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ARTICLE VI.

THE IDEALS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:

THE ARGUMENT FOR THE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE.[1]

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OBERLIN is a college great in history and great in hope, and there are many who love her. The past, whose record has gone into books and into living history, and into living men and women, is glorious and secure. There is no need to-day to rehearse familiar things. In speaking of the Christian college we shall find a good illustration of its spirit and achievements in the institution which we serve. Oberlin, happy in name, heroic in origin, fruitful in service, was as bold a venture of faith as that which launched the Mayflower, or sent the first missionary ship to the shores of Asia. The pioneers are mostly gone; but one, a boy when the ax of the first colonist rang amid these woods,—student, teacher, president, citizen, leader, philosopher, friend,—is yet with us, the completest embodiment of the Oberlin spirit. May wisdom and faith and love like his never depart from among us.

If we should pause a moment to summarize or suggest the past, the chief service of such a comprehensive sketch would be to inspire thankfulness to God, whose hand has been our guide, and to renew our sense of the greatness of the trust committed to our keeping. The history of Christian colleges in the West, as in the East, has been a history of courage and self-sacrifice on the part not merely of a few, but of considerable numbers. The early history of Oberlin reads like a chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, or

[1] Inaugural Address at Oberlin, June 20, 1899.

like a page from the annals of Massachusetts. Oberlin was the most advanced outpost of the highest moral development of America. One cannot read the early story of Oberlin without honoring the tremendous moral energy of the founders, who not only came to the wilderness with the express purpose of glorifying God in doing good to men "to the extent of their ability," but who achieved their purpose and made their college a power for education, for political reform, and spiritual regeneration in the Valley of the Mississippi and over the nations of the earth. There are so many visionaries without the wisdom and courage of success, that we applaud those visionaries who really make a lasting mark on the world. The history of Oberlin is aflame with the light of the Holy Spirit, the very energy of the loving God. We read that history and are touched by the burning heart of the greatest of modern evangelists, one of the epoch-making forces in the kingdom of Christ. We meet vigorous thinkers and stalwart debaters, who tested the many spirits who were so urgent and fleet in the third and fourth decades of our century, whether they were of God's eternal day, or goblins of man's dim, brief twilight. It is certainly one of the chief aims of education to give the student a sense of proportion, to show him the relative values of things. Possessing this sense of proportion, the wise teacher restrains the zeal of fanaticism. We admire the sturdy faith and patience, the logic and the love, with which the leaders gradually overcame the eccentricities of some few of their followers, while they themselves escaped the dominion of partial truths, or of the extravagances and aberrations which they shared with other strong men of the time.

Into the seething and foaming life of the mighty West, Oberlin came with convictions that righteousness and truth and love were to be the regenerating forces of the rapidly upspringing civilization. It was a critical time—rude, tu-

multuous, chaotic. The battle with slavery, destined to end in the most sanguinary strife of the modern world, was already on. Oberlin became an aggressive and pervasive force for emancipation, and made her name loved, feared, and hated over the entire disturbed area of American life. The College stood for humanity, brotherhood, for equal rights in education to men and women of all races. It stood for the worth of honest labor and for the right of elect minds among the poor to the higher education. Oberlin has not educated men away from sympathy with men. Its teaching and spirit do not tend to separate the educated man from the people. Some of our foremost college men are so withdrawn from sympathy with the American spirit that their benevolent efforts to help and guide the people are resented, and they themselves are looked upon as un-American. The habitual scorn and cynicism with which some well-meaning leaders of public opinion are carrying on their work of enlightenment have made the college man an object of dislike and distrust with multitudes. The helpful, the creative, the democratic, the sympathetic spirit has usually characterized the Western college man. He has been a doer rather than a critic; and one ounce of creative power is better than a ton of fault-finding. Oberlin College has illustrated those two Christian teachings, "No man liveth to himself," and "We are every one members one of another." Its thirty thousand students, remaining here from one year to ten years, inhaled, nearly all of them, much of Oberlin's spirit; and they have entered as forces of the better life, into the growth of our country. Those trained in colleges like this have had the spirit of earnestness. They have been shaped largely by religious environments. And here they have had the powerful stimulus to creative forcefulness and productiveness which comes from the inspiration of sacred music and the study of God's life-giving Word.

