

Christianity & Secular Education (Part 2)

CHRISTIAN students must be made to realize the spiritual dangers with which they are faced in the course of their academic pursuits. In order that they may stand on the vantage ground of truth, and to avoid being turned and turned about by false arguments and unholy ideas of irrational intellectuals, a firm attitude based on faith is required.

In a pamphlet entitled "Religion and the School", a group of Christians in the U.S.A. made this observation: *"Our children go away from God when they go back to school, in many instances, because, generally speaking, education today is dominated by the evolutionary point of view with respect to the origin of the universe and the origin of life. And we should understand very clearly that the point of view of materialistic evolution is diametrically opposed to the revelation God has given us of Himself and of His action."* (Emphasis ours).

Mention can also be made of H. Musgrave Reade. He was, for twenty years, not merely an agnostic but an out-and-out atheist until the scales of 'intellectual ignorance' fell off his eyes. In his book *From Atheism to Christ*, he wrote:

"I read eagerly Strauss' *Life of Christ*, in which he contended that the Gospel account was on a par with the mythology of ancient Greece and Rome, and that Christ was simple a myth, probably taken from the Hindu God Krishna. Then I readily drank in Renan's *Vie De Jesus*, with its beautiful, but soul-destroying picture of Christ, neither divine, nor human, neither the Son of God, nor a human, neither the Son of God, nor a truly noble and good man. Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and a host of German metaphysicians then captivated my fancy, and I was soon in the vain imaginings of idealism and thus blossomed into a philosophical deist. Rousseau, Voltaire, Volney, Paine, and others, were eagerly sought for, and the tenets of Christianity were insidiously uprooted from my mind. I became what is termed a Freethinker (why a rejecter of Christianity should have the monopoly of this title I have never been able to understand). The transition from this phase was greatly facilitated by a course of studies in the realm of science, in which I was introduced to the works of Buchner, Haeckel, Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley, etc., and imbibed the doctrines of evolution – this completed the work, and left me a materialistic atheist." While in this state of mind Musgrave Reade enjoyed the company of other prominent atheists, and became an anti-Christian propagandist. Under the sponsorship of his employers he undertook a long journey in America during which he visited sixty-two of the largest towns and cities in the United States. This was a journey that was to lead, and did lead him, to the belief in the existence of the Almighty Creator, for it afforded him an opportunity to see beyond his books through which atheistic conceptions had been inculcated in his head. The various sights he witnessed greatly influenced his mind resulting in the formation of the first link in the chain of evidence of the existence of God. Here are his own words: "Surely all this is not the result of fortuitous circumstances, blind chance, matter and force or, as we glibly say, 'a concourse of fortuitous atoms! Something else than the atomic theory must account for all these wonders. Could 'evolution' explain it all? Evolution can give a plausible case to us whilst we are studying nature in our chamber amongst our books, but the immediate contact with nature herself, in all her rugged beauty, speaks to us of the existence of a higher power than ourselves. I had ever been an honest seeker after truth, and the thought suddenly flashed into my mind – Might I, after all, have been mistaken? I felt I must face the question, I fell on my knees, and cried, 'O God, if Thou dost exist, reveal Thyself' I who had resisted so long His gracious pleadings, who had rebelled against His authority so many years, was at last brought into submission. I arose from my knees filled with joy, saying, 'GOD IS!' We advise agnostics and atheists to follow the example of Musgrave Reade who was humble and sensible enough to kneel in prayers to God for the revelation of Himself to him. And God did answer him!

The instances cited thus far are enough to make any honest person appreciate our point of view that there are lots of things in secular education that are anti-Christian.

There is a great difference between the wisdom of God and that of the world. Certain theses written by scholars to obtain their degrees, and books whose authors are top-intellectuals hardly impress anyone who is truly spiritually minded. Although they may be well constructed and classical in style but put on a spiritual scale one scarcely finds an ounce of the wisdom of God that converts the soul, that shapes a man's character to doing righteousness, and that inclines his heart to divine worship.

This is the system on which modern philosophy is based! No doubt, to the spiritually sober mind it is a wily design of the devil calculated to poison men's minds against God and matters of faith which a clean divine worship demands. No one who is inclined to such a way of reasoning can be an enthusiastic Christian like St. Paul "believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets". How can a person who, through a system of reasoning, doubts the existence of visible things, even the existence of his fellow man, genuinely believe in the existence of God and the other spirits of heaven? The Christian principle postulates an acceptance of spiritual realities on the basis of faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him (God): for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6) And Jesus told Nicodemus: "If you disbelieve me when I talk to you about things on earth, how are you to believe if I should talk about the things of Heaven?" (John 3:12; N. E. B.) It is faithfulness, arrogance and the urge to show off their academic knowledge that make skeptical scholars wallow in the mire of spiritual ignorance and unbelief.

