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**Higher Education**  
and  
**Catholic Leadership**  
In Canada

by  
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# Higher Education and Catholic Leadership



## The Problem In Canada

In an article on "After-War Problems," the Very Rev. Vincent McNabb, O. P., wrote:

"The chief after-war problem will naturally be how to bring the vision of the Catholic Church, the Bride of Christ, before the millions of our fellow-countrymen. Humanly speaking, our present methods can never hope to succeed in converting the country. Moreover, until we have intelligently and patiently exhausted all the human means of converting our country we have no claims upon the divine help. Prayer that is a substitute for human action neither praises nor persuades, but insults God."

Although Father McNabb is eminent as a Master of Theology whom it would be presumptuous for a lay writer to correct on a theological point, it may be well to mention that Father McNabb cannot mean that we must wait until we have exhausted all human means before we begin to call upon God for His help in our Catholic work. We must use supernatural and natural means simultaneously. However, the lesson that Father McNabb endeavours to drive home so strongly is profoundly true. Nothing will excuse Catholics for neglecting the natural, human means necessary to carry on the apostolic work of the Church.

Amongst our religious duties is the duty of secular efficiency in so far as efficiency in secular things goes to promote the strength and influence of the Catholic body. I imagine that even St. Francis of Assisi, with all his passion for the Lady Poverty and his love for what was lowliest, would not think it desirable that Catholics should be the helots of the community, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, whilst the higher social functions, the professions of teaching of letters, of journalism, of medicine, of law, the business of government and the leadership of industry were in the hands of heretics.

We can all see that there is no station of life from which Catholic influence should be excluded. We have all to fit ourselves for the most efficient performance of the duties of our station, whether it be a higher or a lower one. The plea for Catholic efficiency is simply a plea for Catholic education in all its branches. We want the best possible secondary education, and the best possible higher education, as well as the best possible primary education. I am not now speaking of religious teaching, the importance of which Catholics recognize, but of secular teaching, the importance of which many Catholics do not recognize. In Toronto not long ago a deceased Catholic's estate, amounting to many thousands of dollars, was distributed according to the terms of the will. For parish purposes and charitable purposes there were very munificent bequests, but for educational work the testator left not one dollar. In some countries such a Catholic will would be regarded as very singular, but here it is the usual thing. It is rather a singularity when a rich Canadian Catholic is found making any substantial endowment for an educational institution. That remarkable priest, who is the head of the Belgian Catholic Labour Unions, Père Rutten, says: "Catholics aware of their duties and responsibilities have at all times set educational good works in the very forefront of their interests and of their almsgivings." When Father Rutten pleads for Catholic social work he does so on the ground that "social work is only a continuation of the work of education." It can hardly be said that Catholics throughout Canada set educational good works in the forefront of their interests. There have been very few examples of the munificence that used to be traditional with Catholic patrons of learning, and to which the world owes such universities as Oxford, Cambridge, and Louvain.

### **The Nation's Business is Our Business**

Catholics will be backward socially (I do not use the word in the snobbish sense) in proportion as they are backward educationally. Such backwardness as exists is due to lack of vision, to lack of real Catholicity. We are too ex-



clusively occupied with our own particular selves, our own particular parishes, our own little localisms. Therefore, we do not make Catholicism the power and influence in the national life that it ought to be. We are not succeeding in "bringing the vision of the Bride of Christ, the Catholic Church, before the millions of our fellow-countrymen." These countrymen of ours are blind and often bigoted. There are Catholics who make this Protestant blindness and consequent bigotry an excuse for every kind of damnable selfishness and narrowness on the part of Catholics themselves, for neglect to share in the nation's work, for refusal to co-operate in patriotic, civic and social undertakings as if they were none of our business. The nation's business is our business. If we serve the nation efficiently we serve the Church. We take the best means to open the eyes of our fellow-countrymen to the fact that Catholicism is not uncivic. If we make ourselves useful we shall make ourselves valued and anti-Catholic prejudice will be dispelled.

It is not so much for our own sake that we should seek to dispel prejudice as for the sake of our separated brethren themselves. We might indeed say: "Let Catholics adopt the motto of 'Ourselves Alone,' let them trust to their own resources and leave the bigots to their bigotry." But such an attitude would be profoundly un-Catholic. It is our strict duty to labour, in spite of all failures, to dispel anti-Catholic prejudices, because without doing that we cannot succeed in what Father McNabb says is our great work, to bring the vision of the Bride of Christ, the Catholic Church, before the millions of our fellow-countrymen.

