
A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

The Church and Adult Education

By The Rev. Canon H. G. G. Herklots, M.A.

"I BELIEVE that it will be absolutely necessary that you should prevail on our future masters to learn their letters." The words were spoken by Viscount Sherbrooke in the House of Commons upon the passing of the second Reform Bill in 1867 and soon became a popular phrase in the abbreviated form, "We must educate our masters." Nor was it very long before the results of this determination were seen. The Reform Act of 1867 was followed by the Education Act of 1870. The task at that time seemed fairly simple. Two years earlier Mark Pattison had written: "The difficulties in which elementary education is implicated, great as they are, are difficulties of action—How to carry through what we know ought to be done. 1. How is the cost to be defrayed? 2. How is attendance to be secured? 3. How are the nonconformist children to be provided for? These questions exhaust the school problem for the elementary stage. How to do what we want is not easy, but we do understand what we want."[1] The children of the poor were to be instructed in the 3 R's. That was seen to be necessary. But that anything more was needed was not yet apparent. It is not surprising that H. G. Wells could later complain: "The Education Act of 1870 was not an Act for common universal education, it was an Act to educate the lower classes for employment on lower class lines, and with specially trained, inferior teachers who had no universal quality."[2] Yet the ultimate results of this Act were very great indeed. It began, in our country, the state provision of education—previously the state had only given grants to voluntary societies—and thus prepared the way for the educational system which is taking shape at the present time.

I

The modern beginnings of popular education came in an intellectualist age. It was thought that if people were taught to read, then they would read what was good for them. Education, in banishing ignorance, would go far also towards banishing vice. Emerson could write:

> "Another measure of culture is the diffusion of knowledge, overrunning all the old barriers of caste, and, by the cheap press, bringing the university to every poor man's door in the newsboy's basket. Scraps of science, of thought, of poetry, are in the coarsest sheet, so that in every house we hesitate to burn a newspaper until we have looked it through."[3]

An Emerson would not write in this way of the cheap press to-day.

[1] *Suggestion on Academical Organisation* (Edinburgh, 1868), p. 2.
[2] *Experiment in Autobiography*, quoted G. A. N. Lowdnes, *The Silent Social Revolution*, p. 5.
[3] *Society and Solitude*, essay on *Civilisation*.

He would more probably indict it as the enemy of civilisation. In the early days of the popular press, when Alfred Harmsworth was the proprietor both of the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror*, it was said of him that he had invented two kinds of newspapers, one for those who could read but not think, and the other for those who could see but not read. Yet the early versions of these papers appear, by modern standards, quite staid and unsensational. "We must educate our masters"? It sometimes seems as if the chief result of popular education has been to create a populace more susceptible than any ignorant peasantry to the influence of propaganda. Reform Acts led to Education Acts: popular education gave the opportunity to clever men to set about inventing new opiates for the masses.

Yet this is not the whole of the story. Large numbers of the masses might be put to sleep—and more effective drugs have since been invented—but there was a minority which was awakened. The glib expectation of educational reformers that when people were taught to read they would read the classics was sadly disappointed: but there were some who did read them. The spread of Mechanics' Institutes throughout industrial England from 1823 onwards, the foundation of London University in 1827 and the movement which was later to create Universities or University Colleges in most of the larger cities of England, the formation of the Young Men's Christian Association in 1844, with its popular and crowded lectures in Exeter Hall, the beginnings of the University Extension movement in 1872, and the foundation of the Workers' Educational Association in 1903, are only a few of the steps which have led to the developed interest in adult education in our own day. Yet this process has been no uneventful evolution. Historical circumstances have occasioned sudden new developments, what the biologists might call mutations. It may later be seen that one of the greatest of these has taken place as a result of the war through which we have passed. During the war itself it was to "youth work" that the priority was given among civilians. But in the Forces much work in adult education was being done and many new experiments made. To-day the two are combined, in the thought and administration of officials of the Ministry of Education and Local Education Authorities, under the title Further Education. The new projects contemplated under this heading should prove important for the nation and important also for the Church.

