

# “Twelve Apostles” and a Few Heretics

JESSE H. SHERA

A YEAR or two ago we told our faculty that we were of the opinion that a great deal, perhaps even more, could be learned from reading the biographical and philosophical writings of leaders in higher education about what education for librarianship was and should be than from the literature of library education itself. Accordingly we submitted a list of 12 titles which we had found particularly helpful, which was immediately characterized by our colleagues as “Shera’s Twelve Apostles.” Since this little compilation was prepared a few titles that we found helpful have been added, and the whole is brought together here for whatever value it may have to those of you who may be interested in exploring the issues and problems of higher education. We should add the caution that the list is highly personal, subjective, and idiosyncratic. Certainly it is in no sense complete, exhaustive, or definitive. Certainly we do not pretend that these are the “best books” on the subject. Each of you will doubtless find inclusions with which he disagrees. We disagree with some of them, too; and there are omissions which you will regret. The only claim that we make for this selection is that it contains many writings that are stimulating, provocative, and often thoroughly delightful. Having said this, we send you off on your own.

For us, the three great foundation stones, the rocks one might say upon which we have built our own philosophical edifice of higher education are: John Henry Cardinal Newman’s *The Idea of a University*, which first appeared in 1873 as an expansion of his *Discourses*

---

Shera is Dean of the School of Library Science at Case Western Reserve University.

on *the Scope and Nature of University Education*, which was published 20 years earlier. The contemporary reader may want to pick and choose from among these essays, but no person who pretends to be knowledgeable about higher education can afford to be ignorant of them. Alfred North Whitehead's ten lectures, delivered between 1912 and 1928, and published under the title *The Aims of Education*, are, as he himself says, "a protest against dead knowledge, that is to say, against inert ideas." For this reader, however, it is the supreme statement of the need to break down the departmentalization of the university for the benefit of students as well as the faculty. His was a protest against the artificiality of interdisciplinary barriers, and an attempt to establish in place of the notion that courses are entities that exist in nature, a recognition of the course as an artificial simplification for the mastery of complex organisms in which thought, ideas, and institutions are quite interdependent.

Robert Maynard Hutchins' *The Higher Learning in America*, which came from the Yale University Press in 1936, only a few years after its author had accepted the presidency of the University of Chicago, is a watershed in American higher learning. Whatever one may think of Hutchins' concept of education, and despite the fact that the college which he created on the Midway is now only a happy memory for those privileged to attend it, all higher education has felt the impact of his power. The year of its publication we told an audience at the Midwinter meeting of the American Library Association that "every academic librarian should read it religiously once a week." We have never lived up to our rhetorical admonition, but the state of our own copy is clear evidence that it has been read and reread many times, and always with profit. One might well add to the listing below some of the collections of essays by the same author: *No Friendly Voice*, (University of Chicago Press, 1936); *Education for Freedom* (Louisiana University Press, 1947); *The University of Utopia* (University of Chicago Press, 1953); *Freedom, Education, and the Fund* (Meridian Books, 1956); *Some Observations on American Education* (Cambridge University Press, 1956); and *The Learning Society* (Praeger, 1968).

Doubtless there will be many of you who think that we should have included John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (Macmillan, 1916) among the golden tablets, to change the metaphor, and if that be your opinion you have every right to it. As for ourselves, however, we could never quite accept Dewey's denial of education as the training of the intellect and his hollistic approach to an educational system oriented

*"Twelve Apostles" and a Few Heretics*

toward the whole man, any more than we could accept Harold Benjamin's notion, in *The Saber-Tooth Curriculum* (McGraw-Hill, 1939) that "clubbing little wooly horses" is a legitimate school aim so long as the horses had to be clubbed in order to get food, but the subject becomes pointless when the horses disappeared. The aims of education as the training of the intellect do not necessarily shift with alterations in the economy. Hutchins would never agree that the clubbing of little wooly horses ever was an appropriate pedagogic subject. But we must be getting on with our list.

Because the list is short and any classification would introduce only unnecessary complication we have arranged the items alphabetically:

Bell, Daniel. *The Reformation of General Education; The Columbia College Experience in its Natural Setting*. Columbia University Press. 1966.

A critical review of the trend toward general education, first started at the University of Chicago and Harvard, in the light of contemporary social change.

Barzun, Jacques. *The American University*. Harper and Row. 1968.

