

# EDUCATION

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by

**ALEXANDER E. KERR**

President, Dalhousie University,  
Halifax, N. S.

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## EDUCATION

The subject assigned to me for presentation this afternoon is Education. This is a most suitable time of year to call attention to it. Our public schools have recently re-opened, and parents especially are aware of the extent to which the interests of their children revolve about the school and its activities. Further, registration for a new session is now taking place in our Universities. Tens of thousands of young Canadians, a large number of them veterans of the second world war, will attend our institutions of higher education during the coming months. If we could see the events of the week in true perspective, the importance of the concentration of so large a company of our finest young people at these places of learning would be unmistakably apparent. Finally, this happens to be the day designated as Religious Education Sunday in several of the major communions of our country. It is a reminder of the vast service being rendered by the Sunday schools, great and small, to be found in almost every community. They compensate in some measure for the failure of the home and the day-school to impart to the children a knowledge of the Christian faith and to make them heirs of the spiritual wisdom of the ages. They are an expression of the teaching ministry which the Church must necessarily provide if it is to perpetuate its life and fulfil its purpose in the world. A living Church may make many mistakes, but it will never neglect the education of its youth. For these three reasons

this is a most appropriate time to say something in a religious programme about Education in its more general scope.

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It is common knowledge, of course, that the closest relations have normally subsisted between the Church and educational interests. I do not claim that the Church has always and everywhere been as assiduous as she might have been in their promotion, but she has done notable pioneering work, and she has been the great general sponsor and supporter of schools. She has maintained them herself or supplied the impulse that created them. The fact that the State at last assumed responsibility for them in most countries does not mean that the Church failed in this field; on the contrary it may be an index of her success that she induced the State to assume its proper obligation. Her business, as it has been put, is not so much utility as creativity, not so much the performance of specific kinds of social service herself as the inspiration of other social agencies to undertake them.

In her missions in the so-called dark places of the earth, among races of crude and primitive culture, she has almost invariably carried on an educational as well as a medical and evangelizing ministry. Some of the civilizations into which she has gone are much older than ours, but it is significant that so many of their outstanding leaders to-day are products of her schools. On this continent too she deserves credit for many splendid educational achievements. Dr. Stanley Jones, who presumably would not willingly impair his great reputation by making statements which were demonstrably untrue, says that ninety-five per cent of the American colleges owe their origin to the Church.

It would be a mistake however to think of the Church's contribution to our educational development only in terms of the schools and colleges which she directly instituted and controlled, and forget that she supplied the impulse which resulted in educational enterprises which were from the beginning, or are now, autonomous. Harvard College, for instance, was built because its founders dreaded "to leave an illiterate ministry to the Churches when our present ministers shall lie in the dust"; Yale was brought into existence specifically "to train men for public employment both in Church and State"; and Columbia began its life in the vestry of old Trinity Church in the City of New York. In Canada many of our fine seats of learning were started by the churches, and not a few of them still retain their denominational connection; but the Church had a share that was no less real because it was indirect, in the formation and development of colleges which were never under her administration. Dalhousie University, for instance, with which I have the honour to be associated, was from the first a non-sectarian foundation which imposed no religious tests on



either students or professors; but those who took an active part in its establishment were devout Christian men who, in a day of ecclesiastical privilege in higher education, determined to have a college that would serve the entire community, without regard to creed or Church affiliation. The influence and leadership of men who were deeply attached to the Church were continuous in the University's life. Some of the Church's finest contributions to society were made in this unofficial manner.

