

## THE OBJECT OF LIBERAL EDUCATION

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The task of this generation is to establish peace. Peace may no longer be regarded as an interval between wars. Now we must have peace or we shall have no world at all.

Peace is necessary to survival. But survival is not the sins of human life. As St. Thomas said, "A sea captain who merely kept his ship afloat would not deserve the name. The captain must take the ship to its destination." Granting that an important question is, can we survive? We must ask ourselves a still more important question, what are we going to do with ourselves if we do?

The prospects of a satisfactory answer to this question are not encouraging. As we now save children from infants' diseases in order to put them into insane asylums when they grow up, so we have cut working hours from 60 to 40 and produced the comic book as the symbol of our cultural epoch. This process of reducing working hours has been going on for a generation. I am for it, just as I am for literacy. But it must be admitted that the value of leisure, like the value of literacy, depends on what you do with it. A literacy which means that millions who might otherwise have lived in innocence now feed themselves on the yellow press is of doubtful utility to civilization. A leisure which is spent in more and more futile ways of trying to get other people to amuse us cannot lead us, as Aristotle hoped, to a higher intellectual plane. To him the object of work was leisure. But by leisure he did not mean relaxation. The Greek word for leisure is the origin of our word for school. The Greeks thought of leisure as the opportunity for moral and intellectual development and participation in the life of the community. Such leisure is, in truth, the object of all other human activity. I see few signs that the non-working time of Americans can be identified as leisure in this sense.

And I see little hope of improvement. The use of atomic energy for heat, power, and light, is just around the corner. In 1930 Mr. Hoover said that prosperity was just around the corner, and it arrived about 1938. I am using the phrase in the Hooverian sense. There are scientific and engineering

exploitation of atomic energy but they are not insuperable. The cost of transporting the materials from which atomic energy is made is negligible. This means that it will be possible to establish new industries and new communities anywhere in the world. It means that insofar as the location of any city has depended on its proximity to sources of power, there will, to that extent, be no further reason for its existence. If, because of the location of raw materials, it would be more economical to locate industries on the polar ice cap or in the heart of the Congo, then they will be located there. And communities, which could be free from smoke, could be located wherever the climate was most agreeable.

The creation of new industries and new communities will be accompanied, as I have hinted, by the disintegration of old industries and old communities. This means growing insecurity. The problems of citizenship, which we have been able to take very lightly, may seem too much for us. We may turn to the government to save us. Only the government will seem large enough to cope with a crisis of such dimensions. Nobody suggested that atomic energy should not be a government monopoly. The only question was which branch of the Government should monopolize it. As the crisis grows, we may even hear that we need a leader with a capital L. The strain on the government will be security and boredom. And so the world comes back again to bread and circuses.

The President of Harvard has suggested that our appetite for circuses is unlimited. He has intimated that we don't need to worry about the unbounded leisure which the atomic age will bring – we can go to the ball game. I used to do that myself every Saturday afternoon in the fall, but for some reason or other I finally got tired of it. Perhaps the fact that Harvard defeated Chicago 65 to 0 had something to do with my feeling in the matter. At the age of 49 I can testify that all forms of recreation eventually lose their charm. When in the atomic age we can get our living with about the same effort and in the same time with the same training as the fortunate savages required to pick their daily diet from the bread-fruit trees, what shall we do with ourselves then? What we need to prepare ourselves for this situation is education: but appeared to most Americans as the avenue to social and vocational success. The social aspirations of students in a country with universal education would seem to be sufficiently thwarted by the remark of Gilbert and Sullivan that where everybody's somebody, nobody's anybody. Those who seek education for financial success are fated for frustration. Direct training for this purpose, like courses in How to Make Money in the Stock Market, is a fraud. And my observation and experience lead me to say

that the number of occupations in which what are known as “college contacts” are more of a help than a hindrance is severely limited.

