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Religion and Education.

BY THE REV. P. R. PIERCE, B.A.

AN important dignitary of the Church, preaching some time ago on behalf of the poor of East London, is reported to have stated that East End workmen would laugh at people who said that East London was being transformed by free libraries, better sanitary arrangements, or even hospitals.

No doubt there are a good many such East End workmen, and we thank God for the vast number of Christian men who are convinced that Religion is a more important factor than Education in the progress of man. But while we are thankful for this side of the picture, we must not close our eyes to the other side. We have also to face the fact that there is a large class of men who think differently—a class with whom the clergy, as a whole, come into less real contact, men who are out early in the morning, coming home from their business late at night, and are therefore rarely met by the clergy in their visitations, and who seldom think of entering a place of worship.

We meet a man of this type now and then—when he falls sick, or meets with an accident, or is out of work. We get into conversation with him, but find it difficult to get at his views on Religion. He is difficult to draw out, partly because he feels that his views will not coincide with ours, and he is afraid of hurting our feelings, and partly because he is not quite sure of his own ground, and will not give himself away in argument. He has gained from some source, perhaps from his friends at work, or from the Secularist speakers in the park, a vague impression that Religion is on the wane, that it has had its day, that it has ceased to be the greatest power, the most important factor in the progress of man, and that nowadays one must pin one's faith to Education. It is quite certain that he would *not* laugh if he were told that libraries and schools and sanitary arrangements were transforming, and would further transform, London. But he might possibly laugh, or shake his head in-

credulously, if he were told that Religion is, has been, and will be, a greater factor in the progress of man than Education. In such a case it is necessary first to get our man to state what he really means by the progress of man. It will probably be found that progress to him will mean the bettering of the conditions under which he lives and works, the steady ablation of slum districts, better housing of the poor, the acquisition of parks and open spaces, the enactment of laws of health with powers to enforce them, hospitals, infirmaries, sanatoria, free meals to hungry children. He will think of shorter hours of labour, old age pensions, State insurance, the facilities for Education, by means of which the brilliant poor are enabled to climb to the top rung of the ladder. These, he will tell you, constitute real progress. There will also come to his mind the enormous advance made by science, art, literature, medicine, and engineering.

This is what he means by the progress of man, and for all this he will give thanks to Education, and by education he will mean secular as distinguished from religious education.

Now, this is the type of man that is to be found abroad. He is a sample of only too many thousands. He is constantly met by pastors whose experience will harmonize with the foregoing. Now what have we to say to him?

We will tell this non-religious man first that in his definition of the progress of men he is right as far as he goes, but that he does not go far enough, or, rather, that he does not go deeply enough. We, as Christian men and women, are bound to agree that health, happiness, and wisdom are magnificent ends at which to aim, and that the attainment of them is real progress. We give an equally hearty welcome to hospitals, libraries, and healthy homes, to schools and scholarships, but we urge that the attainment of *virtue* is a far greater achievement, and one that is infinitely more necessary than even the great improvements that we have mentioned. In addition to being accomplished, healthy, and comfortable, a man must be good, and this, we say, can be accomplished only by Religion. By Religion we mean

Christianity. It is a mistake to think that to improve the conditions is an infallible means of improving the man, although we admit that it affords opportunities by which he may, and frequently does, improve himself. But, on the whole, improvement in conditions, in surroundings, is a proof of internal progress. A man's habitation is often the index to his inner self. We shall be at once told that the improvement in the habitation has been brought about by Education, that Education has influenced the inner self, and is therefore the internal cause of the external improvement. We admit it, but we say, not the inner, but the *inmost* self has yet to be reached. With all the glorious results of science, art, literature, medicine, and engineering, there is still something lacking. Man has not yet reached his highest point. His education, to be complete, must be not only intellectual, but moral. It should not be necessary for us to labour this point. The main purpose of Education nowadays is to fit a person to earn his living in a certain trade or profession, and although the pursuit of secular studies may encourage patience, industry, and self-control, although the conscience and the will undoubtedly may be improved by many lessons, still, a man may be perfectly fitted to follow a calling and yet not be a good man. He may be a scientist, a man of letters, an artist, a physician, or an engineer, and yet not be what we may term a moral man. Is this not a fact? Is not this often the case? Do we not know that a man, with all his learning and accomplishment, may be selfish, passionate, conceited, or unrestrained? It is because the very secret springs of his being have not yet been touched.

