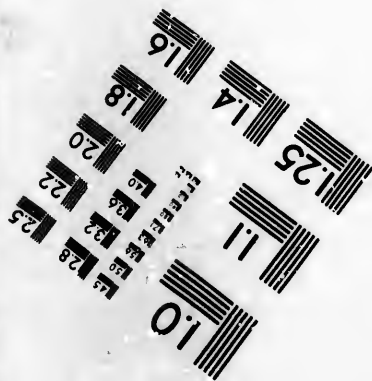
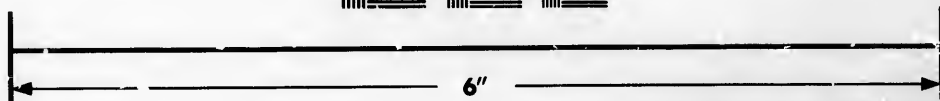
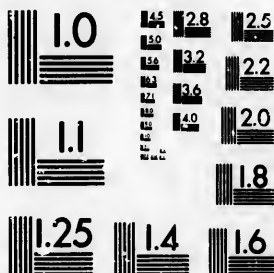


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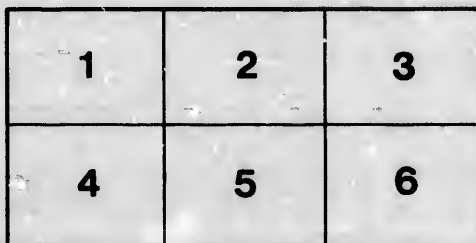
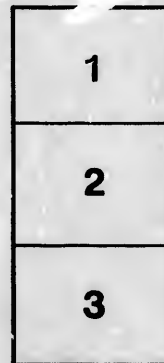
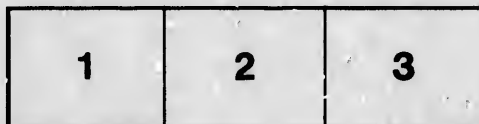
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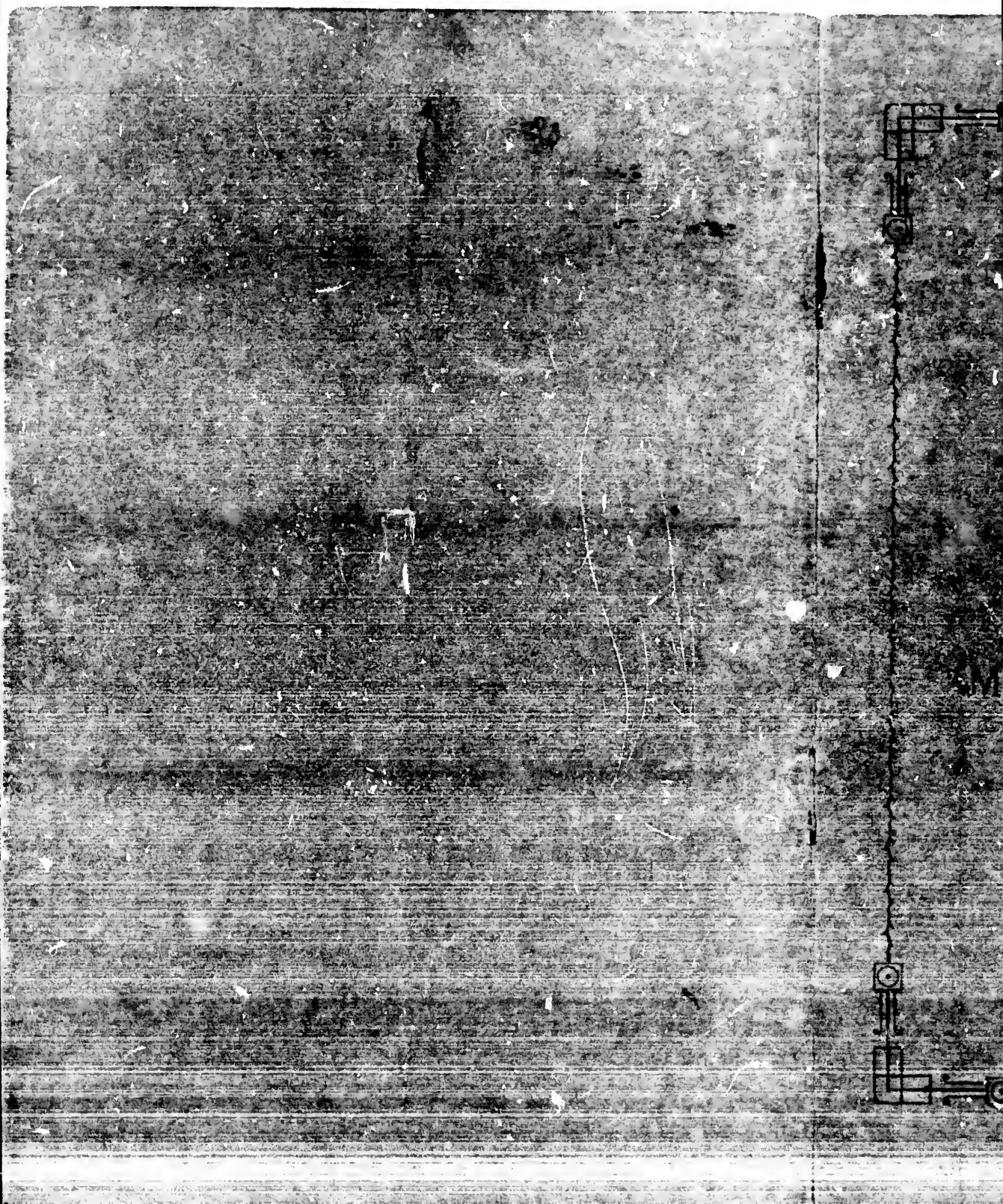
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Toronto Baptist College