It is paradoxical that in our country, where the rapidity of technical change is dramatically presented to every citizen every day, we should have a system of education which ignores the rapidity and inevitability of such change. The program of our schools is essentially a vocational program. Vocational training assumes that the boy will work under the geographical and technical conditions under which he has studied. Vocational agricultural training is given to students in the Dustbowl, who race for Chicago the moment they are through school. Mechanical training is given on obsolescent machines in Chicago to students who find themselves confronted with entirely different ones when they get a job. So the product of vocational training finds his education a positive handicap to him in his vocation. As the experience of wartime showed, the place to train hands for industry is industry. The aircraft companies produced better mechanics in a few weeks that the schools could produce in years.

What education can do, and perhaps all I can do, is to produce a trained mind. Getting a trained mind is hard work. As Aristotle observed, learning is accompanied with pain. Those who are seeking something which education cannot supply are not likely to be enthusiastic about what it can supply, for the pain to them is excruciating. And since our false conception of democracy requires us to admit them to education anyway, something must be done with them when they get into it. And it must, of course, be something painless. Therefore, it must be something which interests them. The vocationalism of our universities results in part from the difficulty of interesting many young people in what are known as “academic” subjects. And the whole apparatus of football, fraternities, and fun is a means by which education is made palatable to those who have no business to be in it.

The fact is that the best practical education is the most theoretical one. This is probably the first time in human history in which change on every front is so rapid that what one generation has learned of practical affairs in the realm of politics, industry, business, and technology is of little value to the next. What the father knows of the facts of life is almost useless to his son. It is principles, and everlasting principles, not data, not facts, not helpful hints, but principles, which the rising generation requires if it is to find its way through the mazes of tomorrow. No man among us can tell what tomorrow will be like. All we know with certainty is that it will be different from today.

It is principles which the adults of 1948 must understand if they are to be ready for 1949. The education of adults has in this country been largely ignored, on the ground that education is something for children. We have thought of it as something like the measles, mumps, chicken-pox, or whooping cough; having had education once, one need not, indeed, cannot have it again. And where we have had adult education it has largely been afflicted with the same disorder which has attacked the education of youth; it has been regarded as a means to vocational or social success. You make a third-rate bank clerk by giving him classes at night.

Education is not a matter for children. It is a process which must go on through life. Apart from mathematics, metaphysics, logic, astronomy, and similar theoretical subjects, that comprehension comes only with experience. A learned Greek remarked that young men should not listen to lectures on moral philosophy, and he was right. Moral philosophy, history, politics, economics, and literature can convey their full meaning only in maturity. Take *Macbeth*, for instance. When I taught it to boys in a preparatory school, it was a blood-and-thunder story, a good one and well worth teaching, but a blood-and-thunder story still. *Macbeth* can mean what it meant to Shakespeare only when the reader has had sufficient experience, vicarious or otherwise, of marriage and ambition to understand the issues and their implications.

It happens that the kinds of things we need most to understand today are those which adults can fully grasp. A boy may be a brilliant mathematician or musician; and I have known several astronomers who were contributing to the international journals at the age of 13. But I never knew a child of that age who had much that was useful to say about the ends of human life, the purposes of organized society, and the means of reconciling freedom and order. It is subjects like these about which we must obtain some clarification if our civilization is to survive.

The survival of civilization depends on those who are adults today. We cannot wait for the rising generation to rise. It is imperative that we enter now, with the aid of all the new devices which technology has given us, upon a program of mass adult education such as we have never dreamed of. One such program is already under way; it is that by which schools, colleges, universities and libraries are forcing adults to consider fundamental issues through the study and discussion of great books of the western world. At the rate at which this program is now expanding, I confidently expect to see 15,000,000 people involved in it within five years.

