

LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL

The Sunday next before Christmas, December 22nd, 1940 at 3:00 pm

THE LOVE OF ENTERPRISE

THE LOVE OF ALONENESS

THE LOVE OF SKILL

THE FIRST LECTURE IN THE NEW PORTION OF THE CATHEDRAL

The Lord Bishop, the Dean and Chapter and the Cathedral Company will welcome the Lecturer Mr. Kurt Hahn, Headmaster of Gordonstoun, in the Chapter House.

The Lord Mayor of Liverpool will be received and conducted through the Choir to the New Portion of the Cathedral; Likewise the Representatives of the University of Liverpool, the Pro-Chancellor and President of the University Council walking on the right of the Dean.

The Representatives of the Education Authorities, the Principals of Colleges and the Masters will enter by The King's Porch.

The Choir will sing Purcell's "Bell Anthem" before the Lecture.

The Lord Bishop will offer the Benedictions, Prayers and Praises for Christian Education.

This Lecture in its original form was delivered in Liverpool Cathedral on December 22nd, 1940, before a company to whom Christian Education is a matter of deep concern. The Lecture was necessarily shortened because the city life had been seriously affected by the enemy bombing of Liverpool on the night before.

In response to the request of the Dean, Mr. Hahn has allowed the Dean and to make the lecture notes available; these copies may be obtained on application to the Dean, Liverpool Cathedral.



Stone masons repairing the Liverpool Cathedral after its bombing during World War II.

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BY

KURT HAHN

Headmaster of Gordonstoun

IF it be true that Education can heal the State, then indeed we educators have a grave and anxious responsibility.

Today a movement has been started to reform the plan of life for boys and girls both at work and at school, so that a measure of their time and strength be released to train qualities that have hitherto been neglected.

What are these qualities? I shall read a definition:

"All depends on the vigilance of the watchman. He must be alert and attentive throughout the whole of his watch. Many watches may be devoid of incident but the greatest care must be taken to avoid the growth of a feeling that nothing is likely to happen. It may be just at the moment when the attention wanders that a vessel burns an inefficient flare and founders before any further signal can be made.

"Conscientiousness and a high sense of responsibility are, therefore, the first essential of a watchman. Other necessary qualities are power of observation, initiative and resource, combined with tact, while local knowledge is of the utmost importance. Imagination also, provided it is properly controlled, is of value as it affords the power to envisage the directions in which a given situation may develop."

This does not come from Plato but from the Manual issued by the Board of Trade for the lifesaving organisation. Now almost none of these qualities can develop except on the basis of vital health. They may be kindled in any dispirited youth by the challenge of emergencies, only to be extinguished again. What can sustain them? A willing body and a nervous system, lively, but not brittle.

We have to face this reality: such human strength is not harvested except from habits of training and enterprise for which amid our diseased civilization there is no room either in the life of the working or learning youth.

We plead: Make room, and immediately encounter a formidable opposition from many and various quarters.

I mention the two most powerful opponents. The first say: What can be wrong with an educational system that has produced ourselves: This is a very natural reaction on the part of those who owe their important stations in life to purely academic distinctions.

The second are much more difficult to answer: They protest in the name of Christianity. We owe it to them and to the earnestness of their objection to pause before we go any further in our plan of reform.

This is what they say:

You are placing an undue emphasis on the heathen virtues. We do not call them sinful nor anti-Christian: but they are, indispensable to all the hardy followers reared in the dictator countries.

Why insist on their cultivation in the upbringing of free men and women? Think of Hector's prayer when he parted from Andromache:

Give that this my son becomes great in Troy and when he comes home from his first battle, carrying the blood-stained armour of his slain enemy, may his mother rejoice in her heart.

This is the prayer of a great heathen. Some such prayers could be heard in Germany before she invaded Poland, in Italy before she attacked Abyssinia, in Russia before she raped Finland, in fact, in every land where the Anti-christ reigns.