### **THE MEANS TO POWER**

In the preface to his "Idea of a University," Cardinal Newman says:

"Whereas Protestants have great advantages of education in the schools, colleges and universities of the United Kingdom, our ecclesiastical rulers have it in purpose that Catholics should enjoy the like advantages, whatever they are, to the full. I conceive that they view it as prejudicial to the interests of religion that there should be any cultivation of mind bestowed on Protestants which is not given to their own youth also."

Those words were written by Cardinal Newman sixty-six years ago when he was engaged on his noble, but ill-fated enterprise of founding a Catholic university in Dublin. Broadly speaking, the generation to which Newman spoke did not need to be convinced of the value and power of higher education. Newman could remark, without labouring the point:

“Our Prelates are impressed with the fact and its consequences, that a youth who ends his education at seventeen, is no match, other things being equal, for one who ends it at twenty-two.”

Dealing with the Catholic body in the United Kingdom in 1852, Newman had difficulties enough, difficulties which brought his efforts to apparent failure. But amongst his difficulties was not that “dismal and abysmal apathy” which a university professor recently declared was the prevailing attitude of Catholics in Canada to the question of higher education. After Newman was in his grave Catholic Ireland obtained the National University she had so long striven for, and in England it is now possible, as it was not in Newman’s day, for Catholics freely to avail themselves of the best educational resources in the country under religious conditions which are satisfactory, though not ideal.

In English-speaking Canada to-day our chief lack is not opportunities for higher education, but it is lack of desire for higher education, lack of appreciation of its value and power. We have St. Francis Xavier’s College at Antigonish; we have St. Michael’s College, federated to the University of Toronto; St. Boniface’s College is in a similar relation to the University of Manitoba; and in Montreal there is Loyola College, federated to Laval. There are some persons who wish for a Catholic University of Canada, like the institution that the Catholics of the United States have established in Washington with the name of the Catholic University of America. Into a discussion of that aspiration I do not propose to enter. At the present time it is an academic, not a practical question. Our urgent business at the moment is to awaken Catholic people



to the fact that apathy to higher education is fatal to the future progress of the Catholic Church in Canada.

### Must We Be Outclassed?

If Catholics are, man for man, outclassed by Protestants in efficiency, Catholics as a body will lose power and influence and consideration. What do we want higher education for? It is interesting to answer in the words of Cardinal Newman, who is telling the advantages of university education:

“They are,” he says, “in one word the culture of the intellect. Robbed, oppressed and thrust aside, Catholics in these islands have not been in a condition for centuries to attempt the sort of education which is necessary for the man of the world, the statesman, the landholder, or the opulent gentleman. Their legitimate stations, duties, employments, have been taken from them, and the qualifications withal, social and intellectual, which are necessary both for reversing the forfeiture and for availing themselves of the reversal. The time is come when this moral disability must be removed.”

Newman was thinking of a society and an age more aristocratic than our own. We have, for instance, ceased to associate particularly culture of the intellect with opulent gentlemen. The landholder is not the power he once was. However, Newman was right in viewing the lack of education primarily as a disability which Catholics suffered barring them from their legitimate stations, duties and employments.

No less than in the aristocratic old countries of Mid-Victorian times the lack of higher education is a disability to Catholics in the democratic Canada of the twentieth century. The disability is, perhaps, even more serious now. In Newman's time higher education was necessary for the “gentleman” and for the learned professions, law, medicine, and the Church; but it was not considered necessary in trade and industry to any considerable extent. To-day industry has become so much a matter of applied science that it calls for the services of the most highly trained men. A modern nation depends at least as much upon the education of its engineers and chemists as upon its lawyers and

doctors. Mind is the most important asset of a nation, and the culture of mind is its most important worldly business.

### THE HIGHER COMMAND

The building up of a new nation like Canada is a task that involves tremendous problems. It is a task that presents great opportunities to great men. The country reaps a splendid harvest when its problems are solved right, but for mistakes there is a bitter price to pay. Britain lost her American colonies; and the United States, eighty years after winning its independence, had to fight a long and bloody civil war in order to establish its national unity. These are but two instances of calamities that represented failures in statesmanship, just as the Confederation of Canada represented a triumph of statesmanship, even though we may recognize that the problems involved in Confederation are by no means all solved.

Some of the chief political problems for Canada are those due to racial differences and those due to immigration. Catholics are as much interested as other citizens in the political aspects of these problems, and they are also, more than other citizens, specially interested in their religious bearings. This nation has the immense educational and social task of "assimilating" or "Canadianizing," as it is called, the Slav, Teutonic and Latin immigrants who come from Europe to settle in our midst. The Canadianizing process is going on, and it is being directed and assisted by men who have made a special study of immigration problems, and who organize in a large way to secure their ends. The population of this country is forty per cent. Catholic; its Government is, we can safely say, at least three-fourths Protestant: and the Canadianizing process applied to immigrants is very largely also Protestantizing or paganizing. Why is it so? Protestants are not such a large majority numerically, yet how massively, how overwhelmingly Protestant is the spirit, the character, the atmosphere of the Dominion! Why is it so? Why are we Catholics so insignificant? And what are we going to do about it?

