

EDUCATION

“Growing Up In Christ”

By

M. O'LEARY, PH.D.

WHAT IS EDUCATION?

St. Paul supplies us with an answer to this ever recurrent question with a phrase which gives us at once a definition and a goal. To the thinking Catholic the process of growing up can never be a haphazard one for it is founded upon settled laws, directed by an established method, inspired by an ideal made concrete in the person of Christ Himself.

Now, it is of the very nature of the living being to wish to attain to maturity and the rational being strives towards that maturity not by a blind urge but with philosophic and selective apprehension. The social being, “Man-in-Society”, sees maturity not as his own isolated development, but as the widening, deepening and raising of the life, both natural and supernatural, of the society in which he lives.

Viewed in this light, the question of education cannot be narrowed into the confines of the School-system, the examination-syllabus, the University programme. It cannot be conceived, merely, as a branch of politics. On the contrary, the term must be made to embrace the whole of life and society, with every human being as its subject; while for its object we envisaged the rational, harmonious use of all created things. The field is vast, certainly, and by its demands for comprehensive thinking this vastness often frightens away the student. Nevertheless, it is only when viewed in its totality that the question of Education can be made to yield its full fruit of human interest and creative power.

There would seem to be a special challenge to the Catholic undergraduate to enter upon this comprehensive study; for his own upbringing in the principles of the Faith will have furnished him not only with data for drawing conclusions but with a method of analysis and synthesis which will prove of priceless value. The young Catholic, consciously or unconsciously imbibes a certain amount of philosophic thought. He gets a training in concentration, in orientation of thought and will, in the analysis of motives, in self-judgment and self-discipline. The practice of liturgical worship and of personal prayer, the self-examination or study of a retreat or of a day of recollection, all go to build up a theory of life which can be deepened and widened by reflection and study. Moreover, the Catholic student is supplied not only with philosophic principles but also with accurate terminology. He inherits from great thinkers in the past a synthesis of learn-

ing into which can be fitted all scientific discoveries, all changing and shifting elements of social life, without a loss of balance or any fear for integrity of thought. Catholic education starts with the first question of the Catechism, "*Who made you?*" and ends nowhere in this life. As has been suggested, it may be narrowed down so as to be considered now as a branch of politics, now as a guide to conduct, now as a criterion of polite letters, but ultimately, it must be referred back to its starting point, the development of the human personality in the light of the Creator's will. "Now this is the Will of God, your sanctification"—and what is sanctification but to "put on Christ"? To be educated for life is, therefore, to "grow up in Christ"

SHOULD YOUTH HAVE VIEWS?

It is not to be wondered at if certain people contend that the only capable exponents of educational theories are the old and the wise, men and women who have achieved after much striving the philosophic calm of Plato's ruling class. This seemed to be the view of those German Universities which in the days of Kant and Hegel attached the duty of a weekly Educational Lecture to the holder of the Chair of Philosophy. Age, indeed, speaks from a vantage point and has its privileges but it can never monopolise the right to speak, for it would thus contradict one of the deepest laws of life, namely, that living things, *as they grow*, produce life. Again and again it will be seen that it is the thinking and, at the same time, acting and developing man who, in the very struggle for self-development achieves creative work and sets his mark upon society. Indeed the contribution made by mature age, is always more potent when maturity continues to be receptive and dynamic to the end. St. Benedict knew this, and bade the Abbot call *all* the brethren to council, "because it is often to the younger that the Lord revealeth what is best."⁽¹⁾ Here is a brief sentence which has made history in Europe and which is as fresh and as important to-day as in the 6th century when it was first written. The younger brethren, everywhere, must be called to the Council in "the School of the Lord's service". Then the younger brethren must have views founded on secure principles, sifted and weighed in the light of truth.