With all the rugged masculinity, the assertive courage, the sturdy independence which Oberlin has represented, there has been no failure to embody what has become one of the secrets of the new education, the spirit of true womanliness, the maternal and sympathetic elements which enter into the best growth of the mind. Here the education of men and women in the same classes has been an interesting and successful experiment. And here music, highest of all arts, cultivated in one of the foremost conservatories of the country, has been a deep, refining, and inspiring influence, penetrating the Oberlin atmosphere. The church services in a thousand congregations have been vastly improved by those who have here been trained and inspired. This Christian college has made itself a civilizing as well as an evangelizing influence. And while it has continually been learning wisdom with the progress of mankind, it has been teaching others, until, after two generations, it finds its ideas and methods widely accepted.

The Christian college has regard to the fact that whatever is in us is given over to the educational process,—body, mind, and soul. It believes that the object of the college training is to make men, to develop human nature on all sides, including the moral and spiritual sides. It believes that the object of education is to fit young people "for high and noble careers, satisfactory to themselves and useful to mankind." The body is the organ and instrument of the intellectual life, and the College does not forget the value of physical training. How much watchful care has here been bestowed by trained men and women upon the physical life! Athleticism is of course not the highest manifestation of the college work. The superiority of brain and heart over brawn must not only be asserted, but steadily adopted as a working truth. If athletics should become an open road to drunkenness, or to apologies for prize-fighting, we should hide our heads in shame. But we deem the

training of the body important, while we deplore and oppose any tendencies to an ungoverned enthusiasm for outdoor play and athletic competitions. Man is a mind in a body, and "the essential constituents of education in its highest sense" must be kept ever before us. True education regards the totality of human nature. It does not neglect the body, but it has respect also for the onlooking spirit, that is to live with God in realms celestial and unwasting.

The world has transformed since 1833. If we could put ourselves back into the material and moral environments of the year when Oberlin was founded, we should feel ourselves to be dwelling in antiquity. Think of living before slavery had been destroyed, before railroads had revolutionized city life and industry, before telephones had made next-door neighbors of people living five hundred miles apart, and before telegraphs had girdled the world, and made a whispering gallery of its surface! Think of living when toleration was thought to be a sin, when the animosities of theologians had a bitterness and intensity today almost incredible! Great have been the triumphs of the human intellect in the last sixty years.

Coming down to a more recent period, that covered by the last thirty years, the advance along every educational line in America has been rapid and re-heartening. Probably more millions of dollars came last year in special gifts to the colleges and universities of America than in any previous year. Real universities are already doing genuine university work in our country. New methods of studying the languages and the sciences are coming to the front, and indeed methods in all departments are becoming more and more alike. American youth have brilliant opportunities open to them, not only in the East, but in the Middle and Central West and on the Pacific Coast. The descendants of the Pilgrim fathers are not now in the condi-

tion of thirty years ago, when they were "still very thankful for the parched corn of learning." Oberlin has been steadily raising the standards of admission, and they are of even rank with those of the best of American colleges. She has done some notable things for the advancement of knowledge, and she is gathering in her laboratories and libraries resources which may mean much for the years to come.

Some very hopeful tendencies are apparent. More people than ever realize that "education is the greatest thing in the world," and is the real purpose of our life on the earth. A new vitality marks the work of American schools and colleges. We are getting closer to things, to realities, to life. The study of history is less and less a study of dates and facts, and is more and more the study of epochs and of great names. The mind should be much more than a phonograph, to report and repeat mechanically what is poured into it. Men are feeling that inspiration is even more than knowledge, that noble feelings stirred are more valuable than facts memorized. Oberlin certainly has not been a place for the repression of sentiment and emotion. It has not been ashamed of admiration, of enthusiasm, of hopefulness. It has endeavored to make learning vital. And the newer pedagogy fully realizes that it is dullness and lack of interest that wear out the nerves of the student, and that young people will do twice as much work under a teacher who inspires them as under one who does not.

