



I value most highly the honour...

Taler

Winston Churchill

Dato

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Sted

Universitetet i Oslo

Omstendigheter

Etter utnevning til æresdoktor

1 Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Mr. Rector, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I value most highly the honour which you have done me today in conferring upon me the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in this famous University of Oslo, and it
5 touches me profoundly to feel all the kindness of your hearts, in this hall and outside, of which I am the recipient at the present time.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Rector has told us of the trials and tribulations of the recent past, and he has spoken of my contribution to our efforts in those days in
10 terms which a man should not hear until he is dead. I shall long remember the eloquent words which he has used, and always hope that what is left to me of my life may not lead him to change his opinion! He has also reminded us of the tragic scenes which this beautiful hall has witnessed, of the pangs of bitterness which were roused in so many gallant Norwegian breasts, and of the
15 contribution made by Norwegian seamen to the victory of the common cause. I would like very much to endorse all he has said. The victim of a foul and treacherous outrage, adhering strictly - perhaps, I might almost have said, too strictly - to its neutrality, Norway was fallen upon and struck to the ground. You may strike the physical body of a man to the ground, but his soul goes marching
20 along; and so it was we went through those years of torment until we emerged together. We went through those years shoulder to shoulder, and now for the rest of our journey we will walk hand in hand in peace and friendship.

Ladies and gentlemen, judged by my many degrees, I am a very learned man.
25 When I was young no one thought I should become so erudite. I never had the advantage of a university education myself, and I must confess to you that I never was any good at passing examinations. I learned from that fact, that one

must not be discouraged by the failures of youth, but persevere and go on
30 learning all through life. Mr. Rector, the privilege of a university education is a
high one, and the more widely it is extended the better. In the great and friendly
country across the Atlantic Ocean they number the graduates of universities by
the million -by several million- and the wider these facilities are open to the
whole mass of the people, and the more they are taken advantage of by those
35 who enjoy them, the sooner, the cleaner, and the surer will the life of that
nation become. But, ladies and gentlemen, education should not be looked
upon as something to end with youth. University education is the key to open
many doors of thought and knowledge. It should guide the reading of a
lifetime. I feel sure that those who profit by their opportunities here will be
40 convinced of the importance of reading the great books of the world and the
literature of one's own country, and of knowing what to read and how to
understand it. One who has profited from university education has a wide
choice. There is no need for such a man ever to be idle or bored; there is no need
for him ever to take refuge in the ceaseless clack and clatter of the modern age;
45 there is no need for him to be offered in the headlines something new every day.
There is the great fountain of the wisdom of all the ages playing for his delight
as long as he lives.

It is a good saying, ladies and gentlemen, that when a new book comes out you
50 should read an old one. As an author myself, I should perhaps not recommend
a too rigid application of that principle. But I must admit that as I have grown
older, I have changed my mind about the study of the classics. I never liked
them when at school. I did not yield responsively at all to the many urgent and
sometimes painful appeals which were made to me to grasp the full charms and
55 precision of the classical languages. But it seems to me that, if the teaching of
the classics dies out in Europe and the modern world, and with it the knowledge
of Greek and Roman literature and the vast picture presented by that long
epoch of time, then a great unifying force in Europe might easily become
extinct.

60 May I, as a Doctor of Philosophy- and I also have the honour to be the
Chancellor of a university in my own country- may I venture to make a few
comment upon the educational conclusions which have come into my mind as
I have gradually acquired some education in my journey through life? I have a
65 strong feeling that university education ought not to be too practical. Men,
young men, go through a university to learn wisdom and not a trade. The

university exists to teach character and not technicalities. We have all to learn a trade and to earn our living, but we have also to learn the way of life. We want a
70 lot of engineers in the modern world, but we don't want a world of modern engineers.

Great events have happened in our lifetime. Our generation has largely parted company with the horse- we have the internal combustion engine instead. I
75 wonder whether as far as our generation is concerned- I say nothing of the future, which we cannot read- but I wonder whether as far as our generation is concerned we have gained or lost by the change. We all speak with great respect of science- we have to. An eminent friend of mine in England, Lord Hugh Cecil, recently described science as "organised curiosity". We must be careful;
80 perhaps we may find out too much, perhaps we may find out things of such great consequence that our immature civilisation is unable to handle them and use them. Even improvements in locomotion only make the world smaller, and in that sense reduce the inheritance of mankind. However, in Norway with its peninsula of a thousand miles you are not likely to be seriously inconvenienced
85 by lack of living space.

But, Mr. Rector, no amount of technical knowledge can replace the comprehension of the humanities; and here I put in my plea - as you have associated the Doctor of History with the Doctor of Philosophy in the
90 conferment of this degree upon me - I enter my plea for the study of history. I have read a lot about the history of England in the long past and even written something about it, and by this channel I became acquainted with the Vikings, who also played a most stirring and inspiring part in my thoughts of early youth. What a wonderful race of men they were, how they ranged widely and
95 freely throughout the world! If I have any criticism to make about the Vikings, it is that they were not at all well grounded in the principles of neutrality. But at any rate they have left their mark in history and in romance, and I am looking forward very much to the expedition which His Majesty has promised to take me on tomorrow to see the Viking Ships which, so marvellously preserved,
100 bring back across the centuries the picture, and to some extent the mood, of that heroic age.

Ladies and gentlemen, I was born in the 19th century, and I shared their hopes and confident belief that the liberal age had dawned, that science would merely
105 be the servant of the ever widening culture of mankind. But the hopes of the

19th century have perished, have gone. We have this terrible 20th century of which you have spoken in this hall, this terrible 20th century with its 30 years' war, with all the strongest and finest races in the world hurled against each other
110 by machinery, slaying each other by the most hideous forms of lethal apparatus.

And now we emerge from this period in a state of confusion and exhaustion, of which we are all conscious and which requires a special effort, a specially strict
115 self-discipline and self-fortification in order that we may confront it. They talk in England about our threatened values of life, and indeed one must be conscious of that. One must be conscious that there are many things in which you could not compare the civilisation of today with what was accepted as finally settled in the century which has just passed away. Greek and Latin
120 philosophers seem often unconscious that their society was based on slavery. They prated of freedom and political institutions, but they were in many cases unconscious of the hideous foundations upon which their civilisation was reared. Here at least we may encourage ourselves by dwelling on the great advance we have made. At least we cherish freedom now - and freedom for all.
125 The light of Christian ethics remains our most precious guide. Their revival and application is a practical need; whether spiritual or secular, it is our most prized, vital, precious treasure. To those who find comfort and consolation in revealed religion, equally with those who resolve to face the mystery of human destiny alone, Christian ethics and their continual application to our daily life remain
130 the last word, as they comprise the finest word, that has ever been spoken on earth.

Only on this foundation will the grace of life return, and only on this foundation shall we find that reconciliation of the rights of the individual with
135 the needs of society, from which the happiness and safety of mankind alone can spring.

Kilde

Churchill's visit to Norway - Speeches. (J.W.Cappelens Forlag, Oslo, 1949 s.14-19)

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Emner

Takketale

URI

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