From the national point of view this enlarged interest is both utilitarian and social. In the first place it is recognised that an uninstructed and ignorant nation will not be able to maintain its position among the Great Powers. Our place in the world depends in no small measure upon the skill and inventiveness of our technicians, the ability of our designers, the informed and imaginative enterprise of those who will sell our goods abroad. We need all these things if we are to show to the world that "Britain can make it." In a technical age we need technical efficiency. In a scientific age we need continued and increasing research. It is no wonder that the most practical men are demanding that universities should be enlarged and their facilities made more widely available. Moreover, during the war, men and

women became used to being "sent on courses." They are now prepared to go to courses on their own volition—though seldom at their own charges. For their fees and maintenance they may be able to look to public authority or to industry itself. The possibility is being created for us to be a nation at school. "There are no frontiers to education, a truth that has now become a guiding principle in the public service of education."[1] The child will begin in the nursery school: he need not leave the Community Centre—for which the Ministry of Education is the body ultimately responsible—until he ceases to draw his old age pension. The Church to-day is in no position to make an alternative total provision; but the State's provision will only be healthy if it is done in partnership with voluntary organisations. The Church must establish a relationship with each of the institutions which public authority provides from the Nursery School onwards.

II.

We have already turned from the utilitarian to the social cause for an enlarged interest in adult education. The two are well put in the opening paragraph of the publication from which we have already quoted, the Ministry of Education's pamphlet on *Further Education*. "We must be efficient in our work, for upon this depends our standard of life and that of our neighbours at home and abroad. We must make constructive use of our leisure, for on the degree of maturity we achieve in our private lives depends in the last analysis the quality of our civilisation. And it is certainly necessary for the health of our democratic society that some part of the increasing leisure which science has made possible should be given in one way or another to the community to which we belong."[2] With shorter working hours and a five day week, is the result to be merely that there is more time in which to go to the pictures or the dog track, more leisure in which with greater care to forecast the results of football matches for the pools? Will science only give us bread and circuses—and perhaps more circuses than bread? It is this challenge which the advocates and prophets of further education are endeavouring to meet.

Their task should not be seen in isolation. Until April of this year six sevenths of the boys and girls of our country left school at fourteen. Much of their schooling was wasted. As Archbishop Temple pointed out, "the real result of what is spent on education up to the age of fourteen is only gathered at or after the age of sixteen, and then only if the study has been continued."[3] Social workers have often noted a marked deterioration in the character of boys and girls during their first year at work: there was a decrease also in knowledge. Because their education was not continued it was largely undone. They quickly forgot much of what they had learned. No one is more aware of this fact, and of its adverse effect upon the efficiency of the nation, than the leaders of industry itself, who have forsaken the short-sighted views which led them to oppose, and ultimately to ruin, the Day

[1] *Further Education*, Ministry of Education Pamphlet, No. 8. (H.M.S.O., 2/-), *p.* 5.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Social Witness and Evangelism* (Beckly Lecture, 1943), p. 15.

Continuation Schools set up after the 1914-1918 war as a result of the Fisher Act. To-day it is industry itself which is forging ahead in setting up schools of this kind, in anticipation of the County Colleges which may prove to be one of the most important results of the Butler Act of 1944. At them, as is well known, boys and girls who have left school, will be required to attend for one day a week, or its equivalent, in employer's time, for further education. We do not know when these Colleges will be opened, nor do we know at all fully what their curriculum is likely to be.[1] The plans of some Local Education Authorities appear to be well advanced. This new development is one for which Christians should be prepared. Very much will depend upon the calibre of the men and women who will be teachers in these Colleges. Have we the Christians for the job? That may be a critical issue in five years' time. Meanwhile, the fact that already the nation's boys and girls are receiving schooling—infinitely different from what was contemplated in 1870— up to the age of fifteen is a reminder *to-day* that our Christian teaching of these whom we can reach, whether in Sunday School, Confirmation Class, or youth group, will not meet the need if it is slipshod and uninformed. Those whose task it is to be Christian educators are in need of further education also. We must educate our pastors as well as our masters.

