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SERMON LXXVI.

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THE MORAL STATE AND CHARACTER OF INFANTS.

LUKE 18:15, 16. *And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*

THE holy Scriptures are given to make us wise unto salvation; to teach us "what we should believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." They are wisely adapted to this great and important purpose. But here they stop; to this object they are limited. They contain nothing to satisfy an idle curiosity. When Peter would know what *this man shall do*, he receives a mild rebuke instead of the information which he desired. This information could not have made his path of duty plainer, nor the labors of his life more useful. When others inquired respecting the number that should be saved, they are earnestly exhorted to secure their own salvation, by entering in at the strait gate. Had this knowledge been given, they could not be saved without holiness. Many inquiries now made, had they been presented to the Savior, would have been dismissed in the same way. If our inquiries are prompted by an honest desire to know our duty that we may perform it, we will find, from the prayerful study of the Bible and the providence of God, full and satisfactory information. But if our inquiries proceed from mere curiosity; if the information required has no connection with our duty or the improvement of our moral character; we must apply to some other source than the Bible for such information. It would be useless to give us information respecting those objects which are, in their own nature, incomprehensible to our minds. If the language employed was suited to the nature of these objects, we could not understand it; and if it was accommodated to our limited faculties, it could not explain the nature of these objects. As far as our agency extends, we have information to guide the useful efforts of this agency: but where our agency ceases, there our information also ceases. The husbandman has a sufficient knowledge of the surface of the earth to direct his labor to useful results; but he knows nothing of the surface of the planets, because his agency does not extend to them. If our information is full and complete, our whole energy is to be exerted; if our information is limited, but a limited agency is required; if we have no knowledge, we can exert no agency.

SERMON LXXVII.

BY SAMUEL C. JENNINGS.

THE PROPER ACQUIREMENTS IN FEMALE EDUCATION.

PSALM 144:12. *That our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.*

The royal Psalmist David, thankful for past victories, desired a complete deliverance from the evils of war. He implored it with paternal solicitude, that the nation might have an opportunity to prosper and improve—that the daughters of Israel might become a binding support and the honor of his kingdom.

As corner-stones of palaces were laid on a good foundation, and were durable and ornamental, and consequently united and adorned the building; so, well-educated daughters, established in piety, unite different and the same families in safety; and when graceful in person, and adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit, ornament the fabric of domestic, civil, and Christian society. Or, if by corner-stones we are to understand the columns which were erected under the porches and galleries of ancient and eastern palaces, still the pious and polished daughters, which grace every house to which they belong, are represented in the same particulars of utility and ornament.

To illustrate farther the propriety of the language of the text, and to improve the subject, I propose to show WHAT ACQUIREMENTS DAUGHTERS NEED TO MAKE THEM AS POLISHED CORNER-STONES.

I cannot in a short space pretend to describe the *modes* by which they should be attained.

I. IT IS REQUISITE THAT THERE BE A PROPER FOUNDATION LAID FOR A GOOD EDUCATION.

1. The *first* part of the foundation is to nurture and preserve, as far as possible, an elastic, healthy state of the body, that there may be a proportionable exercise of the intellectual faculties. This physical education is a sacred duty enjoined by the spirit of the Bible, and important from many considerations.

2. The mental faculties should be trained to *discriminate* between truth and error; to *reason correctly*; to *think long* on one topic; to *examine attentively* any given subject; and to *retain* what is acquired.

3. The moral powers of the soul should be cultivated by the precepts of the gospel. Passions should be restrained; habits formed in reference to the welfare of daughters as moral agents, and in reference to the glory of God. These attentions include all that early, systematic instruction, discipline, and prayer, which are blessed to lead to Jesus Christ for the saving gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit.

Thus the different materials—physical, intellectual, and religious culture—cement and form a foundation for the polished corner-stones in the fabric of society.

H. THE SUPERSTRUCTURE RAISED ON THIS FOUNDATION (*which must still be guarded*) SHOULD BE OF VALUABLE, DURABLE MATERIALS.

