

Christian Education and Freedom

MERLIN G. SMITH

Freedom is America's most cherished human possession. The spirit of the men who won this freedom was most nobly expressed by Patrick Henry on March 23, 1775, in the words, "Is life so dear, or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? as for me, give me liberty or give me death!" Yet this treasured possession which has been the strength and the delight of our land for nearly two centuries is threatened by tyranny more subtle than at any previous time. The threat of communism from without and within with its dangerous revolutionary purges and practices is not as insidious and damaging as the slow poison or creeping paralysis of State-ism, Socialism, Welfare State or Planned Economy. The real threat to our liberty, however, is the spineless, do-nothing acceptance of more and more external controls being increasingly imposed or proposed by our government under whichever of the above names it may wish to slyly designate its purposes.

The wisest of our statesmen have warned us across the years of the very dangers which free men must eventually face. We are facing them now. Here are three statements:

"Agriculture, manufactures, commerce and navigation, the four pillars of our prosperity, are the most thriving when left most free to individual enterprise" are the words of Thomas Jefferson in his message to Congress in 1801.

Grover Cleveland in his inaugural address on March 4, 1893, said, "The lessons of paternalism ought to be learned and the better lesson taught, that while the people should patriotically and cheerfully support their government, its functions do not include the support of the people.

Woodrow Wilson on September 9, 1912, gave us these words, "Liberty has never come from the government... the history of liberty is the history of the limitations of governmental power, not the increase of it."

Jesus came to bring the abundant life. John 10:10, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." This passage has a great spiritual message. But abundant material blessings have accompanied the acceptance of and adherence to the principles taught by Christ.

No land can bear clearer testimony to these blessings than the United States. No country has ever been so blessed as America. Stop for a moment and consider the following list:

Food	Radios
Clothing	Furnaces
Fuel	Bathrooms
Houses	Churches
Cars	Hospitals
Railroads	Orphanages
Refrigerators	Old People's Homes
Telephones	Colleges
Labor Saving Machinery	
Free Education (to 12th grade)	

There is no country where all these benefits are so universally available as here. Human freedom with a sense of responsibility to God has produced them under a free-enterprise system.

There are some few small countries where there is probably less economic inequality than we have in this great country of diversified peoples. There are real faults in our economic system and in our sociological conditions. Every possible effort should be put forth to correct them.

The point we must emphasize here is that our country is the envy of much of the world. Informed visitors who come here marvel at the wide spread wealth in the hands of the common people. The Russians dare not let their people know what material things Americans enjoy. They would be disillusioned about the achievements of Communism if the iron curtain were lifted.

Let us beware of permitting ourselves to be blinded by those who compare the worst faults of our free enterprise or capitalistic system with what they *can only claim* for "planned economy" better known as Socialism! Why should we turn over the management of our government to such a group who can furnish *no proof* that the results of human efforts at economy planning will improve even a single fault, let alone preserve a single good of, our present system? It would be far better for us to seek divine wisdom and devote our efforts to discovering the places where we can improve our present system than to throw it overboard for something so far only known to destroy freedom and liberty and impoverish the people.

The Russian system with its godlessness, its blood purges, its inculcated fears, its absolute control of individuals, its assigned tasks, its heartless taxation, its make-believe courts, and its irresponsible officers should not be attractive to anyone unless he were willing to sell his liberty for a mess of pottage.

There are four principles accepted by people who have achieved freedom. Each of these place a special responsibility upon the educational program of the nation. These requirements can only be fully met by an educational program which is vitally and evangelically Christian. One is the infinite worth of the individual; the second is the recognition of and respect for law; third is the necessity and nobility of hard work; and the fourth is cooperation or fellowship in community interests. There are doubtless others, but these will serve our purpose. In this discussion I want to avoid, if possible, the accusation against educators of Andea, the British poet, who said we are "Lecturing on navigation while the ship is going down."

I

First then consider the Infinite worth of the individual. Wherever materialistic philosophies have been accepted the individual has been made subservient to the state. Probably there is no clearer example than Germany of what can happen in a so-called

enlightened nation, if the educational leadership is wrong. In 1814 Fichte, the German philosopher, died. He had filled the most important educational post in all Germany at the University of Berlin. Pestalozzian methods of instruction had revitalized Prussian education and made the German people the most literate in the world. For four years the struggle went on to determine whether Krause or Hegel would be chosen to fill this important post.

Krause believed that life and intelligence come from God. He wanted a federation of humanity based on reason, love, and justice. He contended that human progress and happiness spring from freedom and that spiritual ideals come from God.

