

## THE CHURCH AND EDUCATION

**I**T is a great privilege to be permitted to participate in the exercises attendant upon the opening of this great Institution. For, as we survey these noble buildings and recall the story of the Institute; trying to realize the extraordinary and almost unparalleled efforts of the President and Board of Trustees to study and profit by the history and results of educational enterprise and advance in every civilized country; the broad and lofty ideals, to which the work of the institute has been thoughtfully and deliberately consecrated, and the magnificent financial endowment at their disposal to reduce these ideals to practice;—we must indeed feel that we are here to-day witnessing and creating an epoch in the history of education, not only for the people of Texas, but for all Americans. I can only say that I pray God that the future usefulness of this Institute may be commensurate with the brave and wise and munificent provision of its Founder; and that in the years and decades and centuries to come the name and memory of William Marsh Rice may be called blessed by the thousands of good American citizens who shall have been the beneficiaries of his princely generosity.

I have come here, at the invitation of President Lovett and the Board of Trustees, not merely as a private citizen, not as the representative of the University of the South, of which I happen to be Chancellor, but as a representative of the Christian Church, to speak on the general subject of the Church and Education.

The two words are not accidentally associated. From the beginning Christianity has been an educational religion, and from the beginning has invited and encouraged intellectual

inquiry. Its first great missionary was a man of learning, a brilliant student of the Rabbinic Schools, the Apostle Paul; and St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles praises the people of Berea because they were more noble (*eugenesteroi*) and showed their nobility by listening to new opinions with readiness of mind, taking the trouble to examine whether they were consistent with what they knew to be the truth. As we read the history to-day we can understand why through such slow processes of preparation this innate spirit of liberty had to express itself. The early Christian Church found the classic literature of Greece and Rome filled with fables and deceits, and foul stories of the gods, which were calculated to injure both the faith and morals of a simple people, too unsophisticated to read them merely as literature; and therefore there appears very early a growing prejudice against pagan learning. But in spite of this fact, and in spite of the fact that the persecution of Christians up to the beginning of the fourth century bred in them a distrust and dislike of heathen books,—yes, in spite of the fact that the moral and social riot which accompanied the decline of Roman civilization created a reaction in favor of Christian asceticism and monasticism, which declared its hatred of the common world and everything connected with it,—its culture and refinement and learning, as well as its falseness, its cowardice, and its degradation,—in spite of all these temptations, these propulsions towards barbarism, the Christian Church became and continued to be the home and nursery of intellectual culture.

There is no name, for example, of any race or people in the third century comparable to that of Origen, the great Christian critic, the great Christian scholar; and the intellectual power and activity of Chrysostom and Basil and the Gregories, and Jerome and Augustine in the fourth and fifth

centuries,—all of them Christian teachers,—would shed glory upon the history of any nation in any age. It is the fashion, I know, with unfriendly critics to emphasize the ignorance and lack of education in the so-called dark ages: but even then there were many instances of Christian enthusiasm for liberal learning. The Benedictine monasteries were the storehouses of ancient manuscripts. The schools of Charlemagne, under the great Christian teacher Alcuin, were undoubtedly the foundation of the later university system of Europe. The British and Irish missionaries, sheltered from the wars that desolated continental Europe, were men of wide culture and enthusiasm for education. King Alfred the Great in England, a true scholar and the father of English prose, got his learning from the Church's schools.

Let us frankly admit all that the critics say: that the episcopal or cathedral schools, and the monastic schools, which represented practically all the educational effort of the Middle Ages, fell far short of popularizing real education or love of learning; and that the fact that there were in every generation some teachers and some schools which had a broader outlook does not redeem the ninth and tenth centuries, under the sway of the Christian Church, from comparative ignorance and barbarism. Yet, after all, it was the Christian Church which in those stormy and tempestuous times preserved the tradition and the materials of knowledge. If ignorance was wide-spread, there was good reason for it. The Church wrought and fought for four hundred years to justify and establish a new ethical ideal; and that is worth more to us to-day than any technical learning. Even in our time, when we study conditions in our cities we are obliged to admit that there are worse things than illiteracy. The Church was fighting the gigantic enemies of human civilization, and it was no wonder that she postponed her

battle with mere ignorance. That was comparatively a small thing. In the sixth and seventh centuries the barbarian hordes were pouring into southern Europe, and the only organized resistance to them was the Christian Church. As Guizot says, it was not merely Christianity as an influence, a doctrine, that saved Europe: it was Christianity as a Church, as an institution, that prevented human civilization being set back four hundred years. In the ninth and tenth centuries the Normans were invading Europe, the Danes were descending on England, the Saracens were threatening Christendom, and organized human society was fighting for its life. Elementary morality, the ten commandments and the Lord's Prayer, were of infinitely more importance than the study of Homer and Virgil, or even of the names of the birds, the fishes, and the trees.

And when peace at last did come for a season, it was out of a Christian school that men like Anselm went forth to assert the claims of reason and arouse the higher intellect of Europe to activity. With the age of Anselm, and largely through the work and thought of Anselm, archbishop of Canterbury in the year 1100, the historians of educational advance place the rise of universities and the beginning of that enthusiasm for knowledge which we commemorate today. As one of the modern experts on the history of education, Dr. Laurie, says: "The universities may be regarded as the natural development of the cathedral and monastery schools." We know anyhow that the Church is the real founder of the Universities of Paris and Bologna and Prague and Oxford and Cambridge; and in more recent times the same may be said of the leading universities of the United States. There are no words strong enough to express the debt which liberal learning and higher education owe to the Christian Church. It was the Great Head of

the Church Who said: "Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free"; and men like Agassiz and Romanes and Pasteur and Lord Kelvin have splendidly demonstrated that the greatest triumphs of the human mind, in scientific discovery and research, have been inspired by loyalty to the Divine Master, Jesus Christ.