The knowledge acquired should not be merely some sickly flowers of poetry and often useless fictions, which excite the imagination but impart no stability to the mind. They who feed it much on the *fictitious images* wrought by the fanciful, will have but little taste or room left for the study of the wondrous *realities* of this and other worlds. Such acquisitions rather unfit than prepare for the active duties of life—they rather prepare the possessor to be crushed into the dust during the storms of life, than to stand firm, an ornament of society and an example of patience and courage.

Whatever has a tendency to increase the knowledge of the works of God, and consequently to fill the mind with adoration, admiration, and love—whatever leads to a knowledge of the will of God as developed in his word and in his providential government of this world—whatever prepares the mind to embrace the plan of redemption, should be made a subject of study on earth. Some degree of this kind of knowledge is essential for this life. *Much* of it should be sought; for to those who are savingly taught of God it will be increased and perfected in heaven.

Beside these branches of inquiry, whatever enlightens as to the past history and the present condition of man, should be obtained to qualify for the performance of social and relative duties. Whatever is likely to fill the mind with pleasing and useful contemplations and reflections—"whatsoever things are true—whatsoever things are lovely," should form a part of Christian female education.

This brief statement as to what should be the acquirements in female education covers several branches of study. Beside those comprehended in a common literary and domestic education, (which I do not propose to notice in this discourse,) it embraces several others, some knowledge of which every daughter, if possible, ought to attain. Namely, 1. The laws by which natural, material objects are governed, with some adequate idea of the number, dimensions, positions, and revolutions, of the heavenly bodies. 2. The composition and properties of bodies, by which daughters would be enabled to explain the causes of the changes which take place in nature. 3. They should be acquainted with the outlines of human physiology, that they may become somewhat acquainted with the structure and operations of that body which is "fearfully and wonderfully made," and be led to the same exercise of mind as the Psalmist from similar knowledge; and be also led to use means for self-preservation. 4. They should have some knowledge of Zoology, or the science of animals, in all its different branches: of beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, and animalculæ. The *names* of some of these creatures often meet the eye in the Sacred Scriptures, and the *things* themselves, in the walks of life; and therefore invite the attention of every person. 5. They should understand Botany: something of the fifty thousand different plants which have been discovered. 6. They should have a general acquaintance with Geology and Mineralogy: with the structure of the earth and the substances which compose it—with the minerals which are found in the earth.

A knowledge of all these branches of natural science help to understand allusions in the word of God. They also enlarge the views respecting his wisdom, power, and goodness. To say nothing of their utility for other purposes, they afford the mind pleasing contemplations when journeying by the way, or in the hours of recreation, when it would otherwise be left comparatively void of useful thought, or perhaps filled with idle imaginations and unnecessary cares.

Farther: some knowledge of mental science, without being conducted through all the labyrinths of metaphysics, with as much acquaintance with

human nature as it is possible to attain, are included in a useful female education.

Every lady, to be well educated, must know the rules of correct reasoning, speaking, and writing.

It is essential to a Christian education, and for a *full* understanding of the comprehensible parts of the Scriptures, that there be an acquaintance with Biblical Antiquities, or the customs in vogue when the Bible was written.

It is also essential that Sacred Geography should be studied, to obtain a knowledge of those places mentioned in the Scriptures, and to have their relative position and condition in the mind, so that the female student may be able to follow the Savior and his apostles, in their journeyings, and to know something of the state of the people amongst whom they tarried at different times.

This should be accompanied with a chronological knowledge of the periods when the events of past ages transpired. This helps to understand prophecy, to locate events, and to trace the dealings of God with the human family. In short, the minds of our daughters should be stored with such ideas as would make them useful and interesting as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers—as members of society, or of the church of God.

III. I COME NOW TO INQUIRE BRIEFLY INTO THE NATURE OF THE ORNAMENTAL ACQUIREMENTS OF A DAUGHTER, WHICH POLISH HER CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE.