I do not suffer from the illusion that if 15,000,000 Americans are studying the great books of the western world within five years we shall avert war. It

can only increase the chances of averting it. But if we do not avert war by this kind of adult education, we can at least provide ourselves in the time that is left us with some dignified alternative to liquor, the movies, the radio, and running around in second-hand cars, catching glimpses of the countryside between the billboards. Machines can do for us far more than slaves ever did for the Greeks. The new leisure which we shall have if we survive gives us an opportunity to develop a civilization quite as glorious as that of the Greeks, and far more lasting.

The education we need is liberal education. Liberal education is first of all education appropriate to man. I shall not tell you what man is in the language of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, or any of the other back-numbers who have been discredited by the advance of modern science. Let us listen instead to the words, and the most recent words of one who is himself a distinguished scientist, Julian Huxley. In *Evolution, the Modern Synthesis*, published in 1942, he asserts that speech and conceptual thought form the basis of man's biological dominance, that speech and conceptual thought are found only in man, that man's increasing control over nature has been the result of his capacity for tradition, which is unique in him, that his gains in the future must be sought in the improvement of the fundamental basis of human dominance – the feeling, thinking brain, the most important aspect of such advance will be increased intelligence, which implies greater disinterestedness and fuller control of emotional impulse. "The evolutionary biologist," Huxley says, "is tempted to ask whether the aim should not be to let the mammal die within us, so as the more effectually to permit the man to live... True human progress consists in an increase of aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual experience and satisfaction." Huxley concludes: "The future of man, if it is to be progress and not merely a standstill or degeneration, must be guided by a deliberate purpose. And this human purpose can be only formulated in terms of the new attributes achieved by life in becoming human."

An education appropriate to man, then will be formulate in terms of the new attributes achieved by life in becoming human; speech, conceptual thought, the capacity for tradition, and aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual experience and satisfaction. As education appropriate to man is one which promotes the death of the mammal within us that the man may live. Rousseau's celebrated sentence, "Man is born free and is everywhere in chains," may be in a political sense less true now than it was in his time. But in every other sense it is as true today as when he wrote it. Man is a slave to the mammal within him to ignorance, emotion, and mammalian standards.

Liberal education, education for freedom, aims to free man from the mammal within.

Bishop Berkley put it in another way, drawing his metaphor from a somewhat lower social stratum of the animal kingdom. He repudiated an education designed for thriving earthworms. An earthworm who wanted to thrive would seek health, wealth, and recreation. I leave to you the question whether American education has had much higher aims.

Upon the development of men's human powers must rest the hope for the development of the human community. There can be no community between earthworms and men. And a community is something more than a group of mammals wrestling with one another in the same geographical region. It cannot be produced by conquest or held together by force. Nor can it result from the improvement of transportation. Improvements in transportation can lead to the subjugation of the world or of large parts of it by powers who have first discovered how to apply the latest inventions in transportation to the extermination of their neighbors. A community depends not on transportation but on communication. Communication is impossible without mutual intelligibility. To communicate, to have, a community, what is communicated must be interpreted and understood, and this can be accomplished only in the light of common principles.

Both individual freedom and the free community, then, depend on the development of the highest powers of men, the characteristic powers of the human animal. In this sense, liberal education must be intellectual education. This is so because it aims to make men human. It is an education appropriate to man.

A second requirement of liberal education is that it must hold before the rising generation what Whitehead called the habitual vision of greatness. Whitehead went so far as to say that without this vision, and without this habitual vision, education is impossible. These are strong words, and yet they are true. The noblest achievements of mankind, the highest aspirations of the human spirit – these are the essence of an education designed to suppress the mammal – or the earthworm – within us and make us truly human. We aim not at the reproduction of mediocrity but at pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps into a different spiritual world. The habitual vision of greatness supplies us with the direction and the motive power we need.

Where do we find that vision in American education today? The pupils of Socrates found it by looking at him. But no system of education for the millions can hope for a Socrates in every classroom.