Surely it is one of the tragedies of the modern world that the young have been so largely defrauded of that understanding of educational principles which is one of the major products of a truly Christian education. Not only have they been deprived of the inheritance which is theirs by right, but again and again, in the name of public-spirit, or patriotism, they have been tricked into the too facile acceptance of educative influences, planned for

(1) Rule of St. Benedict. Ch. III.

them by dominating castes. We know that atheistic communism, Nazism, Fascism, are built up on the mass influence of the young, but do we always realise how many other forces there are at work, here in our midst, to prevent the adolescent from thinking for himself? How many boys and girls are made to accept premises, principles, motives, methods of work, whose value they have neither studied nor learned to value, and by that acceptance have lost their personality in the unthinking herd? This is the real destruction of our civilisation, this is the real famine, the emptiness of mind and will. If we Catholics could actively work at building up personality and could supply for the famine of responsible thought, then we should not only be raising a barrier against the forces of disintegration, but we should be preparing men and women to take on with more practical vigour and concentration the actual relief of physical and spiritual misery in our war-torn world to-day.

Here and now, Catholics are called to think in complete integrity deeply and synthetically and where shall we look for such thinking but in our Universities? Many are turning to the Church at this moment for a lead in adult education. Surely this is the first step, namely, to make the growing boy and girl conscious of the vast importance of the Christian way of life, to make them scrutinise the principles of that life, to stimulate them to be critical of methods and ways of training, and above all, to be eager to adopt the self-discipline which will help them to "grow up in Christ".

EDUCATION AND LIFE

There is an utterance of Balzac which seems peculiarly well to suggest that wholeness of outlook so necessary for the study of education. To a lady who was questioning him about literature the novelist replied: "*La littérature—oh, Madame,—celan' existe pas, la littérature. Il n'y a que la vie dont la politique et l'art font partie. Et je suis un homme qui vie. C'est tout. A man who lives, that is definition enough not only for the artist depicting life in fictional setting, but for the educator who teaches a way of living, whose message is both speculative and practical, embracing every facet of life.*

It has always been the privilege of the Undergraduate to range in philosophic discussion from star-dust to the confines of eternity, to venture out on seas of perilous thinking or to thrust forward through the flaming ramparts of this world to the life of the Spirit. How, we may ask, is the Catholic specially equipped for these discussions? Is there any solid foundation for the claims made on his behalf?

Obviously, there are vast differences, even among those who have shared the same opportunities, so generalisation in this

matter would be absurd. Nevertheless, it can be said briefly that any thinking Catholic has a chance of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole. He has been taught that all facts and principles, all systems and developments, belong to a universe harmoniously planned, the cascade of being coming down from the Creator, made for the praise of the Creator, to be so apprehended and so used by man. Here at once we have a balance of values, whereby even amid the overwhelming physical forces around him, man keeps his supremacy and his central place. And we have a vast simplification amid the tangled complexities of human life. The Catholic has a goal, a measure of values, and an ordered scheme of life. Small wonder, then, that he is enabled to lead the way in educational theory, not by imposing any special syllabus, not by clinging to any set method, but by the quiet orientation of all study, be it scientific or literary, historical or social, to an ideal of Christian living. If this be achieved then we shall see an end of that unfortunate division of *subjects* into two categories, "religious" and "secular", for all subjects become, in the best sense, *religious*, if Christ-centred and Christ-directed. The deepening and growing of all knowledge will strengthen rather than weaken faith, and will serve to enhance the value of Christian living by issuing into practical results.

This, in the main, is the text of any education, the hold that it has upon life, the difference it makes to individuals and to Society. It is quite obvious that one cannot here develop the many ways in which a truly Christian education will show itself, but four main results may here be touched upon. Perhaps it will be of a specific interest to link each one with a notable Catholic thinker of our day. These four qualities or marks of Christian upbringing are, it is suggested, revealed in a certain way of thinking, a way of Worship, a way of Manners and a way of Art.

The quality of Catholic thinking, its balance and synthetic completeness are admirably suggested by G. K. Chesterton's description of the master-mind of St. Thomas Aquinas:—

"A machine made of all the wheels of all the worlds; revolving like that cosmos of concentric spheres which must always be something of a symbol for philosophy; the depth of double and triple transparencies more mysterious than darkness, the sevenfold, the terrible crystal. In the world of that mind there was a wheel of angels, and a wheel of planets, and a wheel of plants or of animals; but there was also a just and intelligible order of all earthly things, a sane authority and a self-respecting liberty, and a hundred answers to a hundred questions in the complexities of ethics

or economics.'(2)

An ideal not to be attained by all, it may be said; more than an ideal the norm of our striving.

