

**"TRUE EDUCATION:  
THE PARAMOUNT  
PURPOSE OF A FREE PEOPLE"**

BY

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OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS



*Commencement Address Delivered  
at the University of Utah*



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## "TRUE EDUCATION: THE PARAMOUNT PURPOSE OF A FREE PEOPLE"

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*Members of the Board of Regents, President Olpin  
and Faculty, Members of the Graduating Class, Ladies and  
Gentlemen:*

"Now Morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime  
Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearl."  
(Milton)

**I**F I were to apply the entrance of graduates and of well-trained youth into the streaming ranks of humanity to that poetic picture of the breaking upon the world of the effulgent light of morning, you would accuse me of making a strained comparison, of attempting to give to education an unmerited, over-estimated value.

Yet, as I face this class of approximately fourteen hundred graduates and realize that they are but one group of five hundred thousand others who will receive similar diplomas this year; when in imagination I see thirty million under-graduates and pupils in our public schools going from school room into summer vacations, I can but think that if every graduate and every child had been influenced even in a slight degree to seek a higher and better life, the moral tone of our Nation would be improved, and the foundation of our Republican form of government made more secure.

Of course, the annual influence of that army of young people upon society is indeterminable and some may claim comparatively infinitesimal, but infinitesimal or not, it is an influence which howsoever imperceptible, is constantly raising or lowering the moral and intellectual standards of communities.

“Who knows what earth needs from earth’s lowest creatures?

No life can be pure in its purpose and strong in its strife

And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.”

(Owen Meredith)

Our Nation is facing critical, if not tragic conditions. Five years since World War II ended, and prospects for peace still hang in the balance—people are almost stunned by the disclosures of the Kefauver investigation committee on the relation of organized crime with politics—the integrity of public officials is critically called into question—poisonous influences of Communist infiltration into key positions in government and in scientific laboratories, have filled loyal citizens with distrust. One United States Senator recently remarked that he believes “The evil and insidious materialism of the Communists is a greater danger to us than their guns.”

Yes, our Nation is facing stupendously critical problems, not the least of which is the present-day indifference toward the need of better training and proper education of Youth—America’s most precious asset, her greatest safeguard, her most important, most potentially profitable enterprise!

### *Education for a Livelihood.*

Students enter school primarily to gain economic or social advantage. But this aim is not always achieved, nor

is it, nor should it be, the highest purpose of education. However, we must not underestimate the value of obtaining an education for a livelihood. Education for economic advancement is a good investment for the individual as well as for the State. The United States as a Nation is still young, but its brief history is replete with striking examples of the value of its free public school system even as a financial investment.

Here, for instance, was a son of a slave entering Iowa State College, having worked his own way through the grades, high school, and three years at Simpson College. Four years later, he took his degree in Agriculture. His work so impressed the authorities that they appointed him a member of the College Faculty. Soon thereafter he refused a tempting offer of \$100,000 a year. As a child, frail and undernourished, he earned a living by doing odd household chores. His adopted parents wanted him to get an education, but offered him no money. The handicapped boy's primary purpose was the same as that of every other child in America; namely, to gain economic and social betterment—to broaden his means of gaining a livelihood. Experts say that this man (Dr. Washington Carver) has done more than any other living man to rehabilitate agriculture in the South. Since 1898 the industry which he fostered has grown until it now runs into more than sixty million dollars a year.

No, I do not in the least disparage this aim, nor criticize our public school system for planning to make possible its realization. But education for a livelihood is not the highest purpose of education. "The fallacious belief," writes Dr. Robert M. Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, "that education can in some way contribute to vocational and social success has done more than most things to disrupt American education. What education can do, and perhaps all it can do, is to produce a trained mind. \* \* \*

It is principles, and everlastingly principles, not data, not facts, not helpful hints, but *principles* which the rising generation requires if it is to find its way through the mazes of tomorrow. No man among us can tell what tomorrow will be like. All we know with certainty is that it will be different from today."

(From "Ferment in Education" pages 34-35.)

To train childhood along these conventional lines there was expended on education, including high schools, during 1950, *five billion* dollars. This was a drop, in percentage of the national income, from 2.53 per cent in 1940 to 2.27 per cent in 1949.

At first thought this seems to be a great sum of money—as much as the American people spend on horse racing every year! In that same period it is estimated that crime and criminals cost the government five times that amount, or twenty billion dollars. This is a state of affairs that reminds one of Joseph Malin's, "The Fence or the Ambulance,"—

"Better guide well the young than reclaim them  
when old;  
For the voice of true wisdom is calling;  
'To rescue the fallen is good, but 'tis best  
To prevent other people from falling.'  
Better close up the source of temptation and  
crime  
Than deliver from dungeon or galley,  
Better put a strong fence around the top of the  
cliff  
Than an ambulance down in the valley."

Law enforcement agencies reported that about fifteen per cent of those arrested and finger-printed involved young people under twenty-one years of age. Patriotic citizens, clear-thinking men look with apprehension and foreboding

upon this increasing tendency of youth toward delinquency and criminality, and with commendable zeal and enterprise put forth every effort to foster counteracting and uplifting organizations.

However, after all is said and done, the most potent force for training youth in the United States today is our public school system. But let us face clearly and forcefully the fact that the paramount ideal permeating all education in the grades, the high school, through college and the university, should be more spiritual than economic.