If the teacher cannot be expected to be a model of greatness, we must look for the habitual vision of it in the student's daily fare. We must find it in the books he reads. Though I have no doubt that there is a place for textbooks in liberal education, we may hesitate to recommend them as the exclusive diet of the American pupil from the first grade to the Ph.D. The most enthusiastic textbook salesman has never argued that any of his wares were great books. He will say that they are easy, clear, comprehensive, up-to-date, or cheap; but neither he nor anybody else will say that he, who is now licensed as sole purveyor to the American young, is supplying them with the habitual vision of greatness.

The position of great books and textbooks is now the reverse of what it ought to be. The books which no man can be educated without reading are on those well-known collateral lists which are printed in every syllabus and never heard of again. The teacher does not refer to them. The student is not examined on them. The student is no fool. His slogan is embodied in the immortal saying of a lady of genius, "I love to loaf, but I will not waste my time." He knows that the course is built around the textbook, that he will be examined on the textbook, and he reads enough of the textbook to pass the course. But offhand it would seem that if one book is to be central and another collateral, the great one should be central and the patient, pedestrian, explanatory, undistinguished one should be collateral. Unless great books become central, the vision of greatness cannot be habitual in education. And no education in which it is not habitual can be liberal education.

The third requirement of liberal education is that it must deal with permanent and not with shifting conditions, with ultimate and not with relative ends. A few years ago a committee appointed by the British Board of Education reported its recommendations for the future of the British secondary schools. The committee, which was under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Norwood, placed these words at the beginning of its report: "We believe that education cannot stop short of recognizing the ideals of truth and beauty and goodness as final and binding for all times and in all places, as ultimate values; we do not believe that these ideals are of temporary convenience only, as devices for holding together society until they can be dispensed with as knowledge grows and organization becomes more scientific. . . . We have no sympathy, therefore, with a theory of education which presupposes that its aim can be dictated by the provisional findings of the special sciences, whether biological, psychological, or sociological, that the function of education is to fit pupils to determine their outlook and conduct according to the changing needs and the changing standards of the day. But our belief is that education from its own nature must be ultimately

concerned with values which are independent of time or particular environment, though realizable under changing forms in both, and therefore that no programs of education which concern themselves only with relative ends and the immediate adaptation of the individual to existing surrounding can be acceptable.”

The Norwood committee apparently thought that it was stating an axiom, for it said that education must be concerned with values independent of time or particular environment, because of its own nature. Yet this proposition, which the committee regards as a self-evident truth, must have a strangely antiquated ring to American ears. The highest aim of American education has been to adjust young to their environment, to reduce the shock of novelty that comes with the first job, the first vote, and the first marriage.

The changes of the last fifty years have produced the same reversal in the contents of the curriculum that we have discovered in the books which students read. The provisional findings of the special sciences, together with the charlatanism of many pseudo-sciences and fake disciplines, have become the heart of the course of study, while the important questions, the ultimate values, the great issues and ideals are remitted to chapel services, student clubs, and bull sessions. One could have no objection to a series of extra-curriculum lectures on How to Get a Job and Hold It. But you who dwell where the aroma of liberal education is strong and beautiful can have no conception of the extent to which such subjects are now, not the topics of extra-curriculum interest and debate, but the very curriculum itself.

Where can you stop if you set out to adjust the young to their environment? The environment presses upon them from every point of the compass, presenting them with problems of conduct most complicated and detailed. The selection of clothing, the methods of paying for it; the selection of food and the methods of finding it; how to discover a place to live; the selection of a wife, and whether she shall be blonde or brunette, ignorant or intelligent, healthy or interesting; the right number of children to have and how to have them and not to have them; the right kind of automobile, radio, refrigerator, heating system, and insurance; the difference between tax evasion and tax avoidance; the relative advantages of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the *Readers' Digest*, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, the *Motion Picture Classic*, and the *Atlantic Monthly*; whether to go to the theater or the movies and how many times a week; how much to contribute to the Community Fund; whether to play tennis or golf and the effect of each upon the heart – these questions, together with the questions whether to be for or against the closed shop, the European Recovery Program, Mr. Truman, and Prohibition – all these questions bear acutely on the young.

