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TEACHERS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
OF N. S. W.

WHAT'S THE USE
OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?

Addresses from the Annual Conference held at Katoomba 23 - 25 July, 1971.

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RELIGION - A SEMINAR FOR G.P.S. AND ASSOCIATE SCHOOLS

Scripture: The Basis of Religious Education

If we understand what Scripture is, we shall best understand why and how it provides the basis for the education of children in the principles of Christianity and for leading them, in a manner proper to their personalities, to personal acceptance of the obligations of Christian discipleship.

The Bible as the Book of the Covenant

The term 'Bible' tells us nothing about the character of the book inside this cover. 'Old Testament' and 'New Testament' are more illuminating (if we take the time to wonder what they mean!) as they indicate (a) the vital concept of God's covenant with the people whom He chooses to be His possession and instrument, and (b) the two ~~historical~~ phases of God's revelation of His purposes. More than that, the terms 'old' and 'new' reflect the fact that the first phase of revelation was in its nature transient and to be dispensed with, while that which replaced it has a vitality which makes it relevant to God's present dealings with men.

The origin or nucleus of 'the Bible' might, as a matter of historical fact, be seen in the book which Moses wrote at Mount Sinai at the time immediately after the Exodus, and which was actually called 'the book of the covenant' (Exodus 24:4-7). This 'book', beginning with the ten commandments including also certain rules of conduct set out now in Exodus 20 to 23, contains both what God undertook to do for His people Israel, and also the reciprocal obligations resting on Israel as God's people. It is arguable that the whole of the rest of scripture was formed by a gradual process of adding to this nucleus of 'the book of the covenant'.

In its final form, scripture, without ever losing its fundamental character as an instrument wherein God's promises and His people's responses are set out, is made up of five quite distinct sections. I mean that these sections were distinct in the minds of those who originally recognised them as belonging properly to the category of authoritative scripture. Indeed, it was the distinct and peculiar character of each of these sections which qualified it to be regarded as inspired scripture, bearing the mark of God's own communication to men. The five sections are: the law, the prophets, the writings; the gospel.

and the apostle. The first three are the traditional Jewish sections of the Old Testament. The last two - the 'gospel' and the 'apostle' - are the categories used by Christians of the second century by which they recognized that certain writings were either the embodiment of the very words of Christ or were the exhortations of the apostles appointed by Him. This five-fold division of scripture implies what can be called a biblical theology: a view of God and His relation to the world, a view of man, his nature and destiny, and especially a view of what the Bible itself calls the 'dispensation' or economy (Gk. oikonomia) in terms of which God the creator enters into the relationship with man for his proper end and good.

The historical continuum within which the divine purpose is carried out today is still 'the people of God'. Without doubt there are problems in the matter of establishing the precise nature of this historical continuity since the New Testament. - Do we have the right thing in what we call today 'the church'? Should we identify 'the church' with 'the people of God' simpliciter? Have we somehow understood the whole relation between the New Testament age and our own? It must also be admitted that one of the principal differences between the Roman Catholic and Protestant positions has been in regard to this question of the criteria by which the continuing instrument of God's purposes in history is to be identified. At the same time, there is a notable rapprochement at the present time, due not least to the re-examination of the idea of 'the people of God' as something not exclusively to be identified with organisational or hierarchical structures. It is, in fact, likely to be the children whom we teach, rather than ourselves, who will discover more accurately than we have done where the dynamic centre of a continuing Christianity is to be located. It has sometimes been observed that a chief cause of the present friendly and open climate between Roman Catholics and Protestants was the enforced community of both Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders and ministers in European prison camps. Suddenly cut off from organizational traditions, a vital centre of both fellowship and Christian witness to others was discovered, common to both groups. Everywhere, however, at least one essential ingredient was a common possession, in the mind if not on paper, of the pattern of

0 biblical truth. It is not too much to say that our whole understanding of God's revelation of Himself to mankind is derived from scripture. Here is the word, contained in human words, which is able to make a man "wise to salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus". Explicitly or implicitly, the response which a child, or a man, must make to the divine self-disclosure must accord with the scriptural pattern of what God has shown Himself to be and of the kind of people He wills to make His own.