Hegel, on the other hand, was favored by the higher critics who had made their now well-known academic efforts to destroy confidence in the Bible and discredit the miraculous origin and power of the Christian religion. He believed that the state was the highest form of human organization and that the Monarch and his family constitute the brain of society and must rule. He and his consorts contended that the common people are sinew and bone of the body politic and must blindly obey. He considered that democracy is a weak and impossible form of government.

In 1818 Hegel was appointed to head the education of Germany. The die was cast. Higher education proposed ruthless domination of the masses. The freedom, teaching, and scholarship that had made the University of Berlin famous became a means of propaganda. No wonder in 1888 Kaiser Wilhelm declared to the teachers of Germany, "War is the highest occupation of humanity", and added in arrogance, "Me und Gott". The tragedies of two world wars that have followed in the wake of that kind of education are too well known to need discussion.

That story is a far cry from the words of the founders of America in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable

rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”.

Dr. H. C. Link has said, “These truths could not have been self-evident only to men who already believed in a creator. In the face of evident inequalities of men, it was self-evident to them that all men were equal in so far as all were the children of God.” But even today we are beset by unbelief in our educational leadership. Dr. Carlson, former president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in his presidential address sought to refute all belief in God and supernaturalism and stated that the scientific method is final authority.

We should not fool ourselves; the materialistic philosophies are in our own educational system. They have back of them the same demonic spirit and power as was the case in Germany. If their adherents here were unrestrained by the widespread, even if merely nominal acceptance of the Christian worth of the individual, we would have far less freedom than we have now. The cunning grasp for power in our present political life with too little apparent statesmanship and stalwart stand for Christian principles of freedom and responsibility is an evidence of the increased acceptance of disbelief in God and in Christ. Too many leaders in politics, in business, and in the church are gloating more in their authority, without any deep consciousness of their responsibility to God and to the people.

Freedom will be assured for the years ahead only by increased numbers of leaders in the political and church life of the nation who believe in the words recorded in Genesis, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him”. No lesser faith will be adequate amid the subtle philosophies of times like these. An education which is faithful in its declaration of God as the creator of the universe and of man, and which interprets all truth in the light of that faith is the only kind of an education that will produce leaders for freedom. Therefore, if we want to remain free men, let us support generously education which is vitally and evangelically Christian.

II

The second theme is that freedom is dependent upon men who respect law. We formerly were taught that the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States had a spiritual birth, as also did the Magna Charta of England. In other words, that they were documents which were guided in their production in a real sense by God, as men were sincerely searching for truth and guidance for means of making available to all peoples life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Today there is more and more tendency to discard the idea that there is any absolute truth or law. All truth is held to be relative and to stem from man’s own concepts and desires. The constitution, therefore, in its interpretation must be made to conform to man’s wishes for himself and society, and especially for those men in office, rather than be an increasingly clear understanding of God’s purposes for human society.

This approach ignores completely the ancient Roman concept of civic virtue based on a government of *laws* rather than of *men*. It also expresses an implacable disbelief in the divine origin of the ten commandments. It further says that we, being scientific, accept with confidence the unfailing faithfulness of the laws of nature but that God, if there be such, would not be nearly so concerned in the moral realm as to make unchanging laws for man.

Here again education, whether of the home, church, or school, has an important role. Especially during the years of higher education it is supremely important to teach college men and women not only that God is the creator of the universe and of man, but also He is a God of law and order and His book reveals that His moral laws are no less specific than the laws of nature. Human society today is in a state of uncertainty, confusion and often even fear because men have ignored God’s word, His unmatched effort to publicize His moral laws. He does not always quickly pour out upon us the thunderbolts of His wrath for our misdeeds, but He does faithfully visit the consequences of our sins upon us as individuals and as nations, unless we re-

pent and espouse His moral standards. It is incumbent upon the college which wants to claim the name Christian to teach that God is a law giver in the moral realm and only as men respect His laws can they be free. Men who do not govern themselves through inner spiritual resources coming from God will be governed by a tyrant from without.

Dr. Samuel M. Shoemaker, rector of Calvary Episcopal Church, New York City, in his recent book *Freedom and Faith* says,

We love to be told it is Christian to be free so we may do as we want; we recoil a little when we are told it is Christian to use our freedom to do as we ought. A child is not only ours to love but ours to train; God's children need not only enjoy His love but obey His laws... It is our habit to think more about our *freedom privileges* than about *freedom responsibilities*.

James Truslow Adams says that our political philosophy from the Revolution onward "has dealt notably with the *rights of citizens* and not with the *duties of subjects*". We must not forget that even in a democracy we are subjects to the sovereign power of the people.