Now what are the qualities which Hector or Hitler demand from their warriors?

Supreme well-being he must have a long breath to pursue, he must have a spring to surprise, powers of acceleration to escape, initiative and watchfulness, but above all passion - the undefeatable spirit.

They demand the Watchman's virtues. No wonder the bugle of alarm is sounded in important Christian quarters. We cannot blame them but we must remind them, they have had a long innings: stunting the development of human strength for half a century, condoning neglect for the other half. What have they achieved? Millions have turned away from the Churches attracted by the eternal glamour of human strength which Christianity seemed to regard as of no relevance; millions have been kept in a state of low spirited docility, at best growing to be neutrals on issues of the "Common life," where you can only be for or against Christ; many others have become devout and earnest Christians.

But have they been effective? The history of that last 25 years has given the answer. In this country no free man or woman can escape responsibility for the tragic failure to heal the international situation. A Statesman, it has been said, does not make history but if in the events around him he hears the rustle of the Mantle of God he must jump and catch at its hem. The Mantle has rustled again and again in '21 '23, '29, '31, '32, '33, '34, '36, '38, '39. No one jumped but this is not the greatest tragedy; whenever the golden opportunities were spurned, wise Christians had heard the rustle and raised their warning voices in noble helplessness.

We remember Napoleon's words:

"The world is not ruined by the wickedness of the wicked but by the weakness of the good."

Still it may be said: Better a million neutrals than a million worshippers of the Tribal God. This is the policy of little faith. We refuse to resign ourselves. Christianity were doomed if it could only secure the docile and low spirited.

We cannot deny the watchman's virtues are demanded also by Hitler. They are neither heathen nor Christian: they may be used for good or evil but it is vital that Christians should not lack them.

I should like in answer to many misgivings to use this analogy. If the thieves among whom the man fell had been trained in the watchman's virtues they would have been more vigorous, vigilant, resourceful, altogether more effective thieves. If the Priest had been thus trained he could not have passed by.

The answer indicates the limits of the reform we advocate. We should be frauds if we claimed that human strength is a sufficient basis of Christianity.

What we do claim is this: The sapping of human strength during adolescence is a disaster - destroys the response so that the inspiration cannot be received. I am convinced that this disaster overtakes the majority of adolescents. May I ask you to follow me for a few minutes in trying to draw a true picture of the adolescents of today, or rather as they were before the war.

Let us begin by asking how did they compare with the promise of their nursery?

The product of the good nursery is unsurpassed in human strength. There is a quickened sense of justice, there is delight in truth. There is a power of sympathy that has the strength of a primitive instinct. There is an untiring spirit of enterprise. There is perseverance and alertness in their curiosity.

Then so often during puberty all this stops together. The League of Nations' health report published in 1937, registers the ill-being of the adolescent as "a physiological necessity" -- "lack of mental coordination," so it says, "is accompanied by the loss of muscular coordination: The movements are sluggish, awkward and unaesthetic. During the age preceding puberty the powers of coordination are perfect but their balance is destroyed by the second, birth of puberty."

I believe this diagnosis is unduly fatalistic, but there is no doubt the normal adolescent is easily unbalanced. Cocksurenness is abnormal. The honourable ones are the vulnerable ones; they long for recognition, not for glory's sake, but to be released from the misery of unimportance. They are never far from frustration and disillusionment.

Now postwar history had wounded the vulnerable. In the Overbury Churchyard there is a Memorial Tablet:

"Remember the Overbury and Conderton men who gave their lives in the Great War that honour, justice, and love should rule mankind."

The fathers of our adolescents had fought and suffered in the Great War: They were poor comforters for their doubting and worrying sons and daughters, Then in 1936 there began the triumphal progress of the tyrants.