## A Cardinal States the Case

Cardinal Bourne, the Archbishop of Westminster, visited Canada some years ago and was profoundly impressed with the opportunities before the Church here. When he went back to England he spoke thus to the Catholic Congress at Norwich in 1912:

“A new population with amazing growth has come into existence in Canada, the whole situation in Canada has changed, and the Church in Canada has to face a responsibility which a few years ago could not have been foreseen. Is not the acceptance of that responsibility part of her divinely given mission, second only in importance to, if it be not even greater than, the earlier mission which she has discharged so nobly?”

Matthew Arnold used to preach the need of what he called by a German word, *geist*, a largeness of outlook and of understanding. The Catholics of Canada will not succeed in their tasks without *geist*. How shall we get *geist*? Lord Haldane, like Matthew Arnold, preaches *geist* for secular purposes, and both these men agree that it is the product of the very highest education, of the very best universities. Lord Haldane says:

“If universities exist in sufficient numbers and strive genuinely to foster, as the outcome of their training, the moral and intellectual virtue which is to be its own reward, the humanity which has the ethical significance that ought to be inseparable from high culture, then the State need not despair. For from among men who have attained to this level there will, if there be a sufficient supply of them, emerge those who have that power of command which is born of penetrating insight. Such a power generally carries in its train the gift of organization, and organization is one of the foundations of national strength. The capacity to organize . . . . is a gift of far-reaching significance. It is operative alike in public and private life, and it imports two separate stages in its application. The first is that of taking thought and fashioning a comprehensive plan, and the second is putting into operation the plan so fashioned. The success of what is done depends on the thoroughness of the thinking that underlies it.”

The success of an army depends, among other things, upon the quality of its Higher Command. If the plans of a battle or a campaign are badly conceived by the Higher Command, the most perfect discipline and valour of the



rank and file will not bring victory. The Catholic forces in Canada require a Higher Command endowed with *geist*, men with big minds for big problems. I am now thinking of strictly ecclesiastical matters, which are exclusively within the sphere of the Hierarchy, but of those social religious questions that are the concern of the laity. The Higher Command cannot be purely clerical. We need laymen with *geist*, with genius for leadership and large organization, that we may be ridden of that narrowness of outlook which is holding back Catholic progress in Canada. And as Lord Haldane suggests, it is education in the highest degree that will give a people leaders of this quality.

### THE LESSON OF LOUVAIN

“Some time ago I had a conversation with a distinguished Belgian gentleman, and I asked him how it came about that the Catholics of Belgium were able to face their opponents and defeat them, time after time, at the hustings, and keep the Government in their own hands against the bitter hostility of Socialists and doctrinaire Liberals. ‘The one explanation of it all is,’ he said to me, ‘that the University of Louvain has given the Catholic body, not only great leaders—statesmen of European reputation to whom the King may safely entrust the Government—but it has filled every district of the country with capable and educated men, men who understand Catholic principles and know how to defend them; and these men keep the people out of the hands of the unbelievers and Socialists, and show them the way to political power.’”

The foregoing is from an article by the late Dr. O’Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, written when the Catholics of Ireland were still deprived of University education. Bishop O’Dwyer was a leader in the fight to secure redress of that grievance. He added:

“That is what we want in Ireland at the head of our popular movement: some few men of intellect and high culture; and throughout the country a large body of really educated men.”

In his recently published “Reminiscences,” Lord Morley, the distinguished writer and Cabinet minister, speaks of his days at Oxford, and he remarks on the extraordinary success of his fellow-Oxford men in winning political distinction. When Palmerston made his government in 1859 his Cabinet held six Oxford first class men (three of them

double firsts) and out of the Cabinet four first classes. In these more democratic days the University man has not lost his leadership. Two out of the five members of the War Cabinet are Oxford men, and of the other positions in the Government only a minority are held by men without a University training. The present Imperial Chancellor of Germany, von Hertling, was a professor of philosophy in a Catholic college; everybody knows that President Wilson was head of Princeton University before going to the White House; and M. Poincaré, the President of the French Republic, is also a University professor.

