HAS ACADIA COLLEGE STILL A MISSION, AND WHAT IS IT?

BY REV. A. C. CHUTE,

An address delivered before the Maritime Baptist Convention, Bear River, and published by request of that body.

A half hour has been allotted me for an address on this occasion, and I shall endeavor not to trespass upon the time of another speaker. What a pity that the eighth commandment is so often broken at Christian associations and conventions.

Has Acadia College still a Mission, and what is it? This is the question given me for treatment by the Secretary of the Board of Governors. I confess that I would never have thought of propounding it myself, for if our Baptist churches still have a mission in the world then Acadia College has. The supreme purpose of both is the same. It may nevertheless, be profitable to reiterate somewhat definitely what part the College is meant to take in the one great programme of bringing men under the domination of the gospel.

Has Acadia College *still* a mission? That it *has* had a mission is here intimated; and the inquiry is as to whether, in the changed condition of things, it has got a work to accomplish. By way of approach to a reply let some earlier circumstances of our denomination be called up in swift review. Before Horton Academy came into existence there was a mis prejudice among many of our people against an educated ministry. But among the zealous pastors themselves there arose a sense of intellectual unfitness for what was exacted of them. And they desired that their successors in the sacred office might not be thus hampered. Hence a looking about for a suitable institution where the rising ministry might obtain mental training. Kings College then existed, but it was fenced in by the Thirty-nine Articles. There was an academy at Pictou, but it was, for that time, far removed from the bulk of our Baptist population. Therefore Horton Academy sprang up. For a while this met the limited requirements, but the enjoyment of its advantages soon made apparent their insufficiency. Then came thought of union with Dalhousie in Collegiate work, but the sectarianism of those in charge of its affairs prevented this and proved the occasion of the founding of Acadia. And it certainly looks, in view of what transpired then and what has transpired since, that at that time providential indication was given that God would have our denomination establish, and ever after sustain, its own separate institutions of higher learning. Much has been said and written upon the desirability of one great university for these provinces, but very little has come of it all. Such an institution would not be likely to have about it the needed religious atmosphere, nor would it draw forth the people's sympathies as denominational colleges do. In the address of Dr. Cramp, delivered at taking the Presidency of Acadia College, are words which must, at the time they were spoken, have met with the hearty assent of those who heard them, and which, as surely, have our approval today. "The second point to which I ask your attention," he says, "is the importance of religious influence pervading the whole course of study, and sanctifying, so to speak, all its arrangements. Acadia College," he goes on to say, "is open to all denominations, no religious tests being imposed either on students or professors; nevertheless, we must claim the right of aiming to imbue literature with the spirit of religion, and of inculcating, from time to time, those principles of our common Christianity and those moral lessons which are admitted by all who wish to shun the reproach of infidelity. Habitual recognition of God," he continues, "should distinguish every seat of learning, so that while the din of controversy is never heard, and party contentions unknown, all may be taught that the 'fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.' It has been well observed that it is our educated young men who will give the tone to society, and control the destiny of the generation in which they live. How desirable, nay, even necessary, it is," he concludes, "that the education they receive, while truly liberal in its plans and provisions, should be connected with that moral conservatism without which the advantages of knowledge itself may prove comparatively valueless!" Alongside these utterances of one whose memory we revere, let there be placed words written by President Strang: "I want," he remarks, 'no denominational college in the sense of a machine for the propagation of the tenets of a particular denomination—a school for teaching a peculiar sort of ecclesiology. But the true denominational college—the college of which a particular body of Christians takes charge, in which it has pride, to which it gives its sons, its contributions and its prayers, and from which it looks for its leaders and teachers—the college which opens its doors freely to men of every creed, but which says to all: 'No training is truly liberal which is not truly Christian; such training, and no other, we offer you'—such colleges as these are an indispensable need of our time, and all our education will play into the hands of unbelief, immorality and anarchy when such colleges as these are lost to us."

We believe, then, that the mission of Acadia will not be brought to an end by any great central university, unless, per chance, the glory of God ceases to be the paramount aim of our denomination in these fair provinces by the sea.

