

## EDUCATION IS A WEAPON

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Stalin said, "Education is a weapon the nature of which will be determined by whom you intend to strike with it." I do not think this concept of education, disastrous as it is, is unique to Stalin. Many have thought of education as a weapon of aggressive nationalism, aggressive racism, aggressive class war, aggressive class privilege. The great educational thinkers have seen it, not as a weapon, but as the instrument of the soul's dignity. The dignity of every child ought to be the central objective of any national or private system or institution of education. The ideology of Moral Re-Armament sees every child as a temple of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Buchman wrote, "The Holy Spirit - there is the force we ought to study." The world is now full of disadvantages, deprived, malnourished, confused children, or children with the works that come from the blind amorality, the immorality or shallow self-gratification of their elders. Education is an instrument which should work towards the cure of every one of these syndromes of personal, family and social disaster.

The late Frank Buchman asked the question in a major speech - what happened where no one stood for purity any more? And he gave the answer - broken homes, nervous and unstable children, the decay of culture, the seed-bed of violence. Again and again teachers find that, because a child's parents are not loyal to one another, the consequence is the instability of the child; the child's attempt to find compensation and protest in disruption; in profanity; in violence; and in contempt for the culture of the school. A distinguished Australian psychiatrist once said to me that she could cure a child of thieving habits even where the child's parents had actively taught the child to steal, when the child's parents were loyal to one another. Where they were not loyal to one another, the child had no foundation on which to build, and the task of cure was made much harder. She meant loyal to one another in the sense of loyal to their marriage vows.

In a treacherous world the child from a background of disaster needs the spiritual and moral steadfastness of the teacher, and needs the respect to the child which is implied towards the child in expecting real achievement and good behaviour. If you expect a child to achieve and to behave you are respecting the child's dignity. This is not a counsel of perfection, but a suggestion that about each child the teacher should seek a wisdom higher than the teacher's own wisdom, in guidance. If you hope and work that a child have the ultimate dignity of being a temple of the Holy Spirit, it is vital to seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, in guidance, about the child. If nervous and unstable children are the victims of impurity, sometimes blatant impurity, in their background, the gift of the purity of the living God is part of the teacher's equipment.

St. Paul wrote, "For the calling of God is not to impurity but to the most thorough purity. You cannot break this rule without somehow cheating your fellow men." The child has already been cheated in many cases, and the teacher's "most thorough purity" may put a stop to the process of cheating the child, - and, also, in relevant cases, to the child's cheating!

The school should be an environment in which spiritual, moral and physical hazards to the child are minimized, and if the school is not, then the class you teach should be. Christ suggested it was better to be a person with a millstone hung around the neck and cast into the sea than to be a person who caused moral, spiritual and physical offence to a child; a statement which causes me to look back on my teaching days with trepidation and concern!

I once opened a library and extensions to a Catholic school in Claremont, Western Australia, invited to do so because Government finance when I was Minister had made the buildings involved possible; and the school choir sang -

"Breathe on me Breath of God,  
Fill me with life anew,  
That I may love what Thou dost love  
And do what Thou would'st do."

That verse is a very practical prayer. Will teachers seek and find ways in which the teacher can allow free play to the breath of God filling the child with "life anew" and find how that culture be made available to the child - the culture of loving what God loves, and doing what God would do?

The child who listens is the child who is listened to. You listen to a child if you have guidance about what the child is actually revealing. You listen to a child if you have guidance about the child who is totally inarticulate. You listen to a child in some cases if you seek out the parent or parents in the background. You listen to a child if you seek the meaning of disastrous behaviour. You listen to a child if your whole being and disposition helps the child to the standards and certainties for which it longs. You listen to the child when sheer sanity and grace are architected by God in yourself.

Some young people in Grafton, New South Wales, were asked to name their College, a new Catholic College, which I opened. They called it Holy Spirit College.

In his speech about Bill Pickle, Frank Buchman mentioned that he, Frank, had had a shrunken 3x2 concept of the Holy Spirit when he was horrified at the deepest spiritual message being given in a State College. He abandoned that shrunken approach and brought the guidance of the Spirit into the College himself and from that action stemmed the world work of Moral Re-Armament of which this education conference is part. He seemed to have the unshakeable conviction that every college was meant to be Holy Spirit college, whatever it was called. Can teachers make the Holy Spirit their discipline and study? That is what this conference is about. Frank Buchman once suggested that the basis of other famines was a famine of listening to the voice of God. Education, the culture of the Holy Spirit, is a weapon to clear the path for a world of grace.