These definitions are enough to make clear that what we have in mind is a general problem, not one confined to any particular country, university, college or school. We are dealing with principles, not with concrete political situations. Yet it is our sincere conviction that particular situations should be discussed in the light of these principles and that facing the nature of the problem is a vital necessity for all non-totalitarian societies.

What is at stake is not the right of the liberal State to teach, nor its ability to do so. The real issue is that liberal States are exhibiting a growing tendency to assume the whole responsibility for public education at the very moment when the notion of morality itself is losing its meaning. Hence, for the liberal State, this curious dilemma, either to enforce a moral code whose justification it does not itself recognize, or to stand by and watch the gradual disintegration of public morality. In the face of such alternatives we should like to suggest that, precisely because it is liberal, the modern State should favour those Christian schools which alone give an education based upon positive principles. How this can best be done is no longer just a philosophical problem but a political one as well; and there is no reason for thinking that it is a problem for which there is only one solution.

Himself a Catholic, the author of this lecture has always had in mind Catholic schools; but he does not think that these are the only schools deserving the attention of public powers. The liberal State should encourage religious education under all its forms, at least if it realizes how urgent is its own need of morally educated citizens. Let Protestants give their children a Protestant education, provided only they realize that "not to be Catholic" is not in itself enough to make an education "protestant." The liberal State is not a Church; we do not expect it to decree the marks of the true religion. Nor are we looking to it for spiritual guidance. States are only too fallible, and those among us who wish to see them enforce the true religion, should always remember what happens in those countries where what is enforced by the State is a false religion. With the liberal State, religious tolerance is a political necessity, and to recognize this practical fact is neither to indulge in philosophical scepticism, nor to profess indifference in matters of religion. In these necessarily sketchy pages, we are simply warning the liberal State that its own survival is at stake, and that, unless it be resolved to commit suicide, it cannot allow Christian education to perish.

The Breakdown of Morals and Christian Education

Before approaching the actual subject of my lecture, I beg to warn this kindly audience that there is something deceptive in the simplicity of its title. Nothing would be easier than to begin with a depressing picture of contemporary morality. Our morning papers bring us every day our usual supply of crimes, armed robberies, criminal assaults, and quite especially those spicy private scandals which always find, in the mind of their readers, some secret complicity. Just take a look at the cheap collections of popular novels! What is the usual subject matter of these twenty-five cent pot-boilers? Most of the time, crime and sex. Nor is immorality confined to the sphere of private life. Governments themselves are today investigating their own criminal activities. Public reports are issued by official commissions revealing the corruption of politicians, of officials, of judges, and of the police, as though even those who make the laws, and who are in charge of enforcing them, no longer feel bound by their authority. Indeed, it would be very easy to show that there is a general crisis of morality in our own times, so much so that juvenile delinquency is becoming for the State a more and more urgent problem.

But that's just the trouble, it would be too easy. Every historian knows that this sort of complaint is a perennial one. Each human generation seems to live under the delusion that the preceding ones were distinctly better, more honest and more virtuous. Now I would not maintain that all human generations are equally good or equally bad; my only point is that, in former times, it was all a question of degree. Just as we can distinguish good and bad moments in the lives of individuals, so can we discern, in the history of Rome, of England or of France, periods during which the bonds of morality seemed to get somewhat loose, and other periods during which these very same bonds appeared to tighten again. Let us remember, for instance, the puritan civilization
of seventeenth-century New England, with the violent reaction it provoked in American literature. Or let us compare pre-Victorian England to both Victorian England and post-Victorian England. Here we can observe, under a very concrete form these alternations of moral rigidity and of moral looseness which follow each other, at least in some countries, with the regularity of an historical law.

What is happening today is something quite different. The very starting point of my remarks is not the breakdown of the *mores*, that is to say, of moral behaviour, but the breakdown of morality itself. The very idea that there is an objective distinction between good and evil, and that man, by consulting his reason, can tell with certitude what is right and what is wrong, is today publicly discussed, subjected to a sharp critique and, as often as not, rejected as wholly deprived of rational justification. This is something entirely different from, and much more serious than, any temporary relaxation or loosening of moral laws themselves. This is the denial of the very existence of such laws. The real trouble with our own times is not the multiplication of sinners, it is the disappearance of sin.