Nor has the mission of our College terminated because other schools now do what it once did in giving theological training to our candidates for the ministry. The Academy and College sprang out of a desire to furnish well-equipped preachers and pastors, and during most of Acadia's history she has given a place to theological studies. And it is not to be wondered at that some of the constituency have sometimes feared that removal of that department does violence to the original design. But what was so essential at an earlier stage will appear, it seems to me, uncalled for when we note well the march of events. Kingly Dr. Crawley vibrated between pastorship and professorship. And why? "These changes were not made," he himself wrote, "through any dissatisfaction on one side or the other, but from the necessity in the infant condition of our educational system and of our churches of applying help in sudden emergencies, sometimes at one point, sometimes at another." Later on, when growth had been made and specialism was possible and needful, this oscillation ceased. And just as professors can now give themselves continuously to teaching and pastors can abide with the churches, so the advance of our body in numbers and intelligence, an advance which the College has had so much to do with effecting, has made it desirable that at Acadia there should be concentration upon the Arts Course, while instruction in Theology be left to Baptist Theological Seminaries elsewhere, that are not only easy of access, but adequately equipped.

And let none make the mistake of supposing that when there is no longer a Theological course at Wolfville, there is therefore nothing done on "the Hill" to prepare those who look to the ministry for the work whereunto they are called. The coming preachers, whether they are to labor at home or abroad, have need first of all, as far as education is concerned, of such a foundational course of study as our college at present provides; and if a young man must dispense either with a regular Theological Course or the course in Arts, a thing seldom necessary, he had better, unless the circumstances be very exceptional, omit the former. For Theological deficiency can more easily be made up by oneself, as a supplement to college discipline, than can the college discipline as a supplement to knowledge of Theology. But neither need be omitted, except in rare cases, and Acadia will best answer its end, best carry out the spirit of its primal purpose, by confinement to what is more basal in education, leaving to competent professional schools elsewhere the special work of professional training.

It might be objected that by such procedure our provinces are robbed of men much needed at home, inasmuch as those who go abroad for theological study are apt to remain abroad for Christian work. But let the reminder here come in that many more would return to us than do at present if our eyes were kept upon them more closely, and fields were here offered to more of them at this graduation. It can hardly be expected that they will disregard calls where they are and come home in search of churches for themselves. There are provincialists now doing noble work in the pastorate in the United States who would, I believe, respond to urgent calls from some of our pastorless churches, and in coming back add materially to our strength. And as for those who continue across the border, despite our calls, there exerting an influence for righteousness, we can only say that there should be thanksgiving at contributing men who prove a blessing to the neighboring republic no less than for what some of our other workers do for the land of the Telugus. "The field is the world."

What is the mission of Acadia College? I shrink from attempting anything like detailed reply, but presuming that this is called for I will endeavor to do something to meet the expectation, feeling the while that my comfort and your gain would be much enhanced if one of our educators stood this evening in my place.

The mission of Acadia, to express it *broadly*, is now just as it has ever been—to fit our youth the better to serve God by fitting them to serve well their fellow-men. And if only we are vigilant to have the college keep abreast of general progress that is made about us, then those who from year to year go forth from her halls will at length, when capable of judging what the *Alma Mater* has done for them, not only rise up to call her blessed, but take no little pleasure in rendering all possible assistance toward enlargement of her power. The mission of Acadia, to be *specific*, is, for one thing, *to train the minds of the students who come under her care.* Mental training was needed in the days of our forefathers, but it is needed much more in this day when intelligence is more common. Matriculants scatter widely after graduation and enter various vocations. Acadia helps furnish recruits to ranks of missionaries and pastors, of lawyers and doctors, of teachers and statesmen, of merchants and farmers. And all, from these in highest to those in lowest of the chosen spheres, must need grapple with questions of importance, not only to themselves and their respective communities, but even to the world at large. We therefore demand of Acadia that she develop the reasoning faculties of those we send thither and increase their ability to solve the problems of practical life. Looking with discernment at the prescribed studies makes it evident that these are adapted to such ends. Often students, themselves, with an eye to what they call utility, confining the word to a narrow sense, and in too great haste to take up active duties, become restive under certain lines of study wherein they observe no practical value. And many a father, unaware that mental skill is more valuable than knowledge, has withdrawn a son from college, impatiently asking what good there can be in learning dead languages or in tarrying so long over the higher mathematics. Is that father a farmer? If so, you notice that he takes time for the grinding of his axe that afterwards he may save both time and strength in the use thereof. And likewise is there exhibition of economy in wrestling with subjects that sharpen our wits. I well remember a brief and of course futile attempt once made by the members of my own class in Acadia to bring about, if possible, an abbreviation of mathematical studies; but the better sense of a later day has shown some of us, at least, our folly, and I, for one, have often wished for the leisure to go again through Olney's Algebra and the General Geometry and Calculus. Over these books we groaned sometimes, but we were then, though realizing it not, fighting in part the battles of the present, inasmuch as we were, by those conflicts, gaining strength for ensuing service. Though the grinding of an axe costs it pays.

