

EDUCATION, TO BE REAL, MUST BE
DENOMINATIONAL.

An Essay

SUGGESTED BY THE PRESENT EDUCATIONAL CRISIS.

BY

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TO THE MOST REVEREND
THE CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOPS AND BISHOPS OF
IRELAND

THESE PAGES ARE INSCRIBED,
IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE EFFORTS WHICH THEY
ARE MAKING AT THE PRESENT CRISIS IN A
CAUSE OF COMMON INTEREST TO THE PEOPLE OF BOTH ISLANDS.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE argument of the following Essay is not restricted to any particular form of religious belief. It turns far less upon the character of the doctrine taught in elementary schools than upon the fact of its being taught *as* doctrine; or, in other words, upon the dogmatic principle. Those only are excluded from its scope who hold, either that religion forms no necessary part of general education, or that doctrine forms no necessary part of religion. The extreme advocates of the former of these opinions do not maintain the latter. On the contrary, they object to the introduction of religion into general education on the very ground that religion and denominationalism are convertible terms. Here I entirely agree with them. But I want them to go a step further, and admit that undogmatic education is as impossible as undogmatic religion. What I mean is, that education, to be worth anything, must inculcate a certain view upon the subjects which fall within its province, and that religion in some shape or another is not only one of those subjects, but enters into others which are more or less external to itself. The defence of the position thus generally stated will form the principal subject of the following pages.

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EDUCATION, TO BE REAL, MUST BE DENOMINATIONAL.

By Denominational Education I understand an education in which religion is taught upon a definite doctrinal basis, and into which it enters, not as an adjunct or accident, but as a pervading principle of direction and control. By a mixed or undenominational education, on the other hand, I understand an education from which all distinctive religious instruction is excluded during school hours, with a view to the comprehension of those who do or may differ in their several religious beliefs. I am not going to waste time in arguing that a mixed, as contradistinguished from a denominational education, is perilous to faith; for this is a position of which its opponents do not need to be convinced, and which its advocates do not care to deny. 'See ye to that,' is their reply to such as urge the objection; 'that is your business, not ours. What we want is, not to train up the children of the nation in any particular form of belief, but to educate them; to bridge over sectarian differences; to make them good citizens and loyal subjects; moral without dogma, and charitable in spite of it.' If therefore I am to have any chance of convincing our opponents, I must meet them on their

own ground, and not on ours, by endeavouring to show that mixed education is not true education; that it neither realises the idea nor secures the practical purposes of true education; and that the one element which it wants, in order to fill out that idea and secure those results, is precisely that element of denominational, or, as I prefer to call it, dogmatic teaching, the elimination of which is regarded by its advocates as its characteristic excellence.

That no education is worthy of the name which does not provide for the training of the religious and moral instincts, as well as for the development of the intellectual faculties of man, is a position which very few persons in this country will be disposed to deny. The questions upon which practical differences exist relate rather to the persons by whom, and the mode in which, those instincts are to be trained, than to the fact of their existence, and the necessity of giving them a right direction. Who are to be the religious and moral educators of our children? Are they to be the parents, or the clergy, or those to whom the work of their education, in the ordinary sense of that term, is more immediately entrusted; or are all these several classes of agents to have a share in the work? Those who are in favour of divorcing definite religious teaching from national education, while yet they are not inclined to go the length of denying its necessity, are for transferring this department of education almost entirely to the parents. Now it may be fully admitted, that parents have a duty in this respect which no others can discharge so well, and for the neglect of which no

subsequent pains can easily compensate. But then it must be remembered that, in the case of children, and more especially of boys in the middle and higher classes, the personal superintendence of parents is usually suspended at the very age when contact with the world becomes dangerous, and is never afterwards restored in the fulness in which it was exercised during the first few years of childhood; whereas the work of moral and religious training has to be continued for many years to come. In the case of the poor, the influence of parents is apt to be still and far more restricted. They have rarely the leisure, and still more rarely the ability to impart instruction of any kind to their children, who must consequently receive that instruction from others, or not at all. I am far from saying that they may not be in other ways the instruments of great moral and religious good to their children; for I have witnessed this result in many instances, and especially among the best classes of the Irish. But I am here speaking of what we commonly mean by religious and moral instruction, which usually demands an aptitude for the work, such as requires on the part of those who perform it a greater amount of education than our poor commonly possess. There is also, unhappily, a large deduction to be made from the value of parental influence in all classes of society, owing to the neglect of parental obligations. Hence it arises, that others besides the parents must have a large share in the moral and religious training of the rising generation. Here is the point at which the Church comes in to supply the place or carry on the work of the parent. It is for her,