If I am asked to sum up the bitterness of the 1938 youth in one sentence, I can do no better than misquote Clough:

*“The struggle naught availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain
The enemy faints not nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.”*

But let us be under no illusion - when the longed for, prayed for day arrives and Victory has restored the Right - it will still be our task to heal the plight of Adolescence.

What is the cure? Training in resilience, speed and endurance, in enterprise and adventure; in struggling against odds to achieve, labouring with care, precision and patience to master projects of art, skill or study.

All this training can preserve and in many cases restore the strength, we can even say the beauty, of childhood, thereby empowering the young not only to receive the inspiration but to remain loyal to it amid many temptations: to fear and not to falter, to feel the lure of the moment and to remain steadfast, to be weary and to persist, to doubt and not to lose heart.

Again we are approaching, so it seems, dangerously near the Balilla and the Hitler Youth demands.

The attackers of Christian Civilisation are hardy, fit, disciplined, self-sacrificing slaves who bear all things, believe all things, hope all things and endure all things. So did the Irish Saint, Gernadius, in the eighth century, who settled in a cave on the Morayshire coast and on stormy nights walked about waving a lantern to warn the fishermen of dangerous rocks. What is the difference?

Hitler's slaves are moved, it is true, by great passion. What is this passion? They certainly love their country but their love is feeble compared with their hatred. Their hatred is their magical spring. It is not only inspired by sermons and songs of hatred, it is trained and stimulated through early action.

Gernadius was moved by the love of men. He cared as passionately about the welfare of his brothers as Nazis care about the misery of their enemies whom they torment. Let us learn from the enemy: We must nourish love by early action.

A Watchers' Corps sprung up among schoolboys on the shores of Morayshire. They built a hut almost on the spot where Gernadius lived. The Board of Trade put in a telephone, gave them a Rocket Apparatus and enrolled them as members of the Life-saving Organisation. Their Life-saving drill was as meticulous as any machine-gun drill has ever been. They were called out in dangerous weather and in the holidays their duties were taken over by local Rovers. Their services were regarded as so relevant that they were asked from a most competent quarter in 1938, whether they would be available in a War emergency when wrecks were bound to be more frequent. It was only natural that not all the boys joining this Watchers' Corps were moved by the love of man. It was very natural that after one year's service, not before, they were meant to give this promise:

"I promise to serve Hopeman Village and this district, through them my King and Country, and Christ through all."

It is a strange thing but sometimes you can only experience the needs of your brothers by ministering to them. "How did you know of your father's suffering?" is Kent's question to Edgar: his answer is: "By nursing him." There are many needs in peacetime waiting for good and young Samaritans.

Allow me to read to you from the letter of a practical idealist which perhaps it is not inappropriate to quote in this great city.

1. One might have a Sea Service Station at a suitable port every 40 miles or so along the coast. The type of ship would vary according to the coast and should, broadly speaking, be based on the local fishing boat type. There would be a Shore Station at the principal port.
2. The object of the Station would be to be responsible for the bit of sea opposite its sector. One of the boats should be continually on patrol. It should keep an up-to-date record of the alteration of channels, and should see that sea-marks and landmarks were moved when necessary. It should make this information available at all the local ports in its sector.
3. It should work in close cooperation with the Coastguard and Customs Services and the R.N.L.I., and a place in the local lifeboat should be regarded as a "blue ribbon" of the Service.
4. It should maintain one or two mobile teams for working rocket lifesaving apparatus.
5. It should assist in the coast-watching service.
6. It should usually combine a good deal of bird watching and enforcement of bird protection legislation.
7. It could do a lot of useful work visiting light-ships and lighthouses, and might be allowed to add a volunteer to the crews of these.
8. In many places, it could do work on coast erosion, including the construction of breakwaters, and the planting of suitable grasses and vegetation.
9. It could work in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in charting the movement of fish and fish foods, and thus giving information to the fishing fleet.