Dr. Shoemaker says again,

Liberty is a blessing like good health which can be abused and destroyed. Sometimes I think many of us Americans believe that we can do almost anything we please, cultivate idleness, break up our homes through divorce, drive ourselves into mental breakdowns through conflict and unbelief, drink unlimited amounts of alcohol, and still remain a free and happy people. We must ask whether our use of freedom—yours and mine, today and every day—is contributing to freedom's strength and gain, or to its weakening and loss. Do we use our freedom of speech to say true and responsible things, or gossipy, negative, irresponsible ones? Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, "The right of free speech, which we so vigorously defend in America, never did include the right to shout 'Fire!' in a crowded theatre." Is that what some of our irresponsible leaders and newspapers do?

Unless we as Americans and as Christians are careful we may be like the parishioners of a Negro preacher who described them thus, "When I preaches about the moonlight and de love of God, everything is all right; but it seems like when I teaches

on de Ten Commandments, dere's a kind of a coolness comes over dis congregation."

The Christian college must not make the mistake that knowledge, even the knowledge of right, is any guarantee that people will do what is right. George Washington expressed himself on this subject:

Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports... And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education... reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

Jules Lachelier, the French philosopher, said the only form of democracy is theocracy and added,

As soon as men refuse to be ruled directly by God they condemn themselves to be ruled directly by man; and if they decline to receive from God the leading principles of their moral and social conduct they are bound to accept them from the king or from the state or from their race or from their own social class.

William Penn gave us this conclusion with finality: "Men must be governed by God, or they will be ruled by tyrants." Therefore, we believe that only men who believe in God as the law giver can long be free.

III

The third resource for freedom is the recognition of the need for a nobility of hard work. The pronouncement in Genesis, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, 'till thou return unto the ground", has never been revoked; in spite of the so-called "efforts for the common man" sponsored by John L. Lewis and President Truman. Yet the enslavement of men by the union system or by capitalism is equally wrong. We would add, both for management and labor, that Christian principles require that management be willing to join with labor in the determination of how actual profits are to be used for plant expansion and replacement and for dividends to investors and to workers through profit sharing. Likewise the unions must be ready to expect from every individual man an

honest day's work up to his capabilities and the wages be in part determined by his capacity. The golden rule must really be accepted by both management and labor or there can be no freedom in industry.

The resources of this great country have become available because our pioneers cleared the forests, planted and harvested their crops, found and utilized mineral resources, constructed great transportation systems and gave their utmost physical, nervous, and mental energy to their individual opportunities. Men and women flocked to our shores because these privileges were not often available in the class restrictions of their own native lands. It will continue to be "the land of the free and the home of the brave" only so long as we depend for our livelihood and security upon our own labor properly protected by government and have the courage to defend our individual freedom against encroachment from that government.

Edison said success is 99% perspiration and 1% inspiration. There is usually no short-cut to success. God has so made the world that there is always a satisfying reward for faithful toil. Honor is made up usually of about 90% responsibility which many would not take and 10% authority which many others could not take. Someone has said.

The heights by great men reached and kept
were not attained by sudden flight
But, they, while their companions slept
Were toiling upward in the night.

Dr. Shoemaker again in his book *Freedom and Faith* says.

Liberty is in danger today from soft people who want to be taken care of. Its great rival here is not revolution, it is security. A vast number of our people would sell their liberty altogether for some certainty of security. —Uncle Sam as a good natured referee to keep us from getting too much in one another's hair is one thing and a very desirable thing, but Uncle Sam as a rich distributor of 'handouts' to every body is another thing and a very undesirable one. We must be careful that our softness and selfishness do not work around to the selling out of our liberties.

He further says,

Perhaps the worst thing that has happened to our freedom has been loss of the belief that there is a connection between wealth and work. Any healthy society can care for its sick and aged; no society can care for loafers and ne'er-do-wells. There is a connection between work and liberty. Lincoln once said, "If our American society and the United States Government are demoralized and overthrown, it will come from the voracious desire for office, this wriggle to live without toil, work and labor...."

Let us often bring our heritage of liberty before God, to whom we owe it, and pray to Him to show us how to use it responsibly.

In this area also we are convinced that those who refuse to accept God's laws will attempt to get something of value without rendering an adequate return, ignoring and defying the great spiritual truth that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Christian education lays a firm foundation for freedom by teaching that God is the creator, He is the great law giver and that in addition toilsome service is necessary and noble.

