

# The State's Voice

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## THE STATE'S PURPOSE IN ITS EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS

### The Seventh and Final Article Upon Educational Problems

As stated previously, the basic conception of the purpose of education determines both the process of educational effort and the character of its products. Perhaps North Carolina has never clearly conceived or expressed the end sought in her educational activities. It is at least important that the matter be occasionally re-examined.

Parents, and children mature enough to conceive a purpose for acquiring an education, may have ends in view that are of no concern to the state. This inquiry concerns only the justifiable purposes of the state's educational activities.

The one justifiable purpose of the state in its educational program, as I conceive it, is briefly, to discover and develop to their limit the potentialities of good citizenship in each child. This necessarily includes the curbing of vicious tendencies, for the vines cannot thrive when the brambles grow rampantly among them. The essentials of good citizenship are economic and social fitness, or efficiency. Whatever processes or expenditures promote those ends, and only those, are justifiable, and even justifiable processes may be limited by the law of decreasing returns. That is, there is such a thing, even in education, as paying too dearly for the whistle.

#### The Characteristics of an Ideal Citizen.

The three basic characteristics of the ideal citizen are, in the order of their importance, a vigorous and wholesome morality, a vigorous and informed mentality, and a vigorous and trained body.

Unfortunately, there are frequently innate obstacles to the attainment of the desirable development of one or all of these three entities. Also, it is unfortunate that the ill health of any one of them reacts upon the other two. On the other hand, it is quite as true, perhaps, that the vigorous state of health of one reacts favorably upon the state of health of both the others. But moral vigor is the predominant factor in good citizenship. Likewise moral sores are the more deadly, destroying not only the soul, but the mind and body also. Also, it is evident that the law of decrease of returns begins to apply earlier in the development of the body and mind than in that of the spirit, or the character. The state is scarcely concerned in the development of a race of either physical or mental giants or in reproducing the longevity of the patriarchs. On the other hand, there is scarcely too high a price limit upon the attainment of a wholesome and vigorous morality, since the noxious weed of immorality, per se, is the costliest of all evils and through its reactions utterly destructive of the whole tissue of economic and social efficiency. It has been recently estimated that crime, indictable offenses, costs this country twelve billions of dollars. Yet that sum in money is probably inconsiderable in comparison with the cost in woes and pains.

#### The Moral Element the Most Important

It stands to reason, from the foregoing observations, that the moral element in education is by far the most important one. All others owe their effectiveness to moral character. Yet it is most difficult to find evidence that the fact is recognized in the state's school program, or by the average teacher. One of the greatest tragedies I have ever known to befall a community was the graduation, at the end of the eleventh year after that community had voted heavy taxes to erect a good school building and to maintain a high school, of a class of 30 of the community's young people scarcely one of whom could be trusted further than you can throw the State Capitol. The school had not created the group of liars, cheats, and rogues, but it had not been able to overcome the environmental influences of a community whose mayor was generally believed to have burned his store for the insurance and whose grand juror (for the state in which this tragedy occurred elects its grand jurors, one to the township, each two years) was generally reputed to mind swearing to a lie no more than he

would eating a good meal.

The unfortunate community had paid dearly for the mere husks of an education for its children. The conception of what an education should mean was utterly lacking, or if not lacking was made of no avail by the very force of examples that were more effective than the influence of the teachers at their best. Better would it have been that the boys and girls had grown up in utter ignorance of text books and with sound morals than to enter community life as moral liabilities.

And, sad to say, there is only too much evidence that the citizens of North Carolina who have so heavily taxed themselves to educate their children are either failing to estimate the true value of moral education or are nullifying all the efforts to that end by their own horrid examples of law violations and aiding and abetting, or covering such, by their own over-emphasis of carousing and so-called sports, and by their general ungodliness and pure cussedness. An example of such overemphasis of carousals: The parent-teacher association of some school not a hundred miles from where I sit has offered a prize of five dollars, I believe, to the boy or girl who will secure the attendance of the oldest person present at a scheduled "square-dance that is different." The babies and the totters upon the edge of the grave, all, all, must give themselves to carousals. The liquor or bridge party is deemed by hosts of parents of school children of more importance than prayer meeting or Sunday school. All that, while the very economic system's failure to function properly because of greed is turning a host of young people to lives of brigandry and blood.

If the rising generation does escape moral collapse it will not be the fault of the thousands of influences that are nullifying those of the schools and of the churches. For, as says a recent writer, "the old spiritual values—contemplation, meditation, the commandments of self-control and self-improvement—are cast aside."