There has been no tendency here to underrate the value of character in the teacher, or the worth of personality as an educational influence. If you consult the graduates of the College, the general opinion will be that the men who most largely builded themselves into their students' lives are remembered for what they were even more than for what they taught. The President of Johns Hopkins University asserts confidently that "the influence of study is on

the whole favorable to the growth of spiritual life, to the development of uprightness, unselfishness, and faith; or, in other words, it is opposed to Epicureanism and materialism." This view may be a wise general conclusion. If so, it indicates that ethical and spiritual influences have on the whole been dominant in American colleges. President Eliot justly makes high claims for the aims and achievements of the American college. It has promoted a noble patriotism, it has strengthened a better public spirit. In some cases it has tended to remove political animosities, bringing together young people from all parts of the land. It has been a great teaching force. Here and there it has been a store-house of knowledge. It has also brought to light new truth. It has usually exercised a unifying social influence.

On the other hand it is safe to assert that study in itself, leaving out high personalities, healthful environments, and the general good influences of American life which make for character, may lead neither to unselfishness nor to faith. Oberlin has from the beginning believed that God, his law, his gospel, should be given a great place in the development of young minds; and therefore religion has not been excluded from the forces purposely made active and persistent here. Let learning, all learning, be hallowed by the light of heaven, even as the light passing through the glorious windows of the Chartres and Cologne cathedrals glorifies the humblest worshiper "with light from fountains elder than the day." We believe that some things are so important that they should always be given a required place in the college life.

Oberlin has not been unwilling to modify the curriculum so as to furnish great liberty in selecting studies. All studies may be made in some degree liberal and truly educative. Let us not unduly magnify one class over another in such a way as to imply that only a few studies

belong to the aristocracy, while all others belong to the democracy, of learning. There are men who think that they discover more of value in the history of a piece of chalk than in the briefer history of Israel. We may challenge rightly such a contention. The history of Israel represents God's method of education with nations and individuals, and has a deeper significance than any chapter of the older geological Scriptures. Nevertheless, science is divinely significant, and Oberlin has rendered a conspicuous service by showing forth what I may term the religiousness of science. Wisdom would not make odious comparisons, but would learn lessons wherever they may be found. Specialization has its place; but it should not be premature. It should be a structure built on a wide foundation of general culture.

The Christian college cannot be understood without understanding its purpose,—to mould the heart and character, to shape the will and the life, as well as to sharpen the intellectual faculties. "Education," as Herbert Spencer has said, "is to prepare us for complete living." Man, being the kind of person he is, needs right ideals and something besides. He needs the spirit and the heavenly forces which help him to fasten his affections on right ideals. The purpose determines the quality of an action, and also in a measure the results of it. If religion is something worth while in education, we ought to be willing to declare it, to announce it in every wise way. Through the life which the student lives there should ever run the golden thread which leads to God. The aim of the Christian college is not reached by turning out students who are merely believers in Christianity, who consent calmly and indifferently to its great creed. It aims to fill its students with the spirit of St. Paul, to make them alive in the service of Christ, and to fire them with the enthusiasm of humanity. It purposes to send them forth equipped

with the knowledge of that Book which, more than any other, has kindled the imagination and shaped the moral sentiment of mankind. The Bible has ever been a text-book, and it is believed will ever remain a text-book, in this College. The greatest literature that the world has known, a literature which has moulded the higher civilization of mankind, has here been taught by capable and skilful men, and is here taught to-day by those who have welcomed new truth in regard to the Word of God, and find the Bible richer and more vital than ever. Oberlin has acted on the theory that what is greatest and best should not be given a secondary place in required studies. The President of Clark University believes that the Bible "is being slowly revealed as man's great text-book in psychology; dealing with him as a whole—his body, mind, and will." And President Gilman affirms that "the ethics of the New Testament will be accepted by the scientific as well as the religious faculties of man." Better that these walls of Oberlin should be carried back to the stone-quarries and brick-yards out of which they came, that the grass should grow undisturbed over all the paths made sacred by the feet of saints and scholars, than that the Bible should be a merely tolerated book, and than that this should become a place where God is politely bowed out of the class-room.