OPENING LECTURE

SESSION 1888-9

By

Wm. J. Bell, LL.D.

SUBJECT:

Mistakes in regard to Education

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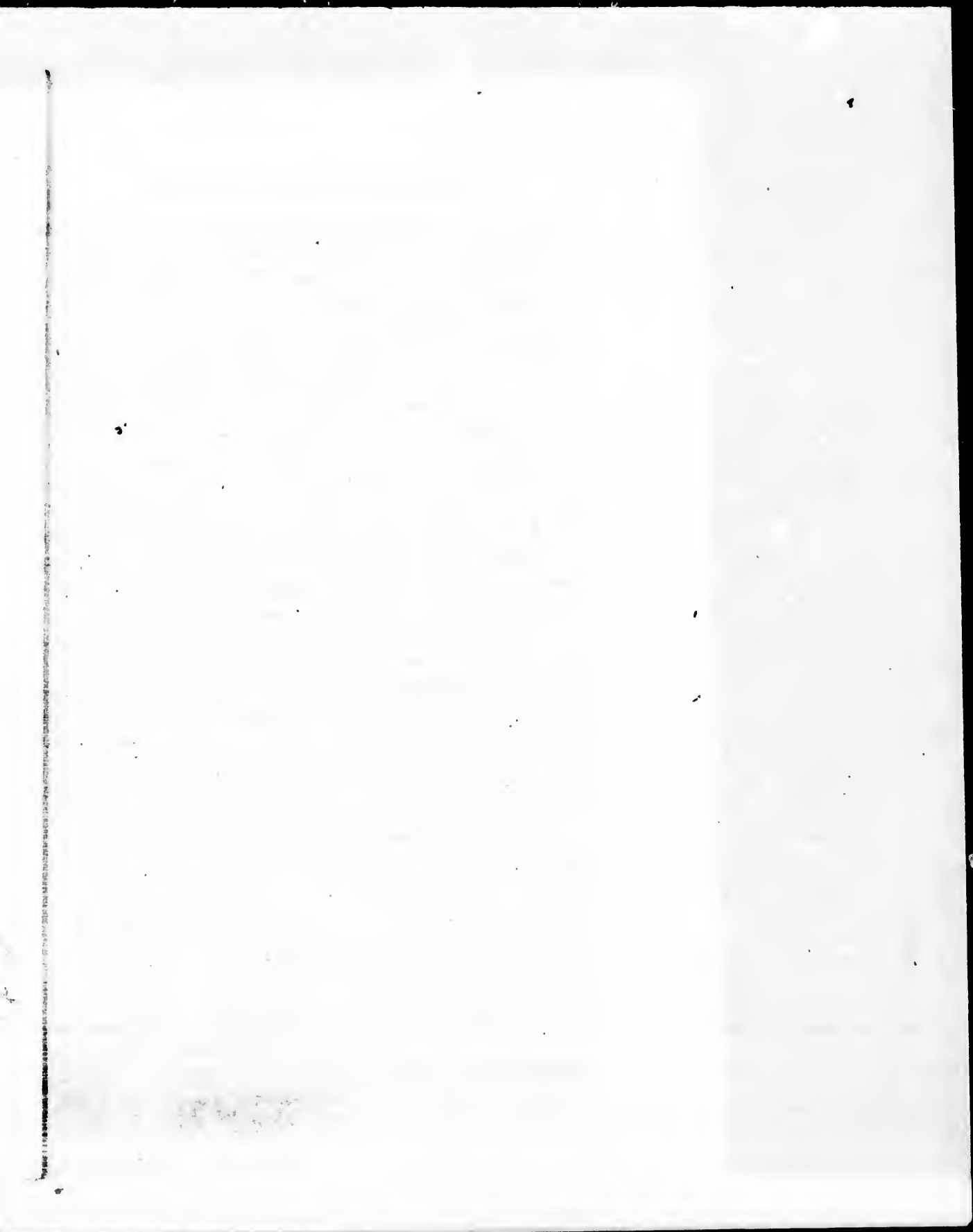
OPENING LECTURE SESSION, 1886-87.

BY

PROFESSOR M. MACVICAR, LL.D.

Subject:—“MISTAKES IN REGARD TO EDUCATION.”

The subject announced for my lecture is somewhat misleading. It may be supposed, in view of the discussions on the Federation of Colleges, which have occupied public attention for some time, that mistakes in educational policy or in our educational system will be passed in review. Let me say at once, this is no part of my intention. I propose to call attention to Christian education in which Christian teachers and ministers of the gospel are equally interested. I class ministers as educators, as teachers; and they are such in a very important sense. They above all others should know the mind of God in regard to the true nature of education; for to them is committed the highest and most vital part of the whole work of education. Their responsibility is therefore of the highest order. And in the discharge of this responsibility, they owe it to the interests of God's cause, and to themselves, to become thoroughly acquainted with the principles and practices which should prevail in conducting family, school and college education. Hence I have thought it in place, in the opening lecture of our College Session, to call attention, in a plain way, to some things, which, in my judgment, must be regarded as fatal mistakes in conducting the work of Christian Education.



The time at my disposal is much too short to enable me to present fully my views upon this subject. I am therefore compelled to state my positions very briefly, in fact, almost in the form of propositions. What I present, however, I trust, is sufficiently full to make clear my meaning and indicate explicitly my convictions upon the points considered. My object will be accomplished, if what I say assists in any way the students of the College to avoid in their preparation for their chosen work, and in doing this work, the mistakes to which attention is called, or, if it assists in forming during their course of study, and in enforcing in their ministry, correct Biblical views in regard to family, school and college education. In pursuance of this object I ask attention—

I. To what constitutes the work of Christian Education.

II. To some of the mistakes made in carrying forward this work.

In order to place before you somewhat clearly what constitutes Christian Education, let me note first what it is from a negative point of view.

Christian Education is not a system of education in which, or by which, Christians are indoctrinated in Divine and spiritual truth and are trained in the observance of this truth in their life and conversation. It is true that such a work as this is properly called education; but it belongs to that higher form of education which is possible only after the heart has been renewed by the power of the spirit of God.