A bridge is thus being constructed from the schools and from youth activities into the country of adult education. Meanwhile there is much activity at the other end of the bridge. We have already referred to the utilitarian and social reasons for this. Some of its more immediate occasions should also be noted. During the war, education in the Forces made rapid strides. This was not only through specialised technical training. It was also through an extension of general education, which was found to make the service man or woman more alert and more reliable, because more interested in what was being done.

A particularly successful example of this was the "Screen Competition," invented by the educational section of the Y.M.C.A. This uses a picture thrown on a screen as the basis of an informal, an often unwitting study group: skilfully thought out questions evoke from a varied audience—which may have been attracted merely by being asked to help rig up a lantern—information which can be assessed and co-ordinated and upon which a judgment can be based. The Army Bureau of Current Affairs, on a wide scale, issued new material, often in a striking pictorial form, for use with discussion groups. And the Church was given its opportunity through Padre's Hours, Moral Leadership Courses and the like. It was, of course, easier to arrange these in the Forces than in civilian life; for some of them, at least, were of the nature of parades—much more attractive ones, no doubt, than others to which men might be detailed. None the less an appetite was aroused, which the Church should endeavour to satisfy in civilian life. These and other ventures are sometimes classed as informal education. To the outsider they sometimes appear to be

[1] See *Youth's Opportunity*, Ministry of Education Pamphlet, No. 3. (H.M.S.O., 1/-).

very easy, but to be "getting nowhere." This is a double fallacy. They are not easy: their conductor may require much more preparation than for a formal lecture; but when they are so prepared they are indeed leading somewhere. It is to be hoped that much of this work will continue in the peace-time army. If the young manhood of the nation is to spend a year in uniform it is important that it should be an educative year, and not one in which what has already been learned is forgotten. There is good evidence that those who are in command in the Forces are well aware of this need and are doing their best to meet it. Meanwhile the Bureau of Current Affairs continues in civilian life the work which its Army counterpart began. This is an organisation with which the clergy should be in touch. It produces fortnightly discussion material on current affairs, and arranges training courses in the technique of leading discussion groups. Its headquarters are at Carnegie House, 117, Piccadilly, London, W.1.

Another stimulation of adult education has come through a delayed recognition of the achievements of the Folk High Schools in Denmark. It has been said in our country that the boy who goes from school to university has first to be taught the questions and then to be taught the answers, but that the older man, coming to the university from an experience of life, comes with questions formed already in his mind, for which he wants the answers. In Denmark the Folk High Schools have enabled a considerable proportion of the population to go through this experience: to spend some months in residence with others, not to gain technical skill, nor any paper "qualification," but to begin to find some of the answers to life's questions. An indirect result has indeed been that many have become more skilful at their work and more valuable to the community in which they live. That this kind of thing is needed here has been felt by many. It is a cause which has been powerfully advocated by Sir Richard Livingstone. "In Denmark adult education penetrates the whole nation," he writes,[1] "in this country it touches individuals and small sections." This is the situation which educationists to-day are setting out deliberately to remedy. In the plans for Colleges of Further Education made by the Ministry of Education, as well as in pioneer ventures made by others—such as that at Pendley in Hertfordshire—the Danish example has been a signpost pointing the way ahead.

III.

This situation is pregnant with opportunities for the Christian Church. At the present time the call is for evangelism. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" We have many preachers yet they do not hear. Does not the trouble lie further back—that men and women have not been prepared to hear and to understand, and to accept or reject, what the preacher has to say? The early Church was indeed built on preaching. But the word was spoken, in part at any rate, to people who were prepared. When Paul, as his custom was, went into the synagogue at Thessalonica, "and for three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, explaining and setting

[1] *The Future in Education*, p. 47.

forth that the Christ must needs have suffered, and have risen from the dead, and that this Jesus (whom I proclaim unto you) is the Christ,"[1] those who listened might be outraged by his teaching but they at least knew what his teaching was about. What he was driving at was only too plain. In his audience were Jews and "devout Greeks": both sets knew their Old Testament. But to-day the word of evangelism has often to be spoken to people who are quite unprepared. They do not know what we are talking about. With them we have to make no assumptions and start at the very beginning. Before they can be challenged to follow Jesus they must be told who Jesus is. Wise strategy seems to demand that we should learn for use in our own country the methods of the educational missionary. We need to pray that God will give us grace to learn his patience too.

