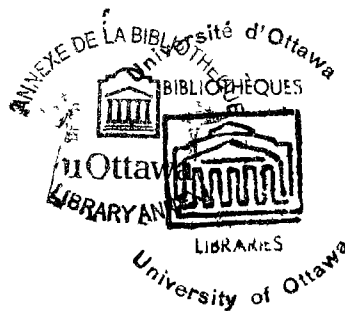


CHESTERTON'S IDEAS ON EDUCATION

by Ralph D. Sturm

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The Curriculum Studiorum

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INTRODUCTION¹

No subject was immune from the penetrating intellect of G.K. Chesterton and very few escaped his pen. In all his writings, which if collected would probably be equal to a hundred good size books, relatively few subjects remain untouched. When any modern group of thinkers come upon a problem, they can be somewhat certain that they will be able to find a worthwhile and refreshing treatment somewhere in the writings of Chesterton.

The "somewhere" is the crux of the problem. The output of books by Chesterton since his death in 1936 is sufficient indication of a sharp interest in his writings. Still, scarcely anyone is able to tell what Chesterton said on any particular topic. Catchy little sentences and thought provoking paradoxes are continually quoted by writers in nearly every field. Seldom however does one find a somewhat complete or synthetic view of Chesterton on any one subject. The reason for this is not a lack of interest in his writings. The reason is that there are, as a rule, no indexes in his published works; there is usually no order in his books of essays between one essay and any other; often there is little or no order in one essay. This was simply the way he preferred to write. He was a bubbling personality and frequently his writings, like a cataract, are beautiful, profound, but tossing, roaring, laughing, and disordered. Hence those wishing to find his outlook on

¹As a guide for factual statements was used, Ward, Maisie, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, N.Y., Sheed and Ward, 1943, xv, 685 p.

any particular matter are confronted with the tremendous task of going through a great number of books. Scarcely any book may be safely disregarded since he may well speak of some economic problem in the middle of a paragraph on some seemingly totally unrelated topic. The gems to be found are worth the digging required but unfortunately few people have the time for digging.

This thesis proposed to do a little digging in an attempt to uncover Chesterton's ideas on education. No one has done this before. Although he is sometimes quoted by educators, no one has given a full size presentation of just what he thought about education.

This thesis has proposed only to investigate books of essays written by G.K. Chesterton in an effort to find, examine, and analyze anything that Chesterton may have said concerning education. Then the final operation has been an attempt to arrange this matter and present it in a logical manner. For example, if Chesterton speaks of modern education in ten different essays, a sentence here and another there, this thesis has attempted to tie these statements together in an ordered paragraph, thus hoping to present the view of a great contemporary Catholic thinker and a literary light of the twentieth century.

No attempt has been made to weigh, prove, condemn or approve anything that Chesterton has said on education. The object of the work has been merely to find out what Chesterton

said on the subject of education and to present this in one place in a somewhat ordered manner.

When the thesis topic was tentatively chosen, it was not known whether sufficient matter had been written by Chesterton to warrant a thesis such as this. As has been mentioned before, the investigation has been conducted only in his published essays. It was thought that his poetry and plays and novels could safely be omitted in a hope to limit sufficiently the scope of the thesis.

Of the books of essays examined, it was found that he wrote about education in twenty-eight books but some essays are repeated in different books. Often a single book dealt with education in six different places in perhaps just a few sentences. He wrote very few essays on education explicitly. Anyone looking for the word "education" in the tables of contents in his books would find only one book with such a listing. Education is more often treated by way of exemplifying another topic or by way of parenthesis in another essay.

The mere fact, however, that he often turned to the subject of education for his examples and comments might indicate that it was often a subject of thought for him. As will be seen in this thesis or as may be seen in nearly any of his writings, Chesterton was extremely fond of children. He set up children as the model for adults. The simplicity and naturalness of the child filled Chesterton with great awe and reverence.