An analysis of how the American university runs and where it is going by an experienced and mature university teacher and administrator. In our view this is Barzun's best book, which is saying quite a lot.

Bestor, Arthur. *The Restoration of Learning*. Knopf. 1956.

This professor of history at the University of Illinois, who has long been a severe critic of American higher education has written a sequel to his *Educational Wastelands* to present a program to redeem the unfulfilled promise of education. The author holds strong prejudices and biases which happen to coincide with our own. Also, as the reader will see, he holds no great respect for library education.

Bruner, Jerome S. *The Process of Education*. Harvard University Press. 1961.

The author, who is an eminent psychologist at Harvard, has written extensively on the psychology of thinking, learning, and problem solving. This little book grew out of a conference on new educational methods held, under the auspices of the National Academy of Science, at Woods Hole, Massachusetts in 1959. Though the focus is primarily on the elementary and secondary school student he has much to say that is important and applicable to higher education.

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION FOR LIBRARIANSHIP

Chicago. University. College. *The Idea and Practice of General Education*. University of Chicago Press. 1950.

The first full account of the University of Chicago College during the Hutchins regime. A compilation by members of the faculty, which makes an interesting comparison with the reports from Harvard and Columbia.

Coffman, Lotus D. *The State University, its Work and Problems*. Oxford University Press. 1939.

A selection of addresses delivered by the president of the University of Minnesota between 1921 and 1933, which form something of a classic statement of the role of the state university in higher education, a view that looks back to Ezra Cornell and Andrew D. White and anticipates Clark Kerr's "multiversity."

Commager, Henry Steele. *The Commonwealth of Learning*. Harper and Row. 1968.

A collection of essays on the school, the university, and academic freedom which represent the fruition of many years of teaching. The author scarcely needs an introduction.

Conant, James Bryant. *Two Modes of Thought*. Trident Press. 1964.

The President Emeritus of Harvard holds that an industrialized free society needs two types of individuals reconciled with each other, the one prefers the theoretical-deductive approach to problems and the other the empirical-inductive. In this thoughtful little book the author sets himself to the task of exploring the implications of his philosophy for the aims and meaning of education, and in so doing has much to say that is relevant for the conflict between theory and technique in library education.

DeVane, William Clyde. *Higher Education in Twentieth Century America*. Harvard University Press. 1965.

A retired dean and professor of English at Yale discusses the forces that are acting upon higher education today. We have found particularly helpful his discussions of the graduate and professional schools.

Diekhoff, John S. *The Domain of the Faculty in our Expanding Colleges*. Harper. 1956.

Since the author of this work is an old friend and colleague, we may be guilty of bias in its favor, but we have found it the best treatment we have

*"Twelve Apostles" and a Few Heretics*

encountered on the responsibilities of the university faculty. It is both full of wisdom and a delight to read. Especially valuable are the sections on "Enhancing Faculty Competence," "Teaching: A Cooperative Enterprise," and "Who Educates the Faculty?"

Flexner, Abraham. *Universities; American, English, German*. Oxford University Press. 1930.

A European view of American higher education. Flexner holds no brief for library education in general and the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago in particular.

Griswold, A. Whitney. *Essays on Education*. Yale University Press. 1954.

Some 14 addresses delivered by Griswold during his first three years as president of Yale. They cover a variety of topics many of which are specifically related to Yale, but all have general application.

Harvard University. Committee on General Education. *General Education in a Free Society*. Harvard University Press. 1945.

Though the concept of a general education goes back to Hutchins' College at Chicago, Harvard was the first to report fully on its experiences. The first three chapters of this report are still more than historically important.

Jaspers, Karl. *The Idea of the University*. London. Peter Owen. 1960.

In this translation of the essential portion of Jaspers' original German text, the author sets forth a credo for the reconstruction of the German universities after the collapse of the Hitler regime. Though he was writing for a German academic world that had been shattered by the Second World War, much of what he has to say has relevance to the crisis in American higher education today. As Karl Deutsch points out in his introduction, the chapters omitted from this translation relate only to the problems peculiar to the German universities of 1946.

Jencks, Christopher, and Riesman, David. *The Academic Revolution*. Doubleday. 1968.

A massive study of the university by two trained social scientists that presents objectively the forces that have brought the university to its present crisis and the changes that the generational conflict are likely to bring to higher education. This book is required reading for anyone concerned with the turmoil in the academic world today.