American educators have responded to the call. You think I have made up these questions. Not at all. You will find that college courses purporting specifically to answer these questions are offered in many colleges and universities of the United States.

Yet it is obvious that in any other line of business the educators who offer courses purporting to answer these specific questions would be indicted for obtaining money under false pretences. To answer them they would have to have the gift of prophecy in a degree with which mankind has not been favored for at least two thousand years. Though they hold that everything is changing, so that there can be no permanent values and no permanent studies, though they believe that we can learn nothing from antiquity, or the middle ages, or the day before yesterday, because it was only yesterday that slavery was abolished and the automobile, aeroplane, and radio invented, they insist that today tells us all about the day after tomorrow, when today will be the day before yesterday. The trouble with current information is precisely that it is current. The one thing we know with certainty is that the world and its current problems will have changed by the time our students face them.

They must be prepared to face them. The question is how. If relative ends and immediate adaption to existing surroundings are a waste of time, it may be that the Norwood committee is right in suggesting values independent of time or particular environment, though reliable under changing forms in both. What we need to make the shifting, environment intelligible is ideas, standards, and principles; ideas the instruments of knowledge; standards, to judge objectively the problems that present themselves; and principles of conduct which transcend the particular problem of the day. Our graduates must have the capacity to face new situations. This means that they must know how to think. If we can help them learn this, we have done the most that we can do for them.

Liberal education, then, is education appropriate to man. It is education which holds before the rising generation the habitual vision of greatness. It is education concerned not with relative ends and the immediate adaptation of the individual to existing surroundings, but with values independent of time or particular environment.

The liberal course of study will therefore emphasize speech, conceptual thought, the capacity for tradition, aesthetic, intellectual, and spiritual experience and satisfaction. It will train the students in the arts of communication and give them a common stock of ideas and ideals. It will offer them models of greatness. It will attempt to help them learn to think,

and to think about the most important questions, the aims and possibilities of human life and of organized society.

This means a curriculum composed of the great books, the great experiments, and the liberal arts, that is language and mathematics. The great books are models of greatness. They raise the great issues. They display the aims and possibilities of human life and of organized society. They embody the tradition of the Western World. They have made us what we are. They suggest what we may be. They are, whether we know it or not, the cement which holds together such community as we have.

It is sometimes said that nobody knows which the great books are. Yet if we tonight were to cast our votes for the fifty greatest books in history I am willing to wager that we should agree on forty of them. And I am sure that of the forty not a single one is read by all the college students of the country and not more than one or two by all students of Harvard, Yale and Princeton.

It is sometimes said that the great books are too hard. One is forced to take two positions toward people who make this remark. Either they have never read the great books or they have never read textbooks. Difficult as Aristotle is, he cannot approach, for sheer boredom, the ordinary textbook in the history of philosophy, and when you read Aristotle, you have some satisfactions which the textbook denies you. You feel that you are reading the work of a great thinker, and you have the notion that you are gaining an accurate impression of what he thought. You have, moreover, the sense that you are doing something important. This sense of importance is what is missing from the contemporary curriculum. And since it is missing, the young, who want to be doing something important, rush into the extra-curriculum. All efforts to control the excesses of the extra-curriculum fail because they do not go to the heart of the problem, which is the inanity of the curriculum.

The great books were, for the most part, written for laymen. Many of them were written for very young laymen. They have been read by very young laymen almost to our own day. We do not need to refer to those fourteen-year-olds who wandered unchaperoned from the remote parts of Ireland to the University of Paris in the twelfth century. Read Walsh's book on the education of the Founding Fathers and remember that even on this continent less than two hundred years ago the character and intelligence of fourteen-year-olds were formed by books which are now thought to be too difficult for Ph.D.s or even for university professors. Can we suppose that our stock has deteriorated so that now the young American can learn nothing except through reading matter which bears the same relation to Aristotle that the late Elinor Glyn has to Shakespeare?

