

Kinney, Prof. Laurence F.

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Educating for the Good Life



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## FOREWORD

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Dr. Laurence F. Kinney has been elected to the Albert Bruce Curry Chair of Bible at SOUTHWESTERN, and will assume his new duties at the beginning of the second semester of the 1943-44 session. He will be associated with Professor T. E. Hill in this department of the college.

Dr. Kinney is a native of West Virginia, a graduate of Hampden - Sydney College and Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia. He holds the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in philosophy from the University of Virginia. He has done graduate work in theology at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, on the Bennett Wood Greene fellowship from the University of Virginia.

He has held two pastorates in Virginia, taught philosophy at the College of William and Mary, and theology at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia. He comes to SOUTHWESTERN from the General Assembly's Training School at Richmond, where he has been professor of Bible and Theology.



## EDUCATING FOR THE GOOD LIFE

By LAURENCE F. KINNEY, Ph.D.

Professor of Bible at SOUTHWESTERN

When an outstanding university introduced theology into its curriculum last fall, it was news. To ask why this should be news raises the whole educational problem in America.

The founding fathers of our country wrote into the charters of the colleges which they established their purpose to educate youth for the good life. They stated that the aim of education is to lead to an understanding of truth, to a development of the moral sense and behavior, and to spiritual well-being. Here is an example from a college charter of the year 1784:

Whereas, Institutions for the liberal education of youth in the principles of virtue, knowledge and useful literature are of the highest benefit to society, in order to train up and perpetuate a succession of able and honest men for discharging the various offices and duties of life, both civil and religious, with usefulness and reputation, and such institutions of learning have accordingly been promoted and encouraged by the wisest and best regulated States: Be it enacted etc. . .

In 1650 Harvard's charter called for "education of the English and Indian youth in this country in knowledge and godliness."

Our oldest colleges and universities still have these profound expressions inscribed in their charters, but the majority of these and of educational institutions founded subsequently have apparently repudiated this total purpose and substituted a partial one. The objective in many cases seems to be merely the training of the mind, and it is often openly declared that education has nothing to do with one's moral behavior, and least of all with his relation to God. This theory of education involves an assumption that mind can be isolated from the total self, the fallacy of which appears both on examination of this act of abstraction and in the practical consequences which flow from it.

In the course of American educational development, the church became disturbed because of the fact that education seemed to concern itself with the mind, apart from morals or spiritual relationships. A movement gained headway which led to an accent in church-related colleges on the religious life, often to the neglect of the intellectual life. But alas this movement simply drove the wedge deeper. One group now staked out as its field of activity the training of the rational faculties and claimed the authority of reason for its work, leaving the mind unrelated to total life. The other accented morals and religion and recognized the need for

faith, but failed to relate the functions of faith and reason or to concern itself with the vital relation of religious truth to natural knowledge. Now it was not the intention of the church college to take a partial view of life, but it was forced into this role by several facts. One was the fear of reason on the part of many religious leaders who directed policies of church colleges. Second was the failure of adequate financial support to maintain high standards of educational facilities and faculties in church colleges. And third was the growth into common currency of the idea that reason is self-sufficient, independent of faith, and authoritative, whereas faith is uncertain and unnecessary. Consequently, students from church colleges, transferring to universities or entering graduate work, often find their credits discounted, and specific credits in Bible are frequently unacceptable.

Universities were originally places where the liberal arts were cultivated. These institutions were predicated on the basis that there must be appreciation, understanding, and knowledge of general human goals if men are to establish more immediate aims which lead toward human fulfillment. The average university today sets itself to train people to achieve immediate goals without preparing them to evaluate these in the light of man's more general good. Many who achieve immediate aims, such as professional skills and competency and material rewards, then wonder why they experience a sense of frustration. Institutions which train men to be successful in particular activities without pointing to the way of human fulfillment through these and other appropriate means are not educating in a true sense. Is it possible that the student has sensed a lack of significance in what is going on in the modern university, and for what he considers the stuffy offerings of the classroom—being unrelated to any underlying vital direction he can discern—he substitutes football and an elaborate social program, which though perhaps equally direction-less, are more exciting at the moment?

One reason universities stopped concerning themselves with ultimate human purposes is that faith and religion loom large at this point, for man's general good is not definable apart from God. Hence the assertions of certain educators that they do not make men but minds. But not even minds are made by dealing with immediate human goals and the means for achieving them while refusing to consider ultimate ends which determine the relative values of the near-at-hand purposes. Truth is thus set at cross purposes with itself; lesser truth is made to obscure greater truth. It is a paradoxical situation that institutions of higher learning should declare their purpose to be the pursuit of wisdom while at



the same time they block the road thereto. It is in revolt against this untenable pattern that the University of Chicago has, during this session, introduced into its curriculum the study of theology. The inaugural words of President Hutchins show that he is aware of the revolutionary character of the action: "We mark tonight the beginning of a great movement in education, the significance of which far transcends our own times."