There are reasons for this tremendous change in attitude. First of all, there is the openly-stated denial that there is a God. Next, there is the open recognition of the consequences of this admission in so far as the validity of moral laws is concerned. There have always been practical atheists, that is to say, men who have lived as though there were no God. There have always been some avowed atheists, that is to say, men who, for philosophical reasons, have been convinced that there is in reality an actual being corresponding to the word "God." But what is happening today is something different. I should say: essentially different. It is the decision, made by certain men, and even by certain States, to proclaim the non-existence of God as a scientifically established dogma, and not only to profess it, but to teach it in schools, in colleges and in universities. Nor is this all. For indeed, if it is true that there is no God, then the whole of human life, both private and public, has to be reorganized on the basis of this new truth. For centuries and centuries, men have been taught to believe that there is a God, and even today, millions of them still believe that there is one. But, as Nietzsche said, this is simply because they do not know that "God is dead." They do not know it yet, but, sooner or later, they will become aware of the fact, and there even are signs that the day when all men will have reached its awareness is rapidly growing near. In other words, for the first time since the beginning of the world, mankind is approaching the day when it will have to live alone, left to its own decisions and to its own resources, without the guidance of a God and, consequently, of any religion.

This is the most tremendous revolution that ever took place in world history. At the very beginning, those who envisaged a godless society experienced a feeling of liberation. At last, man was going to be free! Yet, the most tragic prophet of this new era, the German philosopher Nietzsche, had been fully aware of the fact that, when man should at last be liberated from the authority of God, he would find himself face to face with the entirely new task of creating his own moral values, that is, of determining what should henceforth be considered as right or wrong, good or evil. In our own days, the typical representative of the French school of existentialists, J. P. Sartre, has forcefully expressed this tragic side of the new situation. Still more recently, at the 1950 philosophical Congress of Bordeaux (France), another French philosopher, Polin, calmly announced that he was going to speak against the traditional notion of moral "wisdom" because, so far as he could see, there were no objective moral values. Only that is morally good, he said, which we declare to be so, and only what we specifically affirm to be morally wrong is actually morally wrong. Man, said Polin, is the creator of moral values. Now this is a very extreme position indeed, especially for a "professor of Moral Philosophy and of the Science of Education" in a State university, yet, after all, it is a consistent one. For indeed, if there is no God, who but man himself can teach the distinction between what is right and what is wrong? This is perfectly logical. However, when all is said and done, there is still one more question to be answered. What do we mean by man? Man in general does not exist; there are individual men only, and who, among them, will have authority to teach us the distinction between good and evil? Thus far, no one. And this is what I call the true breakdown of morals, not indeed the all too frequent breaking of a moral code, but the new fact that today there is no moral code to break.
To this, it will perhaps be objected that the societies we live in are actually rather keen on distinguishing between good and evil. Have we not our laws, our police regulations? Are not our laws enforced by all sorts of sanctions, extending from small fines and short terms in jail right on up to capital punishment? Yes, but (and here is the point) what have these laws to do with morality? There are laws which forbid acts which, morally speaking, are irreprehensible. Such laws, as laws, should be obeyed. But the fact that it is always bad to break the law does not at all mean that what the law forbids is in itself sinful. I understand that, in Toronto, it is against the law to take a bottle of beer to a friend's house. All right, then we will not do it. But this does not mean that carrying a bottle of beer is in itself a sin. Robbing and killing are different cases. These acts are likewise forbidden by the laws of the State and by those of traditional morality; but why are they forbidden by the laws of the State? Simply because citizens want to make reasonably sure that their property and their lives will be respected. If a robber were to ask his judge: "After all, what is wrong with stealing?", all that the judge could reply is: "What is wrong with it, is that it is forbidden by the law." The fact that it is a commandment of the Lord is irrelevant to the point of view of the judge qua judge. The proof of this is that, should the robber object on the ground that he does not believe in God, the judge would have to reply that, from the point of view of the law, this makes no difference. In our western countries polygamy is still a crime, except, of course, under the form of divorce. We may have as many wives as we please, but successively, not two at a time. Why is divorce legal and bigamy criminal? No judge is supposed to worry about this. Likewise, when State propaganda tries to discourage people from murdering one another, the best it can say is that "Crime does not pay." Even this is not so sure, but let us suppose it is true, what does it prove? As H. M. McLuhan aptly remarks in his stimulating book, The Mechanical Bride, are we to say that, if crime did pay, it would be all right to kill? This would be the perfect justification for the would-be murderer who thinks that he can kill and get away with it. Besides, let us entertain no illusion about this: "Thou shalt not kill" is far from being a universally recognized precept, much less an unassailable moral law. In Sweden, where abortion is supervised by the state, it has become legal to kill, and just as, in this case, undesirable babies are legally eliminated, there are many people, in all so-called civilized countries, who are beginning to wonder if incurables should not quickly be disposed of? Euthanasia is a pleasant sounding word, but, after all, mercy killing still is killing. How long will law still protect us against this charitable eagerness to relieve us of the burden of life? Nobody knows, it is all a matter of custom. As soon as there is a majority in favour of mercy killing, the liberal State will legalize it. Obviously, even when they stand on the side of morality, the laws of the State cannot do much more than take morality for granted. They are not responsible for the moral justification of morality.