It is not here my purpose to say anything curriculum-wise about how the content of scripture might be utilised in teaching children. I wish simply to draw attention to three aspects of religious education which seem to me to receive insufficient regard.

1. The Parent and Scripture

The parent of a child has the primary responsibility for its education. The relation between parent and child remains primary throughout the period of education. It is not enough for a parent to send his child to a (church) school, or to church. He must succeed in identifying himself, in the eyes of "his child, with 'the people of God' to whom the promise of God's fellowship has come, and he must indicate unmistakably his own acceptance of the obligations of Christian discipleship, the obligations of faith and obedience. Somehow he must convey to his child that he, too, is 'under' the word of scripture, and that he sees himself as a party to the covenant of which the Bible is the chief instrument. To teach these things at school to a child whose father and mother deny or ignore them, may not be entirely fruitless, but it may be a chief reason why we are producing nominal rather than real Christians.

i. What may one expect a parent to do, however, in pursuit of a right aim? One might reasonably expect him to read the Bible to his children, and to offer some explanation of its meaning. He might also be expected to take his children with him to church where together they may hear scriptures read and expounded. In this way a father shows himself to be both subject to the Word of God himself, and also to be a means of passing it on. The whole scriptural notion of God's covenant requires that knowledge of the terms of the covenant and its obligations is conveyed in the first instance by parents to children.

This is made clear in the case of Abraham when the covenant was first proposed (Genesis 18:19), in the rehearsal of the law for the whole people in Deuteronomy (6:4-9), and finally in the New Testament where parents are explicitly exhorted to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6: 1-4). This is not only a pedagogical method; it is the chief instrument whereby the blessings of the covenant are conveyed. God discloses His intentions to Abraham so that Abraham may instruct his household after him to observe 'the way of the LORD', and, further, so that God may bring to pass all that He had promised concerning Abraham (Genesis 18:19). Likewise, Paul's remark that children should obey their parents in the Lord, and that this is the first commandment with promise (namely, "that it may be well with you and that you may live long in the land") shows that he, too, saw the parent as the key figure in conveying to the child the means of his ultimate inheritance. The command to honour one's parents is not designed to produce a form of politeness or etiquette or concern for the welfare of the old people, but to secure that the teaching which the parents are under obligation to impart to their children will be heeded, to the consequent spiritual benefit of the children. It is by parental teaching of God's covenant, in fact, that the 'knowledge of God' becomes a continuously operating and finally effective reality.

2. Letting the Bible Speak for Itself

My second point concerns the way in which the scriptures are allowed to make their impression in teaching. I know there are people who do not think the contents of the Bible should be directly taught to young children at all. I think I do recognise certain dangers in an unthought-out presentation of biblical material to children, though I should have thought that, in principle, a general familiarity with the contents of the Bible from an early age was a good thing. However, what is really needed, however the job is approached, is that the Bible should, over the teaching years, be so exhibited as to convey its own thrust, and by this I chiefly mean that it should be understood as 'the book of the covenant'. Here, the fivefold division I spoke of earlier is important. The place of God's 'law' in His approach to man should be understood. The 'prophets' need to be seen as the spiritual link between the

'law' and the 'gospel'. The 'gospel' itself should be seen as 'gospel', i.e. not merely as stories about Jesus, but the final proclamation of God, to which all else had led up, calling all men into relationship with Himself through the mission of Christ. Finally, the New Testament letters need to be seen as 'the apostles' i.e. as the authoritative witness to the gospel which came through Christ, and as the voice of prophecy and instruction with regard to the implications of the final establishment of the 'new covenant!'. All this means that, for example, it is not enough to have 'Bible Stories for the Young Part I' followed by 'Bible Stories for the Young Part II' and so ad inf. The fundamental units of the Bible, sometimes whole books and collections of books, need to be identified as to their character, and the leading ideas allowed to convey their force coherently: the great theme of God's relation to the world expressed in creation, the promise of Abraham, the election of Israel, the exodus-redemption, the fulfilment of Israel's inheritance in the kingdom of David and Solomon, the significance of the prophets as spiritual interpreters in critical days, the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the fulfilment of the ancient promises of an inheritance for sons of God in the work of the risen Christ, the social and ethical implications of this for the present transitory age. In short - if you are not frightened by the term - we need to impart biblical theology.