#### The Roots of Morality.

By so many roots as the marsh grass sends in the sod—

So will I lay me a hold of the greatness of God,

—sang the South's premier poet, Sidney Lanier.

And here is a quotation from a recent review of Freeman's Life of Lee:

"His greatness, so Douglas Southall Freeman relates in the concluding volumes of 'R. E. Lee,' lay in his quiet application of religious ideals to conduct in life. He was 'a gentleman of simple soul. . . . The clear light of conscience and of social obligation left no zone of gray in his heart; everything was black or white. . . . In his clear creed right was duty and must be discharged'."

I concede that the state has no special concern with religious views pertaining to a future life. Yet it would be exceedingly difficult for the state to set a higher or more desirable standard of citizenship than that prescribed for the citizen of the kingdom of God, and in this life at that. For instance, happy is that state whose citizens measure up to the standard set in the 15th Psalm for him who would "dwell in thy holy hill," only one provision of which I here quote: "He that swear-eth to his own hurt and changeth not." Or what more desirable standard for North Carolina citizenship than that prescribed in the 24th Psalm for him who would "stand in his holy place," namely, "he that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully?" What more desirable traits of citizenship are sought through the state's educational program than those listed by Paul as the "fruit of the spirit," namely, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance? Or what list more completely sums up the fruits of our present-day "civilization" than Paul's catalogue of the "fruits of the flesh": Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunken-

ness, and revellings? And what more fatal than these to good citizenship!

#### The Basis of Civic and Religious Righteousness Identical.

No; the state is not concerned with fitting men for heaven, but since the basis of civic and heavenly righteousness must be conceded to be identical, and since civic righteousness, which effectualizes all other desirable results of the educational process, must be deemed the chief end sought in the state's educational program, it is evident that religion should be recognized as the chief handmaiden of the state. In brief, any state that disregards God forsakes the hope of civic righteousness.

Back to our quotations above. The sweet singer Lanier would anchor his life to "the greatness of God." The South's ideal citizen's "greatness lay," according to his most recent biographer, "in his quiet application of religious ideals to conduct in life." In his clear creed right was duty and must be discharged.

#### False Inferences from the Doctrine of Separation of the Church and State.

Recent generations have fallaciously assumed that the doctrine of the separation of church and state divorces this government from God and religion. Under the sway of that assumption, the schools have more and more ignored God. Happily, however, the very document upon which the life of our nation is based recognizes the sovereignty and almighty power of God as definitely in its very beginning as does the Book of Genesis. "In the beginning God created," says the sacred scripture; "God has created," echoes the Declaration of Independence. The constitution does divorce the state and church organizations. But it does anything else than attempt to banish the conception of the immanence of God. Indeed, God is enthroned in the citadel of the nation. And while our constitution rightly leaves every citizen free to worship God in his own way, the very laws of our own state penalize the atheist by denying him the right to take an oath of office or to give evidence as a witness.

#### God Is God.

There is one God. Conceptions of Him may differ. But all men who believe in a Supreme Being necessarily believe in the same God, whatever the variance in names or conceptions of His relations to men. Therefore, there can be no violation of the freedom of conscience in instilling the idea of God in his sovereignty and of man's duty to heed his injunctions, whether of the conscience or of the sacred records. His righteousness is the basis of all righteousness, even civic righteousness. And there is no believer in God in this country whose rights can be violated by teaching God and His righteousness. Yea, Christians of all sects and names, the Jews, and the Moslems, all, all, have the very same God and all accept the Old Testament as a sacred book. Therefore, there is scarcely a believer in a Supreme Being in this country whose God is not Jehovah. Therefore, Jehovah may be as lawfully as wisely enthroned in the schools of the state. It is the atheist who is unrecognized in our fundamental laws; yet the false assumption referred to above has given to him the power of dominating the schools and excluding God and His righteousness from their precincts!—A procedure fatal to civic righteousness and the happiness and prosperity of the state.

#### The State's Proper Attitude to Religious Activities.

There is not an accredited religious sect in America to-day which does not teach the essential moralities. And it is due, I conceive, to the activities of religionists of any and all sects that civic righteousness survives at all. Yet many subdivisions of government haven't sufficient sense of self-preservation to encourage those religious activities which have thus far been the chief bar to absolute demoralization, and therefore to economic ruin. The state could well afford to pay for the work being done by the

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