Again, Christian Education is not a system of education intended exclusively or largely to serve the purpose of conveying, in a convincing manner, saving truth to the mind and conscience of the sinner. This work is the high prerogative of the Church of Christ. This is to be done by the direct presentation of Christ and him crucified. Men are to be convinced of their sins and saved by the foolishness of preaching. But while this is emphatically true and should be clearly understood, it is equally true and should be as clearly understood

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and maintained, that a Christian Education does mean an education every step of which is conducted in perfect harmony with this great end. Yea, more, every step of which is conducted so that the entire work has the strictest reference to this end, and is in the fullest sense fundamental and preparatory to the accomplishment of this end. True Christians cannot, consistently with their allegiance to Christ and their profession of interest in the salvation of their fellow-creatures, take any lower ground than this. The final destiny of the soul is of infinitely more consequence than the acquisition of knowledge, of learning, and of a superior preparation for earthly efforts and honors. This every child of God must believe if true to God and to himself, and believing thus, how can he otherwise than insist, that in the process of education in which the whole character is largely moulded and determined, the strictest reference should be had at every stage to what constitutes the crowning glory of a true manhood.

But once more, Christian education is not a system of education in which there is simply a bare recognition of God and of His word. It is passing strange how men are willing to satisfy their conscience in this vital matter with what cannot be otherwise than regarded, by even men of the world, as a mere formality. We insist upon it, at least some do, that a short portion of God's word be read without note or comment and a formal prayer offered at the opening of our schools. Far be it from me to object to the use of God's word or to the offering of heart felt prayers. I cannot, however, shut my eyes to the fact that such opening exercises are, to a large extent, a mere formality. This cannot be gainsaid by anyone who is familiar with what is done in many schools and colleges. Just think, for example, of some of these colleges, having an attendance of several hundreds of young men, calling the daily repetition of a short prayer, in the presence of a very limited number of these men, anything else than a mere formality. Indeed such a course is worse than a formality, it is a positive

evil. It engenders the worst kind of indifference and skepticism in reference to religious exercises. It surely cannot be regarded by the thoughtful otherwise than as a mere effort to quiet the religious conscience.

But aside from this view of the matter, there are other objections to such exercises. They fail to serve any important purpose as an educational power; they fail to affect for good the conduct and life of students. Indeed, they have the opposite effect upon many of our most thoughtful young men who are passing through a formative condition, and who on account of this fact are disposed to question even the most obvious and important truths of God's word. Yes, such exercises are a formality so far as right educational effects are concerned. We would not be slow to see this if the same course were pursued in any practical sphere of life. Who would, for example, admit for a moment, that a merchant could educate boys in business principles, practices and habits by calling them together every morning regularly and reading before them in the most devout manner a short portion of the best business manual that can possibly be made. No one would admit, that such an exercise, however pleasant and gratifying, could have scarcely any effect as an educating power or as a means of transforming the boys into able business men. Neither can the formal reading of a portion of the Bible, at the opening or closing of a school, have any great effect as an educating power or as a means of transforming the pupils into practical and efficient moral and spiritual workers.

Just here some one may say, if this be so should not the use of the Bible be dispensed with entirely in our schools? I answer emphatically, no. Such a course would be, indeed, a great mistake. What we should dispense with is not the Bible, but the sham formality of reading a short extract from it once or twice a day, while the book itself, as a book, is placed under interdict, is, to all intents and purposes, excluded

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from our schools. It is not given the place allowed to other books. It cannot be taught; it cannot be used as a text-book. Christian education demands just the opposite of this course. It demands that the entire Bible, and not a collection of extracts or an expurgated edition, should be in the hands of every pupil; and that the book, as a book, should receive, in our schools and colleges, at least as much attention from teachers and pupils as the works of Homer, Plato, Virgil, Horace, Shakespeare, Milton, and other classical writers. Surely this is not too much to ask of Christian institutions of learning, or of Christian educators who profess a sacred reverence for the Bible, even from a literary standpoint.