3. The Need for Relevance to be Perceived

Nothing is more relevant to the needs and aspirations of modern man than the Bible; but most modern men would be surprised to be told this! While all that I have been outlining can (and eventually must) be presented as an internally consistent scheme of thought in its own biblical terms, it is absolutely vital that its spiritual essence should be related, for the child, to his life as it is. The child has, as yet, little historical perspective, and little sense of the possible relevance of any generation prior to his own. We must, therefore, take into account the palpable realities of the child's existence: the world of nature about him (observed and talked about), his social relations, commerce, government, law, entertainment, patterns of ethical behaviour, the peculiar slant on life communicated to him (at many removes) by the scientific method. All these things must be shown in their

relation to the divine revelation. This brings us up against another of our real problems, namely, that our teachers are concerned with teaching children science and social studies and the rest often have no notion themselves of biblical theology, and offer no assistance to the child in finding a scriptural basis for his thinking, or, for that matter, any sort of coherent basis. This, I judge, is the major failing of our church schools. They have no effective philosophy of Christian education carried out in actual teaching over the whole range of subjects. The energies of many excellent people are quite exhausted in the tasks of management and administration and pedagogy. The necessities of schedules and commitments and Wynnham schemes leave no room for either training or searching for teachers who know what Christianity is and (equally important for our task) know how it should be communicated to children without damage to their personalities. Not least in the task is this ability to approach the 'scriptural basis' from the non-scriptural end. By this I mean the ability both to teach the child how to observe and assess the world in which he lives, and also how to discover for himself his real place in that world, in relation to God who is both his God and his parents' God and his teacher's God. The basis of such an education can only come from scripture - scripture not sentimentalised, and not plundered to suit our own prejudices, but seen in its total testimony to God's purpose in creation and in the renewal of all things in Jesus Christ.

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STATE, CHURCH AND EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

I have been asked to say something, from the point of view of biblical theology, about the nature of the church and the nature of the state, their relationship to each other, and the implications of this relationship to Christian education in schools.

The Nature and Purpose of "The State".

There is no biblical doctrine or theory of "the state". It is taken for granted in the Bible that various tribes and nations have arrangements by which they organize their common life, but no approval or disapproval attaches to this system of government that, and, except in relation to the unique case of Israel's theocracy, there appears to be no political theory. Indeed, if we press the point (made by Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 441) that "the State is not the nation, and the nation is not the State", we shall probably conclude that the very idea of the state is practically non-existent in the Bible, and that all the Bible is concerned with is government. "The rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them" (Matt. 20:25) well expresses the pragmatic view of government to be found generally in the Bible.

Although the incidence of bribery, corruption, and injustice among rulers is recognized, it is assumed, for all that, that the primary function of rulers is to maintain justice and to support good works against evil. "Benefactors" (euergetai) was a proper title for rulers (Luke 22:25) and the importunate widow could make her plea for justice with some confidence, even to a judge with a reputation for unjudicial independence.

Because this is so, rulers have a proper claim on the support of their subjects and act rightly in requiring tax, tribute and respect from those who accept the benefits of their rule. And all this is without regard to the method by which particular rulers may have arrived at their position, or for the particular form of administration which may obtain in a nation.

If there is no biblical doctrine of the state, there is certainly a clear reason why rule and exercise of authority is approved. It is God's will that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). It is not for kings and rulers themselves to be preachers of the

truth, but they do have the God-given function of promoting the conditions of "peace and quietness" which, as both Old Testament and New Testament show, are conducive to the increase of the knowledge of God among all men. Christians, therefore, above all others, have reason to respect their government, not necessarily conceding its own estimate of itself at all points, but for its authority derived from God; and they should pray that their rulers might properly fulfil their function of providing highways for the gospel of God.

The ruler who best exemplifies this function in the Old Testament is Cyrus, the Persian king, who, because of his policy of restoring Israel to its own land, and of rebuilding Jerusalem, is designated "the Lord's anointed", and hailed as the fulfiller of God's purposes. The fact that Cyrus did not himself "know" the God of Israel is beside the point; but he certainly knew that he was acting as a benefactor to Israel and its religion.

