

Living Fountains or Broken Cisterns – An Educational Problem for Protestants

Living Fountains or Broken Cisterns?



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“My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” Jer. 2:13.

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Preface

THERE are few books which treat of the history of education, and fewer which attempt to show the part that the educational work has ever borne in the upbuilding of nations. That religion is inseparably connected with, and upheld by, the system of education maintained by its advocates, has been recognized by many historians in a casual way; but, to the author's knowledge, no one has hitherto made this thought the subject of a volume.

In teaching the history of education and the growth of Protestantism, the close relationship ever existing between the latter and true methods of education led to a careful study of the educational system of the nations of the earth, especially of those nations which have exerted a lasting influence upon the world's history. The present volume is the result of that study.

D'Aubigné says that in the Reformation “the school was early placed beside the church; and these two great institutions, so powerful to regenerate the nations, were equally reanimated by it. It was by a close alliance with learning that the Reformation entered into the world.”

True education, Protestantism, and republicanism form a threefold union which defies the powers of earth to overthrow; but to-day the Protestant churches are growing weak, and the boasted freedom of America's democracy is being exchanged for monarchical principles of government.

This weakness is rightly attributed by some to the want of proper education. The same cause of degeneracy would doubtless be assigned by many others, were effects traced to their source.

The author has attempted, by a generous use of historical quotations, to so arrange facts that the reader will see that the hope of Protestantism and the hope of republicanism lies in the proper education of the youth; and that this true education is found in the principles delivered by Jehovah to his chosen people, the Jews; that it was afterward more fully demonstrated by the Master Teacher, Christ; that the Reformation witnessed a revival of these principles; and that Protestants to-day, if true to their faith, will educate their children in accordance with these same principles.

Due credit is given to the authors quoted, a list of whose names appears at the end of the volume. A complete index renders this work easy of reference.

E. A. S.

I. Introductory: God the Source of wisdom

“SURELY there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold where they fine it. Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone. . . . As for the earth, out of it cometh bread; and under it is turned up as it were fire. The stones of it are the place of sapphires; and it hath dust of gold. There is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen. The lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it..

“But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me. It can not be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. . . . The gold and the crystal can not equal it; and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold... . Whence then cometh wisdom? And where is the place of understanding? . . . God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof.” – Job 28.

Man sometimes feels that *he* understands the way of wisdom, and boasts that he *knows* the place thereof. He may indeed understand it in a measure, and he may ascertain its abiding place; but that knowledge comes in one way, and only one. He who understandeth the way thereof and knoweth the place thereof, opens a channel which connects earth with that fountain of life.

In the creation of the universe that wisdom was manifested. “When He made a decree for the *rain*, and a way for the “*lightning of the thunder*; then did He see it, and declare it; He prepared it, yea, and searched it out.” Written on the face of creation is the WISDOM OF THE ETERNAL. “And unto man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, THAT IS WISDOM; and to depart from evil is understanding.” In other words, when man lives in harmony with God,— that is, when physically he acts in accordance with the laws of the universe; when mentally his thoughts are those of the Father; and when spiritually his soul responds to the drawing power of love, that power which controls creation,—

then has he entered the royal road which leads direct to WISDOM.

Where is the wise? There is implanted in each human heart a longing to come in touch with wisdom. God, by the abundance of life, is as a great magnet, drawing humanity to Himself. So close is the union that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In one man—a man made of flesh and blood like all men now living — there dwelt the spirit of wisdom. More than this, in Him are “hid all the treasures of wisdom;” and hence the life of Immanuel stands a constant witness that the WISDOM OF THE AGES is accessible to man. And the record adds, “Ye are complete in Him.”

This wisdom brings eternal life; for in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom,” “and ye are complete in Him.” “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God.”

Christ, at Jacob’s well, explained to the woman of Samaria, and through her to you and me, the means of gaining wisdom. The well of living water, from the depths of which the patriarch had drawn for himself, his children, and his cattle, and which he bequeathed as a rich legacy to generations following, who drank, and blessed his name, symbolized worldly wisdom. Men to-day mistake this for that wisdom described in Job, of which God understandeth the way and knoweth the place. Christ spoke of this latter when He said, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee *living water*.” “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.”

Why, then, if wisdom may be had for the asking, if that spiritual drink may be had for the taking, are not all filled? The fountain flows free; why are not all satisfied? Only one reason can be given: **men in their search accept falsehood in place of truth**. This blunts their sensibilities, until the false seems true and the true false.

“Where is the wise? . . . hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” “Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect (full-grown): yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this age which are coming to naught: but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, . . . which none of the rulers of this world knoweth.” — I Cor. 2:6

There is, then, a distinction between the wisdom of God and that of this world. How, then, can we attain unto the higher life,—to the real, the true wisdom? There are things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, which eyes should see and ears hear, and these “God hath revealed unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

To man, then, if born of the Spirit, is given a spiritual eyesight which pierces infinitude, and enables the soul to commune with the Author of all things. No wonder the realization of such possibilities within himself led the psalmist to exclaim, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I can not attain unto it.” And Paul himself exclaimed, “O the depth of the riches both of the *wisdom* and *knowledge* of God! . . . For who hath known the mind of the Lord?” “The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”

And "we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Hence to us *is* given the power to commune with Him and to search into the mysteries of the otherwise unfathomable.

Dealing with wisdom is education. If it be the wisdom of the world, then it is *worldly education*, if, on the other hand, it is a search for the wisdom of God, it is CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

Over these two questions the controversy between good and evil is waging. The final triumph of truth will place the advocates of Christian education in the kingdom of God. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

That education which links man with God, the source of wisdom, and the author and finisher of our faith, is a spiritual education, and prepares the heart for that kingdom which is within.