



The School



Education—Its Last End

What the last end of education should be is still a problem with many educational writers. They deplore the predominance of utilitarian aims in the choice of subjects and in the actual teaching process; they wish the school to arouse and develop an appreciation of the human, social and spiritual aspect of every subject. Children should be urged to keep looking for new relations between their work and humankind. The great ideal of education is to start them growing in ability to realize that the study of mathematics, for instance, helps them not only to make a living but to understand the beauty of order, the greatness and symmetry of the universe, and many of the wonders of human achievement.

Growth is worth striving for as an end in so far as it tends to widen the pupil's vision and to teach him to consider the human and social aspects of any department of life. But unless it takes on a richer content it does not satisfy the requirements of the ultimate end of education. This should square with the ultimate end of man. If education does not ultimately tend to develop man's abilities to attain his last end, it has failed, no matter how diversified and ideally rich its proximate aims are. This is merely applying the awful words of Scripture beginning with, "What doth it profit a man?"

It can also be said that the last end of education is to bring out and develop that which is best in man. Now man possesses no greater prerogative than that he was created in and is the image and likeness of God. He is naturally the image of God in so far as by his intellect and will he has an aptitude to know and love God in a natural way and for natural motives; he is supernaturally but imperfectly in this life, and perfectly in heaven. This perfect and supernatural knowledge and love of God constitutes the essence of the last end of man, and it can only be obtained by the development in this life of both the natural and supernatural, imperfect knowledge and love of God. Hence to bring out that which is most perfect in man is to lead him to his last end. Growth in the knowledge and love of God!