The man with the trained mind becomes the leader of the people, and it is the University that gives this training to the mind and produces such leaders. Of course, there are men who rise to leadership through sheer natural genius without many educational advantages. But such men as Lloyd-George, Joseph Chamberlain and Abraham Lincoln are exceptions. A nation cannot depend upon such rarities, but it must provide the schools where leaders of the finest quality can be trained. As Lord Haldane says:

“The elementary school raises our people to the level at which they may become skilled workers. The secondary school assists to develop a much smaller, but still large class of well-educated citizens. But for the production of that limited body of men and women whose calling requires high talent, the University or its equivalent alone suffices.”

### **The Gifts of Leadership**

It is from the Universities that we get the Higher Command, the men with the very finest intellectual powers, the greatest gifts of leadership, minds that can master the hardest problems, and fashion and carry out comprehensive plans, giving inspiration and direction to their fellows. The nations of the world know the value of such men, and they grudge no money sent on their discovery and training. The Church needs these men as well as the State. Who can estimate the value to religion of such a man as Cardinal Mercier, considering nothing he has done during this war, but only his services to Catholic thought and learning through his work at Louvain! No one can read the history

of the re-birth of the Catholic Church in England during the nineteenth century without being struck with the enormous importance of individuals—Wiseman, Manning, Newman.

Scholarship, and the capacity for affairs, are qualities valuable not only for secular purposes; the Catholic body can never afford to neglect their cultivation; and for the Church as for the State, the means of their cultivation is higher education. Neither our clergy nor the Catholic laity can be intellectually inferior to Protestants if the Church is to fulfil her proper mission. If Catholics are to keep, or rather gain their place in the public life of Canada, they must, like the Catholics of Belgium, avail themselves of higher education to train the men fitted to lead and to rule. "Some few men of intellect and high culture; and throughout the country a large number of really educated men. That is what we want in Ireland at the head of our popular movements," said Bishop O'Dwyer. And that is what we want in Canada.

### **CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY**

It has always been recognized that a higher education, that is, an education of University standard, is necessary for a man aspiring to eminence in government or in the so-called learned professions of law and medicine. A University education has not always been regarded as essential, or even desirable, for men who intended to make their way to the top in business and industry. In the year 1889 Mr. Andrew Carnegie, when addressing the workmen at the dedication of the Carnegie Library at Braddock, said:

"In my own experience I can say that I have known few young men intended for business who were not injured by a collegiate education. Had they gone into active life during the years spent in college they would have been better educated men in every sense of that term. The fire and energy have been stamped out of them, and how to so manage as to live a life of idleness, and not a life of usefulness, has become the chief question with them."

Mr. Carnegie, in thus condemning advanced education as a preparation for business life, was expressing the prevailing opinion of his time, and an opinion that is still held



somewhat widely. It is thought that a youth spends his time better getting practical business experience than in college. But Mr. Carnegie himself has changed his views. He is now emphasizing the business value of University education. Seven years after his Braddock address he spoke at Cornell University and said:

“The exceptional graduate should excel the exceptional non-graduate. He has more education, and education will always tell, the other qualities being equal.”

Even when he opposed liberal education as a preparation for business life, Mr. Carnegie was a strong advocate of technical education for men engaged in manufacturing and industry. In 1890 Mr. Carnegie said:

“The trained (apprenticed) mechanic of the past, who has, as we have seen, hitherto carried off most of the honours in our industrial works, is now to meet a rival in the scientifically educated youth who will push him hard—very hard indeed. Three of the largest steel manufacturing concerns in the world are already under the management of three young educated men. . . . Such young educated men have an important advantage over the apprenticed mechanic—they are open-minded and without prejudice. The scientific attitude of mind, that of the searcher after truth, renders them receptive of new ideas. Great and invaluable as the working mechanic has been, and is, yet he is disposed to adopt narrow views of affairs, for he is generally well up in years before he comes into power. It is different with the scientifically trained boy.”

### **Science and National Power**

There are obvious reasons why advanced education is now more necessary for success in industry than it formerly was. In the first place, industry itself has become infinitely more technical, more a matter of applied science, than it used to be. We know that a nation's military and naval power is now as much a matter of supremacy in chemistry and engineering as it is in strategical skill or the training of troops. In the same way a nation's industrial position depends upon its chemists and engineers, the men scientifically trained to understand the forces of nature and harness them for the development of a country's material resources. Germany is the classic example of a country whose industrial expansion, an expansion more wonderful even than that of England three-quarters of a

century earlier, has been the result of a national devotion to education and research. In Germany the great manufacturing concerns have watched the colleges for young men of promise, and they have hastened to secure such men by the offer of responsible positions and high salaries. On this continent and in Britain there is not the same systematic search on the part of industrial chiefs for the discovery of ability. A young man is left more to assert his own powers and force his own way to the front. But year by year industry is finding it necessary to establish closer relations with the college, and the best students are being more sought after to fill the best positions.