The required chapel exercises here have become a unifying, elevating influence in the college life, and some of those who have gone elsewhere have sadly missed them. I know that the chapel is not universally liked, though I believe that here it is regarded with special favor. All schools insist on some things that are not liked. For example, there are those who dislike mathematics, though "it lies at the basis of all our knowledge of this world." And there are those who dislike the Bible, though it lies at the basis of all our knowledge of the other world. There may

be no more reason for discarding the one than the other. On the whole it may be said that larger favor and more general acceptance have been accorded to the distinctive principles of the Christian college as the years have gone by. The president of a state university has affirmed, from his own experience, the conviction that a state institution cannot exist unless it is founded upon a religious basis. The many agencies to promote religion among students in state colleges are no part of the education legally provided by the state. State universities which began by requiring church and chapel attendance have logically given up this requirement. State institutions cannot discharge a teacher who is hostile to Christianity. Christian schools can. Many approve, in the present condition of things, the plans suggesting that, to an even larger extent, academic and college work be placed in Christian hands, under positive Christian teaching, while the state universities give themselves more and more to distinctively university work. There is a growing feeling in colleges less emphatically Christian than our own, that religion must be an integral part of education. One of the overseers of Harvard recently declared that there never had been a stronger desire than now at that great University that Christian forces should be brought to bear vigorously on the lives of students. As soon as American Christians are educated and enlightened enough to discriminate between the trivial and the important, and to agree on what is essential Christianity, the Christian church will very likely insist that the education of our children in the public schools shall be essentially Christian education, and that selections from the best Book in the world shall be a part of the literature read and studied by all who are trained in them. Christianity is the dominating force of our civilization, and should always and everywhere be the dominating force in education. How absurd, in deference to a false and un-

sound university ideal, to rule out of the college the chief literature, the most commanding facts, in the past and present history of the world!

There are special reasons to-day which show that the part taken by the Christian college in our national life is growingly important and strategic. America, already the richest of nations, is to become far richer. The number of the wealthy will be increased, and millions will have most of the comforts and even luxuries which the very rich now enjoy. The tendency of opulence is to enervate. Christian character needs to be hardened and fortified against luxury. And "a manhood that can stand money" is what the Christian college aims to produce, and what Oberlin College has produced in the few men of her graduates who have given their lives successfully to the getting of great fortunes. Education, refinement, knowledge, are the powerfulest forces of misery, restlessness, and vicious discontent that exist in the world to-day, unless they are penetrated and controlled by the religion of Christ, which gives peace, love, courage, faith, hope, and joy. Our civilization rushes to a vast and fatal plunge unless God is enthroned in the educated minds of our people. Education without religion is architecture without foundations and roof. Christian character in the leaders of our cities, states, and communities is the gracious something which the Christian college helps to foster and furnish.

The world that knows Oberlin is familiar with the fact that theological training and preparation for the Christian ministry have been an integral part of its life almost from the beginning. The supreme importance of the gospel and of the preaching of it, has not been underrated. It is perfectly evident that Christian colleges must be maintained and improved if American churches are to thrive. These churches are not furnishing ministers enough for

church work in our own land, and an increasing percentage comes from other countries. This is not a healthy condition of things. From this town many hundreds have been sent forth filled with the Spirit of God, giving their lives to that "foolishness of preaching" by which the world is to be saved. Throughout the length and breadth of the land, in the high places and in the places misnamed lowly, they have been telling that truth which the world most needs; and telling it so faithfully and living so Christianly that studious onlookers have often been able to say that such men and women must have been trained in Oberlin, because they were willing and eager to do, and do faithfully, whatever tasks, however hard, came before them. Many parents have wisely wished their sons and daughters to receive their college education in a community like this, where artificial temptations are largely removed, and where the forces that make for morality and piety are so vigorous and attractive.