But Christian education demands much more than this. It demands that the Bible should have a higher place in our schools and colleges, than any human productions of ancient or modern times; and that the book be studied, not only as a literary production, but as the veritable Word of God, as the only book which can make men wise unto salvation. It demands, therefore, that the teachings of the book be embodied in a character, in a life. Hence it demands that the book be in constant use from the beginning to the completion of an educational course. But I have said enough to make apparent that Christian education is not a system of education in which there is simply a bare recognition of God and His Word.

Thus far I have indicated what Christian Education is from a negative point of view. Let me now ask your attention to the positive side.

Christian education may be defined as such a course of instruction, training, and discipline as will develop symmetrically and call into full, harmonious and healthful exercise, in perfect accord with God's revealed will, all the possibilities of our nature, including both body and mind.

As an abstract proposition I am disposed to think that every believer in the Word of God, as the only rule of faith

and practice, must give substantial assent to this definition of Christian education. In words, at least, every Christian holds that the entire man should be trained for God ; that the body as well as the mind should be brought into complete subjection to His laws ; and that every power of the body and mind should be developed in such a manner as will best fit us to glorify God in every thing that we do. To hold any thing less than this is to reject some of the plainest teachings of the Word of God. But to hold this, not as a mere theory, but as an operative and practical principle, means a great deal. It means the doing of a work which our schools and colleges largely if not altogether ignore. But that this may be apparent let me notice more carefully what the definition implies.

It implies first, that education is a growth, a development, a transformation of our being which commences with infancy and continues until we reach mature manhood. It implies that education is the evolution (using the word evolution not in the Darwinian sense) of all the possibilities which God has planted in our nature ; that it is the unifying of these possibilities in harmony with the mind of God, subordinating all to the direction and control of the intelligence and will ; that it is, in short, the crystallization of all these possibilities into a character, which, because of this crystallization, is made to possess efficient intellectual, moral and spiritual power. I say intellectual, moral and spiritual power, not one or two of these, not each taken separately, but the harmonious and co-operative blending of the three. It is only when this blending takes place that each can be perfected and made capable of its highest exercise. The development of such power as this is the first and most important product of Christian education. But such a product, I need not say, is impossible when in the very process of education the moral and spiritual elements of our nature are partially or wholly neglected. And is not this just the state of things that prevails, just the mistake that is made in a large proportion of our schools and colleges ?

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But again the definition implies, that during the process of the development of which I have just spoken certain other important products besides intellectual, moral and spiritual power must receive special attention. Christian education seeks to perfect the individual man as an individual ; but it seeks much more than this. It seeks to perfect the man for the sake of what he can do for others, for the sake of what he can bring to pass. It seeks to place him in full sympathy with all that is true and good in God's universe. It seeks specially to place him in helpful relations to every interest and work that tends to glorify God and to promote the well-being of his fellow creatures. In short, it seeks to fit the man for Christ-like service in whatever sphere of life he may be called to labor. All this implies the development in the process of education of such powers, qualities, tastes and aptitudes as will place the man in full and perfect working relations with the material world, with his fellow creatures, and with God. It implies then a rounded, symmetrical development, a true and broad manhood, and not such a one-sided and narrow development as is frequently given in schools and colleges ; a development which affects chiefly, if not exclusively, the intellectual part of the man, and which fits him quite as much to be an efficient instrument for evil as for good. Surely such neutral, such negative educational products, cannot be regarded otherwise than as a great mistake. Yet such must be the products of our educational processes, in whatever institution conducted, so long as we fail to recognize fully the co-ordinate character of our intellectual, moral and spiritual natures, or so long as we fail to treat the man as a complete unit, composed of these co-ordinate factors, the development of each of which must be carried on at one and the same time.

In this brief and very incomplete statement of what is to be understood by the work of Christian education, I have necessarily indicated, directly and indirectly, what must be regarded as mistakes in our conception and execution of this work. I

come now, however, to notice mistakes of a different origin. Granting that we have the most perfect conception of what Christian education is, yet we may fail largely in carrying forward this work because of another class of mistakes into which we fall. To this class I now ask your attention.