In peacetime the coast perhaps provides the most stirring but by no means the only opportunities of service for the young. The Report of the Scottish Economic Committee in 1938 on the Highlands and Islands reveals urgent needs in Agriculture and Forestry which call for the help of the adolescent. The wonderful work done at the moment by the Youth Service Squads originally inspired by the East Suffolk example points the way to many healing experiences that ought never again to fade out of the plan of life of boys and girls.

When I say healing experiences I do not mean only healing for those who minister but also for those to whom they minister.

In many contingencies the adolescent can render service better than a child and better than an adult. Wool factories can testify to the nimbleness of fingers of young girls. In the last War they used 18 or 17 year old soldiers as the best detectors for the burring of approaching aeroplanes.

I say it in all earnestness that the adolescent can develop an alertness of the senses and a vigilance of the spirit which it is wrong not to use: not only for his sake but for the sake of the competent service he can render in War and in Peace.

Without such service the passion of Love cannot grow.

Let us shake ourselves free from the heresy that love can be sustained by words alone.

You need action and suffering; that is why cripples and invalids on the one hand and Nansens on the other, have given us examples that will not be extinguished in men's memory.

The struggle to overcome is the source of renewal.

Illness and vital health may both call forth this struggle but never the listlessness of over-wrought and undernourished youths that are neither ill nor well.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life."

Can we claim now to have provided a Christian education? Certainly not. He who does not love men does not know God, but we cannot say that the love of men necessarily ends in the knowledge of God.

The final inspiration has still to come. Yet we have done more than simply to restore the response, in readiness for the inspiration if and when it will come: we are now approaching a great mystery. Any attempt to probe into the hidden depth must fail, but I feel Plato has revealed the main springs of human effort so that we may see them, as it were, in half darkness.

We are at the present moment baffled by the variety of conflicting views on right and wrong in the issues between classes and nations. We are in the habit of regarding these manifold views as genuine manifestations of conflicting consciences. If really in the life of a nation there were at every moment the claim of conflicting equivalent truths to be considered, there would be no chance of a unanimity on essentials, and paralysis would come over the executive powers of the State.

I maintain this hurly-burly of consciences is due to the fact that for a great part they operate in emotional bondage.

If you preserve the human strength of the child during puberty you liberate conscience from this bondage. I plead for your patience in order to demonstrate conscience when in submission and when in control.

Let us take the case of a drunkard who has signed the pledge. He can drink again, fully conscious of his transgression "*deteriora sequor meliora video.*" In this case conscience is bullied.

Or he can say to himself: "By drinking again I might possibly shorten the duration of my mental fitness, but I shall intensify it, and do work which will be of such benefit to humanity as to justify even the breaking of a pledge, therefore it is not only my right but my duty to drink." In the second case conscience, is bullied.

Now, every passion is capable of growing to be as intense a craving as drunkenness or any other drug craving, and every passion has, like drunkenness, the twofold power of both bullying and

bewitching conscience, bewitching it to such an extent that the transgressor at times not only justifies but dutifies his sin.

A cruel ruler will persuade himself and others that his slaves are really happier.

Or take the lazy doctor, who is rung up by a patient legitimately alarmed about his symptoms. The doctor puts a leading question meant to extract reassuring information allowing him to remain in bed.

Or take the case of a boy of 16, brave in daytime, but a funk at night. He goes through the wood and bears the scream of a human voice. He starts and shudders, and then decides that it was an owl that screamed.

In the parable of the good Samaritan I am sure that the Priest who went by made himself believe that his help would come too late for the man who fell among thieves or that he thought that the problem of thieving was altogether too complicated and needed a lot more careful discussion.

You cannot overestimate the power of self deception.

So-called virtues can frustrate the Christian purpose: caution and daring, pity and rectitude can enslave the conscience either by force or guile.

Now let us try to understand how conscience works when gaining control.