She should desire and seek none which do not unite utility with adorning. The time of every daughter is too precious, and her obligations too great, to waste the one and neglect the other in mere "outward adorning." (See 1 Pet. 3:3. 1 Tim. 2:9.) David, in the text, desired that the daughters of his kingdom should be as polished corner-stones: Not polished automations, or statues. Whatever countenance may seem to have been given to mere external embellishments, in accordance with the spirit and usage of the Old Testament dispensation, true refinement and the simplicity of the gospel should now lead Christian daughters to lay aside. Their tendency, under the former dispensation, can be learned from the third chapter of Isaiah. Still, like the virtuous woman described by Solomon, she may make "herself coverings of tapestry," to hang her rooms; especially when necessity requires it, as much as the latticed windows of his time, to screen from the light and the air. And her clothing may be "of silk and purple" on suitable occasions; for in such covering utility and beauty are united together.

Among the ornamental acquirements which are useful, are the arts of *Drawing* and *Painting*. By these a taste is cultivated for observing whatever is sublime or beautiful in the works of the Creator. These arts, for which but few have genius, when properly directed, lead the mind up to God. When there is an *adequate* knowledge of them, the results can be applied to ornament what is useful, or to help memory to retain a remembrance of persons and scenes which may and should be recollected.

Music may be mentioned as illustrative of accomplishments which are useful and ornamental. Both *vocal* and *instrumental* music, refine and soften the asperities of mind, when moral and devotional pieces are the subjects of study and performance. A talent for the former is much more universal than for the latter; and its value, especially for the worship of God, is much greater than instrumental music. Very few daughters have musical talents for this branch sufficient to justify conscientious Christian parents to cause them to persist in the pursuit of it. The time and expense necessary for the most gifted pupils to acquire a polished acquaintance with it, are great. But when youth, who have comparatively no talents for this branch, are kept from year to year pursuing that which they never can attain, to the neglect of important

branches of knowledge for which they have talents, is sacrificing time and money on the altar of vanity. The ladies, in the time of David, do not appear to have had an acquaintance with the difficult wind and stringed instruments then in use. Those in use by them seem to have been chiefly the timbrel and cymbal, to use which did not require much skill.

As to the point, whether our daughters should acquire a knowledge of the *Ancient and Modern Languages*, should depend much upon their situation in life and future prospects. The *individual* advantage which a lady would derive from a knowledge of the Ancient Languages, would not be so great as if the same time had been spent in other studies. And the condition of mankind is such, that much time and means should not be expended on what cannot, in the possession of a lady, greatly profit our fellow creatures.

The Modern Languages may be more useful and ornamental. They give an opportunity, in many situations, "to do good and to communicate;" and give the possessor an opportunity to peruse the excellent authors who write in some other than the English Language.

Other feelings beside prejudice from the abuse of the knowledge of dancing, will prevent us from numbering it among the useful ornaments which should be acquired by the daughters of this age. There was "a time to dance," when the exercise was employed as part of the service of God, and as a manifestation of gratitude to him. None now, however, *profess* to "praise him in the dance," and should not appeal for examples to usages of a former dispensation, which have been abolished with the "carnal ordinances," Heb. 9:10.

There is too much time spent, and too many dangers in the practice, and too much risk of health, to compensate for all the ease in carriage which are acquired by this practice, separately considered. Gracefulness in movements and in forms of society, can be acquired from competent instructors, and from mingling with refined people.

That ease and gentility in manners are useful accomplishments should be inculcated on youth of both sexes. Their acceptability in society, and consequently their usefulness, depends much on these attainments. Moreover, the words of sacred writ direct to "be courteous;" to "be gentle with all meekness towards all men." These passages have reference to the *external* carriage, as well as to the state of the mind. Genuine polished manners, proceed from that gentleness which is a fruit of the Spirit. There may exist true love to God without some traits of *true* politeness and other necessary accomplishments to fit for usefulness. And it is the work of human education, to impart such an acquaintance with refined manners as may be obtained by instruction and example. And on the other hand, there may be much of the gentleness and dignity of Christ attained from praiseworthy motives, without being influenced by his Spirit, and so far it is commendable; still, while this ornamented structure has not its foundation in true piety, it is in danger. The most polished corner-stones in an edifice, which have *stood* long, may eventually, for want of a good foundation and because of some undermining influence, be hurled from their position and dashed to pieces.

Like the prophet let me call upon you, to "hear my voice, ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech," and let your education be founded on the principles and affections of true religion, your superstructure of useful materials, and your *first* adorning that of a "meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price."