It is Acadia's mission, also, *to open up for students lines of investigation and engender ardent desire for knowledge.* It might seem to some that it were little simply to start men upon paths of inquiry and to beget hunger for continuance. But the truth is that such is no small achievement. Comparatively little knowledge can be acquired in the brief period of four years. While an academy boy, I thought Sophomores to be wise indeed, and as for Seniors, well, they were quite unapproachable, so far had they gone along the highways of learning. But time makes great changes in our estimates. The yardstick with which we once measured doth dwindle to an inch. If, however, along with mere entrance upon the study of science, history and literature, strong wish to go farther has been begotten, then there is good guarantee that life being spared, what has been well begun will be well continued. The arousement of a worthy ambition in a youthful mind not only furnishes the individual himself with an enviable source of enjoyment, but also ensures the betterment of other lives that shall touch his.

Again—it is a part of the mission of Acadia *to increase the power of application and foster a spirit of persistency.* One of the rarest and most valuable of possessions is the ability of *attention*, that is the power to hold the mind closely and continuously to whatever should occupy it. Without acquiring this habit there can be little hope of attaining leadership. Alexander Hamilton, the American statesman, was deemed by many a man of genius; but he himself said that whatever he brought to pass worthy of note was the outcome solely of severe and prolonged application. There is no lack of men who can do things admirably for a spurt, but there is lack of such as persist and succeed. And Acadia is a strong agency in helping fill among us this need. In most young people who go thither, and around them too, many forces keep, operating to divert them from the paths in which they are expected to press steadily on. Some have love of ease, others a too great fondness for sport, while a few incline too much to follow the bent of their own intellectual tastes at the expense of prescribed courses. And unquestionably it is a blessing that there are other wills and wishes in exercise besides the students' own, choosing for them in their immaturity what they themselves would be likely to choose with the wisdom of a later day. A yielding to that pressure of the college which holds in check such youthful inclinations as are not for the time being in harmony with what has been wisely outlined, and which impels onward to thorough completion of all assigned tasks, is productive of that self-mastery and that ability to keep to the lines of duty that consecutively present themselves, which will certainly stand the student in great stead when professional studies are taken up or the demands of active service are subsequently encountered. Often the things we are least disposed to do are the very things that should be done by us in order to avoid a one-sided development. Time and again have I thought of a characteristic bit of wisdom our honored president showed in assigning the members of our class subjects for essays at the opening of the senior year. He knew us well and knew just what we required to round us out much better. So he gave to each a subject farthest removed from what would have been the personal choice of the writer. It caused no little discomfort, as you can readily see, and much cudgeling of brains, but the end thereof was profit. My subject was a political one, which introduced me to the wonderful prose writings of John Milton, an introduction for which I have ever since been grateful. By this piece of experience, and experiences like that have succeeded, I have learned that subjects unattractive at the outset may prove most pleasing after they have been entered upon. We have no need to live long to know that in every honorable vocation there are unpleasant duties, and it is surely worth much to have gained not only the disposition to turn to these and execute them faithfully, but to have found out that what appears disagreeable when we are off a little way from it may be quite delightful to us when we have reached its midst.