On the contrary, all the evidence we have from St. John's, Chicago and Columbia supports the conviction that the sense of urgency imported into the curriculum by the great books produces at last the American student, this is, a person who wants and likes to study. Learning is accompanied by pain. But the pain of learning trivial stuff by trivial means can become intolerable. The pain of learning important stuff by important means has its daily and great rewards.

The liberal arts are our mother tongue. They are a kind of basic language about everything. They are the arts of communication. Through them we comprehend ideas and through them and through ideas we comprehend the environment. Through them things become intelligible to us, and we become intelligible to others. So they are the means by which we may hope to achieve community. They are specifically human arts, for they deal with speech and conceptual thought and are the avenues to intellectual experience and satisfaction.

If, then, we know what liberal education is, our last question is, to whom shall it be offered? But this question answers itself. Liberal education is education for freedom. All you have to do to answer the question, to whom shall it be offered, is to ask yourself who is to be free. Who are to be the members of our free community? If there are to be people in this country who are not to be admitted to that community, then we do not have to worry about them, except to see to it that they are kept in good working condition. But if every man is to be free, then every man must be educated for freedom. This truth is self-evident; and the debate must shift from the question, who is to have liberal education to the one we have been discussing, what is liberal education? When you know what liberal education is, you cannot shrink from the task of giving it to every individual who is destined for freedom. The alternative is to reach the indefensible conclusion that there are some men who are not destined for freedom. But though this conclusion is supported by the high authority of Aristotle, it is still indefensible, for it amounts to saying that there are some men who are not men. You will say that it can't be done. But I reply that it must be done, and that you don't know that it can't be. You merely think it can't because you are familiar with the apathy and apparent stupidity of those you have watched staring blankly out the window of American classrooms. I do not deny that the task is so difficult as to look impossible. I do not deny the years, perhaps centuries; will be required to reach the goal. But I do insist that this is the goal and that we must fight our way toward it with all our power.

Liberal education is moral education. But moral education must contend with the community. When Plato first made the point that the city educates

the man, he had in mind moral education; he meant that in this realm the atmosphere of the community was decisive. When he said that what is honored in a country will be cultivated there, he suggested that all education, moral and intellectual, formal and informal, derived its aims from the purposes of the community. It would be almost impossible to obtain the widespread cultivation of habits upon which the community set a low valuation. For example, it would be hard to establish asceticism as a way of life in the United States today. And in the era of mass media of mass communication, the problem is more difficult than ever, Can it be seriously supposed that the American educational system, no matter how efficient, elaborate, and expensive, can compete with the radio, the motion picture, the slick-paper magazine, and the comic book?

The problem is urgent, because all other education is wasted, from the social point of view, if moral education fails. We do not want a nation of scientific cracksmen or learned crooks. Gibbon in his celebrated chapter on the future of Europe seeks to relieve the fears of his contemporaries by assuring them that there can never be another barbarian conqueror. The reason is simple. War is now so far advanced and requires the knowledge of so many arts and sciences that only highly educated men can hope to wage war successfully. The inference is that if men are highly educated they will not be so stupid or vulgar to wage war. But the last war was the most barbarous in history precisely because so much knowledge was at the disposal of those who waged it; and the atomic bomb is the final refutation of Gibbon's comforting theory. It can be little consolation to the Japanese who died at Hiroshima and Nagasaki that they were killed by Ph.D.s.

The crisis of the contemporary world may be summed up in the proposition that our knowledge now exceeds our capacity to use it for good; in other words, moral education has failed. The solution is not to reduce our knowledge, or to halt the progress of science, but to make moral education equal to it. We have now reached the point where the bad character, or even the momentary carelessness, of the human race may lead to its extermination by the tremendous discoveries which the human intellect has achieved. The problem of preserving our civilization is a moral problem. Our difficulty is not to get more knowledge or more goods, but to do the right thing with them when we get them. Today we are confident that every scientific problem will be solved. We know that every material deficiency of the race can in time be supplied. Yet we are quivering on the brink of a catastrophe that will put an end to our world.