If we would see the effect on life and on conduct of the Catholic way of worship, the Church's liturgy, we have but to study its many-sided appeal to the whole man to direct his faculties, and release emotional and volitional activities in the praise of the Creator. Catholic worship, says E. I. Watkin, has:—

“its centre in the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Sacrifice, objective realities which do not depend on the subjective state of minister and people. It celebrates and mystically continues the facts of our Redemption from the Incarnation to the Triumph of Christ . . . The Catholic centre is rational and the guardian of rationality . . . This rationality is emphasised by the liturgical insistence on light; together with life, health, purity, peace, joy, law and liberty . . . the eight principal categories of liturgical prayer, categories under which the Church represents the Divine Goal of human endeavour”.(3)

These few lines alone present a picture of rational worship, a re-living and making one's own of the Redemptive life of Christ, a taking up and consecrating of those basic forces of the soul's well-being, in fine a complete building up or a full development of the soul in Christ. Not only must such a worship leave its mark upon conduct; it must also show itself outwardly in deeply rooted manners, the well-spring of which may best be sought in the teaching of our Saviour. “*By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if ye have love for one another.*” For the link which will unite the Christian way of thought and worship to the outward demeanour of daily life, we must, in the words of Jacques Maritain, look to personal prayer:—

“The life of prayer, alone, enables us to unite to a never-waning, never-failing, absolute fidelity to truth, a great charity—in particular, a great intellectual charity—towards our neighbour. The life of prayer, alone, by supernaturally rectifying our faculties of desire, enables us to convert the truth into practice.”(4)

Lastly, when we remember that the Christian way of thinking can never be for long removed from that transcendental plane on which flourish the vision and the achievement of all real art, we must expect in any Christian Society, the ever-renewed freshness of artistic achievement in painting, music, drama or poetry. The contribution of Catholic youth is here of priceless value, for it should find ever new and ever more appropriate ways of linking

(2) St. Thomas Aquinas. G. K. Chesterton.

(3) The Catholic Centre. E. I. Watkin, p.109 et passim.

(4) Prayer and Intelligence. Jacques Maritain. Sheed & Ward, p. 56.

the visible beauty of creation to the invisible loveliness of faith; it has a most distinctive and characteristic function of its own, to link the particular forms of contemporary civilisation with ultimate and universal concepts of truth and beauty.

The poet's creative thought when voluntarily submitted to the life giving breath of the Holy Spirit of God is, as a recent Catholic poet tells us, living and active in our midst:—

‘‘And for all this, nature is never spent,
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things,
And though the last lights off the black west went
Oh, morning, as the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.’’⁽⁵⁾

CHALLENGE TO YOUTH

From the above pages it will be seen that the most vital contribution which can be made to the cause of Catholic education, is necessarily made in the realms of personal thought and achievement. The trite saying that it is *what a man is* which matters to society is as true to-day as when first enunciated. If Catholic undergraduates went on further than to take a serious interest in the Catholic way of life they would exert an influence on the studies of their University, on the Press, the cinema, and indeed, on the whole trend of Catholic adult education. If every Catholic student were pre-occupied with finding the Catholic background to his own particular subject, if he would study the enveloping action of Catholic thought on law, or medicine, or Social theories, his influence would soon be felt among those with whom he works and would give real direction to educational thought.

For, we must remember, there can be no *movement* for adult education until there is a noticeable increase in the number of adults seeking to deepen and widen their hold upon knowledge and culture. While we read of the zeal shown in Denmark and Turkey by students of the Fockschule or Halklevi, we must remember that the success of these colleges depends much less upon the efficiency of their system than upon the spirit and enthusiasm which have brought them into being. Already, there are signs, here in England, of a revival of interest in Catholic higher studies, of a desire for centres of Catholic learning where all branches of knowledge could be reviewed in the light of Catholic philosophy. The Summer School held at Ampleforth in 1944, under the aegis of the Newman Association of itself, gave abundant evidence of intellectual keenness and a real desire for organised Catholic studies. The great meeting which has celebrated the entry of John Henry Newman into the Church

(5) Gerard Manley Hopkins

has, fittingly, given a stimulus to the cause of Catholic studies of which the great Cardinal is the exponent. The men and women who met at Beaumont College, where for so many years the torch of Christian education has been handed on, may well have found in the circumstances of time and place an inspiration to help on the cause of Catholic Culture.