It would be easy to multiply illustrations of the close and mutually helpful relations which have generally obtained between the Church and education, and to suggest that if she follows the work of education with a cordial interest to-day, she is by no means departing from her traditional practice. Indeed I would say that she must be concerned with it if she knows the spirit she is of, for she exists to minister to the true development of human personality. Christ's declared purpose was "that men might have life and that they might have it more abundantly". Every instinct must find its proper expression, and the human spirit must be enfranchised with the freedom that God intended for his children. But obviously, this ideal in a being endowed with reason implies the active and satisfying exercise of his rational powers. It is worthy of note, whatever the true explanation of the circumstance may be, that when Jesus said that the first commandment was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength", quoting an arresting verse from the Book of Deuteronomy, he added a phrase, "and with all thy mind", which was not in the authorized version of Deuteronomy at all. The Church can never look complacently on the spectacle of men vegetating in ignorance, darkened and undeveloped in their understanding, and fettered in the exercise of their intellectual life. She can never be satisfied to see them condemned to "nourish a blind life within the brain". She is obliged by her very nature to be the friend of education whose purpose is so closely akin, and so easily assimilated, to her own.

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One of the specific changes which the Church may help to bring about in the sphere of higher education, which is my immediate personal interest, is the reduction of the importance of the economic factor in the decision as to whether or not our young men and women shall be able to continue their education beyond High School in the University. As far as the University is concerned, whosoever will may come if he can give proof of satisfactory matriculation standing and pay the prescribed fees. The financial difficulty is the really serious one for many a prospective student: he does not know how he can secure sufficient funds to meet his needs for several years at College. The amount required is more than a great many parents can afford and more than many of the most frugal and industrious young people can possibly save.

The advantages of a situation in which young people must make their own way without too much patronage, and deny themselves if they would proceed to College, are obvious enough. The defect of the present system however is that the privilege of university education may become restricted too much to sons and daughters of the economically favoured section of society, and that promising young people who would profit greatly by the opportunity of advanced study do not get the chance because they cannot finance it.

In these post-war years veterans constitute a fairly large proportion of the student population in every university, and while it is to be expected that so large a group will contain its quota of students who are of merely average or less than average ability, a significantly large number of them have shown definitely that they possess superior gifts. They have demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that they are as capable of advanced studies as any of their fellow-students. It is quite certain however that many of them would never have seen the inside of a university without the financial grant given by the Federal Government.

Perhaps in the most ideally ordered system some Miltons will still be doomed to mute inglorious life and some Hampdens to spend their days at menial toil, but it is a condition to be avoided as far as possible in the interests both of the persons themselves and of society at large. Certainly the economic factor should be made far subordinate to the intellectual in the settlement of the question, to go or not to go to college: and there is no reason why the intellectual factor should be the sole consideration either. The passport to the university might be the possession in a satisfactory measure, of the main qualifications required for Rhodes Scholars, which include, in the following order, scholastic attainments, qualities of manhood, truth, kindliness, devotion, unselfishness, and, as the official memorandum itself emphasizes, moral courage and interest in one's fellow men. My contention is that evidence of these gifts, and not of substantial means, should constitute the right of young Canadians to the highest educational privileges that our country can offer; and it should not be beyond our ingenuity to revise the existing system in that direction.

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I wish that it were possible for me to devote more time than I have at my disposal this afternoon to a consideration of some of the marks which should distinguish any educational discipline which could be considered adequate for the day in which we are living. There is one thing however, that I must take a few moments to say: it is that I observe signs of a growing conviction among the educators whom I personally know and those whose writings come to my attention, that while education must be concerned with enlightenment, with the impartation of the special knowledge requir-



ed for the practice of certain professions, and most fundamentally with the training of the reason to draw the proper conclusions from any given set of premises, it will fail in its duty to the students and to society if it does these alone, and does not also inculcate wholesome attitudes of mind and awaken an appreciation of the things that are excellent. In the language of the schools, it must consciously and increasingly deal with values, and proceed on the assumption that the highest knowledge is the knowledge of the good. If it concerns itself entirely with the admission of men to the possession of knowledge, which is power, careless of whether it merely makes evil men more effective in their machinations, and devils more clever in the achievement of their purpose, it will be of very doubtful value to mankind. (NOTE: According to a recent newspaper description of the Nazis on trial at Nuernberg, Herman Goering has an exceedingly high Intelligence Quotient - "138 out of a possible 150." The writer adds, "His prosecutors count it worthless without a conscience".)