To proceed a step farther, we notice that it is the mission of Acadia College *to bind together in sympathy those who subsequently are to occupy prominent positions in the diverse walks of life.* A liberal education is a great unifier of men. It is something in the first place, for young people who come from different parts and out of diversity of surroundings, having various tastes and ambitions, to be thrown into each other's company. Each, without knowing it, is the instructor of his fellow. And then, by pursuing the same studies, they are brought to have, in some degree, a community of interest after they have gone forth to all directions to follow diverse pursuits. There is ever danger that men unduly exalt, in their own estimation, what they themselves are about, and that they belittle, in comparison, what others have to attend to. But it will be found, I think, that those who have together gone through the courses in mathematics, physics and literature, are, as a rule, united in a way that is ever after productive of mutual sympathy and helpfulness. One of my classmates is now one of my deacons, and the profession of the law is more to me and the work of the ministry probably more to him because we went side by side through Acadia's curriculum. In the address of President Sawyer at the jubilee of '88 there is a passage which finds in me so ready an assent that I must here repeat it. "Perhaps after all," he says, "Society is suffering more from the want of general than special education. We need common sympathies among educated men; we need these sympathies between members of different professions. We need the habit of broad thinking and open sympathy with all learning. We need an interest in intellectual life and culture that shall be counted as having as real value as success in professional pursuits. We need to cure the conceit that leads men of eminence in one line of study to despise the zeal and be indifferent to the excellence of such as are devoted to other lines. For all this," he well adds in conclusion, "I know of no better means than a course of what is called liberal education. I believe it to be, when the proper elements enter into it in proper proportions, the best method for training students for the greatest usefulness in the general pursuits of life and for the highest success in special study."

It is Acadia's mission, we say next, and with emphasis, *to encircle its students with influences tending to lead them in ways of righteousness.* Not that the professors are to give themselves to distinctively evangelistic work; but the atmosphere of the school should be adapted to the development of Christian character. And devoutly should we render praise unto God that this has ever been the case at Acadia in a degree so marked. In prayer the institutions were born, by prayer they have been fostered, and the duty abides upon us to remain in prayer that God's saving grace may there be largely exhibited in all the years to come. A God-fearing teacher fails not to make evident, even when confining himself to what we term secular instruction, his allegiance to the Lord of All, and he works upon scholars for their right lastingly even when both teacher and taught are ignorant of the ongoing of such a process. Few similar institutions have, throughout their history, been more thoroughly permeated with the spirit of the Christian religion than our Acadia. The dominant aim of well-conditioned Baptist churches, the bringing of men under the rule of Immanuel, has been, we can truthfully assert, the dominant aim of this College. The fact has constantly been recognized that liberal education does not shut out the Bible, but includes it and accords it the topmost place among books. The reading of the Word and the morning prayers in the College chapel, the students' weekly meeting for prayer, the incidental utterances of professors, evincing unmistakably where their trust is stayed, and the oft recurring revivals which have formed so conspicuous a feature at Acadia for these more than fifty years, all unite in proclaiming the Institutions at Wolfville a choice place indeed for our young men and young women; and inasmuch as these religious features are still regarded as essential in our scheme of higher education, we may well, from the moral as well as the intellectual standpoint, bestir ourselves to add new names to the roll of students.

Those who have read the Prospectus of the N. S. Baptist Education Society, the society which had charge of our educational affairs in the early years of our schools at Horton, and who knew the history of these schools until now, cannot fail to be impressed with the close adherence there has always been to its thirteenth clause. It reads thus: "It shall be the care of the committee to provide efficient teachers, to whose moral and religious character special regard will be had; and it is considered an object in every department under the influence of this society, never to be lost sight of, that the scholars and students while acquiring information to fit them for their various stations in life, should be led to a knowledge of the true relation of man to his Creator, and of that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which alone can furnish a sure pledge of their good conduct in this world, and their happiness in eternity." We have no need to add that Acadia's mission, as touching the spiritual welfare of those coming to her, is now exactly what it was at a former day, and there is adherence thereto in the present as certainly as there was in the long ago. From it may she never depart!