But there are also some real advantages in a rural theological seminary, especially in one situated close to a large city, but not in it. There are more opportunities for study, and fewer distractions. Young men have a better chance for mastering the great books which must be read, for pursuing investigations into the chief fields of theological learning. And furthermore, the atmosphere of a community like this is more favorable to the growth of deep feeling and a ripening of Christian experience, than the secular atmosphere of a great city. There is no reason why the Oberlin Seminary should not become a great school of preaching. The emphasis must be laid here more and more upon preaching. It is to be the business of the Seminary to train men of capacity, originality, and wisdom, who have made careful studies of the most important things, who have been trained to think clearly and speak effectively, who have formed habits of study, and

who know that they cannot be teachers of men for long years without being faithful students of truth; men who believe the gospel with all their heart, who mean by it no narrow gospel dealing exclusively with a few things; men who are thoroughly manly, who have social gifts and graces, who know not only how to *be* gentlemen, but *appear* like gentlemen in a world of growing taste and refinement; men who are sound and courageous and true; men of large hearts, who give spiritual intensity to their preaching. For such men there were never grander opportunities of service in the Christian pulpit than to-day.

We ought to rejoice that Oberlin has had with it almost from the beginning a school of theology. In this respect it has had one of the elements of a university, and has never been compelled, like our state institutions, to exclude from its curriculum the highest of all the sciences. In the Oberlin Seminary we have rejoiced in two traditions: the tradition of evangelical earnestness and the tradition of intellectual breadth and liberty. Under no sectarian control though the College is, the Seminary has been identified most largely with a special denomination, the great college-building and educational force of our earlier history. Living in a village like this, theological students should have a training which should fit them preëminently for the preaching and pastoral life. One of the foremost preachers of the modern world was the second President of Oberlin. His fame and his spirit have gone everywhere. The intense evangelism of his nature ought to be embodied in the spirit of to-day, in new forms, doubtless. Furthermore, here the student must learn the essential importance of studiousness, intellectual progressiveness, and intellectual fullness.

As a character-building institution the Christian college holds an unrivaled place. Some studies are difficult; but the forming of character is both the most difficult

and the most important task given to the Christian teacher. It is the most difficult, for "it is a far harder task to form a single moral virtue than to become a philosopher." Virtue is the habit of doing good, and habits go with us longer and more potentially than the knowledge of the facts of science and history. Germany does not think it safe to educate her children leaving out religion. In France the schools are proving a prodigious ethical failure, because, owing to a natural fear of despotic priestcraft, the highest truths and motives are omitted from the school life. Criminal statistics in France as well as in America indicate that there is horrible failure somewhere in the education of the youth. We are witnessing a strong reaction in favor of ethical training; but it is plain that the code of morality which ignores religion is both incomplete and ineffective. Morality without religion Frederic Harrison pronounced "a rattling of dry bones."

The future of Oberlin is not to be a slavish repetition of the past. We live in the midst of a divine evolution, and we cannot go backward if we would. Any friend of Oberlin who wishes to have things to-day just as they were twenty-five years ago, simply proves that for a quarter of a century his mind has not been growing. We welcome criticism, for we desire improvement. If anything has been lacking in the past, we wish to supply it. Progress does not come from trying to galvanize into life dead forms, nor by deploring that men will not do just as their fathers did. Progress does not fail to look as well as to move forward. "God fulfils his will in many ways." The Christian life of the college is marked by a new emphasis. Men talk less about religion, but endeavor no less earnestly to do the things which God requires. We are ambitious here to exemplify the breadth, the liberty, and the glory of Christianity, and we are not willing to lose any of its power. And so we desire to live in the spirit of all that is

best in the new education without losing any of the ethical and spiritual potencies of the past. What changes the future will bring forth cannot be definitely prophesied. But these changes will probably be along the line of ampler liberty for advanced students.

We who believe in Christian colleges believe that they ought to be so amply equipped that even state universities cannot surpass them. Give us this equipment, and you draw to the Christian college more of the higher minds, and hence lead more of the stronger intellects into the Christian ministry. It is well known that on account of small salaries, Oberlin teachers have not been able to make the most of themselves. They have had too much teaching and too little remuneration. They have not been able to produce as abundantly as the faculties of some other colleges, although many books of Oberlin teachers have had a wide circulation and influence. They have had too few hours for research. In order to do the best teaching there must be research. A college that gives itself exclusively to teaching cannot stand in the front rank. A university, it has been said, "which is not a place of research, will not long continue to be a good place of teaching."