This is precisely the point where the problem of education enters the picture. It entered it, at least, at the very moment when modern States decided to assume the responsibility for public education. This epoch-making event is not so old as most people imagine. There was no state-teaching in classical Antiquity, except in Sparta, which was a totalitarian State. More important still, is the fact that all our modern teaching institutions have been created by the Catholic Church, not by any State, The Universities date from the early thirteenth century, and the oldest one, that of Paris, received its first statute from the then acting pontifical legate in France. What we today call High Schools are an invention of the Jesuits, who organized the first ones in the sixteenth century. As to the primary schools, they began to take shape in the seventeenth century, when Saint John Baptist de la Salle organized a teaching order specially destined to fight illiteracy in the mass of the population. All these schools, colleges and universities were run by priests and religious of various orders or congregations, plus, of course, the nuns of the divers communities who, as Saint John Baptist de la Salle himself acknowledged, have often been ahead of the men and done pioneering work in these domains. When we speak of "Separate Schools," let us not imagine that the Catholic schools once separated themselves from the State operated schools. The real "Separate" schools are those which the State separated from both the Church and God, when at the time of the French Revolution, it decided to open schools of its own and to take charge of public education.
At first sight, this was an easy thing to do and there was no evident reason why it should not be done. In fact, the State has a duty to make sure that all its future citizens receive a proper education. It must even see to it that enough of them be prepared to fulfill the various tasks which are required for the welfare of its members. A society needs skilled workers, engineers, scientists, physicians, lawyers, soldiers, businessmen, competent farmers, etc. Moreover, the State has at its disposal resources which enable it to build and to maintain schools, colleges and universities, including the tremendously costly laboratories and libraries which are necessary to such institutions. Last, not the least, since it is the proper business of the State to provide for the temporal welfare of its citizens, nobody can say that it is not minding its own business when it organizes a public school system and makes sure that the largest possible number of children receive the most complete instruction possible.

This the modern State has done in many different countries, and its teachers have done it well, but there was a difficulty hidden in the very nature of its undertaking. The Church had never aimed to teach for the sake of teaching. The true aim of the Church has always been to educate, and, more precisely, to educate men in view of their eternal salvation. Naturally, since teaching is part and parcel of all education, the Church has always had to teach. Even today, when missionaries set up a chapel, they open a school at the same time. The reason for this is simple enough. Before making Christians, missionaries have to make men. This is exactly what the Church did in mediaeval Europe, when its century long efforts progressively turned half-barbarians into civilized nations. The bishops and the monks, not the kings, were the real civilizers of Europe, and it is by the Church that the kings themselves were first civilized. Yet, when all is said and done, the main-spring of this tremendous teaching activity has always been the will to save as many souls as possible. In short, the teaching work of the Church has always been subservient to a higher aim, namely Christian education.