In the New Testament, an even more striking example of governmental 'promotion' of the Christian gospel is seen in the attitude of various representatives of the Roman system towards St Paul. Paul was, in a special and unique way, the "apostle to the nations", and the task of world evangelization rested, at least representatively, on his shoulders. Time and again the onward course of the gospel was made possible because Rome upheld the political rights of one of its own citizens. No imprimatur is put on the method by which Paul may have obtained his citizenship, or on the particular political system to which it attached. But the underlining by Luke of the advantage to the gospel of the Roman administration is one of the prominent features of his account of early Christianity. This patronage was not a patronage of the "church" in any sense in which Luke would have understood that word, but a recognition of the right of Paul to utilize the advantages of his Roman citizenship in the exercise of his apostolic ministry.

(When, in other circumstances, the same government turned to persecute Christians and to put to death those who confessed Christ, it was designated by Christians as a "beast". By this designation it was declared to have departed from its true human function as given by God for the good of mankind. The implications are instructive: had the government acted rightly, it would have encouraged the spread of the truth, not suppressed it.)

The New Testament teaches that all authority (exousia) belongs to God (Romans 13:1, John 19:11), and that the proper exercise of authority by men is God's ordinance, i.e. he wills it for the good of man. Thus government, like marriage, is the ordinance of God, whether those who participate recognize the fact or not. It is realized, at the same time, that systems of government are devised by men in response to human demands and needs. This may be why St Peter speaks of government as a "human ordinance" or "human creation" (anthropine ktisis, 1 Pet 2:13). Men are bidden to submit themselves to all such "human ordinances" for the Lord's sake.

In New Testament times, authority resided chiefly in rulers and magistrates. If you had no citizen rights, you had no voice at all in the appointment of such persons, or in the formulating of any of the laws or rules in accordance with which they would act. If you were a citizen, then you were a member of the political assembly (ekklesia) which appointed the magistrates, and you had some say in the constitution under which you were governed. (For slaves, authority resided, for all practical purposes, in their masters, and wives and children had to submit to the authority of husbands or fathers.) One has the impression that not many of the early Christians were citizens of their respective cities; fewer still citizens of Rome as well, like St Paul.

Perhaps we need to remind ourselves that it was not an entity or organization called "the church" with which early governments had to do, but merely with Christians. The early apologists seldom defend "the church". Origen against Celsus, for example, defends the behaviour and beliefs of Christians, not the church. Christians met in assemblies, of course, which were called, like the assemblies of citizens, churches, but our modern concept of "church and state" as contrasting entities would have been meaningless in New Testament days. The question was, were Christians at liberty to practise their religion, and should governments enable and encourage them to do so? It is quite clear that early Christians did expect governments to recognize the unique validity of the religion they practised, and to protect them in the proclamation of the gospel for all nations. In the New Testament itself, the

Acts of the Apostles clearly, and other parts incidentally, press the claim of Christianity to be the legitimate fulfillment of the Jewish religion. The political importance of this is that Judaism was already a permitted religion (religio licita), and that part of Paul's apologetic was that he had a prior political right to be preaching the gospel of the resurrection. No small part of the reason for so much anti-Jewish feeling on the part of Christians in early centuries was due to the Jewish repudiation of Christianity as having anything to do with its faith.

Our Present Situation

Our forms of government are very different from any which existed in biblical times. Nevertheless, as Christians, we must see government as serving the same broad end of promoting quietness and stability and justice, and as God's agent in the purpose of setting forward the salvation of all men. It is a legitimate aspiration to have in positions of government men who understand not only the means of administrative equity, but the final ends of government as a divine instrument and ordinance.

What is markedly different today from yesterday is the vastness and flexibility of the administration of governmental authority, and the ways in which a government may legitimately be influenced in its courses of action. Our 'democratic' system is not only under regular review by popular franchise; it is continuously sensitive to the will of the people, and even to particular interests where these are not inconsistent with the common good. It allows, expects, and even requires, pressure from such groups, whether these are political parties with comprehensive platforms, or other minority groups representing particular interests. The interests of minorities are not necessarily incompatible with the commonweal, and a complex and flexible democracy allows the ends of government to be served with the maximum of liberty of this sort.

