know, that in proportion to the amount of true knowledge men have, in the same proportion must superstition loosen its grasp upon the soul, just as mists relax their mephitic hold upon the earth at the ascendancy of the sun. Accordingly, must Presbyterianism have a *learned ministry*, chiefly, indeed, for its own growth's sake, but likewise on account of the controversies which have emerged out of that protracted contest, where scholarship has from the first moment of its awakening been utterly forbidden to sleep again or to loiter, and which, almost alone of all *human* agencies, can radiate such a light as the opposing darkness shall dread. Hence, too, the necessity for learned men, who shall explore the very depths of truth and climb to all its heights, from which to convince men beyond a doubt of the real nature of a Christianity which is the heritage of all men alike; and so as to ward off the

danger of an apostasy in Protestantism itself, like that which befell the church when almost all learning was hidden in monasteries, or was driven to the silent closets of those who, free to think, dared not to speak; and to these ends the old Greek tongue was to be, and to stay, revived, the Latin to be raised from the dead, the Hebrew to be diligently studied, all the sciences too, to be brought to contribute of their stores, the histories to be compelled to testify, and the entire round of speculative thought to be made subservient, so that God's inspired word should, at no point, lack an exposition such as lettered and unlettered might alike apprehend.

Taking now into the account what we have thus suggested—and we have done little more than suggest—it cannot but appear that Presbyterianism and Education are, indeed, most intimately related by the tie of a common blood, if, indeed, they be not *identical*. Certainly you no sooner mention the one than the other is brought to mind. Other ecclesiastical organisms, we are glad to acknowledge, place a high estimate upon the potencies of education, but they do not, in all instances, feel the need for assessing it at so high a value as is the case with ourselves. We are free to say that as a church we cannot prosper—we had almost said *exist*—apart from its co-efficiency. But no more, when largely viewed, can true Christianity; the alliance between it and education being not that of a mere *treaty*, which may, at any time, be broken off, but that of *coincident nature*—as imperative as a universal law. Accordingly, it has always been true that in proportion as the element of education has been eliminated from the offices of Christianity, in equal proportion has Christianity itself suffered loss. And it is this proposition (for whose establishment no proof is needed), upon which *Presbyterianism* rests its justification, whenever any defence is required of the fact that it leans so heavily upon the supporting arm of education. But it is also in the fact that these twin agencies are inseparable, that we as instantly discern the dependence of education itself upon Christianity, as we perceive the converse. That is to say, Presbyterians—regarding the Christian religion as they must—do always insist upon an education which is not merely and baldly *secular*.

A godless education is simply heathenish—and all *unchristian* education is essentially ungodly; an injury, therefore, and by no means a blessing—a dwarfed plant which is destitute of nourishing soil, and what fruit it bears is unavoidably sapped with poison. It is not, therefore, *every kind* of education for which we plead. Away with it, if it be not transfused and illumined with the smile of heaven. It is spurious. More, it is deadly. It is not a torch for light, but for conflagration.

Not much space is now left in which to answer the question: But *has* Presbyterianism educated; *i. e.*, apart from the immediate power of its doctrine and its polity? Has it gone into the world at large, and, in the spirit of a genuine philanthropy, responded to the call for knowledge and for nurture everywhere?—imparting intellectual life and moral force in whatsoever direction these have been needed? If so, where are its schools, its colleges, its universities; its variety of gymnasia, as required for the exercise of the soul's faculties from childhood onward? In order to a comprehensive reply we must hold in mind the *extent* of Presbyterianism. Those branches of the many-membered family of churches which are entitled to this denomination, do, together with their near relative, the Lutheran, comprise, in their wide embrace, more than half of Protestant Christendom—a vast moiety which is peculiarly characterized by the spirit of an apparently exhaustless energy that has long displayed the resolve to chase ignorance of every degree from all its corners and citadels.