Strangely enough, when the modern States decided to open schools of their own, they did not realize that they would have not only to teach, but also to educate. The reasons which account for their error are complex, and I do not think they have ever been carefully studied. One of them, at least, seems obvious. After ten centuries of Christian education, the peoples of western Europe were so thoroughly permeated by the rules of Christian conduct that they mistook them for so many evidences of natural reason. So long as their own morals continued to be Christian, the families whose children were attending the new State-operated schools, could provide them with the beliefs and principles of moral conduct for which these schools could afford no justification. But this moral and religious capital could not last indefinitely. Even in countries where they did not openly fight religion, public schools did little or nothing to keep it alive. In most favourable cases, such schools could not continue to distribute to their pupils a teaching wholly permeated with the spirit of the Church and an education wholly directed towards a Christian end. Through no fault of their own, but simply by doing what they were supposed to do, and nothing more, these non-Christian schools prepared new generations of citizens to whom religion appeared as a sort of additional teaching, if not useless, at least unnecessary, as could be seen from the fact that the State itself was not including it in its own program of education. True enough, the liberal State did not close the churches, but churches are places of worship and of religious teaching; it is not there, but in homes and in schools that children are educated according to the principles of religion. After deciding that religion should be kept out of its schools, the State has now to deal with new generations of parents who cannot educate because they themselves have lost the awareness of the religious foundations upon which their own education had been built. The consequence of this state of affairs is clearly expressed in this title of an article in Look, November 6, 1951: "Teenage Vice Begins at Home." Not at all that parents favour vice; on the contrary, they are horrified at discovering that, in decent homes like their own, nice little girls begin by stealing from the corner drugstore, pending the time when they will end as common prostitutes, if not worse. The bare fact is that, even where it survives, home education is no longer able to withstand alone the tremendous demoralizing pressure to which our children are now being submitted. Many parents, who clearly realize this peril, desire the help of a truly Christian school in the task of educating their children, but the liberal State does not seem to feel the same need. It calmly declares that religion is a "private affair" at the very moment when "calendars of scandal" are daily revealing the gangrenous disease which affects the vital organs of public life. Who does not see what sophism lies hidden under this worn out argument? Yes, indeed, religion is the private affair of each and every citizen,
but is it not the public duty of the liberal State to see to it that all children may receive the religious education which their parents wish them to receive? Instead of this, the liberal State declares itself religiously neutral and, the better to express its neutrality, it relegates religion to churches and practically excludes it from its schools. Let us not forget that, in many State-controlled universities, even where thousands of students and their families are clamouring for it, the teaching of religion under any form, save perhaps the history of religions taught by professors who do not necessarily believe in any one, is still positively forbidden on the campus. If students want it, they have to look for it somewhere else. Now there may be excellent reasons for this attitude and I am not attacking it; my only point is that, after a hundred years or so of what can be called, at best, religious indifference in State institutions of learning, we should not be too surprised to find the religious capital of the nations pretty well exhausted. And even this would be none of our business if, at least in the Western Hemisphere, the various States themselves were not beginning to worry about the situation.

And not without good reason! Just now, States are beginning to realize that they are not equipped to provide themselves with the kind of citizens they need. They do not need citizens merely, but law-abiding citizens; that is, people who neither steal nor kill even though they could get away with it; not judges, but incorruptible judges; not policemen, but policemen who do not draw a salary from the very gangsters they are supposed to catch; not soldiers, but soldiers who are willing to lay down their lives for the defense of their country. In short, modern States took up education in order to make sure that they be served, but they are now realizing that, because they cannot educate, the kind of teaching they give is for them no guarantee that they will be served well.

Confronted with this entirely new problem, modern States have imagined two possible solutions: that of the totalitarian State and that of the liberal State. Let us examine them separately.

The totalitarian solution is the natural and logical outcome of the move by which modern societies have made education subservient to their own temporal ends. To the full extent that it educates, the State educates in view of itself. What, from the very beginning, had prompted the desire for a secularized education now shines forth with the unmistakable necessity of a principle. The only conceivable end of a State-owned education is the State itself. States themselves may not know it. They may sincerely believe that nothing is more foreign to their honest intentions; yet, to put it bluntly, the only reason why a State may not want children to be educated in view of God is that it wants them to be educated in view of itself. Totalitarian education does nothing more than go the whole way along the same line. The result is what we know: political, economic, intellectual and spiritual slavery. Then, as Dorothy Thompson admirably put it in her column in the Globe and Mail (Aug. 17, 1951), "the state is all power: creator and destroyer, holding the keys of heaven and hell, both of which are on this earth. Therefore fear it and keep its commandments. For though the ways of God are inscrutable, they never err. The State being God, cannot err, and the right hand of God is Stalin, or Hitler, or Tito, to whom be honor and glory, now and for evermore, Amen."