The official American response to this challenge, insofar as it is possible to determine it, is force. In the greatest moral crisis in history we do not say,

“Let us be good.” We say, “Let us be powerful – and then we can compel other people to be good.” Instead of saying, “Let us use our knowledge and our resources for the benefit of all mankind,” we say, “Let us use our knowledge to make more terrifying weapons of destruction; and let us use our resources to usher in the American Century, in which we shall dominate the world. Instead of saying, “Let us feed the starving because all men are brothers,” we say, “Let us feed the starving, if we feed them at all, so they will not vote the Communist ticket.” Instead of saying, “Let us have moral education,” we say, “Let us have military training.”

Yet even from the military point of view it is possible that General Montgomery is right in saying that it is not weapons or large armies that win victories, but the character, that is, the education, of the people. A tremendous military establishment can be, and usually is, a Frankenstein; and all history confirms the doctrine that those who rely upon the sword shall perish by it. Power corrupts. A false sense of superiority leads to a false sense of security. Behind an impressive façade the building falls into ruins. The building can be no better than the character of the people who inhabit it.

Force is absolutely amoral. And it is almost certain to be immoral. The essence of fascism is pushing other people around; you frighten them into doing what you want them to do. A country composed of people who want to push other people around is a fascist country; a government which pursues a fascist policy will eventually produce a lot of fascist citizens. It will produce a population of immoral individuals who regard other individuals as means to their ends and who will seek the power to make other individuals serve their ends. Such a country cannot long remain strong; such a population cannot be happy. If I have accurately diagnosed the policy of our country today, it follows that the power and happiness of America have already passed their zenith.

In this context the possibilities of moral education seem slim indeed. Popular education in this country has never been conceived of as a means by which we may raise ourselves by our own bootstraps into a different spiritual world. It has been a means of accentuating and perpetuating accepted values. If the values now sought to be accentuated and perpetuated are wrong, what help is there in us?

But nations have to lift themselves by their own bootstraps. Nobody else can do it for them. In this country the hope is to be found in the fact that our education is not uniform; education by and through non-conformist minorities, is still possible. The responsibility of those minorities which possess some intelligible moral standards is greater now than at any time in

history. The Lord promised to spare the city of Sodom if ten righteous men could be found there. It is not too much hope that our country may still be saved by the same fraction of its population.

It is possible to change the idols of a country. Ours are now being changed – for the worse. The idolatry of moneymaking is giving way before the idolatry of power. The symptoms of this are on every hand, and not the least significant is the rapid militarization of our government. I do not like the idolatry of moneymaking, when the highest praise you can give a university president is that he is a good business man. But compared with the idolatry of power the idolatry of moneymaking is relatively harmless – it may lead to the production and distribution of goods. The idolatry of power can lead only to disaster. But the comparative insufficiency of inadequate ideals need not detain us. The point is that ideals can be changed. If 15,000,000 people enroll in the classes now studying the great books, it is impossible that the idols and ideals of the country can remain unaffected. The tone and subject-matter of conversation in considerable areas of the United States have already been drastically altered by these great books discussion groups. The minorities which have intelligible moral standards must insist on education in accordance with them, and not slavishly imitate the popular system of education in order to be popular.

The good life and the good state – we have today the two things which were to give them to us, production and education. We have incredible production and educational opportunities of which our ancestors could not dream. But the good life and the good state seem farther off than ever. Production has increased poverty. Education has increased ignorance. Yet civilization appears to be doomed unless the hearts and minds of men can be changed, and this is the task of education. The change required is a moral, intellectual, and spiritual reformation, so deep and drastic as to be called a revolution, throughout the world. This is the object of liberal education.

