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Contact:

Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

Manifest Destiny.

Man's most important study is the history of his own race. It is also a difficult study, and without the idea of an all-loving and over-ruling power conducting the course of human destiny, it presents an inexplicable mystery, a meaningless succession of generations, a great drama without relation of parts. But viewed from the proper standpoint it shows that the human race, through vice, misery & corruption, has ever steadily ascended in the scale of existence.

Humanity is an individual.
Its every condition and period
of life is preparatory, as youth
is preparatory to manhood &
manhood to the ripened ma-
turity of age. What is once
learned can never be forgotten.
Wisdom and experience do not
perish with the ages that
in labor and travail have
brought them forth, but re-
main as the common fund
and capital of the universal
intelligence. Thus under the
severe tutor-ship of its own
experience humanity is being
educated, is ever-growing wiser
and better.

That the race is

advancing intellectually all readily admit, but many of contracted views, who look continually on the dark side of life, and consequently see only its miseries, imagine that it is sadly degenerating in morals. Let us see if this is the case. It is said that truth is the offspring of time. Not so, it is, however, the work of time to discover and distinguish it from error. Moral truth is as properly ~~the~~ subject of discovery as any other. ~~For~~ It is not all contained in revelation, nor is it recognized immediately & intuitively,

it comes not as the sparks
from the smitten steel or the
lightnings flash from the rifted
storm cloud, but is the result
rather of the slow and patient
gleamings of the centuries. The
genius of every age is concentra-
ted upon the subject of moral
philosophy, and new truths are
constantly being discovered. The
shadowy conceptions of our age
become bright living realities
in the next. Much with which
we are familiarly conversant
was entirely unknown in the
past. Evidently then we know
more, we enjoy superior-moral
light. Now we do not believe
with Socrates that to acquire

Knowledge is absolutely to become better, but since the mind is naturally disposed to receive truth, ~~the~~ certainly the more clearly it is presented the more of it will be received; the more a man knows of his duty, *ceteris paribus*, the more of it will he perform.

There is one fact that more particularly and positively declares the superiority of this age; it is the wide spread and universal dissemination of truth. Science and religion are cherished now with ^{not} selfish esoteric spirit, but with a philanthropy as broad as the earth and as universal

as the race, they have been
sent forth everywhere to dis-
pel by their united power the
might of ignorance and super-
stition that has hitherto
hung over the masses. This
and this alone evince true
progress. Humanity is a
complete whole, a collection
unit, and therefore can only
advance as the race, the
whole mass of society is elevat-
ed. It is the highest glory
of this age, that it is more
than any preceding, contrib-
uting to the consummation
of this desired end. Truth
is sown broad cast in the
kindly soil of the great

Heart of humanity, where
it will ever live a lasting
memorial of the energy, zeal
and rightly directed labors
of the present.

If then the
race is now in a state of
progressive development ev-
idently it is destined to con-
tinue so as long as it exists,
till humanity is perfected
and man has regained his lost
original condition, when he
associated with Angels and
held close converse with
God.

But we cannot be assured
of the continued progress of the
race unless it have an object

To aim at, a model after-
which to fashion itself. Man
has no originality, he is essent-
ially imitation and cannot
work without a pattern. One
of his own creation will not
do for-it must needs be
like himself imperfect, and
it is difficult to attain per-
fection by aiming at im-
perfection. What and where
then is this model, this guar-
anty of the complete final
development of humanity?
It is the conception of Deity
that lives in the soul. Here
is an ideal model so perfect
that it may ^{ever} be approximated
yet never equalled. As the

asymptote ever-approaches
nearer and nearer the para-
bolic curve, though if indef-
initely produced cannot become
tangent to it, so humanity
may and is destined to ap-
proach in likeness the char-
acter of God throughout
eternity.

Isabell Dyer
July 14 1859

Commencement Oration of Zebulon Dyer, Class of 1859
Transcribed by Michael Geduldig, June 2009
Edited by Don Sailer, September 2009

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Humanity is an individual. Its very condition and period of life is preparatory, as youth is preparatory to manhood & manhood to the ripened maturity of age. What is once learned can never be forgotten. Wisdom and experience do not perish with the ages that in labor and travail have brought them forth, but remain as the common fund and capital of the universal intelligence. Thus under the severe tutorship of its own experience humanity is being educated, is ever growing wiser and better.
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it comes not as the spark from the smitten steel or the lightnings flash from the rifted storm cloud, but is the result rather of the slow and patient gleanings of the centuries. The genius of every age is concentrated upon the subject of moral philosophy, and new truths are constantly being discovered. The shadowy conceptions of one age become bright living realities in the next. Much with which we are familiarly conversant was entirely unknown in the past. Evidently then we know more, we enjoy superior moral light. Now we do not believe with Socrates that to acquire

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as the race, they have been sent forth everywhere to dispel by their united power the night of ignorance and superstition that has hitherto hung over the masses. This and this alone evinces

true progress. Humanity is a complete whole, a collective unit, and therefore can only advance as the race, the whole mass of society is elevated. It is the highest glory of this age, that it is more than any preceding, contributing to the consumation of this desired end. Truth is sown broad cast in the kindly soil of the great

heart of humanity, where it will ever live a lasting memorial of the energy, zeal and rightly directed labors of the present.

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to aim at, a model after which to fashion itself. Man has no originality, he is essentially accumulation and cannot work without a pattern. One of his own creation will not do for it must needs be like himself imperfect, and it is difficult to attain perfection by aiming at imperfection. What and when then is this model, this guarenty of the complete final development of humanity? It is the conception of Deity that lives in the soul. Here is an ideal model so perfect that it may ever be approximated yet never equaled. As the

[assymtote?] ever approaches nearer and nearer the parabolic curve, though if indefinitely produced cannot become tangent to it, so humanity may and is destined to approach in likeness the character of God throughout eternity.