Assuming that we have before us a correct ideal of what constitutes a truly educated man from the Christian standpoint, the question at once presses itself upon our mind how can this ideal be executed. This necessarily gives rise to questions of detail. We ask what are the appliances by which this ideal can be carried out? How must these appliances be used? Is there any way by which we can ascertain with certainty what is to be done? Can we be saved from making mistakes in this vital matter? Or, has God left this, the most important work committed to man, to the weak and miserable caprice of each worker? In this, which affects most vitally the destiny of man both here and hereafter, is there no law? Are there no fixed principles to guide the workers? Is every thing uncertain? Is every way and any way of doing the work equally satisfactory to God? These are serious questions—questions which we, as teachers and ministers, cannot ignore. To ignore them is to become guilty before God. I leave them with you, with a few reflections and further questions which may help to a careful consideration of these.

I have asked, can we be saved from making mistakes in this vital matter? I answer yes, if we are willing to pay the cost. The cost means hard work. It means putting our professions and theories into efforts and actions. It means that we make earnest and diligent search for our mistakes, and having found them, that we put forth the effort necessary to enable us to avoid them. Since this is what must be done; it is important that we ask and answer the question—Where are we to look for our mistakes, what is their origin? To this question I am disposed to answer first:

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educational work arise in a large measure from a partial or total disregard of the existence and operation of the conditions and fixed laws under which God has made the right development of our nature possible.

This disregard in the practical work of education is almost universal. It is not so, however, in theory. Many, if not all, are ready to admit, that such conditions and laws do exist ; that God has, in education, as in other things, fixed purposes ; and that His provisions for executing these purposes are all perfect. But admitting this fundamental truth is one thing, and allowing it to control us and determine our course of action is quite another thing. We may say that God has fixed purposes, and that He makes no mistakes in His methods of executing these purposes, but are we ready honestly and persistently to carry out His purposes and methods of work ? Are we ready in our educational efforts to give sincere and earnest heed to the real constitution of things with which we are surrounded ? Are we ready to take into full account the inherent constitution of man as at first created, and as it has been marred by sin ? Are those whose special work it is to educate others ready to devote time, energy and earnest study to the work of ascertaining what God has made possible in the human constitution ? Are they ready to trace carefully and exhaustively God's own methods of developing these possibilities ? Are they ready as true educators to prepare themselves in this way to follow God's methods in performing the work He has given them to do ?

To these interrogations I am forced to give, at least, in part, a negative answer. No doubt our age is one of progress in education. But notwithstanding this progress it must be clear to any careful and impartial observer, that many of our schools and colleges have yet but little regard in their discipline and methods of work to man's inherent constitution, or to God's revealed ideal of true manhood or womanhood, or to the provisions he has made to execute this ideal.

But why this state of things? Has God failed to place plainly before us what constitutes a true man? Is it impossible for us to find out His purposes and methods of work? Certainly not, His word and His works give an explicit answer to each of these questions. The first receives a full and perfect answer in the life of Christ upon earth. He was truly God, and He became just as truly man. Hence His life on earth, while intended to give us a full and final revelation of the nature of God, is also intended to give us an equally full and final revelation of the possibilities of the nature of man. He is placed before us in the Bible not merely as an ideal at which we should aim, but as a literal embodiment of the very character we should possess. If we wish therefore to know what constitutes true manhood, we must devote ourselves earnestly to the study of Christ, not to the study of what is said about him, but to the actual study of Himself. This is the only source to which we can go to get a final and perfect representation of God's mind upon this subject.

But, again, the second question receives an equally full and explicit answer. In the intellectual, moral and spiritual world, God is constantly at work. He transforms men and women into new creatures right in our presence. We have therefore given us in this region the most perfect opportunities of observing His methods of work. But further, in the natural or material world He is constantly at work before our eyes. All nature is God's work shop. And in this work shop He makes no mistakes; His ideals are wrought out with unerring precision; what comes from his hands is perfect.