in the person of her ministers, to secure that the children of whom she is the common mother be duly instructed in the doctrines of their religion and in the principles of moral obligation which flow from them. In colleges and schools for the upper classes, it is common for the clergy to form part of the official staff, and thus to bring the influence of religion to bear directly upon the administration in general. In the case of what are called Poor Schools, however, their share in the work of religious and moral education is necessarily external and occasional; consisting rather in special instruction on some directly religious subject than in regulating the conduct of the education in general. We are thus brought to the department occupied by the immediate and daily teachers of the Poor School—the master and mistress with their assistants. In many respects, the power for good or evil of these, the habitual administrators of education, exceeds that of any other of the agents in that great work.

On the whole, we arrive at the conclusion that, whatever may be the importance of other and more external agencies, it is in the school itself, and through the direct business of instruction, that the moral and religious character of the pupil will have to be formed. If religion, in some distinct and definite shape, be ignored or kept out of sight during the school hours, it will be comparatively of little use that it should receive a certain recognition at other times and in other places. If it be what it claims to be, the instrument by which man is to be educated for heaven, it is no mere department of knowledge, no mere accident of times and

places, but something which has its throne in all companies and its right to a voice on all subjects. I am far from meaning that it should make its entrance lightly or unseasonably, or without the *dignus vindice nodus*. What I mean is, that it should always act as the assessor, even where it is not the judge, and be ready as occasion may arise to interpose with its corrective or qualifying interpretations. No one who feels the importance of imbuing the tender and susceptible minds of children with religious principles and associations will be content to forego the many opportunities which even what is called secular education furnishes for engaging them to the love of it. Those who have the direction of the books to be used in the reading lessons will take care that the superintending Providence of God, in the conduct both of the natural and moral world, be always kept distinctly in view, and that the motives and principles of the Gospel, as distinguished from those which find favour with the world at large, be everywhere recognised as the only safe conditions of human action, and the only true foundation of human happiness. Where the imagination is to be interested, the simple and beautiful narratives of Scripture, or the anecdotes of saintly biography will be preferred to materials drawn from less religious sources. Christian doctrine will be inculcated, as well directly by catechetical instruction, as indirectly by true history, innocent fiction, and sacred song. In short, everything will be done to divest religious teaching of that cold and formal character which comes of its being relegated to a department of its own, and

confined to the repetition of phrases learned by heart, without being permanently impressed on the memory by explanations to render them intelligible, or illustrations to render them interesting.

This is what I understand by true education; but it is such an education as presumes the denominational principle. It is a kind of education which is rendered utterly impracticable by what is called the National System in Ireland, as well as by that which is now required by our Government in all schools receiving support from the State. It also flatly contradicts the theory of education which is entertained and acted upon by the various School-Boards throughout the country. I shall not labour to prove that the popular theory implies a system which ignores the existence of Christianity as a leavening element in human affairs, for this is indeed self-evident. It is more to the purpose to show that such a system is not merely not Christian education, but not education at all, according to any view of that process which has ever been held by reasonable men. This is what I shall attempt.

Every art and design of man, says the great ethical philosopher of antiquity, proposes to itself as its end some real or apparent good, and this good becomes in its turn the principle upon which the means towards that end are to be selected, and the rule by which they are to be tried. This is undoubtedly sound philosophy; and the question is, how it bears on the subject before us. In other words, what is the end of education, and how are the means by which it is to be carried out affected

and determined by that end? We shall not be far wrong in saying that the end of education is to draw out the various faculties of the human mind, moral as well as intellectual, so as to render them subservient to the purpose for which they were implanted by the Creator; that is to say, for the advancement of His own glory, and the greater good and happiness of His creatures. This being so, it follows that the mere acquisition of knowledge, so far from being the chief end of education, is but a secondary end, or means to that chief end. To exclude religion from general education, under this view of its character, is a conception which one would suppose that no person in his senses could entertain, unless he utterly disbelieve in the providential government of God and the eternal destiny of man; and there are accordingly but few persons in this country, comparatively speaking, who go the full length of such a proposal. But there are, on the other hand, a very great number of persons who consider that such an amount of religion as it is necessary for children to learn at school may be imparted by some kind of teaching which keeps clear of doctrinal peculiarities. I consider, on the other hand, that no religious teaching which is not doctrinal can meet the requirements of education in the sense in which we have just defined it; and moreover, that the very idea of purely undogmatic religious teaching is a chimera, which it needs nothing but experience to dispel. There is no such thing as religion in the abstract. Dogma is of its very essence, and belongs to its most elementary truths and principles, as much as to their most remote and recondite

