This article was downloaded by: [Universite Laval]

On: 29 December 2014, At: 02:42

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/urea20>

CHARACTER AND CULTURE

Samuel C. Mitchell LL.D.^a

^a President State University of South Carolina , Columbia, S. C.

Published online: 10 Jul 2006.

To cite this article: Samuel C. Mitchell LL.D. (1910) CHARACTER AND CULTURE, Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association, 5:2, 104-108, DOI: [10.1080/0034408100050202](https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408100050202)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0034408100050202>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

cation to audiences which increase in numbers and significance each year, and organizing everywhere groups of those who can continue the impressions made.

(4) The most important contribution, however, which the R. E. A. makes to the cause of religious education is the formulation of adequate and impressive standards in method and achievement. It can call to this high and holy task the most representative men and women—not scholars alone—but men and women of affairs. It is not hampered by the traditions which check the freedom of every church. It need not limit its invitation to those of one communion. It can direct the united energies of every type of Christian worker to the erection of simple but sufficient standards to which every one can repair.

CHARACTER AND CULTURE.

SHOULD ALL THE SUBJECTS OF THE COLLEGE CURRICULUM AIM AT CHARACTER FORMATION OR AT SCHOLARSHIP

SAMUEL C. MITCHELL, LL.D.,

President State University of South Carolina, Columbia, S. C.

The question you propose is an old one. Aristotle stated it clearly in these words: "Mankind are by no means agreed about the things to be taught, whether we look to virtue or the best life. Neither is it clear whether education is more concerned with intellectual or with moral virtue. The existing practice is perplexing; no one knows on what principle we should proceed—should the useful in life, or should virtue, or should the higher knowledge, be the aim of our training; all three opinions have been entertained."

THE QUESTION NOT SIMPLE.

The question as stated, cannot be answered by yes or no. The aim of education is not so simple and is not exhausted by either one of the alternatives suggested. The right embraces both character and scholarship. The moral and intellectual elements in education are related as the vine to the branch. Or, as Thoreau inquires, "how shall we have a harvest of thought, unless we have a sowing of character?" To be sure, there have been many

instances of thinkers like Goethe, in whom the intellect seemed divorced from conscience. Rosseau was certainly not lacking in brilliancy of literary style, suggestiveness and contagious influence as an author; and yet, "he lived a life somewhat less clean than that of an ordinary beast." Such anomalies as these, however, only tend to bring out anew the real aim of modern education, namely, "mental character, not simply brain power, not simply conscience, but character informed and developed by the trained mind." In the educational process, character and culture are not related as cause and effect, but as inter-acting forces achieving the goal of manhood—a sound mind and a sound character in a sound body.

THE MODERN CURRICULUM SOCIAL.

The center of gravity of the curriculum has undoubtedly shifted. Courses in Christian Ethics, Moral Philosophy, the old Metaphysics, and such works as Butler's *Analogy* have become more or less obsolete in modern colleges. While this is true, I am not prepared to say that the present curriculum is less ethical in either its content or outcome than the old one which it displaced. If the former studies incited speculation as to ethics and religion, present studies in Science and Sociology relate the student vitally to nature and life. The old curriculum was abstract, the modern one human. The former subjects addressed themselves to the contemplative faculties, while the latter make a strong appeal to the constructive mind of the modern world, busy with pressing problems such as the abolition of peonage, the working out of democracy, the slums of our great cities, child labor, a fair wage, better housing of the poor, white slavery, public health, and the carrying of the Gospel to the heathen world.

Although the curriculum today gives less place to refined theses as to certain remote ethical inquiries and religious dogmas, it is yet surcharged with a social spirit and is rich in human interest that more than make up for any loss in formal instruction in the realm of morals. The spirit of democracy, disclosing the value of man, equality of opportunity, and the entire interdependence of all the members of society, has reacted helpfully upon the methods and aims of higher education. Education no longer fires a blank cartridge; it takes definite aim. We have begun to use the school as the tool to achieve certain ends in nature and in human society. This re-direction of the studies in a modern college is fraught with

moral energies and purposes that more than compensate for the time formerly given in our classes to ethical and other religious discussions.

COLLEGE ATMOSPHERIC TONIC.