It is not our purpose to evaluate the details of the venture of the University of Chicago into theology. Those responsible for it will doubtless have a full budget of problems, not least of which will arise from their federated theological faculty, representing four denominations, including the Unitarian. The three most critical issues in launching this program were (1) Will the theology which is taught be natural theology only, or revealed Christian theology? (2) Do morals root in religion? (3) Will theology be open both to ministerial students and also to the general student body? A quotation from Dr. Hutchins' address shows how satisfactorily the first two questions were met; and the implications of the whole address clearly answer the third question in the affirmative:

Theology and the theological school are at the apex of the university and its studies because they seek to supply the answers to the ultimate questions about the most fundamental matters with which the university is concerned. Metaphysics and natural theology deal with these questions, too. But intellectual history reveals nothing so clearly as their inadequacy for the task. The existence and nature of God, the character and destiny of the human soul, and the salvation of man are problems which remain obscure in the light of natural reason. Theology, which adds faith to reason, illuminates them.

A perfect theory of democracy as the best form of government can be made out of the writings of Aristotle. . . . But it is improbable that the practice of democracy now or in the future can be achieved merely by the demonstration of its reasonableness. Men, simply because they are men, are unlikely to find within themselves the power that can bring the good life and the good state to pass.

But what is now belatedly introduced at Chicago has long been regular diet in our best church colleges. SOUTHWESTERN took the lead in America in requiring all its students to study Bible. The trouble with many church colleges has been that the academic disciplines in the various branches of study have not been maintained at a high level. Failing to learn other subjects well, the students came to no appreciative understanding of the Bible. Because the knowledge of natural things was not thorough, the light of Christian truth did not fall upon it and illumine the various areas of life. Bible became an isolated study, and students have not looked to Christian truth as an essential directive for the solution of the problem of living.

My own interest in SOUTHWESTERN developed on the basis of its genuine intellectual and religious tradition. SOUTHWESTERN has long been committed to the practice of sound intellectual disciplines. It is exceptional among church colleges in its dedication to learning the truth; it is not the only church college that maintains high academic standards, but it is one of the most notable among those that do. And it has been the steady purpose at SOUTHWESTERN to make the study of Bible a discipline as rigorous and intellectually solid as any study on the campus. This policy has been followed because of the recognition of the fact that Christian truth bears a controlling relationship to all other knowledge. The Christian religion is here considered the highest truth and also as the supreme wisdom for action. "To think clearly and to act wisely" are wedded in the educational program of SOUTHWESTERN.

It is important, but it is not enough, to be men of good will. We must also know the truth if the truth is to set us free. In "A message to all peoples," adopted by the 1938 International Missionary Council, meeting at Madras, India, there appears this thoughtful observation:

Again and again we have been forced to note that the evils that we face are not the work of bad men only but of good as well. The gravest of our disasters have been brought upon us not by men desiring to make trouble for mankind but by those who thought they did their best in the circumstances surrounding them. We do not know the man wise enough to have saved the world from its present sufferings. . . .

Where are we to find men wise enough to lead us in our perplexing times? What fitness is needed by the men and women who will guide our destinies in obscure but important ways, or who will reach decisions that concern a whole nation or a commonwealth of nations? Is good will alone enough? Is technical training alone enough? We shall need men and women with a clear apprehension of essential knowledge in a broad setting of understanding of true human purposes, disclosed and made effective through vital, divine control.

There is a carefully planned feature in the Bible curriculum at SOUTHWESTERN which is designed to make religion as vital as possible in the educational process. All first-year students and all seniors are required to take Bible. The purpose of this program is to introduce a student early to the truths of the Bible, and then in the senior year to consider, in the light of the divine revelation, the whole field of knowledge which has opened to him. The senior has had at least a year of Bible study. He has studied the sciences, the humanities, the classics. Burning questions have been



concerning him. What is the source of realities? Is there underlying purpose? Do right and wrong make any difference? The student is coming to some kind of decision in terms of which his outlook and behavior will be determined. Will something other than God be supreme and weigh most with him when he makes practical decisions, or will God be supreme for him? Will he have a God-focus on life so that he will live under a sense of companionship and recognition that life begins and ends in a God who is Christ-like? The senior, while coming to these life-determining points of view, enters a course of study definitely designed to help him reach a Christian faith and understanding of life. There are two divisions of this course of Bible study. The first includes a consideration of the nature of religion, the existence and nature of God and our knowledge of Him, sin, salvation, the practice of the Christian life, prayer, immortality. The second division is a study of Christian ethics which seeks to show the foundation of Christian ethics, the principles of right and wrong, and to apply Christian truths to vital personal and group problems of our times.

In addition to Bible studies, a community of Christian teachers and students working together constitutes means, both in the classroom and informally, for grounding in Christian understanding and behavior. This is properly so since Christianity is the highest truth about life. In this respect also we have a common purpose with President Hutchins, who envisages through Chicago University's revised program a unification of understanding arising from a close relation between the study of theology and all other studies. The total program projected at SOUTHWESTERN has far-reaching possibilities, not fully explored here or in any institution, for a fuller cooperation of all faculty members for development among us, faculty and students alike, of a more and more mature Christian outlook on all of life. I welcome the opportunity to have a part in it.

**A complete and generous education is one that fits a man to perform, skillfully, justly, and magnanimously, all the acts, both public and private, of peace and war.—Milton.**