

DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION AND WHAT IS IMPLIED

"Either God is or He is not. If He is, then our faith must be in line with all that we know of Him and His saving way. If He is not, then we are of all people the most stupid in striving to maintain a Christian ethic without the reality of a faith to support our claim" ("Vital Ground for Democracy," **Current Affairs for the Canadian Forces**, April 15, 1955, p. 28.) For to a marked degree Western civilization is permeated with the determinative beliefs of Christianity—historic truths about God, and man which have shaped the past, minister to the present, and designate the future. "Indeed, Christianity and Hellenism are the spiritual bases of our civilization." (Ibid—p. 25) Greek thought and Christianity created the soul of Western civilization, formed its mind, and are the vitamins of its life-blood. In history and in Christian thought the two are linked indissolubly. Christianity surviving from the downfall of the ancient world salvaged and adapted Roman organization and Greek thought, and incorporated both in the new house that it built for Western civilization." (Sir Richard Livingstone, **Education for a World Adrift** p. 97.

Now the hallmark and boast of Western civilization is that many-splendoured thing, democracy. Churchill, with his verbal artistry, has shrewdly defined it as "the worst form of government except all those other forms which have been tried from time to time." In more serious and specific terms, Maritain calls it, "The flowering in political life of the Christian dignity of man." John D. Redden considers it, "Christian charity which has come to bud and blossom in political life and in social life." Regardless of terminology, the blessed fact remains that it is founded on belief in God, and operates according to Christian principles: we acknowledge the brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God. We realize that man and God cannot sit upon the same throne at the same time—one or the other must be subordinate. We know that man can walk the earth as man only when he walks hand in hand with God.

"O Soul of Love, immortal and divine,
Mine is the power to curse Thee or to bless.
The glory of this earthly hour is Thine
Or else betrayal and forgetfulness."

John Oxenham.

Man's foolish attempt to become the centre of existence results in God being pushed to the circumference of life and finally out of the universe altogether. Indeed the human presumption that man can defy or ignore the world above him because he is lord of the world about him is largely responsible for the ills of our time. Surely by now we ought to know that democracy must breathe the spiritual air of eternal truth or die—man lives and learns for eternity—and that ideologies boasting of the discard of truth and righteousness have the seeds of their own destruction planted within. These are perilous times: we are passing through a period of great confusion and even of conflict: we must choose between faith in God's order and faith in the disorder of the godless. Fortunately, "The Faith is an anvil which has worn out many hammers." (Lord Tweedsmuir.) Upon our success in educating young people to make the correct choice depend infinite values. The stakes are eternal.

It is a tremendous task. For its success, knowledge is important—"your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil." But still "more important

than knowledge is the power to use it; but most important of all is what a man believes what he thinks good and bad, whether he has clear standards and values, and is prepared to live by them. . . . As Plato said, the noblest of all studies is the study of what man should be and how he should live. It is also the most important of all studies: do we give it enough attention?" (Sir Richard Livingstone. **Education for a World Adrift**, p. XI.) Education, whither goest thou?

Long ago Plato defined education as "that which gives to the body and soul all the perfection of which they are capable." That from a pagan! And Mohammed is credited with, "He who honestly instructs, reverences God." Now, after twenty centuries of enlightenment and progress, "What we call education," in the words of Walter Lippmann, "is really an educational void. The real reason is that we reject the religious and classical heritage. . . . We have abolished the old curriculum because we are afraid of it, afraid to face any longer in a modern democratic society the severe discipline and the deep, disconcerting issues of the nature of the universe and of man's place in it and of his destiny. . . . By separating education from the classical-religious tradition the school cannot train the pupil to look upon himself as an inviolable person because he is made in the image of God. These very words, though they are the noblest in our language, now sound archaic. . . . The teacher has no subject matter that even pretends to deal with the elementary and universal issues of human destiny. . . . Thus there is a cultural vacuum, for the more men have become separated from the spiritual heritage which binds them together, the more has education become egoist, careerist, specialist and asocial." ("Address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science," **The American Scholar**.) We have established a system of education in which we insist that while everyone must be educated, there is nothing in particular that an educated man should know. There is little agreement on what should be taught, how it should be taught, or why it should be taught, or if there is any good reason for teaching it. There is rather general agreement that in some way education must be for democracy, to preserve its ideals or values. Arnold Toynbee measured our success in fulfilling this trust when he declared that in our technology the West has created a material society with a spiritual vacuum which must be again filled or such a society, founded on the values of the spirit, will collapse. God must be restored to society before society can be restored to God.

Four attitudes or values must be brought back to education if democracy is to survive: the consciousness of a framework of life under God (" . . . one nation, under God. . . ."), the sense of the Christian dignity of the individual, a healthy attitude towards work and nature, and a sense of community. We teachers hold within our hands the energies of thousands of students, energies far more potent than those of any hydrogen bomb. We must harness these energies for the good life under God. Our future lies not in our stars but in ourselves.

The consciousness of a framework of life under God—In the school the child must be brought to recognize that there is law and order outside himself to which he is responsible—the moral law, that the highest good of society and his own happiness depend upon his abiding by this moral law. The child is not free to do as he pleases in school: there is authority which he should be taught to respect. There will be discipline too, for he sometimes has to be required to do the things he doesn't like. Such training will develop self-discipline without which democracy so disintegrates that the external discipline of dictatorship swiftly ensues. The knowledge of our cultural herit-