deductions ; to the existence of a Supreme Being, as fully as to the doctrine of Transubstantiation. It is a question of degree only, and not of principle. If you do not tell a child that it is *bound* to believe in God, you do not teach religion in any true sense at all ; and if you do, you teach a dogma, or, in other words, a certain religious formula which goes to restrict the liberty of thought in relation to its own particular subject.

Indeed, the opponents of dogmatic teaching are at this very time acting, to our cost, upon the principle they profess to repudiate. They are endeavouring to de-christianise and de-catholicise the people of England and Ireland by means which, if the Catholic Church were to employ them in the propagation of her own faith, would be generally denounced as in the highest degree arbitrary and overbearing. They do not indeed go so far as to prevent parents from educating their children as they please, but they throw the whole weight of public influence and material advantage on the side of a system against which the mind of both nations has declared itself with sufficient distinctness. They extract the pecuniary sources of this propagandism from public funds, levied upon those who recoil from it. This is the tyranny of liberalism, the intolerance of toleration, the bigotry of unsectarianism. We do not complain that they provide safeguards against proselytism. What we complain of is, that they will not allow us to educate the children of our own poor in our own way, but make it a condition of that pecuniary aid which the circumstances of unestablished denominations render it so hard to

forego, that we should eliminate all denominational teaching, and therefore, practically, all religious teaching whatever from the schools of the poor.

Now, then, let us see what is the practical effect of this exclusion. The so-called education thus provided is in fact no true education at all: it is meaningless, aimless, characterless. It is the form without the spirit. Far from directing knowledge to its true end, it does not even impart true knowledge. You cannot educate, any more than you can accomplish any other great work, except upon a *view*; and a view is just the thing which Governments and School-Boards will not allow us to carry out. The general who leads an army to battle, the statesman who holds the reins of civil government, the lawyer who conducts the case of his client, the author who writes a work, all start with some definite idea of the mode in which their object is to be effected, whether we call it plan, policy, theory, or whatever else. Of the educator alone are the energies to be crippled and the wings clipped. He desires to employ the great resources at his command for the permanent moral and religious advantage of the children under his care, but the Government or the School-Board steps in and says, 'You shall not use this book, nor permit this hymn to be sung, nor invite the children to call God to mind in the midst of their work by some momentary act of devotion, nor explain the Bible with any doctrinal bias; in short, you must not allow religion in any definite form to enter, either directly or indirectly, into your teaching.'

But, I ask, what subject of education is there, bearing in any way on human affairs, in which religion may not find a place, and from which, if it have a place, you have a right to exclude it? Let us take, by way of example, that of History, in the rudiments of which I suppose it will be generally allowed that even such children as frequent our national schools may be advantageously instructed. Upon the received system, the history of the Church, in any form which could make it really valuable, can find no entrance as a part of general instruction. But what of secular history—such, for instance, as the history of our own country? What idea can you convey to a child of such facts as those which enter into every page in the lives of King John or Henry II., which shall be clear alike of any offence to the conscience either of a Catholic or a Protestant? How shall you extract the pound of flesh required in the bond without so much as a hair's-breadth of encroachment on the unlawful surroundings? Again, are you to describe the Reformation as a good thing, and thus shock the prejudices of the Catholic; or as a bad thing, and thus excite the indignation of the Protestant? Yet, if you can do nothing of all this without an infringement of your compact with the Government or the School-Board, what more is the history which you teach than an old almanac?

