

**EDUCATION AND
RELIGION: THEIR
MUTUAL CONNECTION
AND RELATIVE BEARINGS**

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Education and Religion: Their Mutual Connection and Relative Bearings by David Kay

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P R E F A C E .

MUCH injury has been done both to Education and Religion by the attempts that have been made, more particularly of late, to set the one against the other; as if the interests of the two were diverse, in place of being identical; as if they were opposing and hostile, instead of allied and friendly powers.¹ Thus, there are many who seek to disparage or slight education, with the view thereby of exalting religion; and there are not a few who seem to regard education as the one thing needful for the perfection of humanity, and so deny to religion its proper place and work.²

These mistaken ideas can only be owing to the want of a clear understanding of the true nature and office of the one or of the other. Did the Christian see in education one of the chief means for the improvement of the race, and for building it up in the faith, he would be slow to deny anything that can be said in its favour, or to oppose any step that may be taken for its advancement; and, on the other hand, did the most sanguine friends of education recognize in religion the highest and most effectual means for the perfecting of humanity, they would doubtless be willing to concede to it a chief place in their schemes.

¹ "The two great forces of the world—religion and education—are arrayed against each other, instead of working in unison, to the mutual injury of both, and to the retarding of the perfection of humanity."—(J. A. LANGRISH: *Religion and Education*.)

² "Culture, with its eye fixed on man's perfection, has been busy with the means that tend towards this,—that is, appropriating the large results which human effort, thought, and experience have gathered from past centuries. Religion, on the other hand, starting not from the view of man's perfection, but of God's existence . . . has been entirely absorbed in the results that flow out of this relation. . . . And thus each, self-enwrapped, has taken little account of its neighbour."—(Prof. SHARP: *Religion and Culture*.)

Man is a religious as well as a moral and intellectual being. Alike in his savage as in his civilized state, the heart of man naturally craves for some object of worship—some being or beings to whom he may pay divine honours, and who may be invested with the highest attributes for his admiration and imitation. This part of his nature, like every other, requires to be educated, in order that he may worship aright, admire and imitate that Being in whom all perfection dwells. Further, this religious part of man's nature is the highest of all its parts, and serves to sustain and direct the others; and hence, when this is neglected all the others are deprived of their chief support, and of their only sure guide. On the other hand, religion is not a mere doctrine or a belief; it is a life and a conduct for which an education is necessary. The holiness of life which Scripture enjoins, and in which religion properly consists, can only be fully attained through education and practice, for it is by the practice of virtue that men are made virtuous.¹ Besides this, religion is necessarily connected with all that tends to ameliorate, improve, and elevate humanity, with all that adds to the happiness or increases the comforts of the race. True happiness and true religion are not distinct, but one and the same. Man's true happiness is centred in the perfection of his being, and this is the great object both of religion and education.

Religion and education are thus not distinct and separate, but are intimately connected the one with the other. Each is necessary to the fulness and completeness of the other—religion as a branch of education; education as a part of religion. Whatever impedes or retards the progress of the one, is detrimental to the interests of the other; and, on the other hand, whatever furthers the cause of the one is for the advantage of the other.

But while thus maintaining the closest and most intimate connection to subsist between religion and education, we are of the opinion of those who believe that religious

¹ "We are made virtuous, not by the possession of the faculty which judges of virtuous action, or of the emotions which echo its decisions, but by the possession of the virtuous actions themselves."—(Dr. McCosk.)

instruction should form no part of the business of the ordinary day-school. We regard parents as those on whom, primarily and properly, devolves the duty of imparting religious instruction and training to their children. While they may, and indeed, in general, must and ought to delegate the secular education of their children to others, it may well be questioned how far they are at liberty to do so with their religious training. The family relationship is the most important that can exist, and is divinely instituted for the highest of all ends—the rearing of children. In order to do this, parents and children are united together by the strongest of all ties, not generally, but individually; individual parents to individual children, and individual children to individual parents. The parent has been said to be the God of the child, for it is towards him that those feelings and affections are first called out which afterwards find their proper sphere in the worship of God. Love to parents is the stem on which is engrafted love to God, and God himself can assume no dearer or closer relationship to His people than that of Father. He who has bestowed nothing in vain, or for no purpose, could only have intended thereby that parents should be the principal religious instructors of their children; and every possible means should be used of impressing the necessity and importance of this duty upon them.