Then again the growing interest shown in Study Groups or "Study Week Ends", the pioneer work of the "West Country Experiment", published in pamphlet form two years ago, the first essay at establishing a Catholic adult, residential College, outlined by Mr. Trevett in the May Number of *Blackfriars*, 1945, and made the subject of a summer school in August of the same year, all point to an awakening not only to the needs of the Catholic body in general but also to the responsibility of each individual thinking man and woman.

For if, as has been said above, the strength of Catholic life is largely measured by its standard of thinking, its standard of worship, its standard of manners and its standard of art, we have, in that fact, a pointer to immediate and wholly practical action. We need not wait for planning from above or for any building up of systems, to take up, each one in his own measure, the challenge to action—Christian thought at its best is logical thought, is thought based not only upon metaphysical principles but also on a sane psychology. It is time that Catholic parents insisted upon a real training in such thought being given in every school that bears the name of Catholic. On the Continent, notably in France, the heritage of Catholic philosophy has never been wholly lost, a fact which accounts in large measure for the strength and effectiveness of any movement towards Catholic revival—a Léon Bloy, a Psichari, a Péguy, a Paul Claudel, has unknowingly imbibed from the intellectual climate in which he was brought up, an appreciation of straight thinking, too often lamentably absent from the English mind to-day. Who shall remedy this defect if not the Catholic teacher and the Catholic parent? Now, the undergraduate of to-day is the teacher and parent of to-morrow. The conclusion for each one, individually, is therefore obvious. Moreover every learned Catholic Society, whatever may be its immediate aim, must accept responsibility for the general standard of Catholic thought. The Schools, the Colleges, the Seminaries, the periodicals, the University departments, which call themselves Catholic, are all challenged to build up a way of thought which, while allowing for differences of endowment and vocation, shall rise above that tendency to departmentalism which issues into obscurity and loss of standard. We must convince ourselves and convince the world in general that Catholic philosophy is not the apnage of a special cast, but the neces-

sary consequence of the Catholic way of life.

With regard to our Catholic Worship we have clear directions from the Popes themselves. Ever since the *Motu Proprio* of Pius X, we have had, again and again, the call to deepen and widen our appreciation of the Church's liturgical worship—a worship which is in itself one of the most powerful educative influences which can be conceived. The response in England has been poor—yet year by year—the Society of St. Gregory, founded to propagate the knowledge and understanding of liturgical worship, holds Summer Schools and Conferences, publishes its periodical, offers help to individuals. If these efforts were given the support they merit, the whole standard of Christian culture would rise. If teachers, after getting from the Society the necessary training, carried their learning and enthusiasm into the schools, the whole Church in England would find that a new understanding of Christian mysteries had been drawn from this “the indispensable source of enlightenment”. Again and again have we heard this teaching, in Apostolic constitution or Encyclical, but still too many of our school children and our adult population remain dumb in our churches, leaving all intelligent participation to priest or altar server, content with rosary or hymn book as the norm of their devotion.

As for worship, so for manners, the relationship being a close one. People who in church do not sing or pray together, outside the church treat one another as strangers, unless some other, *secular* bond draw them together. But *Communion*, received side by side, is, or should be, an outward sign of our corporate life, while it is also the very sap of that life which we all share in Christ. Here is a theme for preacher and teacher, a practice for every individual Christian, the revival of that realisation of our brotherhood in Christ which was the strength not only of the early Church, but of every religious order in the days of its first fervour. “See how these Christians love one another” and see how that love solves their daily problems, the problems of family life, and of old age, the problems of economic difficulties, the problems of a war-scarred world, of re-adjustment and unemployment, of the status of woman, of the training of youth. But if we are to *see*, then the manners of the every day Catholic, both in family life as in public life, must show forth something which is a direct product of his faith.

