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THE PURPOSE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

By Levi T. Pennington,
President of Pacific College.

The question as to whether the young people of America will be educated is not debatable. They not only will, but they must. The question as to whether a large share of these young people will go on to college is as definitely settled. They do, and they will. Especially is this true in Oregon, which in proportion to its population sends more of its young people to college than any other state in the union.

While some of us might, if we would, prevent our children from securing a higher education, for most of us that would seem on a par with starving and dwarfing them in body -- yes, as much worse as the body is less valuable than the mind. Our task is not to determine whether our children will have higher education, but what kind of education they shall have, and how and under what auspices it shall be secured.

There is a definitely Christian higher education, and there is a higher education which is essentially pagan in its character and attitude toward life. As president of Pacific College I wish to speak to you of the purpose of Pacific College in giving to its students what we hope to make as fully as possible a Christian education.

Briefly it may be said that the purpose of education as we try to give it at Pacific College is to enable the student to know his world, to know himself and to know his God.

No man can expect to adjust himself properly to the world in which he lives unless and until he understands something of what that world is. There is a world of matter with which he must be in physical relation every day. He must know its laws, understand its workings, learn to control it through the uniformity of its operation and his ability to direct the springs of its action. There is a world of life in which he lives. He must know much of this living world, both the living world about him and the living world within him. The laws of life, physical and mental and spiritual, are quite as vital to his well-being as are the laws of the inert physical world which constitutes the environment of life. And there is the world of humanity in which he lives and of which he is an integral part. He must know this human world if he is to take his proper place in it. He must know this world historically, and economically, and socially, and ethically. How can a man serve the human world in which he lives unless he has a broad and deep understanding of what that world is and what its life means?

Quite as important as his knowledge of his world is the student's knowledge of himself. "Know thyself" said Socrates, and all thinking men acknowledge the importance of that dictum.

It is easy in these days, as it has always been, probably, for the student to take too degraded and degrading a view of himself. Science and scripture alike have told us that we are of the earth, earthy. "Out of the dust of the earth" is as true of the chemistry of man's body as it is of his creation. We are related to the dust, and no man should forget it nor disregard it.

But this is not by any means the whole story. We are related both to dust and to deity. God made us of the dust of the earth on the physical side; but He also made us in His image. "Body and soul make man; body and soul, dust and deity." We are related to the world about us. We have the vegetative functions of taking aliment from without the body and transforming it into body tissues. We have the animal functions of instincts, voluntary activity and such like. But this is not all. We have, from the highest to the lowest of us, those god-like qualities and powers of thought, emotion, volition, which link us to the divine.

No man truly knows himself who has not achieved this view of himself as related both to the lower and the higher in the scale of life. He must see not only that he is a brother to the dust and on the physical side like to the beasts that perish, but he must see himself as the son of God, and related by the inescapable laws of his creation and his being to God who perisheth not.

There is much in the teaching of today which overemphasizes man's relation to the things that perish. There is not a little in the so-called "new psychology" which not only quarrels but little with the lower things in man's sinful nature, but actually condones and excuses sin. One could point to teachings which actually advise things in the personal life which our godly mothers and our own enlightened consciences alike condemn as bestial and devilish. It is the province of Christian education to give the student a better knowledge of himself than that teaching which would excuse him from living on the low plane of the brute-beast.

But the supreme purpose of Christian education is that the student should come to a knowledge of God. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" -- thus spoke the wisest Teacher who ever lived, and the supreme Master of Life. Any education which fails to bring the student to this supremely important knowledge, the knowledge of God, is not only inadequate, but may be disastrous.

When we speak of the knowledge of God, we mean not merely knowledge about God, important as that is. It is of vast consequence that the student know about God, that he study His nature, His laws, His dealings with men.

Pacific College teaches its students about God. The biblical courses, and no student can graduate from the college without considerable biblical work, are maintained on the same basis of scholarship as the other work of the college. They are actual courses for real study and attainment, and if any minister of the yearly meeting thinks that we do not do real work and study, let him offer himself, after all his years of bible study, for an examination in The Life of Christ or Acts and Epistles, for instance.