Oberlin must make more and more of science, and give ampler facilities for its study; for "the arts built upon chemistry, physics, botany, zoölogy, and geology are the chief factors of the civilization of our time." We have so much in this community that it is a pity and almost a shame that we have not more, in order to make provision for advanced studies, for new knowledge, for the gratification of that mental curiosity which peers into the unknown; for "when curiosity dies man will be but a beast of burden."

Oberlin has been preëminently a school of economies quite as much as a school of economics. There is one study which students and faculty have never neglected: they have profoundly and faithfully investigated the

problem of making a little go as far as possible. It is a just claim that no other large institution of America gives more to her students at less expense. The spirit of rigid economy should never be lost, even when ampler resources come into our hands. The special needs of Oberlin are well known, the first of which undoubtedly is a million dollars for general endowment. After this should be placed scholarships. Oh for hundreds of them, to enable us to remit in part the tuition of worthy and gifted young men and women who are coming to us from homes of poverty! Then we ought to have fellowships, scores of them, for advanced students. And then come the eight or ten new buildings required by the expanding needs of the College. We appreciate thoroughly the service which has been rendered to the College by the Academy, a school which should be made to prosper in every way. It should be dignified by a worthy building that will give it a more distinctive life, while it retains the advantage of connection with the College. And then the Library, already overcrowded, needs to be enlarged; and the best new books must be had, since otherwise teachers and students will remain behind the progress of the time. The sum of $200,000 for the endowment of the Library is urgently demanded. With this endowment and equipment we shall have even better teachers than in the past, as well as better students and more of them. Give us the best teachers and we shall have the best of colleges.

We all hope to see the College brought into closer relations with the public school system. The state universities have some special advantages over us right here. But we must seek to affiliate the college life with that of the schools, for the sake of both. It is well known that young people in America at a given age know less than those of the same age in European schools, on account of inferior methods of teaching. If the colleges can help the schools

along the line of method, they can find one of their chief offices. Oberlin has already trained thousands of teachers. Is there a better place than this for a school of pedagogy, a teachers' college, where the training should be in accordance with the best modern ideas, and where the teacher should be instructed in handcraft as well as mental craft? On such a college might very appropriately be written the words, "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee."

The generous benefactors of colleges are the lords and gentlemen of the American state, the true nobility of our republic. Our House of Lords is becoming a numerous body. More than twelve millions of dollars were given last year to the higher education in America, much of it in sums that would have seemed enormous to our forefathers. We have recently become, to an extent never dreamed of before, a world-power. National enlargement brings new perils, new responsibilities, new duties. In the colleges must be trained the great host of those who are to become civilizers, educators, diplomatists, missionaries, engineers, torch-bearers of light and learning to the millions with whom directly and indirectly we are coming into closer contact. We often say that the college should fit for citizenship; but in our time the college training that does not fit for world-citizenship, is an abysmal failure.

As many, reading the last chapter of Drummond's "Ascent of Man," have exclaimed, "Oh for some one to take up and carry forward his fine and stimulating suggestions, and show the later and higher evolution of man in recorded history!" so, as we have reviewed what has already been accomplished here, and now behold this hungry, aspiring, unfinished college world, the strong appeal comes to you to take up and carry on this work and place it upon some loftier and more radiant tableland. If those who are gathered here this morning are faithful to the duties and equal

to the possibilities of the present, this happy day may be a new beginning of a greater and better Oberlin. In the confidence that such friends are assured, we may feel once more that we are entering into the great inheritances of the past, that we are linking our lives with those who have built the Bible and the Cross into colleges and universities the wide world over. We may inspire our hearts with the splendid nobility of learning wedded to faith, and may deem ourselves justly "the heirs of all the ages in the foremost files of time." The higher American patriotism is kindled by the University of Virginia, and amid the buildings of Harvard and Princeton, Yale and Columbia, Amherst, Dartmouth, and Williams. Our rational patriotic hopefulness is enriched by scores of younger colleges, which by far Western rivers keep alive the glorious traditions of a hallowed learning. We already have a noble place in the annals of the mind; but sublimer possibilities are ours as the new century hastens toward the sunrise. God grant that faithful, wide-reaching, and permanent may be the services which we shall render to that cause of Truth and of Faith which is here linked with the sweet and honored name of John Frederick Oberlin.