From the art of life, we turn to art in *life*, for one of the major problems of our civilisation is the integrating of the artist into our social world. This has never been an easy task; the artist, by nature, is not often an easy person. The task is doubly difficult in an age of scientific development, when those who think in terms of mathematics and physics find the world opening be-

fore them careers of eminence and usefulness, while those whose minds are made for the abstract and the universal scarce get a hearing. The humanities are in danger in every university, the abstract thinker no longer directs public life and thought. Who shall value the philosopher and restore him to his place as leader and judge if not the Catholic who has learned to value abstract thinking and to appreciate transcendental values?

People are asking, at this moment of reconstruction, what the Catholic Schools can do to save the Catholic way of life. The fear of being squeezed out of the School system, of being unable to face up to economic pressure obscures the issue and tempts us to seek for a solution in terms of bureaucracy and planning rather than in terms of life and thought. The Catholic undergraduate can here play an important part by contributing that thought and personal dynamism which will make for a revival of Catholic life at its source. If that is achieved then we may confidently hope that in time more and more Catholics will take part in Public life and so may save our Schools and Colleges from any policy that might be inimical to them. The stronger our body of Catholic life and thought, the less we have to fear from outward organisation. Let us then look to those deep sources where the springs of life rise clear.

The challenge is both to thought and action. Vision must grow without loss of practical achievement. We are on the eve of vast changes in the educational system of the country, changes which will not only modify the schools but the whole of social life. With great dangers come great opportunities. Never before have there been so many openings for the public-spirited Catholic to make his influence felt on Local Authority, Education Committee, Governing Board. Never has there been so wide a field thrown open for the joint work of religious and lay-folk. Catholic experts are considering the question of syllabuses in Schools and Universities, at this time when the stranglehold of the external examinations seems likely to be removed. The Training Colleges are called upon to re-organise their way of life, new teachers are wanted for evening schools, Young People's Colleges, for every grade of the Educational world. Here are opportunities not to be missed. Here is a call to a zeal inspired by faith and to a concerted action whose strength is charity. Perhaps our best conclusion may be to look upon the field before us through the eyes of John Henry Newman, whose words on the *illuminative reason* which marks the Christian culture, bring calm and balance to us, to-day, as they did to the readers of his own time.

ILLUMINATION OF MIND

At this moment when, if ever, there is in the world a vital

need of *illuminative* reason, of balance of mind in the face of tangled politics, the words of the great Cardinal bring peace and a norm for our thinking:—

“To have even a portion of this illuminative reason, and true philosophy is the highest state to which nature can aspire in the way of intellect; it puts the mind above the influences of chance and necessity, above anxiety, suspense, unsettlement, and superstition, which is the lot of the many . . . the intellect, which has been disciplined to the perfection of its powers, which knows, and thinks while it knows, which has learned to leaven the dense mass of facts and events with the elastic force of reason, such an intellect cannot be partial, cannot be exclusive, cannot be impetuous, cannot be at a loss, cannot but be patient, collected and majestically calm, because it discerns the end in every beginning, the origin in every end, the law in every interruption, the limit in each delay; because it ever knows where it stands, and how its path lies from one point to another. It is the *τερπύωνος* of the Peripatetic, and has the *nil admirari* of the Stoic.

*Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Atque metus omnes, et inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus, Strepitumque Achroontis avari.*

. . . that perfection of the intellect, which is the result of Education, and its *beau ideal*, to be imparted to individuals in their respective measures, is the clear, calm, accurate vision and comprehension of all things, as far as the finite mind can embrace them, each in its place, and with its own characteristics upon it. It is almost prophetic from its knowledge of history; it is almost heart searching from its knowledge of human nature; it has almost supernatural charity from its freedom from littleness and prejudice; it has almost the repose of faith, because nothing can startle it; it has almost the beauty and harmony of heavenly contemplation, so intimate is it with the eternal order of things and the music of the spheres” (*Idea of a University*, Discourse VI).

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