I am but repeating what we all know and feel when I say that our country's greatest asset is its manhood. Upon that depends not only the survival of the individual freedom vouchsafed by the Constitution and Bill of Rights, and all other ideals for which the founders of the Republic fought and died, but the survival of the best that we cherish in present-day civilization throughout the world.

The preservation of these must come through education. Lest you think that I am merely an idealist, appealing for something which cannot be attained practically through the curriculum of our public schools, let me say that if the *purpose* be properly emphasized and the *desire* to achieve it be generally sensed, the coming generation and adults of the present time can be influenced within the next ten years. Still fresh in our memory is the fact that a paranoiac, with a native ability to influence the masses, demonstrated through concentrated, continued effort by specially-trained instructors and leaders, how the minds of youth could be directed within two decades to accept even a perverted ideal. How near he came to the realization of his aim within a few short years is now a matter of history. If youth can be so influenced to degenerate to the jungle, it can also be trained by united purpose to ascend the path of spiritual attainment.

Only through proper education can these fundamental principles become fixed and guiding influences in the lives of human beings. Our educational system will radiate such principles just to the extent that we employ in our public schools, high schools, colleges, and universities men and women who are not only eminent in their particular professions, but loyal to the Constitution of our land, influential as leaders, noble in character.

Imagine what it would mean to the national integrity of America if every one of the half million graduates, in addition to his having earned his diploma, he could cherish the memory of a noble teacher of whom throughout the years he could say as a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States said of one who influenced his University career—"I admired him for his learning, loved him for his goodness, profited greatly from both. He believed that scholastic attainments were better than riches, but that better than either were faith, love, charity, clean living, clean thinking, loyalty, tolerance, and all the other attributes that combine to constitute that most precious of all possessions—good character."

In his appreciation of the instructor who wielded the most influence in his life, this leader of men is but echoing the sentiments expressed by Ralph Waldo Emerson, reputedly the wisest American—"Character is higher than intellect; a great soul will be fit to live as well as to think." The most potent influence in training our youth to cherish life, to keep their word of honor, to have increased respect for human kind and love of justice, is the life and personality of the teacher. If the people of the United States would have the highest returns for their financial investment in education, they must as a matter of sound business judgment have in all our schools teachers of outstanding leadership and wholesome influence. Dr. Ralph Macdonald rightly portrays as follows the high class of men and women



whom youth should have as leaders and exemplars: "The teachers of our young must be strong and vigorous; keen of intellect, balanced in outlook, superior in personality traits, deep-rooted in their spiritual foundations. They must have a passionate devotion to human freedom, and be anchored to an abiding faith in the improvability of man. To such an outstanding personality must be added education and the heritage of the human race, with a loving understanding of human growth and development in the precepts of democracy, in the lure of the school, and in the skills of teaching."

Commenting upon this, Chas. Luckman, President of Lever's Bros. Co., writes: "I think it is an active portrayal of the kind of people most of us expect our children's teachers to be. It is not the job-description that is amazing; what is amazing is \* \* \* that we are so naive that we actually expect to command the services of this type of intellect at an average salary which is lower than our starting-wage for the youngsters who are just beginning to work in our factories. No educational system in the world could be expected to survive in the face of such absurd economic thinking."

There are two hundred sixty-one thousand business men who today serve on school boards throughout the nation, constituting 76% of the total membership of these boards. What a mighty responsibility these business men have to remedy the bad economic thinking which now paralyzes our educational system!

The contribution of general education to the industrial and commercial greatness of the country is obvious on every hand—in research laboratories, in increased productivity of farms, in achievements of electrical, physical, chemical, engineering sciences, in harnessing, either for the benefit or destruction of man, the boundless force of atomic

energy—but what true education has done, and may do to awaken in the human heart a sense of the end and aim of human existence on this earth, what it has done to raise the standard of citizenship, how it has helped to make living happier by contributing to the prosperity, peace, and security of our country, are beyond evaluation!

Stockholders—the people of the United States—must make this greatest of industries in our Republic pay dividends in character and true citizenship or face inevitable failure and possible catastrophe.

### *Conclusion.*

Southey tells us that, in his walk one stormy day, he met an old woman, to whom, by way of greeting, he made the rather obvious remark that it was dreadful weather. She answered philosophically, that, in her opinion, “any weather is better than none”! So we may say that any education is better than none, but a free people to remain free must ever strive for the highest and best.

To you members of the Graduating Class, I extend sincere congratulations upon your having completed the prescribed courses of study in your respective chosen professions, but, more than that, upon your increased ability to preserve the liberties of your country, and to be of greater service to your fellow men—for whatever your future successes or seeming failures, I still look upon all recipients of true education as individuals and groups radiating an influence that makes less dense and ineffective the darkness of ignorance, of suspicion, of hatred, of bigotry, avarice and greed that continue to envelop in darkness the lives of men. Of course, to quote Newel Dwight Hillis: “Not all men are of equal value—Not many Platos—only one, to whom a thousand lesser minds look up and learn and think. Not many Dantes: one, and a thousand poets tune their

harps to his and repeat his notes. Not many Raphaels; one, and no second. But a thousand lesser artists looking up to him are lifted to his level. Not many royal hearts—great magazines of kindness. Happy the town blessed with a few great minds and a few great hearts. One such citizen will civilize an entire community.”