IV

We turn finally to the fourth and last of the steps to freedom, cooperation and fellowship in community interests. The town meeting was an expression of common concern in the welfare of neighbors and community life. The church house was an acknowledgement of dependence upon God for strength and wisdom to direct personal and group responsibilities. Schools were established that the growing nation might have an intelligent and God fearing electorate. This was the fellowship for freedom.

But how is it today?

The spirit of hate proposed by Hitler as the rallying ideal in the beer garden group created a kind of group solidarity. The cells of the communist organization are bound together by a spirit of hatred for all who refuse to join with them. This spirit of hate can not fail to include those of their own group who should in any way fail to follow the party program as the confessions of many a former communist has revealed. Fear of reprisals from their associates keeps them in line after they have become disillusioned about the program that at first

appeared so ideal. This hate or fear spirit is of demonic origin and is the very opposite of the fellowship which makes freedom and democracy possible.

Rabbi Liebman says, "No reconstructed society can be built on unreconstructed individuals. Personal unbalance *never* leads to social stability. Peace of mind is the indispensable prerequisite of individual and social balance."

Lecomte du Noüy in his book *Human Destiny* makes this incisive statement,

If intelligence alone should rule, all the human traits of which we are proudest, the sense of duty, of liberty, of dignity, of the beauty of disinterested effort would disappear little by little and fade out into oblivion, until *civilization would vanish without even an afterglow.*

It is well-known that in a majority of the most respected educational circles there is in actuality complete rejection of the words of the Psalmist, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." They reject the real basis fellowship.

Jesus said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

Fellowship in even a limited sense is possible only when there is a common acceptance of such beliefs as we have enumerated, that the individual is of infinite worth because of being the crown of God's creation, that God is the law giver in both the natural and moral realms, and that God has made work both necessary and noble. A higher and surer fellowship for your co-operation in community and national life springs from a spirit of oneness through the transforming power of the crucified and risen Lord, Jesus Christ. Such a fellowship will make possible co-operation in community interests and it alone can assure the fullest freedom.

Colleges to be really Christian, are under the necessity then of teaching that God is the creator and that He is the source of all moral law and of using every means at their disposal to bring every student to the crisis decision for or against Jesus Christ.

All campus activities, whether religious, academic, social, or athletic, must make the decision for Christ as attractive as possible and yet not conceal its cruciality. The current reports of college revivals reveal that the youth of this day are willing to accept "Christianity, not as a pursuit of truth, but as a declaration of truth already revealed, in which all other truths must find their meaning."

Piety, no matter how genuine and sincere, may not be a substitute for sound scholarship or teaching ability even in the Christian college. A Christian college's first responsibility is to graduate students who are convinced Christians, who know what they believe and why. —Its primary function is to turn out graduates who are first Christians and secondarily doctors, lawyers, or merchants.

It is said that when Alexander the Great was reminded, on the eve of his world conquests, that he was a Greek and would need to guard carefully against the possibilities of barbaric inroads on his Greek culture, Alexander replied to his teacher, Aristotle, that his teacher had failed to charge him with his real responsibility to give those with whom he came in contact a Greek mind. It is the privilege of every real Christian to witness to a changed mind and heart and declare to his associates that Christ is available to perform this work in them, and that eternal loss awaits those who reject Him.

The materialistic philosophies including Communism are locked in deadly combat with Christianity to capture the loyalties of men. It is not enough for Christians to make an effort to be good or to actually be good and do good. The time has come for witnessing by proclamation that our source of strength is in Jesus Christ. We must not forget that while the underprivileged peoples of every land want food and shelter they also want a *faith*. If Christianity is not presented to them both by precept and example in the finest form and fullest possibilities, they will accept a less worthy faith. It is well to remind ourselves in this crisis that in the words of a song I do not like "It is later than you think."

Any education which destroys or even weakens a belief in God as creator, as a moral law giver, undermines this very foundation of freedom. Whether this struggle for freedom will be won depends much on what we as Christians do, what we make possible for Christian schools to do by adequately supporting them. *It is not merely a matter of maintaining a religious faith in our country, but of the actual survival of national freedom.*

Woodrow Wilson sums up the situation in his last essay, "The Road Away from Revolution":

The sum of the whole matter is this, that our civilization cannot survive materially unless it be redeemed spiritually. It can be saved only by becoming permeated with the spirit of Christ and being made free and happy by the practices which spring out of that spirit. Only thus can discontent be driven out and all the shadows lifted from the road ahead. —In its last analysis it would not be worth keeping without such redemption.

It seems clear, therefore, that the evangelical Christian college is one of the greatest bulwarks for our American freedom.