When we come to the far more important province of morality, this model education appears in a still more unfavourable light. Observe, I am all along speaking of it not so much in a religious as in an educational point of view. What I say, then, is, that

morality cannot be disjoined from religion ; and if not from religion, then not from doctrine. You can, of course, teach children that idleness may bring them to the gallows, and that industry will advance them in the world ; you may deter them from certain sins, such as intemperance, by pointing out their mischievous effects upon health, character, and domestic comfort. By similar arguments you may inculcate a preference of order to turbulence, or loyalty to sedition. I do not say that such exhortations are useless ; but they clearly do not go to the root of the matter. They are very feeble weapons indeed against the powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil. They hardly suffice to produce even external decency in those who are not naturally disposed towards it ; and they do not touch the thoughts of the heart, in which all morality originates. If you desire children to grow into good men and women, you must habitually impress upon them, that in their own nature they are weak and sinful, and that they must constantly seek help from above through the appointed means. In a denominational school, all this would be done through the Holy Scriptures, and other religious books ; but in the national schools no religion can be publicly taught, and no morality enforced, by its doctrinal sanctions. But we shall be told that the Bible may be used as a class-book, provided that no doctrine be founded upon it. Now, for my own part, I believe that making the Bible a mere class-book, and mixing it up with the irksome associations of a school, is the very way to prevent children from having recourse to it for instruction and comfort in after-life, especially if during

their school-time they have been led to suppose that the succession of the kings of Israel and the geography of the Holy Land are the kind of subjects on which they should principally look to it for information. But here another difficulty occurs. The teacher for the time being—who, for anything provided to the contrary, may be an infidel—will be at liberty to select such portions of the Bible as he thinks it best for his pupils to read. Now, there are passages in the New Testament which denounce heresy and unbelief in terms quite as strong as are to be found in the Athanasian Creed, and others in which the eternity and nature of future punishments are described with a clearness very unacceptable to the present generation. Passages of this kind, we may be quite sure, will not be brought under the notice of the children. And why not? Are not all parts of the canonical Scriptures equally inspired and equally binding? Then why, I ask, this arbitrary selection? Select, however, you must; for otherwise you make the Bible itself a dogmatic teacher of the most formidable kind. Yet the very principle of selection is in itself dogmatic. It is a complete violation of that neutrality which is the boast of undenominational education, and ought to be looked upon as a *casus belli* implying a breach of contract, and justifying reprisals.

It would sound almost like satire to object that such a moral education as we have supposed is unequal to the training of men and women for heaven, because any such result is immeasurably above its pretensions, and does not appear even to enter into the programme of its advocates. It is more to the purpose to inquire whether it will fit

them for the duties of the present life. There is much cause to apprehend that the spread of such education as is now in fashion will create a power which it will be but ill able to control and direct. That which it will certainly do is to give a fresh impulse to trashy literature, and a keener appetite for it. This literature will at once reflect and reanimate the spirit of the age. It will enlarge freely upon the dignity of human nature and the inalienable rights of men and women ; but it will say little about the duty of obedience to authority, patience under reproaches, and contentment with the state in which Providence has placed us. It will exalt political activity, and disparage the life which is without excitement and sensation. It will preach worse doctrines than these ; but it may well be doubted whether even these will tend to form a community of faithful husbands, good fathers, contented tenants, dutiful apprentices, and loyal subjects. My own impression rather is, that such a literature is the stuff out of which come Socialism, Communism, Fenianism, and all the various forms of political heresy and social confusion. And if I am to speak my own mind, I must express a deep-rooted conviction that a national education into which religion does not enter as a pervading element, so far from being a safeguard against these evils, is the very instrument by which they will be propagated. It is a singular confirmation of this opinion, that the ranks of Fenianism are known to have been recruited by several teachers in the national schools of Ireland, who had themselves been pupils in the Model Training Schools.

I can hardly doubt that, among those who are actively or passively lending their aid to the great educational movement of our time, there must be not a few who share both the opinion of its true character and the apprehension of its probable consequences which have been expressed or implied in the foregoing pages. I cannot, for instance, believe that any one who himself has received the education which the University of Oxford imparted to its junior members before its connexion with the Church of England was severed or relaxed, can undervalue the importance of the dogmatic element as a safeguard of true knowledge as well as of intelligent faith. Still less can I believe that any of those who, like myself, have taken part in the education of the poor, and have lived long enough to test the results of systems more or less denominational upon the character and conduct of the children in after-life, can fail to have observed that the best security for virtuous and orderly habits is to be found in the early and continuous inculcation of specifically Christian doctrine. The misfortune is, that the great majority of those who, by their words or their acts, or both together, have given an impulse to this disastrous movement, are men who are entirely without practical experience in education, and especially the education of the poor, and who take up and circulate and argue upon certain watchwords of which, if they know the meaning, they certainly do not realize the full import and remoter bearings. It is thus that the movement has been allowed to acquire proportions which make retrogression not hopeless indeed (God forbid), but

very difficult. But the hold which it has taken upon the minds of many good and able men is probably to be accounted for in two ways.