Foolishness of Worldly Wisdom

While a number of scholars repudiate religion and denounce God through philosophy, there are also accredited philosophers who consider such an attitude or carnal propensity as sheer madness. Writing on "How Religion may be an Embodiment of Reasons" George Santayana, a well-known philosopher and social historian, who was considered to be one of the chief thinkers and writers of his time, stated: "EXPERIENCE has repeatedly confirmed that well-known maxim of Bacon's that a little philosophy inclineth man's mind to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion'. Even the heretics and atheists, if they have profundity, turn out after a while to be forerunners of some new orthodoxy. What they rebel against is religion alien to their nature; they are atheists only by accident, and relatively to a convention which inwardly offends them, but they yearn mightily in their own souls after the religious acceptance of a world interpreted in their own fashion. So it appears in the end that their atheism and loud protestation were in fact the hastier part of their thought, since what emboldened them to deny the poor world's faith was that they were too impatient to understand it." (Emphasis ours).

On the whole it is unsafe, therefore, to rely on the vagaries of imperfect human minds. Any philosophy or system of thinking that makes people disbelieve in God and estranges them from His worship and righteousness is diabolical. Against such St. Paul warned the Christians, as it is written: "BEWARE LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT, AFTER THE TRADITION OF MEN, AFTER THE RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, AND NOT AFTER CHRIST." – Colossians 2:8.

Spiritual Values

That secular education, at any level, cannot make one godly is a fact no sane person is apt to deny. There are spiritual as well as humane values which cannot be measured by the units of science or attained through philosophy. Those who always depend on science or philosophy will therefore not only ever be ignorant of such values but will surely lack them.

There are a number of academicians whose heads are brimful of books, and whose pens rule the kingdom of letters but if one judges them the other way round one finds that in manners they are rustic, in morals depraved, and have no integrity. This is so because their knowledge is devoid of spiritual ingredients of reformation that make one practise righteousness. On American education, Alan Valentine wrote: "It is difficult to escape the conclusion that American education is not elevating popular society but merely informing it, and that it is not preserving humane culture but diluting it. Each year American schools and colleges graduate thousands of men and women vocationally competent, mentally alert, socially confident, orally fluent, intellectually broadminded and superficially sophisticated. But those who look beneath the surface of these attractive graduates find limitations in mental self-discipline, humane values, firm ethical concepts, historical perspective, qualitative standards and depth and accuracy of knowledge." (The Age of Conformity, emphasis ours.) Here in Nigeria as in Europe and other parts of the world the situation is nothing different.

The view expressed by another American educator, Everett Dean Martin, is also worthy of note: "The college man shares the usual popular prejudices of his community. He runs with the crowd after the hero of the hour, and shows the same lack of discrimination as do the uneducated. He votes the same party ticket, is intolerant along with his neighbors. AND PUTS THE SAME VALUE ON MATERIAL SUCCESS AS DO THE ILLITERATE. His education has made very little difference in his religious beliefs, his social philosophy, his ethical values, or his general outlook on the world. LIKE ALL OPINIONATED AND HALF-EDUCATED PEOPLE, HE JUMPS TO HASTY CONCLUSIONS, believes what others believe, does things because others do them worships the past, idealizes the present." (The Meaning of a Liberal Education, emphasis ours).

In fact, there is consensus of opinion on the short-comings of secular education as far as spiritual and humane values are concerned. Dr. Magnus Pyke, in his treatise on the "The Boundaries of Science", wrote: "Purpose, aesthetics, impulsiveness, ethics-these are outside the boundaries of science." It is true that some academicians are good-mannered, sober, and trustworthy but many of them are eccentric, narrow-minded and irresponsible. Their education has not reformed them but rather it has done more to warp their dispositions.

The God's Kingdom Society is not opposed to her members' receiving college or university education but she has always warned them against the dangers in believing in vain philosophies of godless men and preferring academic knowledge to spiritual knowledge.

There is an experience that is common almost to all religious organizations: it is that most of the youths among the adherents are more inclined to secular education than spiritual knowledge.

Often and again we read in publications about the grumbings and protestations of religious leaders against the decline of young intellectuals in their zeal and faith in church affairs. In his booklet, *Jesus and Nigeria*, Mr. D. Reeves, M. A. (Oxon), wrote: "Many Christians value academic knowledge more than knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." Faithless fellows!

In so far as the GKS is concerned academic knowledge is of secondary importance knowing that it does not even make one what the world calls a "perfect gentleman" and is no qualification for righteousness. What is of primary importance is spiritual education – the true knowledge of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures – which brings one both material and spiritual blessings and salvation in God's perfect Kingdom. – John 17:3; 2nd Timothy 3:15-17.

