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W. W. Prescott:

*W. W. Prescott's "New Order of Things"
 in Education*

Let me briefly outline my ideas. You remember what I wrote you some time ago, that there had never yet been such a thing as a Bible school among us. Sometime there must be no other kind of school, and that time ought to come very soon. It would be utterly useless to attempt to make the change in one of our old institutions; it must begin in a new place, and that is one item in favor of the present project. It seems like a bold and almost impudent request to make, but whoever starts the new order of things must for a time have complete control of the school, that is, of the teaching. I do not mean that he must direct the teaching, but that he must for a time be the sole teacher, and there must be no other book than the Bible. All the present and prospective teachers must come into the class as students. All must devote their entire time to the study of the Bible, and of nothing else, except as the study of the Bible leads to it. How long this state of things should continue would depend on the heartiness with which all took hold of the new order, and the zeal with which they studied. It ought not to be necessary for it to be more than a very few weeks with such a class as I suppose will be gathered--people of somewhat mature minds.

When there has been a good Bible foundation, and all have grasped the true principles of Bible study, so that they could go on by themselves and study the Bible alone, then the teacher should begin to branch out into the sciences. Of course this would be done in a measure all the time; but the great aim in the beginning would be to get all to see how to study the Bible for themselves. Then I (I speak in the first person, for probably nobody else would be presumptuous enough to propose such a plan) should wish to show how every branch of knowledge grows out of the Bible. I feel perfectly sure that I could carry the matter alone that far. I know that I could show how to use the Bible in the study of history, language, natural science, physiology, chemistry, astronomy, etc., but of course I am not competent to teach all these branches and carry the students along as far as they ought to go. At this point the other teachers would be drafted in. As they grasped the idea, and imbibed it, or absorbed it, they could pick up each branch, and go on with it, and I should expect to learn from them technical matters that they know better than I do. The thing is very simple, and it ought not to take long to get it going. Then there would be nothing taught in the school but the Bible, and yet every branch of learning would be carried as far as any teacher would be able to carry it. But this of course means that each teacher is thoroughly conversant with his subject, and not dependent on books. No teacher is fit to teach anything for which he is dependent on a so-called text book. That is to say no one is a teacher, who has to have a book in his hand when he teaches, whether it be the Bible or anything else. Anybody can read out of a book, and ask questions on what he sees before him, although the questions will be feeble ones.

I think that you get my idea. If all are in earnest it seems to me that it ought not to take long to get it into operation. the thing that I fear, and which makes me dread to undertake the task, is that it will be thought too radical a change, and that the teachers will not feel like falling in with it. I know how they might very naturally feel at being called on to step down from their places for a while, and put themselves under anybody else, especially an obscure person who has no standing as an educationalist, and I couldn't blame them at all for refusing. I am quite conscious that the proposal is a radical one, and seems egotistical. The only thing that saves it from being egotistical is the fact that I do not claim to be the man that can do it. That must be decided by the Board and by the outcome; but I do know that it is the thing to be done, when the right man shall be found to start it. You can see what I mean by hearty cooperation. It is within the bounds of possibility that some teachers would never get back to their places again; that would depend altogether on their receptiveness, and their power to adapt themselves to new conditions. For all who could fall into line, and could assimilate the growing truth, there would be places as teachers, even though it be every student; for what the whole world (not merely our body), needs is teachers.

Signed

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