This kind of government is that "ordinance of man" to which it happens to be our duty to submit. This involves not only conforming to the laws and regulations, but an active acceptance of the way the government works. It involves 'operating the system'. We are not slaves in an ancient republican city. We are all citizens, with access to our representatives, and with various avenues of political expression and pressure open to us. Even if we

do not have the government of our choice in power, we must remember that the principle of "loyal opposition" is essential to the healthy working of our particular "ordnance of man"; and that this principle is applicable at various levels outside, as well as inside, parliament. In crude terms, any group of citizens, acting for what it believes to be desirable and right, is entitled, under our system, to get what it can by putting the acid on the government.

Brunner says: "Every State not only confronts every individual, but also the collective body of all its 'subjects' as an independent entity, and yet it is never anything else than the will and the thought of these very people poured into this mould" (The Divine Imperative, p. 441). This is true enough, though we should not confuse the idea of the state as "an independent entity" with the idea of the state as an inflexible entity. It can be constantly changing. The "will and thought of the people" can give the state an ever-changing face, while still securing the ends of quietness and peace, and open doors for the proclamation of the truth.

We may now ask, Is there an obligation on the government to be neutral in regard to religion (or Christianity)? There is no absolute reason why it should be neutral, or why it should not espouse the purpose of promoting religion, or why it should not give encouragement to agencies explicitly devoted to teaching the Word of God.

In this connection, we are aware that our own state is not, in fact, neutral in the matter of the Christian faith (not to mention other states which are more active in the support of the Christian religion than we are). We acknowledge God as the source of our authority; and we invoke Him in our parliamentary deliberations and in our judicial proceedings. Our Queen is recognized as a Christian sovereign, committed to the defence of the Christian faith. Christian leaders are given places of honour, along with officials of the State, on State occasions.

There is nothing improper or inappropriate about this so far as the state is concerned, so long as we will have it so. We could go further if we were minded to. It has not been our mind to do so, largely, no doubt, because of the denominational character of ecclesiastical organization. But support

for ecclesiastical organization is not the same thing as support for the Christian religion. (Had there been only one ecclesiastical denomination in Australia, there is every reason to think that this denomination would have been given full State support and thus have been "established"; nor would the state have exceeded its function had it done so.)

Let me make it clear that I am not an advocate of such "establishment" of particular ecclesiastical systems; but I certainly regard it as open to the state to receive into a position of patronage certain modes of worship and Christian activity, should this be the wish of the people, and so long as the consciences of minorities are not coerced.

Without going as far as establishment in the usual sense, it is also open to the state, if it considers it expedient, to accede to the request of Christian bodies, be they majorities or minorities in the community, to use the instrumentalities of the state for purposes of Christian worship or teaching. I am not here considering whether this would be expedient from a Christian point of view. I am merely saying that it would not contradict anything in the state's true function.

Denomination and the Church

Is there anything in the character of the church which makes it improper for it to accept state patronage or to utilize state instrumentalities in the furtherance of its purpose? The answer depends largely on how "church" is defined.

If we use "church" to mean "denomination" or "group of denominations", there seems no reason why a close connection between "church" and "state" should not, in theory at least, be allowed. (Christians have very good reason, of course, to know that not everything lawful for them is expedient!) The denomination itself is an organization like the state: an external, (dare I say 'secular'?) structure, relating the common interests of a certain number of Christians to the life of the community. Anything the denomination can do for its members, the state can do. If the denomination can build a school, so can the state. If the denomination can appoint a chaplain, so can the state. Whether the state does any of these things is a matter, not of principle but of expediency. Whether the denomination presses the state to act in this way is, again, not

a matter of principle but of expediency.

It will be realized, of course, that the denomination and its instruments are not the "church" in any biblical sense of the word. As we saw earlier, the "church" in the New Testament is nothing but the assemblies of Christians, the purpose of which is for prayer and praise and mutual fellowship. The only point at which this activity touches a government is in regard to permission to congregate. Once property and other considerations enter in, it is another matter - but by then you have a denomination and you have moved into the area of corporate Christian enterprise with all the equipment and structure of a community organization which has to justify itself in and to the state on a "secular" basis.