It may be assumed without dispute that education in an age which has been marked by truly epoch-making advances of science should continue to emphasize the scientific spirit and to encourage this generation to search in faith for the power to order mountains to fall into the sea and compel their obedience. It is foolish to suggest, as some have done, that we try to impose a moratorium on further scientific advance because the new knowledge which has come into our possession has proven so dangerous. It is dangerous indeed. We are now the trustees of the secret of atomic power, and the responsibility terrifies us. The right use of it might bring untold blessings to the world, the misuse might destroy a nation in a day. In the consciousness of the possibilities for good or evil inherent in this latest achievement of science, many writers and speakers have been quoting the familiar dictum that history has become a race between education and catastrophe.

We have come close enough to the brink of this catastrophe to know that the outcome is not one of mere academic interest, and it has occurred to many of us to ask how education can provide the alternative that the world so desperately needs. I personally see very little hope in the education which is concerned only with the extension of the frontiers of knowledge or the improvement of professional skills: for there is not the slightest reason why it should not collaborate with the forces of evil and increase their destructiveness. The kind, however that not only places the key of knowledge in men's hands but implants in their hearts a profound belief in those moral values which are the indispensable guiding lights to worthy living might, and should, make some significant contribution to our salvation.

It has often been observed that one of the most disturbing features of the contemporary world is that our scientific achieve-

ment has outrun our moral advance. This is due in part to our failure to see how our inherited moral precepts apply to the situation in which we find ourselves, the private view of morality which formerly prevailed being unable to match the emerging problems of social and industrial life. It is due also in part to a more fundamental loss of moral conviction. Scepticism has been at work for some time undermining the foundations of moral belief, and reducing it to a convention which changes according to the side of the Pyrenees on which one happens to find himself. So on the one hand we see science driving forward at breath-taking speed, and on the other, moral convictions being treated with but slight deference by simple and worldly-wise alike; and the condition which prevails in some countries can only be described in terms of the most profound and alarming moral collapse. There can be no reasoned peace or security for mankind so long as our growth in knowledge is not attended by a corresponding advance in morals, so long as we attain to power without learning the wisdom of using this power for worthy ends. The education that we require under the circumstances must be ethical as well as intellectual and scientific. It must speak clearly and convincingly to our youth about justice and mercy and faithful dealing and truth and duty and love. Only thus can it serve their highest interests and minister to their deepest needs.

The name of Heidelberg University is familiar to all men and women who are interested in education, for it was famous during those years when Germany was the mecca of the intellectual world. Ten years ago it became a tragic example of the transformation which education suffered under the Nazi regime. I heard the newly-appointed President of a Canadian college in the course of his Inaugural Lecture about that time describe the degradation which had overtaken German education, using Heidelberg to illustrate his theme. Formerly there stood somewhere in the University a reproduction of the immortal Greek sculpture of Pallas Athena, the deity who presided over the moral and intellectual aspects of man's life, with the dedication, "To the Eternal Spirit". The Nazi authorities replaced it in 1936 with a huge German eagle, bearing the inscription, "To the German Spirit". Heidelberg became to the outside world a symbol of the exploitation of education by a philosophy and a political policy in which the universal moral values which have the sanction of the Christian faith were rejected with open scorn. Last year, after hostilities had ceased and some activities of the normal life of society were resumed, the Medical School of Heidelberg was re-opened and I read with great interest the address delivered on the occasion by one of Germany's outstanding critics and scholars. The burden of his message was that the School, and the whole profession in Germany for which it prepared candidates, had failed the nation in its hour of need, not because they lacked professional skill, but because they had denied those moral values which cannot be ignored with impunity. In particular they had



compromised their loyalty to truth, or they would never have subscribed to the Aryan myth which inflated the nation's pride; and they had rejected the claims of compassion, or they would never have prostituted their knowledge to the inhuman purposes to which they had lent their, perhaps reluctant, aid. We have been spared the ordeal through which the schools and colleges of Germany were forced to pass, but we should not on that account ignore the lessons which they learned at so great a price, nor send our youth out into life with an education which has not impressed on them the meaning of high moral obligation and taught them to think on the things that are true and honest and just and pure and lovely and of good report.