It is not only in the more scientific and technical branches of industry, as engineering, that the importance of advanced education is securing increased recognition. For general business administration the University-trained man is proving his superiority. A leading American railroad manager writes:

“My own feeling is that as the control of large properties comes to involve more and more technical information, makes larger drafts on capacity for organization, and to be handled not in the process of evolution as the present managers have come to them, but as a going business—as they must be dealt with in the future—they can only be handled in the main by people who have had a thorough training and liberal education.”

An American University President, Prof. Chas. F. Thwing, comments on the significant phrase, “going business,” in the above quotation. Men in the future will take up railroading as it is carried on now with the vast forces involved. They won't enter the business when the business is small and let it grow with them. They must start with the handling of a very extensive and complex organization, and therefore they need to start with the best possible training of mind. A higher education becomes as essential to the captains and lieutenants of industry as to judges and statesmen.

### **PROGRESS OR STAGNATION?**

About a dozen years ago a brilliant Irish Bishop was exerting himself, with surpassing eloquence, to make his

countrymen realize how calamitous it was to the most vital interests of Catholic Ireland to be deprived of University education. He described how the chief countries of the world, Germany, the United States, England, were year by year spending millions and still more millions for the advancement of the higher education which they knew to be essential to them, if they were to hold their own in international competition. The late Bishop O'Dwyer, of Limerick, after speaking of this, said :

“What is the feeling of an intelligent Irishman reading all this? He looks about him on this land of torpor and decay; he stands as one in the midst of the great stagnant morass they call Irish life; no University worth the name—no genuine education, no intellectual life and energy grasping the problems of our own environment, but systems as worn out and obsolete as would be in modern warfare the bows and arrows of our primitive ancestors.”

Bishop O'Dwyer destroyed some illusions with which the Catholics of Ireland had given themselves a false comfort about their standing in education. It is easy to deceive ourselves by an unthinking acceptance of examination results. In Ontario, we may get an entirely mistaken notion of the efficiency of our primary schools by taking the high proportion of successful candidates among those writing the High School Entrance Examinations. Such a high proportion of successful candidates is no true criterion at all. We can only judge the efficiency of a school, so far as examinations can prove efficiency, if we know the number of those who write the examination, and the number of those in the school who ought to write the examination, but do not. If you have a senior class of twenty pupils, and you pick out only the brightest five to write the examination, it is not difficult to get all the five to pass and thus parade a 10 per cent. success, when really it is only a 25 per cent. success.

### **The University Indispensable**

Bishop O'Dwyer remarks that the Catholics of Ireland were annually dazzled and gratified at the successes of the Catholic pupils in the Intermediate Examinations, which led to the belief that Catholic teachers, without any University advantages, were the equals of other teachers who



had those advantages. But, said Bishop O'Dwyer, that was a mistake. Although several of the great teaching orders, like the Jesuits and the Vincentians, had a tradition of teaching among themselves which took the place of a University for them, yet in order to hold their own in the Intermediate Examination they had to employ layment from Universities, non-Catholics often, in order to teach their pupils classics and mathematics. Moreover, it was little use to have secondary education for their best students when it could not be completed at a University.

“And in that fact,” said Bishop O'Dwyer, “humiliating as it is to have to admit, is to be found the reason why Irish Catholics, as a body, are cut off from the highest prizes in life, whether these are to be gained in competition in the civil service or in professional careers, or in literature or science. We have never had the culture, the mental discipline, the training which such studies can give, and we are simply outclassed by our more fortunate fellow-citizens.”

Through no fault of the Irish people themselves, but through the opposition of the Protestant ascendancy in England and Ulster, Catholic Ireland suffered these grievous disabilities. It was not lack of primary education or secondary education, but of higher education, that the Bishop deplored. The most far-reaching injury to all parts of the national life issued from the absence of a University that Catholics could conscientiously attend. The British Government has at last righted this long-standing wrong. There is now a National Catholic University in Ireland.

The words the Bishop of Limerick applied to Ireland have a very near interest for Catholics in Canada. Not through an unjust deprivation, as was the case in Ireland, but through their own indifference, Catholics in Canada are letting themselves be outclassed by their Protestant fellow-citizens. They are truly cutting themselves off from the highest prizes in life, and falling behind whether in the civil service, or in professional careers, or in literature, science or industry. We cannot continue in our attitude of “dismal and abysmal” apathy to higher education unless we are content to be an inferior people in this Dominion.