Conscience in trouble calls to help the antforce hostile to the pressing passion it wants to resist. A man feeling himself rushed into vindictiveness, summons from his past emotional experiences unforgettable incidents steeped in the emotion of love. A man about to yield to weakly pity, summons a past experience governed by moral indignation. My lazy doctor, had he been equipped with a willing body, would not have found lust for comfort irresistible, but he would have revived the spirit of enterprise from past experience.

A man, wishing to strengthen the resisting power of conscience, has, as it were by instinct, at his disposal a relevant experience acting as an antforce; but it is difficult to say beforehand what will be the antforce to a particular temptation.

A Swiss colleague of mine in Salem, who was a grievance nurser, was standing with two English colleagues on the Acropolis. He suddenly pulled out a watch, extracted a piece of paper from under the lid, leant over the wall, and threw it as it were into the setting sun. My English colleagues approached him tactfully, and enquired after his health. He assured them, " No, no, do not think me mad; whenever I am annoyed in Salem about any one of my colleagues, I write down his name on a piece of paper, which I insert into my watch, so that I may be reminded every day of him and the grudge I owe him. I wrote down X's name three weeks ago, but here it is so beautiful that I must throw the paper away."

I can say that if you are a resentful person you should train your power of sympathy, but I cannot possibly say beforehand that, looking down from the Acropolis into the setting sun, will act as an antforce against grievance nursing.

Here we face the darkness of our inner life. But I maintain that only men and women whose spiritual strength is unbroken have at their disposal an anti-chamber full of unforgettable

memories forever on their toes, ready to jump into 'consciousness and to come to the rescue of a troubled conscience.

Now the question arises, is it possible to preserve the strength of childhood unbroken and undiluted into adult life? It is: provided you protect adolescence by non-poisonous passions.

May I be forgiven if for convenience sake I group the mysterious and elusive varieties of healthgiving passions under:

*The love of enterprise;
The love of aloneness;
The love of skill.*

Our civilisation no longer engenders the habits of life from which the three loves are gleaned.

When I began my work I thought it was enough to provide the proper fodder for the healthy tastes that were there. I know now that very often we have to bring to life tastes that are almost extinct.

Love of enterprise demands a willing body: the sloth of modern adolescence has frequently set in before puberty begins. The motor car provides unearned speed, the cinema unearned thrills; American doctors speak of the social disease "spectatoritis." The love of aloneness cannot grow up amid the confusing turmoil of incoherent sights and sounds.

I once showed a film of Salem life in New York. When a boy was seen going on a solitary walk on Sunday an angry voice interrupted: "How cruel to force anyone to be in his own company."

Neither the love of man nor the love of God can take deep root in a child that does not know aloneness.

Now to the love of skill. The implanter must be under no illusion about the reluctance of the soil which is to receive the seed.

The modern boy and girl have an impetuous lust for quick results. A job of skill demands victorious patience. The young of today hate protracted and painful effort. A love of slapdash has grown up and found a philosophy behind which to entrench, itself: it is the genius of the English race to "muddle through," so before the war many a young muddler in his inmost heart believed he contributed to the genius of the race.

Now this is the antidote against a poisonous civilisation: the plan of life for adolescence at school and out of school, should give a place of importance to activities meant to stir and sustain the love of skill, the love of enterprise, and the love of aloneness.

The strength of childhood preserved through puberty is more than a source of well-being.

"Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child he shall not enter herein." But how is the knowledge of God to come? Through the inspiration which has been faithfully preserved by careful and loving hands for 2,000 years.

Habits of prayer are vital.

Proper enlightenment at home and at school is indeed important.

But the youth gathers his or her truth, as it were, like a bee from many sources and at a certain stage only reluctantly from parent, schoolmasters, or any manifest improvers. The young fashion their choice of life on the anvil of public events. Today the enemy is planting an insidious propaganda throughout the world.

"We are in earnest against Christ; they are not in earnest for Christ. We have the good old heathen virtues and have a new heroic creed. They have lost faith in their Christianity and are really faithless now. You can trust their professions as little as their promises but you can trust our threats."