It is also to be remembered that in college life the curriculum is only one agency in the formation of character, perhaps the chief one. The Young Men's Christian Association with all of its manifold activities, such as the student Missionary Movement, the University social settlement, college athletics and student journalism, all of these tend to develop character in the individual by the actual exercise of the mind and heart in social service, in team-work and in trying to influence public opinion. It is, after all, the will that we desire chiefly to energize ethically, for a main defect in education is its failure to train the will as effectually as it sharpens the intellect or refines the emotions. The life of the modern college with its curriculum dominantly scientific and social, is, in my opinion, unquestionably more stimulating to manly endeavor in moral and civic causes than was in the old system the great body of formal precepts dealing with ethics and kindred subjects. With this conclusion President Tucker seems to express agreement in these words: "In the change, in such large degree, of the subject-matter of the higher education to subjects of immediate utility, the moral element seems to have been relegated to a second place in modern education. There can be no doubt but that success is a word nearer to education than it used to be, and that duty is a more remote word. * * * The moral problem of education is how to get the thought of duty well set in the whole process of mental training. * * * I think that we are gaining, because we are coming to understand that the morality of the intellect is not altogether a question of the subject on which the intellect is exercised, and we are also learning that in so far as the subject is material to moral training, we have in the matter of modern education, subjects of the most vital concern to human life."

THE VIRTUE OF THOUGHT.

We must not forget that accuracy and sincerity in thinking are themselves a high form of virtue. President Pritchett is fond of showing that our country has on the whole suffered more from the lack of ability to think straight than from any moral delinquency upon the part of public leaders. Physical Science teaches the student that he cannot doctor results. The mists that over-hung

the speculative problems of the old metaphysics have been partially dispelled by the tangible and demonstrable methods of the laboratory. We have certainly gained in clearness of vision and in appreciation of reality. We attach new meaning to these words: "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." The relation that reality sustains to freedom and well-being is becoming more patent as we come to see that life itself is a delicate adjustment to changing environment. Does not the query of our subject resolve itself into the old, old question of Pilate: "What is truth?" Is not the moral as well as the mental found in its content? Is not truth the unity of thought and character?

As Dr. J. H. Thornwell says, "*the habit of sound thinking is more than a thousand thoughts.*"

THE MORAL VALUE OF EVOLUTION.

The evolutionary philosophy which has given us an orderly conception of the world and human experience, which has substituted growth for cataclysm in nature and revolution in politics, which has heightened our reverence for God in his method of unfolding the acorn into the oak, is adding a structural element to modern education that is of the highest ethical value. While it may have dimmed somewhat supernatural agencies, it has tended to make divine the every-day process in nature and life. It has revealed anew the immanence of Deity, the purposefulness of nature and human life, and the directive powers of man. As a result, the evolutionary view of the world and society has set free the energies of the will and has enriched the mind with creative impulses and ideals of divine import. We begin to realize that we are living in an unfinished world, that forces about us are plastic to the purposes of the human spirit, as the putty in the kindergarten takes shape from the fingers of the child; and that, in Goethe's phrase, "this world means something to the capable."

Evolution has re-enforced Kant's view that the mind of man is not like the photographer's plate upon which the sun's penciled ray paints the picture of the universe, but that the mind is itself the penciled ray and the world without corresponds to the photographer's plate upon which the mind bodies forth its ideas and energies. In a word, man is active, not passive; his energies are dynamic; and his life is becoming purposeful in nature and in society. He is accordingly no longer a mere conformist in religion, politics or science. Every realm has had to capitulate to this new instinct of

man for order and rationality and growth. Better far than any formal treatment of ethics is this surging spirit of life and social service which has entered constructively into all our college courses. Cobwebs are being swept away, but the verities stand revealed. As Emerson says, "we love the classics, not because they are antique, but because they are natural."

THE ETHICS OF PERSONALITY.

If there is any alarm at the bearing of modern studies on the formation of character, does it not spring from the fact that specialization has brought forward the specialist, instead of the teacher whose personality glowed with a love of truth, sympathy with his students, enthusiasm for noble causes and devotion to high civic and spiritual ideals? Must we not attribute whatsoever of vibrant moral energy the old education displayed to the enkindling enthusiasm of the teacher's personality, rather than to any formal instruction given upon ethics and religion? One may be a specialist in entomology, and yet not an inspiring companion and guide to the youth of our country. And please understand that I am not pleading for less specialization, but more manhood in the choice of those who make up the faculties of our colleges. Thomas Arnold, Louis Agassiz, Francis Wayland and Mark Hopkins did not owe their moral primacy to the nature of the curriculum. There is no need of reviving the ancient question as to whether virtue can be taught, but we are all clear in our minds that, for students, the personality of the teacher furnishes the incarnation of truth and virtue. With the young, ethical ideas become formative, not as abstractions, but as embodied in the character of parent and teacher, just as the sap exists in the tree. If the teacher has as much reverence for a fact as he has for a moral law, if a teacher embraces within his sympathies the interests of mankind, if he loves righteousness as he loves truth, then neither character nor scholarship will suffer at his hands.