Does any one ask, then, what is it actually doing for the achievement of so great a result? Shall we mention its *homes*, with a head over each, who has vowed that, whatsoever else may be neglected, the children shall experience a nurture in the knowledge of their living and loving Lord? And although this pledge is not always made good, nevertheless count, if you can, the number of domestic circles (to be found in all the classes of society) wherein an educating process is going on, the whole outcome of which is too immense even for conjecture, and which, accordingly, no census statistician has ever attempted, so much as approximately, to calculate. Or need we point to those innumerable gatherings of the waifs of the people which Presbyterian charity has

assisted to summon from the haunts and holes of a ragged destitution in order to impart to minds that otherwise must prove a curse to themselves and many others, some inkling, at least, of the rays of a better guidance? What an amount of teaching, too, from the A B C upwards, is provided for the hopelessly poor in the thousands of Sabbath-schools that are embraced in our Presbyterian system, which is thus in happy unison with the genius of Christianity, as exemplified by other churchly methods that are touched by us at almost no other point of resemblance! We might speak also of that free, public, every-day schooling in the moulding and furthering of the institutes for which Presbyterian influences have been so decidedly and so deeply felt, and in the proper management of which the best of our people have shown so intelligent an anxiety and extended so helpful a hand.

But is it still asked, Where are those *institutions* of learning of one grade or another which owe their *exclusive* origin to Presbyterianism, and of which, with an honorable pride, it may be boasted that they remain altogether its own, having upon them its special image and superscription? Where *are* these! Nay, where are they *not*? Travel the earth around, and you see it dotted, rather emblazoned, with specimens of them on every hand: in the far-off islands of awakening Japan; in many of the towns of vast India; in Turkey, with its Robert College at Constantinople for the shining head of a large body of subordinate academies; throughout agitated but hopeful Bulgaria; in not a few of the German States; in reluctant Greece, too, and ragged Italy, and republican France; in mountainous Switzerland; here and there in Russia even; and in the Scandinavian monarchies. Need we name indomitable Holland, or pass over to great England, to covenanted Scotland, to struggling Ireland? Is it necessary to do more than mention our own United States, where Presbyterianism has grown proportionately faster than the fast-growing population, and planted its various schools by the side of its augmenting churches from flowering Florida to frozen Alaska, and from where Canada (itself full of our institutions) extends hitherward her cold hands to where California warms her feet in the genial Pacific? Through all lands, from Australia and Tasmania to both Americas, and to

where east melts into west at almost every point of the juncture-line, Presbyterianism has persistently followed the sun in his course, and will follow, until none of the hours of that sun's mighty clock shall strike without the echo of a response from some chime that may announce the presence of a seminary of learning, lowly or lofty, out of whose open doors will stream a light superior even to this sun's own!

But why, it may be asked—it has often been sneeringly asked—why do Presbyterians have so much to say upon the subject of education—and will not let the world rest until in this it agree with them? May not an uneducated people be saved? Yes; but it cannot become the best type of a Christian people—and this best type is that which *all* the churches should strive to produce. Plants grow despite a brazen sky or a backward soil; but these are neither the most useful nor the most vigorous of their kind. So grace, which often seeks an earthly home in souls where there is not even the ability to read, may here minister to the hope of heaven in an atmosphere of childish ignorance; and who is not ready to bless its benignant author and bestower that such is the fact? But the great kingdom prefers to lay its foundations and rear its temples in souls where cultivated mind has prepared a firm ground for an intelligent and, thus, a propagative faith. There were thirteen apostles, but the mightiest of these was the scholarly Paul. There are thousands of gospel preachers; yet, with rare exceptions, the most influential are they who are the best furnished with knowledge and the best disciplined in ability to think. There are myriads of believers, but the most energetic and aggressive of their number are usually such as have been trained to habits of reflection.

We are, therefore, prepared to hail the day whose dawning shall witness, in every church organization, the prevalency of a zeal for education which shall at least equal the fervor of its preaching power, and thus behold a generation of Christians who shall be more fully equipped than were its predecessors, to commend the great articles of their belief to others, in the face of every doubt which an abashed infidel scholarship may presume to suggest.

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