Any man who by word or deed lends colour to this lie is a traitor to the cause of youth. He gives the enemies of the Lord great occasion to blaspheme, like the people who suggested, to the horror of British seafaring men, that enemy sailors who scuttled their ships should be allowed to drown. On the other hand he who breaks the moratorium of the Sermon on the Mount¹ and refuses to abstain either from mercy or from truth, proves a much more potent transmitter of Christianity than we teachers can ever hope to be.

I am thinking of men and women who bore witness for Christ and thereby risked death or torture or imprisonment or even only public disfavour and I am thinking of others whose love of men triumphed when the world would gladly have forgiven them for yielding to hatred.

We remember William the Silent's words, when he believed he had received the mortal wound :
"Do not kill the murderer - I forgive him my death."

I am thinking of the Jewish Captain who risked his own life to save a Nazi airman struggling in the sea. I am thinking of Doctor Hill's speech on the Aliens' question in the House of Commons a fortnight ago which will not be forgotten in history. I remember the incident in the House of Lords in autumn 1915 when the blind Lord

Courtney indicted the slayers of Nurse Cavell, and after using her words: "Patriotism's not enough in the world; you must also overcome hatred," ended by groping his way to where the Bishops sat, saying, "I make these sacred words my own and ask your Lordships to accept them in their simplicity." It is strange how such Christian testimony will even reach the enemy.

I am saying all this by way of a warning, lest the range of Education be overestimated.

Young England's destiny of character depends upon our ruler's example. Who is minister of education in Germany? Hitler, and he knows it; he refers to the young which he has corrupted as his eternal source of strength and renewal.

I plead that in this country the needs of adolescence should no longer be ignored.' Pious resolutions for the coming period of peace are not enough. Now is the opportunity to act and now the need. In '42 and '43 the quality of the available manpower may be the decisive factor. It will then be very important whether it takes two months or six months to turn a citizen into a soldier. The services today do not want premilitary training of a technical kind; what they ask for is no

¹ An expression used by Sir William Byles, in the House of Commons, May 26th, 1916.

more or less than that the watchman's virtues be no longer neglected. There exists in fact, remarkable unanimity which could immediately be harvested.

There is no difficulty in adjusting the time-table of schools to include a training break interrupting the sedentary habits of the morning and also to include opportunities to make room for service, for skill, enterprise and aloneness.

It will need a heroic effort to release the time and energy of boys at work. But this country has never been more ready for heroic decisions, not only to win the war, but also to unburden our consciences.

What is the difference between cruelty and callousness? The one torments, the other neglects. They both challenge Christianity to intervene on behalf of their victims.

When the Prime Minister called upon us to defend our Christian civilisation, hetherewith summoned us to be on our guard against the anti-Christ in our midst.

May 1, in conclusion, put before you six findings of the Geneva Health Bureau. They do not refer to this country more than to any other:

The first: Occupational work of adolescents be it the work of the apprentice, of the cyclist, of the errand boy, or sedentary work, is almost always harmful because it lasts too long.

The second: A certain amount of rest every day is not enough to repair the damage.

The third: In addition there is needed a holiday long enough to be of biological value when additional natural stimuli are provided and work is completely broken off.

The fourth: Under our social system the majority of working boys and, girls have no such holiday.

The fifth: This absence of the annual restoration of the equilibrium is a disaster - hence it is not surprising that medical examination of adolescents. should reveal serious physical defects in over 30 percent of cases.

The Sixth: We would add to the disaster if we induced overstrained and perhaps malnourished boy and girls to undergo gymnastic and athletic training in their spare time.

These findings put a clear choice before us: Neglect and console or heal and train. On this issue there is no room for honorable neutrality.

The report was written in peace. The strain on adolescents at work has increased in war.

The Geneva Health Authorities ask in 'other language that *we* should no longer withhold from youth the experiences by which "He restoreth their soul."