Failing the parents, and supplemental to them, the duty of the religious education of the young clearly devolves upon the different religious bodies in the country. These are established for the religious instruction and edification of the people, of whom the young form a very important part. Were our Churches and congregations to make it more directly a part of their duty to instruct and educate the young in what pertains to religion, we believe that they would soon have less reason than at present to cry out against the general apathy that prevails on the subject; and that were their people trained as well as taught to be religious, there would be found among them brighter examples of Christian piety, and fewer of those whose conduct but too frequently tends to bring religion into disrepute.

It is one great objection to the present state of things, that it fosters the belief that those with whom the duty of the religious education of the young naturally and properly rests acquit themselves of their responsibility by devolving it upon others. In this way parents are led to believe that they have only to see that their children are at a school where religious instruction is professed to be given; while our Churches and clergy are in too many cases satisfied if the teacher is only of their own particular belief. Can it be otherwise than that both religious and secular education suffer in such circumstances? and would not their separation be of the greatest advantage to both?

But, while we have thus at some length treated of the "Religious difficulty," this is by no means the main or principal object of our book. The religious difficulty may speedily be settled, but the much wider and more important question of the connection between religion and education must continue to call for the attention of mankind for a long time to come. The bearings of education upon religion, the necessity of training and culture in order to the building up of the Christian character, as well as the necessity of religion to all true culture and social progress, must engage the attention of men as long as culture and progress are demands of our nature. With this view we have endeavoured to show the close and intimate connection that ought to subsist between religion and education, and the necessity of the one in order to the fulness and completeness of the other. Part of our object has, therefore, been to remove mistaken ideas, on the one side or the other, that, in our view, interfere with their complete union, as well as to bring out others that tend to their closer alliance. In particular, we have endeavoured to show the erroneousness of any notions with regard to religion that would tend to its being considered as in any way distinct or apart from ordinary life, or to there being anything in it calculated to supersede human exertion or to interfere with the fullest and freest exercise of our powers and faculties. We believe that it is the man who strives most earnestly and exerts himself most manfully in the cause of his own improvement that comes

to be most conscious of his need of Divine aid. Having exerted his strength, he knows exactly its limits, and he feels how hopeless all his efforts are beyond a certain point, outside of which, if true to himself, he can scarcely fail to feel and to recognize the presence of a power different from and higher than his own. Thus it is that almost all great men have been fatalists. Those who have effected most in the world, who have carried the bounds of human knowledge farthest, have had the clearest conviction of a mysterious power, apart from and beyond themselves, that was working in them and through them, and without which they could not have done what they had done. It is not the man who does least, but he that does most, that manifests the greatest faith: it is the man that most earnestly strives to work out his own salvation that is most conscious of his need of a Saviour. Thus we learn by reason what the Scriptures plainly teach—that God's benefits are conferred as the reward of human exertion.

Our thoughts and feelings, unless they are put forth into activities, are worse than useless, because, like noxious weeds, they abstract nourishment from other parts of the system; and the man who frequently indulges in day-dreams of a future life soon becomes unfitted for his proper place in this. Our thoughts, in order to be of value to ourselves or others, must put themselves into action. Thus, we are able to test them so as to bring out their true nature; and from being dreamy, misty, and indefinite, they become clear, distinct, and well defined. Much of the sin and evil and error in the world may be traced to a want of harmony between our thoughts or our intentions and our actions. Men think and purpose and intend much that is good and right, but they fail in the power to carry it out into action. They resolve and re-resolve, and yet their conduct remains the same. The great business of education is to mould and fashion our conduct, and to bring our actions into exact accordance with our wills, so that the body may, in all respects, be a ready, willing, and efficient servant of the mind.

In consequence of the very limited nature of his faculties, man can only take a narrow and one-sided view of things.