In following God in this region of His work, scientists have not failed to do faithful service. They have already carefully observed and formulated a wide range of God's methods of doing His work. They call the phenomena which can be formulated natural laws,—which is only the scientific name for God's uniform mode of working. This is what the scientists have done and are doing in regard to the material world. But what are we

doing in regard to the spiritual world? Has God not given us the same opportunities? Can nothing be done? His methods would seem to be so plain, which teaches us that this is so? I am sure that we can progress uniformly in the use of His methods in every case as well as in every progress and in every mind. Human training and education it is now in the physical and

This being the case, why do ministers, educators, at the cost of time and money, if God has revealed to His purposes the development of character, having discovered that we fail to do so, as a great necessity, we must not be done as teachers, and the consequences depend upon

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These methods under conditions which are not right development, defective of appliances, and become open

doing in regard to the intellectual, moral and spiritual world? Has God no fixed method of doing His work in this region? Can nothing be formulated so that we may follow and obey His methods in performing the work assigned to us? It would seem not if we are to judge from the hap-hazard way in which teachers and ministers sometimes do their work. But is this so? I answer emphatically no. It is not so. God works as uniformly in the world of mind as in the world of matter, and His methods of work can be observed and formulated in the one case as well as in the other. When this is done, we shall see real progress and marvelous results accomplished in the world of mind. Human effort will then be made as productive in the training and development of mind in schools and colleges, as it is now in the production of material results in the chemical, physical and botanical laboratory.

This being so, is it too much to insist that as teachers, ministers, educators, it is our imperative duty, at whatever cost of time and earnest effort, to ascertain and follow what God has revealed in His works and in His word in reference to His purposes and methods of accomplishing the true development of our entire nature. Can we consider ourselves as having discharged our sacred obligations to God and man, if we fail to do this? Failing to do it must surely be regarded as a great mistake, as an almost unpardonable mistake. For we must not forget that upon the way in which our work is done as teachers and ministers, momentous and eternal consequences depend.

But again if the question of the origin of our mistakes as educators is further pressed, I answer secondly:

These mistakes originate, not only in failing to ascertain the conditions and fixed laws under which God has made the right development of our entire nature possible, but also in defective or incorrect views in regard to the nature of the appliances through which these conditions and fixed, laws become operative.

The time left to me will only permit a partial notice of one example, out of many that might be presented, of the truth of this position.

In these days of inventions and mechanical contrivances by which the most perfect work of every sort is performed, it is natural that in education the same mechanical tendency should appear. In the manufacturing world, in consequence of the use of mechanical contrivances, specialism is carried to a marvelous extent. A special machine is now provided to perform each of the most minute divisions of work. This course is substantially pursued in conducting educational work. Specialists are the order of the day. They are in demand to be put in charge of almost every department of educational work. This is a great mistake. These specialists are not specialists at all in educational work. They are simply specialists in certain lines of knowledge. In these lines they may be very learned, but this does not qualify them for the work of the teacher.

Just here it may be asked, what is the work of the true teacher? Is it to talk freely and correctly about things in the hearing of his pupils? Is it to communicate to them his own extensive knowledge of the subject under consideration? Is it to deliver in their presence well written and learned lectures? This may be a part of his work, yet it is the least important part of all. It is the part, however, which the man who is simply a specialist in knowledge is fitted to perform. No, this is not the great, the important work of the teacher. The true teacher recognizes fully the fact that his work does not consist in transmitting to his pupils his own exact and extensive knowledge, which has taken him many years to acquire. He knows that such a course is simply a small part of teaching. Education to him, as we have already seen, is a development, a growth, and his work as a true teacher is to supply all the conditions that are necessary to minister rightly to this growth. This being the case it is evident that the man who is

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simply a specialist, who has abundant knowledge of certain kinds, is no more fitted, on account of this knowledge, to do this work, than a profound and learned botanist, on account of his botanical knowledge, is fitted to be a practical horticulturist and to minister successfully to the growth of plants.