Education: the Parent and the State

Where is the Christian education of children in all this? Is there any objection, from the point of view of basic Christian obligation, to an educational system in which Christian people, acting directly in relation to the state, or indirectly through their denomination, utilize state instrumentalities?

The question involves a discussion of the nature of Christian education which would be beyond the scope of this paper, and I can give my comment only in the form of some brief propositions:

1. Education, as part of upbringing, is the responsibility of parents. I can see no a priori objection to parents discharging this responsibility, in important parts of it, collectively through state instrumentalities, or through denominational instrumentalities, or through private instrumentalities.

Parents must satisfy themselves that the end they desire is being achieved. This goes for Christian parents as well as those who make no Christian profession.

2. There is a direct and non-transferable duty resting on Christian parents to bring their children up in "the discipline and instruction of the Lord". This duty cannot be passed over to a school or to a church. It is inherent in the whole relationship between the parent and the child. What a child acquires at church is important and vital, but it presupposes a basis of instruction and nurture at home. This is also the essential basis

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irrespective of what sort of schooling a child receives.

3. A child grows in Christian maturity also by the benefits of fellowship (koinonia) experienced at church, including benefits from the ministry of teaching. For these purposes, however, the experience of 'church' may be wider than is yielded merely by the 11 a.m. service at the local denominational headquarters, and may include activities of a less formal and more ephemeral kind, e.g. youth fellowships or I.S.C.F.F. In theory, there is no reason why a scripture class in school could not constitute a 'church', i.e. an assembly of believers in fellowship in the Lord's name, at which His word is ministered (since all the children, and the teacher, are nominal Christians).

4. Teaching the Word of God is not, however, confined to the Christian home or the Christian church. There is a large scope for imparting the Word in any kind of assembly where people will listen. The public ministry of Jesus is instructive in this regard. The occasion is comparatively incidental. Everything depends on the teacher, and his awareness of the condition of his hearers, and perhaps especially on his awareness of the need for a certain parabolic or indirect approach, where there is unbelief or resistance to the gospel among nominal Christians. I do not mean that there is not a proper justification in a school scripture lesson for straightforward instruction on the contents of the Bible. This sort of thing Jesus could take for granted in speaking to the multitudes of his day, and it is entirely right for us to give this instruction to children whose parents wish them to receive it under school auspices. But in the very giving of this instruction, and arising out of it, there will be considerable opportunity for sowing the seed of the gospel in ways appropriate to the capacity of the hearers. But I cannot here enter into the matter of right approach. Rightly understood, and rightly approached, the present scope provided by our state system for those who have a ministry of Christian teaching could well prove our most effective evangelistic opportunity to reach our spiritually indifferent generation with the word of truth.

RELIGION IN CHURCH SCHOOLS

What is expected? By a Church Parent

What do I expect of the school to which I send my sons, in regard to spiritual development? I shall try to answer this question as a Christian parent; not as a clergyman or as a member of a school council.

My answer depends on my view of the total education of my children, of the role of schools in this regard.

As a parent, I believe I have an absolute and inalienable responsibility for the upbringing of my children. It rests on me to ensure that they grow to maturity in a manner beneficial to their natures, and true to their relationship with God and their fellow-people. Although other people guide and instruct my children in these things, no one has the responsibility which rests on me to

As a Christian parent, recognise the further specific obligation to nurture my children in the "discipline and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). This obligation is inherent in the whole relationship between me and my children and involves all I say to them, all I require of them, and the example I give them. In other words, the primary place for such nurture and admonition must be my home, and within my family (this includes participation by my whole family in the life of the church; but nevertheless the primary place of Christian nurture is the home, not the church.)

Recognising the character of the age in which all of us live, and in which children must learn to relate themselves to their fellows, I must see that my children acquire the knowledge and skills which are necessary if they are to be as persons, really part of their generation. Since it is both impracticable and impossible for me to impart this kind of education to my children directly myself, I am bound to avail myself of the facilities provided by schools. But, grateful as I am for this help, regard such particular education as secondary to the moral and spiritual discipline and instruction which alone can provide the basis for the life I must encourage them to lead.