First, of course, there is what is called the religious difficulty, which many who dislike the received solution of it nevertheless regard as insoluble in any other way. Perhaps it may be so. It may indeed be a fact, which different persons will regard under different aspects, that undenominational education is the logical result of the change of religion three centuries ago. I cannot, however, but think that the attempt to find some other way out of the difficulty may have been too readily abandoned under an inadequate notion of the evil involved in the actual solution of it. If that evil amount, as I verily believe, to nothing less than the flooding of the nation with a kind of knowledge sufficient to make men conceited, but not sufficient to make them moral, it becomes a grave question whether the nation has gained much by the acquisition. But I have never been able to understand why the advantage of national education might not have been secured without any infringement of the claim of each separate denomination to educate its children in its own way. We hear a vast deal about the consciences of the undenominational party, but little comparatively about the consciences of the religious section of the community. One is constantly reminded of the lady in the play who expected her feelings to be considered, whereas she cared but little for the annoyance she was herself inflicting on others. '*Your* feelings, madam,' is the reply which she provokes—'*your* feelings; but I say

my feelings, if you please.' The objectors to the payment of fees in denominational schools decline to pay rates towards the support of a system which they regard as oppressive, but they see with perfect composure rates levied upon denominationalists in aid of an education which they regard as infidel. Now, I cannot understand why it might not have been possible to distribute the same amount of public money as is required for the erection and sustentation of the proposed national schools, in aiding the schools of each separate denomination; securing only—what the State has a perfect right to secure—that the secular education imparted in such schools should rise to the requisite standard of efficiency. The multiplication throughout the country of schools similar to those which, up to the last year, were supported by Government aid and subjected to Government inspection, seems to me to be all which the warmest advocates of national education have a right to claim, as it is certainly all which the warmest advocates of denominational education would be inclined to demand; and I cannot but think that if all the denominational feeling in this country had been concentrated on the one great object, without the drawback of sectarian differences, it would have prevailed to carry such a result against all the efforts of the undenominational party.

I come, in the last place, to the chief ground of defence which is set up in favour of mixed education, and which, I believe, has its influence with many good men. It is said that the cause of charity is promoted by bringing the children of different denominations together, and educating them in common without re-

gard to the specific tenets of their parents. My belief is, that the contrary is the fact. I have always found that the best safeguard of charity, on the part of those who differ in their religious beliefs, consists in a deep and practical knowledge of the truths which they severally prize. I speak, of course, of true Christian charity; not of that sentiment of mere benevolence which flows from indifference to what each party ought to regard as vital, nor of that languid and apathetic peace which is effected by a forced and unnatural suppression of characteristic differences, and to which we may apply the words of the historian, '*Solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant.*' I speak only of that real and heartfelt love which may subsist between persons, each strong in his own religious convictions, yet each feeling and acting as those who believe that charity is the bond of perfection. I think that persons who are the least instructed in their religion, and carry it the least into practice, are generally the most apt to pick controversial quarrels with their neighbours. The well-informed, and those who carry their religion into daily life, are always able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, and are the least likely to be provoked and exasperated by the taunts to which they are sometimes exposed. They know how commonly those taunts are the result of ignorance which they compassionate where they fail to remove it, but compassionate in a kind and brotherly, and not in a contemptuous and overbearing spirit. These are, at any rate, the lessons which we will teach our poor children, if only we be allowed. We will teach them these lessons in every way and by every

argument which is supplied among the numberless resources of Christian education; by the precepts of Holy Scripture; by the example of our Lord and of His Saints; through the catechisms of Christian doctrine; in the prayers which they repeat, and in the hymns which they sing. We will impress upon them that the better they understand their religion the less proudly they will think of themselves, and the more tenderly, forbearingly, and forgivingly of their neighbour. But if you will let us do nothing of all this, if you will bar the avenues to religious knowledge, and seal up the fountains whence flow the streams of moral health and vigour, then do not blame *us* if the next generation of Englishmen and Irishmen be quarrelsome, turbulent, and disloyal, where we would have taught them to be quiet neighbours, orderly citizens, and dutiful subjects.