But not only in the actual biblical courses are the students taught about God and His laws and dealings with men. In the teaching of Philosophy the effort is made to find what is God's truth, and the course closes with a series of lectures on The Philosophy of Christianity, the most adequate philosophy which the world has ever known. In the teaching of Ethics, the effort is made to find not what is temporarily and locally expedient but what is eternally right because in harmony with the will and spirit of the eternal. In the teaching of History, the student is taught to see the hand of God at work -- "history is really His-story." In the study of Economics and Sociology, the effort is made to look beyond the present order of things to what would be more pleasing to God than some of our present conditions of injustice. Even in the teaching of Science and Mathematics it is God's laws which are being studied -- no teaching which is not done reverently is done adequately.

But all this teaching about God falls short of the real purpose of Christian education unless with it and in part through its agency comes to the student the personal, first-hand knowledge of God Himself. Pacific College seeks to help accomplish the purpose of Jesus, who said, "I came that they might have life, and that they might have it abundantly." The abundant life is possible only when the student possesses eternal life, here and now. And "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

Not long ago it was my privilege to visit a sister institution, and to attend one of the classes in Religious Education. Much that was taught there was greatly enjoyed and appreciated. But one statement of the head of the department stood out strikingly. "The chief purpose of religious education," he said, "is to make conversion unnecessary." Perhaps his words did not mean just what they seemed to mean. But with our usual understanding of the terms employed, it can be said positively that his state-

ment does not at all express the purpose of Pacific College. The purpose of religious education at Pacific College is to make conversion as nearly inevitable as possible. We should rejoice if we could always have true of the college a statement which was made about Pacific by one of our graduates. This young man came to us from a far distant state and from an environment quite dissimilar to that of most of our students. As his graduation drew near, he said in the Christian Association meeting one day, "Shortly after I came to Pacific I heard the president of the college say that he wanted this to be a place where it would be easy for a fellow to become a Christian. It seems to me that that ideal has been surpassed. It seems to me that Pacific is a place where it is hard for a fellow not to become a Christian."

Perhaps in no better way can the purpose of the college be stated than by quoting from the catalogue a statement which is printed year after year as the aim of the college:

"Pacific College is definitely and positively Christian. It seeks to make it easy for the student to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior, especially in view of the fact that if a student completes his college or even his high school course without becoming a Christian, he is far too likely never to take that step. Pacific College seeks to help its students to a definite dedication of life to the service of Christ, and to that in coming of the divine Spirit without whose help the fullest service to God and humanity is impossible. The student who does not dedicate himself to Christ before completing his college course is far too likely never to make that dedication. Pacific College seeks to assist its students to find their work in life, and at least to begin their definite preparation for it."

No college, no church, no other part of the enterprise of the Kingdom measures up fully to its own ideal. But if the Friends of Oregon Yearly Meeting were in position to see the work which Pacific College is doing in comparison with state institutions in general, it is likely that they would be better satisfied with the work of their college. If they could ~~even~~ compare the college religiously with some of the other denominational colleges of the Pacific Northwest, that comparison might not work to our disadvantage. Even in comparison with other Friends colleges Pacific might not seem to be too far below the general standard.

But such comparisons as these are vain in view of one other comparison which may and which should be made. We should see Pacific College in comparison with what it ought to be and may be, under the blessing of God.

We are proud of the product of the college. The speaker has seen 71 young people graduate from Pacific College since he became its president. Of this group, 46 have entered the work of teaching, more than a dozen of them in Friends schools where their remuneration was much smaller than that which they could have obtained elsewhere; seven of them are ministers; three of them have seen service on the foreign mission field and four of them in home missions; two are doctors; two are in the whole-time employ of the church; two are in full-time Y.M.C.A. work; and there are other business and professional men, with a liberal sprinkling of those who are going on with their education in preparation for a still larger service to humanity.

But there are better things ahead. If the friends of the college will continue to support the institution as they have in the past, with prayers and interest and encouragement and financial help, a greater work than the college has ever yet done is just ahead. With a larger and better prepared faculty, more adequate equipment and greater assurance of permanence, we shall soon, we hope, be serving a greatly enlarged student body, and in a much larger field be carrying out the three-fold purpose of Christian education, that purpose to aid the student in arriving at an adequate knowledge of his world, and accurate knowledge of himself, and an experimental and personal knowledge of God, as Father, Savior, Master, Guide, through Jesus Christ our Lord.