JOURNAL OF EDUCATION FOR LIBRARIANSHIP

Kerr, Clark. *The Uses of the University*. Harvard University Press. 1963.

The former president of the Berkeley campus sets forth his ideas concerning the "multiversity," the influence of federal grants upon higher education, and the future of "the city of intellect."

Maritain, Jacques. *Education at the Crossroads*. Yale University Press. 1943.

Maritain charges that education has been more concerned with techniques than with goals, and urges that it should return to a consideration of "the whole man." In short, this leading Catholic philosopher out-Hutchins Hutchins. A quarter of a century ago he saw education in the midst of crisis, but you may not agree with his solutions, especially if you do not accept Hutchins.

Newsom, Carroll V. *A University President Speaks Out*. Harper. 1961.

The president of New York University speaks out from a rich career in college and university administration concerning a variety of problems. He believes that students should have more time than they now have for independent study, reading, thinking, and participation in discussion. He also holds that colleges are too much alike, and that there should be more adaptation to the particular needs and strengths of the individual institution. Finally, he has some very interesting observations on the distinction between general education and liberal education. A thoughtful and well written little book.

Perkins, James A. *The University in Transition*. Princeton University Press. 1966.

The president of Cornell addresses himself to the dynamics of university growth, the search for internal coherence, and the transition from institutional autonomy to system. The volume invites comparison with those of Kerr and Newsom.

Pusey, Nathan M. *The Age of the Scholar*. Harvard University Press. 1963.

A collection of some 20 essays on a variety of topics relating to the position of the scholar in the university. The essays that comprise the volume were published between 1953 and 1962, the first ten years of the author's presidency at Harvard.

"Twelve Apostles" and a Few Heretics

Thomas, Russell. *The Search for a Common Learning; General Education from 1800-1960*. McGraw-Hill. 1962.

An excellent survey of the emergence of general education. This study grew out of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York which had made possible the critical review of general education as practiced at the universities of Chicago, Harvard, Columbia, and Brown.

Woodring, Paul. *The Higher Learning in America*. McGraw-Hill. 1968.

A sharp indictment of higher education by the educational editor of *The Saturday Review*. He has taken the title used by both Thorstein Veblen and Hutchins to emphasize the changes that have taken place in higher education and the need for its reassessment.

Wriston, Henry M. *Academic Procession*. Columbia University Press. 1959.

Next to Hutchins' volume we have probably reread this book more frequently than any other on this list. The product of a brilliant career in college and university administration it is filled with much wisdom. It stands on our shelves beside Kerr, Newsom, Perkins, and Pusey. Even those public librarians who are not particularly concerned with library education will find the chapter on the university trustee filled with much meaningful philosophy.

We might conclude with a few titles that do not properly fall within the self-imposed limits of this little bibliography, but nevertheless ought to be mentioned as being important to anyone concerned with library education. Bernard Berelson's *Graduate Education in the United States* (McGraw-Hill, 1960). A solid statistical portrait of its subject that one finds himself turning to at frequent intervals. Unfortunately, it is the kind of study that quickly goes out of date. There are several delightful anthologies of which we might mention Robert Ulich's *Three Thousand Years of Educational Wisdom* (Harvard University Press, 1954) which spans educational history from ancient China to the present. Houston Peterson's *Great Teachers* (Rutgers University Press, 1946), which portray characterizations of great teachers as presented by equally distinguished students, is a sheer delight. For those interested in the history of higher education there is: Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith's monumental documentary history in two substantial volumes, *American Higher Education* (University of Chicago Press,

1961); Laurence R. Veysey's *The Emergence of the American University* (University of Chicago Press, 1965); Frederick Rudolph's *The American College and University* (Knopf, 1962) and Richard Hofstadter and C. DeWitt Hardy's *The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States* (Columbia University Press, 1952).

Finally, one might properly ask why we did not include John W. Gardner's *Excellence and No Easy Victories* (Harper, 1961 and 1968 respectively), Ortega y Gasset's *The Mission of the University* (Princeton, 1944), or Paul Weiss' *The Making of Men* (Southern Illinois University, 1967), and they would be right. But shouldn't you be able to dig something out for yourselves? Involvement, that is what all of these apostles tell us education really is.