This, Miss Thompson presently adds, is blasphemy, which is a strictly correct theological diagnosis, but this blasphemy is at least a consistent one. Our own liberal States are not necessarily blasphemous, but they are much less consistent. On the one hand, they refuse to mistake themselves for the God of their citizens; yet, on the other hand, while professing that they are not the ultimate end of man, they refuse to say what that ultimate end actually is. In other words, while acknowledging the fact that the temporal welfare of the State presupposes the recognition, by its citizens, of an order of ends and means set above the State, our liberal societies persist in considering as "separate" the only schools which can provide them with the very type of citizens they need, namely, Christian schools. This is not even a half-way house, it is sheer nonsense. Concerning the ultimate end of man, the laws of moral conduct, the reasons why there is good and evil, or why there are virtues and vices, the liberal State, taken precisely qua liberal, knows absolutely nothing. In matters of education properly speaking, the liberal State is strictly incompetent, not indeed, in spite of the fact that it is liberal, but because of it. Of all the types of political society the liberal State is the one least qualified to beget the spiritual forces which alone can keep it alive. Protestants as well as Catholics are equally interested in the recognition of this fact. If we do
not care to awake some morning on the wrong side of the iron curtain, then we are all likewise interested in not letting the liberal State believe that it can indefinitely persist in educating children in view of nothing. Either the liberal State will recognize that there is no education without religion, or it will cease to be liberal by turning itself into a god, and civil service into a religious service. Our only choice is not between religion and no religion, but between true religion and false religion.

If at least Catholics are aware of this truth, let them not be afraid of stating it, in season and out of season, the more so as the liberal States themselves are beginning to realize it. In a curious article recently published by the Globe and Mail (Aug. 14, 1951), a war correspondent in Korea was remarking that "the Communists in Korea are demonstrating what cause can do." In other words, the liberal States are just discovering that soldiers fight better when they have something to fight for, that is a common "cause," provided they know what it is, and knowing it, believe in it.

Nothing is more certain, but who is to tell the soldiers of the liberal State what they are fighting for? One cannot help feeling some misgivings when he reads, in the same article, that in consequence of this discovery, "the Army is studying religion and philosophy," and that it studies them as battle factors, that is to say, as conditions governing a battle and its outcome." It would be difficult to show more clearly the root of the whole mistake. First of all, I, at least, cannot help experiencing an almost physical revulsion at the thought of using the Gospel of Christ as a battle-governing condition. This is no longer blasphemy, it is sacrilege. Next, I am afraid the plan will not work. The Gideon Bible is all right, but Gideon did not wait for the eve of the battle to tell his soldiers: "By the way, there is a God, you know, and He is what we are going to fight for tomorrow morning!" It would have been too late. Our own army chaplains cannot be expected to distribute God to the troops as a supplement of ammunition. Unless soldiers have already learned to know Him on their mothers' knees, and unless His name has not been deleted from their hearts in schools which officially profess to know nothing about Him, it will be too late to call God to the rescue. Catholic soldiers know full well what cause the adversaries of marxist imperialism are called upon to defend; it is, through national independence and truly democratic institutions, the right of man to serve God, even above the State. But the Church alone can teach this, not the State. Religion alone can teach man to serve God above all things, which is spiritual liberty, itself the common root of all other liberties.

To sum up, the breakdown of morals is a matter of life or death for the liberal State. After heedlessly squandering the Christian heritage on which it has lived so long a time, the day is now come when it has to make a choice: either openly to draw from all the sources of religious life, and thus to survive, or else to let them dry up, and thus itself to perish.

We are not asking the liberal State to help the Church; we are merely inviting it to help itself by not excluding its future citizens from the benefit of an education which they can only find in Christian schools. The liberal State is not a Church; consequently it cannot give a religious education. The liberal State is not a philosopher; consequently, it has no authority to lay down any philosophical principles, not even in ethics. All it can do, and actually does, is to allow its teachers and professors to preach an ethical code deprived of any foundations, as if a river could flow indefinitely after being cut off from its sources. This is not enough. If it wants to have morally-minded citizens in peace time, and resolute soldiers in war time, the State must let its members have something to live by, and, if necessary, to live for. The totalitarian States would be less dangerous than they are if they did not know so well how to achieve this result. Since it itself recognizes, on the contrary, that it is neither the Truth, nor the Way, nor the Life, the very least that the liberal State can do is not to shut its future citizens from Him Who is the Truth, the Way and the Life. In short, it has no other choice than to let them have a truly Christian education.

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