It is true that a successful horticulturist must have a certain minimum of practical botanical knowledge, but this is not the secret of his success. He is successful simply because he is a specialist in horticulture. So it is with the true teacher or with the true minister, he must have a minimum of knowledge in the lines of his work. But his success in his work is the invariable product of power inherent in himself. It is the product of his practical specialism in the way of efficient living contact with those whom he is to affect. Power must go out of himself to his pupils or his parishioners, not out of his knowledge, if he is to render the help needed for real intellectual, moral and spiritual growth. The truth of this position is fully verified by the experience of every successful teacher and minister of the Gospel. When I say successful teachers and ministers, I mean men who have stamped the impress of true manhood and womanhood upon those committed to their charge. I mean men who have been the instruments in God's hands in building up noble, strong and Godlike characters in others. I mean men who have real convictions of truth, who are not vacillating about everything, who do not carry into everything they say and do uncertainty and doubt. In short, I mean men of faith such as are described in the xi. of Hebrews, men who can do and dare anything for the sake of their Master, and the good of their fellows. Such men will bear testimony to the truth of my position. They know that their success is not the product of their knowledge, however wide and varied it may be, but the product of power, inherent power, power that can be turned to effective account in real work, in any sphere of life to which they may be called.

But, finally, the tendency to employ almost exclusively to

do educational work, specialists in certain lines of knowledge, is a great mistake from other points of view than I have yet noticed. This tendency overlooks entirely the fact that not one in a thousand of our boys and girls are to be specialists, in any line of knowledge, when they have completed their education. Hence minute, exact and detailed knowledge, such as the specialist is fitted to give, and will give, if true to his own instincts, is not what they need or what they should have. They are in school not to be made specialists, but to be educated. A knowledge of certain subjects must therefore be imparted, not for the sake of the knowledge itself, but for the sake of the discipline which it affords. When their school training is completed, they enter upon the stern activities of life. These activities are very varied and taxing. They call for specialists, not in knowledge, but in power. They call for men and women who, because they possess power, character and a strong individuality, are able to become at once marked specialists, as effective workmen in any sphere of activity to which they may turn their attention.

The world calls for such men. They are needed everywhere. They are needed as business men, as lawyers, as mechanics, as physicians, as teachers and as heralds of the cross. Our pulpits and our schools and colleges call for men who are possessed of power, divine power, power which can prevail with God and man, power associated with courage to undertake hard things, to overcome great difficulties. Such men are not the products of the training of specialists in certain lines of knowledge. No, the power they possess comes from other sources than the acquisition of the minute details of knowledge furnished by the specialists. It comes from wrestling single handed with truth, real, objective, God-given truth, until it is mastered and until it becomes a living reality, a living fire which they carry into their daily life. It comes from grappling single handed with, and solving difficult problems in thought, in philosophy and in science. It comes

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from grappling with living issues which effect vitally the well-being of themselves and of their fellow-creatures. It comes from undertaking and executing successfully such material, moral and spiritual responsibilities, as require earnest and prolonged effort. It comes from real, living and intimate contact and association with their teachers; teachers who know how to sympathize with them in their struggles to gain a correct insight into the true nature of things, into the mysteries of truth relating to this and to the world beyond; teachers who will not do the students' work or bear their responsibilities, but who will surround them with such living conditions as will compel them to do this for themselves; finally, teachers who possess power and a heart to use this power efficiently in promoting the highest interests of their pupils. In short, the power which is called for in every sphere of life, the power which prevails with God and man, comes from a complete and voluntary subordination of the whole man to God and to His word, and to the laws revealed in His word and in His works, for the right training and development of the entire nature, physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual. Such institutions as supply the conditions which will give this kind of education, this kind of training and development to their students, are entitled in a true sense to the sacred name of Christian Schools. They are also entitled to command our most earnest and self-denying efforts in their behalf, that they may be firmly established and continue to do just such work through all the ages.