In thus distinguishing between formal education and nurture and discipline of the Lord, I do not mean that you can acquire first the one and then the other or even that you can acquire the one without the other. The conditions of our life hardly make such a dichotomy possible. I mean rather that the formal elements of education must, for the person receiving them, serve the ends of that relationship to God which is the heart of true religion.

What then do I expect of a church school?

The first thing I expect is what I would expect of any school, namely that it will teach my sons, as honestly and conscientiously as it can, the basic knowledge and skills which I lack time and talents to teach. Although I would like to think that a Christian school, because it is Christian, is more honest and conscientious, freer from prejudice and more balanced in its instruction, than other schools, I cannot honestly say that this is why I send my sons to a church school. For this basic purpose, any honest and conscientious school would do. For I do not look to the school, to any school to do for my sons what should do for them, that is, to provide them with the essential elements of Christian training and Christian teaching, and the example of Christ living in the society of a family. Why then am I interested at all in a church school? The answer lies in the modern educational situation. Schools generally have become very comprehensive in the interest they take in the children they teach. Curricula are broad in their scope, and take in the whole life. Social studies and history - once highly suspect of theological principle and not to be made compulsory even in our universities - are taken for granted as good nourishment for the young. Schools likewise claim an interest in the physical and cultural development of children. I think I should say that I do not altogether like this comprehensive tendency of the modern school, as I believe it encourages the idea that the school, or even the State, is finally responsible for the education of the young, and tends to shift the responsibility from parents. But the extent to which the school has this comprehensive character, I feel bound to look to its teachers to share with me the task of helping my sons

relate their knowledge of the world to their personal character and outlook, and to do this in a manner which is consistent with my own outlook and with the fundamental training I am giving them.

Therefore, the thing I look for most in a church school - (indeed in any modern school, but I look more expectantly for it in a church school) - is a certain quality of mind in its teachers, or in at least some of them. This quality must include personal Christian faith and an ability to relate this faith to the whole of life and learning as it affects the area covered by the interests of the school. Given this in a church school, I would not greatly mind if it offered nothing else. However, and again because the school is a comprehensive and corporate society, two things can properly be expected.

First, the curriculum should include a systematic presentation of biblical and theological knowledge commensurate with the extent and depth of other subjects especially where these other subjects raise obvious questions of the nature of man and his relation to the world. It is not fair to raise or imply the basic questions of life without providing adequate material from the Christian revelation and Christian thinking, in terms of which such questions may be answered or at least considered.

Secondly, since the school lives as a community, there should be some community activities of a formal Christian kind, which will give clear articulation to the Christian character of the community. Chapel services are the traditional way of providing these exercises and I consider they ought to continue. But Chapel traditions have their peculiar tyrannies, and I should be happy for more use to be made of the assembly hall and the classroom for prayer and worship. (Perhaps a mixture would be helpful.) I want to see school worship based on the actual community life of the school, and not become a growth out of proportion to that community life or expressing only a section of it. For that reason, it should not encroach on other community activities of the boys, such as the home community or the local church community. Decisions will sometimes have to be made, but the principle is an important one.

One comment about chapel attendance: Example is as important as precept: and I should be quite happy for chapel attendance to be a voluntary activity for boys - but only on condition that it was compulsory for masters!

I have not considered these matters from the point of view of the Christian influence a school might have on boys whose home may not be a Christian home, or may be less Christian than it might be. I have looked at the subject from a Christian parent's angle. However, if there is one practical suggestion I may make, it is this; from time to time - perhaps annually - a school should provide an opportunity for a meeting between parents and school (and by school here I am thinking of the Council and the senior masters) where matters relating to the spiritual development of the children could be considered. This might be a chapel service with a suitable address, or a less formal discussion. There have, in some schools, been valuable discussions of courses between parents and headmaster. I am thinking of something analogous in the area of spiritual responsibilities. Such a meeting might help to articulate, for all concerned, the nature of the school's responsibilities in relation to those of the parents, and might enable the school to challenge the parents to see that the home foundation of Christian character and teaching is being firmly laid.