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The recognition of the importance of moral values leads us inevitably to think of the place of religion in the educational scheme. Morality and religion may be separated for purposes of study: although I find authority in the Gospels for assuming that all fine moral devotion is implicitly religious, and that it does not lose its quality because good men may feed the hungry and clothe the naked without realizing that they are at the same time responding to the King to whom the Christian offers his articulate worship. Nevertheless ethics is an independent science, which admits of investigation without religious presuppositions. Pagan writers have left us many admirable non-theological treatises on the subject. Aristotle remains a master in this field, and his list of virtues was incorporated into Christian teaching. But anyone who is seriously interested in the moral side of life and education would do well to ponder on the judgment of Lecky, whose history of European morals is a standard work, that while the speculations of pagan moralists influenced a few of the elite, the Christian religion, which is ethical to the core, made great thoughts about duty, which the noblest minds of antiquity could barely grasp, "the truisms of the village school, the proverbs of the cottage and the alley". The Christian religion provides a view of the universe in which moral values are at home; and while history leaves no room for doubt that such religion and such morality may and should go hand in hand, each reacting on and reinforcing the other, there is very grave reason to question whether the finest moral sentiments can continue to survive if men deny what ethical religion basically asserts, and build their philosophy on the postulate that the world is ultimately nothing but "phosphorous and glue".

Well-meaning efforts have been made by certain modern reformers to keep the moral values of Christianity without any commitment to the Christian faith, "to have religiousness without religion" as one champion of this position has phrased it. Readers of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* will recall an interesting parallel in the story of the cat which disappeared but

left its grin behind. Such strange phenomena belong to the realm of fantasy and not to that of actual experience. Any educational ideal which rejects or ignores the religious insistence that life is meaningful is in an unenviable position when it attempts to present moral values in convincing terms. But the Christian teacher finds himself in a happy position, because his estimate of them is of one piece with his beliefs about God and man and the universe.

It is stated in the widely discussed Harvard report on Education, published last year, that "the goals of education must largely include those of religious education, education in the Western tradition and education in modern democracy", and that "each of these is to a great extent implied in the others". A liberal education "must embrace the mainsprings of our culture". Incidentally Sir Richard Livingstone, the eminent British educationalist was reminding his wide circle of readers at the same time that Christianity is the great new fact of the last nineteen hundred years; that it is largely responsible for "creating the soul of Western civilization, forming the mind, and providing the requisite vitamins for its life-blood"; and that our education should therefore lead to a philosophy which is fundamentally Christian. The Harvard scholars implicitly recognize this, and frankly declare "the importance of religious belief in the completely good life". They hesitate however to propose religious instruction as part of the educational curriculum, out of deference to the "varieties of faith and unfaith in the American scene". Their position may be justified on the ground of expediency: their consistency may still be a matter of dispute: in any case if the inspiration and sustaining source of those moral values with which education is vitally concerned, is found in the Christian faith, the consequences of neglecting it will be the same, even if we can advance a perfectly plausible explanation why we left it out. Purely secular education which gives no room or place to it cannot pass the crucial test.

The Report contains an observation in another connection which it is pertinent here to recall, and with it I close: the best way to infect a student with zest for intellectual integrity, it says, is to put him near a teacher who is himself selflessly devoted to the truth, so that a spark from him will, so to speak, leap across the desk and kindle in the soul of the pupil a flame which will thereafter sustain itself. The same is true in the sphere of religious faith. As Augustine expressed it long ago, "One loving heart sets another on fire". And whatever the limitations of the formal system of education may be, we can go forward with high confidence if we have in our schools and colleges a succession of inspiring teachers whose pupils realize that they, like St. Paul, are "not ashamed of the Gospel."