It is the mission of Acadia College, if I may mention another item without committing the sin deprecated at the beginning, *to help young people discover the particular plans God cherishes for them, and to incite them to enter upon their fulfilment.* That God has a definite plan for every one, for the less gifted as well as the largely endowed, I cannot but think, and the thought, if dwelt upon, must prove ennobling. There is a special sphere divinely designed for each separate individual. But we find not our respective places by giving way to ease and trusting to chance. Among the youth there is often haste in plunging into life's active arena, parents sometimes favoring this prematurity, so that God's plan is not infrequently missed. College life helps to see what the world has been and is, what it should be and will surely become with the spread of Christianity. Not only so, but it tests and trains the student himself. And therefore the student with fuller knowledge of himself, the world and the Gospel, is put in a position to determine with less likelihood of mistake just the very path God would have him take. It is a pity that one summoned by his aptitude to one calling should select for himself another. There are in the gospel ministry today many successful preachers who looked to something else when they entered Acadia, but during their College career they learned *God's* will and gave up their own. Of course we do not mean that all who study at Wolfville take divinely appointed paths; but we do mean that the advantages of the schools established there put persons in the way of discovering with greater certainty the parts God would have them take in righting, under His direction, a disordered world, and put them also in the way of accomplishing those parts with fuller efficiency.

In answer to the question, What is the mission of Acadia College? we have said that it is to train the minds of our [illegible] people; to open up for them lines of investigation and awaken keen desire for knowledge; to beget in them power of application and of persistent effort; to bind together in sympathy, by oneness of intellectual pursuits, those who are afterwards to be leaders in the various spheres of noble activity; to put about them influences adapted to lead them to Godly living; and to assist them in finding out the places God would have them occupy respectively in the world's great workshop. Now let it be affirmed, in conclusion, that an institution having such a mission is in no danger whatever of getting larger support than it deserves; but rather, if we watch not well, we will undoubtedly fall away, through thoughtlessness or preoccupation, from due appreciation of its solid worth, and therefore withold what it justly claims, to the detriment of every denominational interest. If we have regard for the common schools of our country; if we are concerned about the affairs of government; if we wish to see competent men in the various professions; if we favor what conduces to temporal prosperity, if we hope to be held an increase, not only of the numbers of our churches, but of their spirituality and power; if we long in any degree to be the means of bringing heathendom to the feet of the one only Saviour—in a word, if we, the Baptists of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island are at all eager to glorify God through efforts for regeneration of the lost and sanctification of believers, then we had better be swift and liberal in the offering of our prayers, our children and our money, that Acadia may, by suitable equipment, keep place with general progress, thereby doing a memorable part to ensure the success of every Christian enterprise. The financial help which comes to Acadia in her need is indicative, quite accurately, of the esteem in which she is held by us, the constituency; and I am sure that if we could behold with greater clearness at this present hour the vast and precious and far-reaching character of the work committed of God to our schools at Wolfville, financial embarrassment would not for a moment continue. To us, as to our predecessors, a magnificent opportunity is given right here, to make investments that will, without shadow of doubt, bring blessed and bountiful returns. Let the toils and sacrifices of the fathers and founders be recalled, and then let us offer fervent prayer to God to make us, as they were, wise and vigilant, that the great debt we owe the past may be cheerfully paid over in full to the present generation. All hail beloved Acadia. *Esto perpetua.*

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He lived right well, and nobly served his day,
And ere the heat of noon was called away.
His comrades looked around, bewildered, dumb:
The Lord had taken him from ills to come.

(*Is.* 57: 1.)

From morn till night, through all the busy days,
God's eyes had been upon His servant's ways;
And finding none more faithful in the land,
He took him to be at His own right hand.

(*Ps.* 101: 6.)

Dwelling too far away, for what he would
Do for his Master, if he only could;
Knowing this servant loved His work so well,
The King had him called home with Him to dwell.

(1 *Chron.* 4: 23.)

His heart, renewed in all, and cleansed with blood,
Was pure and stainless—so his life was good;
And thus accounted worthy of such grace,
He now beholds the glory of God's face.

(*Matt.* 5: 8.)

Others beheld the face of Moses shine,
Though he knew not that he appeared divine;
Even so our brother does not see or know
What heavenly glories on his features glow.

(*Rev.* 22: 4.)

And now, shall vain regrets, or blinded love
Grudge him his service sweet, or bliss above?
Ah no, but grateful for his life below,
Let us so live that we his joys may know.

(*Rev.* 14: 13.)

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