# THE THEOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Most Rev. C. E. Byrne

I want to thank Dr. Hutchins for his splendid outline of a liberal education. I hope that the American people will listen to him and turn away from the example set by the so-called educators, which has cluttered up American education, and that the youth here in America, will make something of the spirit of education after we have poured out our millions of dollars to educate them. All this has been resulting from the fact that there are so many who talk about a philosophy of education without ever averting to the fact that there is a theology of education. Here and there, in his splendid fashion, Dr. Hutchins referred to an outline of the theology of education.

It might be interesting to discuss that this evening – who has the right to educate? I have been asked to talk to you briefly of Catholic higher education in the Diocese of Galveston, and permit me to say that Catholics have started right because they have started to build a definite answer to the question – who has the right to educate?

Recall for a moment a recent decision of the Supreme Court of the United States. They have reached a decision which speaks of the government or the state as having the right to educate. This decision was concurred in by eight of the nine Supreme Justices. In that whole decision, from beginning to end, you will find that parents are not mentioned. And who has a greater right to direct the education of a child than the parents of that child? That is one of the inalienable rights accorded to us by the Creator. For the parent, under God, is responsible for the life and teaching of the child. And yet, our Supreme Court speaks of education and has ignored the right of the father and mother to educate the child. The parent can no more abdicate that duty to educate and put his right in the hands of another to educate his child than he can abdicate his duty, right and responsibility to feed, clothe, and house his child.

Then the theology of education asks the question, which Dr. Hutchins referred to in the early portion of his speech – what is the end of education? He has told us how at the present time in education where few instances are where we do not hear of the wonderful things which are for our enjoyment, our comfort and our luxury. But after we have them all, what are they?

Where are we going, and what are we going to do? In the end we find that many of our schools devote themselves to studies which will lead on to a knowledge which will destroy civilization entirely and will obliterate the human race. The bomb at Nagasaki destroyed tens of thousands of lives in a twinkling of an eye.

In answer to what is the end of education – theology tells us that man is a creature composed of body and soul, made in the image and likeness of God, and intended for a life that is eternal and for a reward which cannot be increased and which cannot be diminished. It is strange how human eyes, looking out at the world in all its beauty and magnificence, and the wealth of things which are made by man in the sphere of scientific research – it is strange, how man can look at the sunrise and sunset, at the fields producing their crops year after year, at the branches bearing fruit and the roses with their fragrance, and yet never realize that they were made for man who is made to the image and likeness of God. Man seems to be so afraid of God that he excludes from education Him who created Heaven and Earth, and if He would withdraw His hand, how quickly even the impact of the bomb would fall into nothingness.

Dr. Hutchins in his speech on liberal education said we need ideals and examples. What greater examples can we have than Him who offered Himself as the Son of God for the salvation of the world, and on the Truth of Whose gospel the civilization of the world depends. There is a theology of education and the true theology of education makes for a liberal education, the education which ought to be the desire and ambition of every true American.

So you people here are to be given higher Catholic education from the Catholic point of view by the Basilian Fathers who will give whoever comes, a true theology of education as well as a true philosophy of education. And they offer to you a university, which means that there will be no science that has resulted from the minds of men, or which satisfies the desires of men that will be neglected. That is moral education which Dr. Hutchins spoke of and which will be well cared for in the University of St. Thomas.

We ask you therefore to take these ideas so splendidly presented to you by Dr. Hutchins. Let us do all that we can to promote the growth and development of the University of St. Thomas. And then we can be sure that there will be a place in the Diocese of Galveston where liberal education will be given to all who come.

*The Christian Culture Conference  
Lectures, sponsored by the University  
of St. Thomas, were given March 31,  
1948.*

*The Christian Culture Conference,  
one of the adult education activities of  
the University of St. Thomas, presents  
to the Houston community distin-  
guished speakers on important ques-  
tions of Christian civilization.*