Every day I live I am more and more convinced that the true incentive and justification of scientific effort to learn the secrets of this world in which we find ourselves is the fact of our relation of kinship to the good God, Who made and sustains it all, a relation which was revealed and certified to us by the Incarnation.

And this is why Christianity brought with it a new educational impulse to the world. It introduced into the life of our race new and fruitful ideas, which, working slowly perhaps as we count time, but surely, have created whatever is best in our modern civilization. It deepened the sense of brotherhood, gave it a wider meaning and a Divine sanction. At the same time it developed and emphasized the personal freedom and the personal responsibility of the individual man and woman, by teaching them that they are in a true sense children of God, born of God and destined to return to God. Yes, it wove the hope of immortality into the common thought of daily life, and justified higher learning and research for their own sakes, by declaring that every bit of progress that man makes in knowledge and character has value and significance beyond time and forever.

Christianity taught the worth and importance of the individual, the necessity of his effort for self-development and self-expression, as it had never been taught before: but it also emphasized the purpose and meaning of this self-development as increase of efficiency for service—service to God and to our fellow men. And thus it invited and challenged the

world to the realization of an ideal of eternal value, an ideal which a thousand thousand years of educational experiment will not exhaust or overpass, an ideal which consecrates all man's intellectual effort, justifies all his unwearied search for knowledge, and holds before him an ever-vanishing goal of perpetual pursuit; and that Christian ideal is the development of the utmost efficiency, physical, mental, spiritual, in every individual man, woman, and child, for the sake of mutual service in the Kingdom of God.

I have ventured upon this brief and imperfect sketch of the historical attitude of the Christian Church towards education in its intellectual aspect, first of all because not a few writers and speakers, prejudiced by superficial accounts of the Middle Ages, and obsessed with the importance of mere mental development, have done injustice to the Church, not caring to consider that it was the Church's moral conquest of barbarism that created the atmosphere and environment which enabled modern physical science to begin its work.

*Who loves not knowledge? Who shall rail  
Against her beauty? Who shall fix  
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.*

*But what is she, cut off from love and faith,  
But some wild Pallas of the brain  
Of demons, fiery hot to burst  
All barriers in her onward race  
For power? Let her know her place:  
She is the second, not the first.*

But secondly, I have insisted upon the Church's ideal at the opening of a great institution like this, because I want to

plead with this audience for a recognition of the claims of patriotism.

The Rice Institute will last, we hope, for centuries to come, provided that the American people continue to maintain and reverence those moral ideals of life which create the quality of manhood and womanhood that makes free government secure. For the true end and aim of education is to develop men and women, and not to make machines or tools. A man may be so trained as to become a very successful machine for making money, or a keen-edged tool for others to use in exploring and producing material wealth; but such products of the schools are very often poor citizens, and worse husbands and fathers.

Of course I realize that if life for each one of us means simply to "make good," as the phrase goes, for our generation, getting what comfort and ease and luxury we can by plan and effort and struggle in the present time; taking advantage of whatever social, commercial, or political condition may conduce to our individual advantage; opportunists in conduct and pragmatists in philosophy; having no thought for the future, or interest in the success or failure of the Republic, or the happiness or misery of the generations that are to come after us;—I realize that if this be our life's philosophy, then of course the measure of the value of an institution like this is the amount in dollars and cents which its students shall be trained, not necessarily to earn or deserve, but to get, to acquire, to gain.

But I have not so understood the plan and scope of this Institute, or the ideals and hopes of the men who are on its Board of Administration and compose its Faculties.

Surely this Institute stands for higher and better things than mere materialism and commercialism. While, indeed, it must be conducted according to the most approved princi-

ples of scientific method and theory in order to promote the practical efficiency of its students from every section, yet it will, we hope, also give room and encouragement to that loftier human aspiration which we call liberal culture, and strive to create and nurture that enthusiasm for real learning which has made the finest and truest progress of our race.

For I hold that it is not the men of action, whether on battle-fields or in cabinets or in commercial business, that have most truly helped the world. Nor is it the men who have invented new tools and new machinery, and discovered new methods of utilizing Nature's forces for man's use and comfort, and for the increase of material wealth, who have been the foremost benefactors of mankind. Rather it is the men who with moral heroism and unwearied love of truth for its own sake, asking no recognition and no reward, have tried to create through schools and colleges and universities an atmosphere, a tone, a *Zeitgeist*, that will inspire men, in spite of themselves, to noble aims; aye, it is these men who by their very retirement and isolation have escaped the contagion of current fashions of thought, whose humility is the result of long experience of the difficulty of arriving at absolute certainty on any subject, and who by patience and faith have found for themselves, and are working to protect and defend, a height, whence he who will may attain their vision—the vision of a larger world and a greater life.

This is the true measure of the scholar; this is the justification of the University. And this means religion; that a man is not a mere brute, nor a unit of sensation, but the child of God, akin to God, with capacity for infinite happiness and responsibility for infinite progress. And in this definition of education all true learning, all advance in real knowledge, has a religious value. The search for truth is itself a re-



ligious act; and the men who, honestly and sincerely, are studying and teaching Nature's secrets are the servants of the Most High God.

Let us accept this as the Divine Message, the Divine Challenge, and the assurance of the Divine Blessing to this Institute. Truly it may be said of it, that it has been founded as securely as the wit and knowledge of man can plan, with financial support assured to it, in extent almost unequalled in the history of educational institutions. If only it will take its stand for God and His righteousness, then indeed may we apply to it the words of the Prophet :

“I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.”

THOMAS FRANK GAILOR.