If there is educational work to be done, in the first place through informal methods—exhibitions, information centres, brains trusts, films, publications, listening groups—to reach the outsider, there is needed also much adult religious education of the members of our congregations. For the truth is that many of them have allowed their religion to be a dull and unimaginative thing, set in a narrow context, unattractive to others. If the Church is to be militant in England it must first be literate. In the Christian life also education knows no frontiers of age group: it is only those who continue all their lives to be disciples who can be in any sense apostles. Campaigns for Christian literacy—for men and women who have grasped the essentials of the Faith, who understand something of the circumstances in which the Bible was written and what it is saying to our day—are a need prior to the launching of campaigns of evangelism. As a writer in a recent issue of *Theology*[2] has asked: "Is not the time ripe for a movement somewhat parallel to that of the Parish Communion, to bring religious education into the centre of parochial life?" If this is to be done we must be prepared to use our Sundays creatively, not afraid to upset their time honoured time-table so that a week-end school on the Bible may be held, with lectures and discussions, not afraid, even, to send some of our Church officials away for the week-end that they may be given intensive training the better to understand and to commend their faith. Diocesan Hostels and Retreat Houses should be used more and more as Colleges of Further Religious Education.

When the Church begins to be an educative force in a community, it attracts to itself some who are on its fringe. There are many school teachers to-day who are conscious of the new responsibilities laid upon them by the Butler Act in the matter of religious instruction; who would like to give better Scripture teaching but do not always know where to look for help. Special courses arranged for the Ministry of Education by the Institute of Christian Education (46, Gordon Square, W.C.1.) have always had more applicants than it has been possible to accept. Local courses of the same kind, arranged by the Institute, the Church, or a local inter-denominational committee, have also been well supported. So have University Extension Lectures on the Bible—active clergy can greatly increase the number of these.

[1] Acts xvii. 2, 3. [2] The Rev. E. S. G. Wickham, December, 1946.

For all these opportunities Christians should be on the look out, and in the creation of them they should be prepared to take the initiative. In all the planning of Community Centres, Colleges of Further Education, and the like, they should play their part. Vigilance in this field over the next few years, and a readiness to give without counting the cost, may open many new doors for the Gospel.

In the Church of England the National Society has an Adult Committee, presided over by Sir Richard Livingstone. In the new arrangements which will follow from the recommendations of the Selborne Commission, an Adult Council will be one of the four departmental councils of the Church of England Council for Education. We are assured, therefore, that the Church will give thought to this matter, and that there will be a staff to help us, in parish and diocese, as we seek to further the task of educational evangelism.

" My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,"[1] said the prophet long ago. It is a fair diagnosis of the situation in modern England. But at the same time there is a desire for knowledge, an appetite for knowledge. It is for the Church to use all the methods which the times provide to bring to men, in terms which they can understand, the knowledge of the one true God.

[1] Hosea iv. 6.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE BOARDING SCHOOL

(Continued from page 70)

the church is not given an opportunity of influence because it is never entered. It is left to the schoolmasters who feel their vocation to Christian ministry and service to be the new clergy, and their responsibility in the modern world is very great. The school depends also upon the influence of its older boys. Their witness is usually better given in their life than in their words. Boys are reticent about the things that mean most to them and can see through any form of words that is not lived out in practice. The general atmosphere of the school depends on the relationships of all within it—of masters with masters, of boys with boys, of both with the domestic staff, of all with people outside the school—being those of Christians who love one another in the fullest meaning of that word. The school must remember its duty to all the types of boys which come to it, and it need not hurry unduly in view of the four or five years for which it has the boy. The Christian boy must be built up in his faith and leave with firm and lasting foundations to it ; he must not find the atmosphere so protected from outside ideas and experiences that, when he meets them later, he is unable to stand on his own feet ; the boy with no Christian experience must be shown the faith in all the strength and attractiveness of its claims, but, if he does not accept it then and there, every care must be taken that he is surrounded by understanding love and not choked off into antagonism. Just as a child is led most easily to faith in Christ in a Christian home, so it should be easy to find Him in the life of the Christian school.