We therefore conclude that the lack of Education may be the cause of intellectual mistakes, but that the lack of moral education will be productive of something quite different—namely, the absence of a standard of right and wrong, and consequently an erroneous view and judgment of self. There must be a standard of right and wrong by which the conscience may judge and the will may act. Can Education supply this standard? Can Education set up an ethical ideal, a perfect norm? It

cannot, nor does it profess to do so. Can moral education set up a standard? It may in the abstract. But man needs a practical standard, a concrete example, one that will touch the facts of experience. From whence can it be supplied? Christianity can supply, and does supply us with a perfect ideal in the life and teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the advent of Christianity, the command, "Man, know thyself" could be but imperfectly obeyed. But now, measuring ourselves by the standard of the life of the Blessed Master, we are able to take a correct measurement of ourselves. But the man who has received no religious education is without a perfect ideal, and what is the consequence? He has learned much about the things around him, but he knows not yet, that which he ought above all things to know, about himself. He cannot see that he has sinned and come short of the *reputation* (may we so translate *δόξης*?), the character of God, the Great Example. Secular education apart from religious education will produce a false self-conceit.

We say, then, that the first step in the progress of man must be to know himself, to see himself in comparison with the perfect ideal.

Having had a view of himself, and keeping constantly before him the life of Christ as this ideal, he may then begin a progress along the best lines, the lines of humility, self-denial, and love, and he will find that not only does Christianity point out a line of right conduct, but that it also supplies the motive power in the knowledge that he is *loved* by an Almighty Creator and Father, Whose revealed will and purpose make for the best interests of the whole of mankind.

We have tried to show that moral education requires a theology. But this is also the need of purely intellectual education. It needs a theology, natural or revealed, or both. As the moral in man seeks some knowledge of the law-giver who has placed within him a law which conflicts with the law of self-preservation, so the intellectual demands a first cause uncaused. **This dual need Religion is able to supply.** The intellect, more-

over, through Philosophy, studying the nature of experience as the whole, seeks to find the ultimate unity of all things, ending where Religion begins, with the unity of creation and the Creator. Our non-religious friend will say: "All your arguments, then, amount to this—that you think Religion can make a man good without the aid of Education. But surely no man is wholly uneducated, for life itself is an education." "We grant you this," we say in reply; "but it is possible for a man who has had no schooling to become, under the influence of Christianity, a thoroughly good and moral man. There are many good men who cannot tell one letter from another. But," we add, "can you find me an educated man who can be good without the aid of religion?" "Oh, plenty," replies our friend, and at once he challenges us with the fact that there are many good-living people who are professed unbelievers, or who, at any rate, are indifferent to the claims of Religion. That is true. But can a man live to-day without coming in contact, in some way, either with Religion or, what is equally important, can he live his life without being influenced by, and partaking of, the results of Religion? Is it not well-nigh impossible to be entirely unaffected by the influence of Christian life and thought?

Much of the credit that is claimed for Education is really due to Religion.

Although it has done much to improve man's lot, twenty centuries of Christianity, and in particular three centuries of the open Bible, has done more. The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, but is like leaven, hidden, but effective, causing its power to be felt in an ever-widening area.

Religion has been, and still can be, of the greatest service to Education, and Education has been the handmaid of Religion. They should never be separated. The college chapel is as necessary to real progress as the lecture-room. True Religion should be the centre of college life. Religious services need not be a tedious waste of time; even though they may seem so at times, one cannot estimate the value of *daily contact* with the Great Standard. The influence may not be felt at the time,

but it will be there, and in times of stress and temptation, the benefit from contact with holy things will be gloriously manifest.

But alas! signs are not wanting that this Religion of ours is not valued by the rising and the newly-risen generation. In the ever-widening circle around London, schools spring up, splendidly built, excellently equipped, and well staffed. Handsome libraries and museums rise up on all hands. But what is the proportion of *men* who think it of first importance to build, equip, and endow a church, and what the proportion of men who ever give the matter a thought at all? We have in this great belt, half-finished, poorly-furnished churches, galvanized mission halls, understaffed parishes. They are left to struggle on as best they may. Surely this is an index of the way men are thinking to-day. They look upon Education as absolutely essential, and upon Religion as a non-essential. Something is wrong somewhere, either with the Church, the clergy, or the public. Very likely in all three. But if people were begged less often to come to church and more frequently and earnestly to come to *Christ*, perhaps the fault in all three might be eradicated.