Hundreds of times in his writings he refers to children when exemplifying some point. Any man so interested in children and so full of love and admiration for them would naturally be quite interested in their education.

Since education is always a topic of interest in any age, nothing need be said of the timeliness of the topic or of the usefulness of any study of the subject. Perhaps at no time in the history of the world has there been so much interest in education as there is in our present day. Some will certainly say that at no time during the past few centuries has education gone through a greater crisis than it is going through at the present time. Evidently any work which might uncover worthwhile material on the subject would not only be extremely valuable but also most useful.

It might be well to explain briefly why the writings of Chesterton were chosen as a field of research.

In the first place Chesterton is one of the outstanding literary men of our time. Such a statement made forty years ago might have been questioned by literary experts. There seems to be little danger of any such question today. His works are being more widely published now than they were ten years ago. Moreover he is recognized as one of the most brilliant philosophers of our time. In his own time, let us say from 1900 to 1936, he was best known as a thorn in the side of the pseudo-scientific progressives of the time.

He was then best known as a journalist. As the years have passed, many of his writings have been forgotten, especially much of his journalistic work which was by its nature something short-lived. His essays which have been continually read and re-published are now the basis for his fame. He has taken on less the character of a thorn and more the aspect of a gem, a Catholic thinker of outstanding worth. He has continued to exercise his effect on an ever growing Chesterton public. France, perhaps not the first place we would expect quick approval of an English author, has come to know Chesterton. He is one of the most popular foreign authors in France of the twentieth century among the Catholic thinkers.

It is believed that there are no Catholic thinkers who have disapproved of Chesterton and his writings in general.

Probably most people do not think of Chesterton as an educator. He need not be an educator to be a good critic of education of course. However, it is interesting to note that Hilaire Belloc considered Chesterton a teacher. He said: "Always, in whatever manner he launched the parallelism, he produced the shock of illumination. He taught.

He made men see what they had not seen before. He made them know."²

²Belloc, Hilaire, On the Place of Gilbert Chesterton in English Letters, London, Sheed and Ward, 1940 39 p.

CHAPTER ONE

BASIC IDEAS ON EDUCATION

In this chapter will be collected and presented Chesterton's scattered thoughts which show his basic ideas of education. This chapter does not hope to give a complete idea of his ideas on education. Were that the case the following chapters would be useless. No clear idea of Chesterton's mind on the subject can be had without seeing his words on education and the family, education and the Church, education and the state, and the faults of modern education. Here then will be shown his thoughts on the essentials of education more or less abstracted from other factors which will be considered later.

Chesterton speaking generally and not explicitly of education, though definitely not excluding it, calls for a return to philosophy. Man in general, Chesterton saw, would be defeated without philosophy. Man would "Stagger on to a miserable death with no comfort but a series of catchwords."¹ These catchwords Chesterton calls "substitutes for thoughts."² People are satisfied with the tail ends of somebody else's thinking. As is commonly recognized, Chesterton's apostolate was to make people think and only then act. He wanted people not only to have a reason for preferring a tested system but to test the tests.³

¹Chesterton, G.K., The Common Man, London, Sheed and Ward, 1950, 173 p.

²Ibidem, 173 p.

³Ibidem, p. 176

The fact that this general outlook of Chesterton is very aptly applied to education will be made clearer, later in the paper, especially when he deals with the ills of modern education.

I - The Object of Education

One of the first things to be seen in Chesterton's basic ideas of education is what he sees as the object of education. In one place Chesterton seems to express the opinion that education as now understood is at the same time too broad and too narrow in its scope. However, there is no contradiction if the two statements are carefully compared.

In an essay, "A Grammar of Shelley", Chesterton says that the discovery of the vastness of this word, education, is a curse in modern life.⁴ But in "As I Was Saying", he, on the other hand, says that education implies enlargement.

Improvement implies all that is commonly called education, and education implies enlargement and especially enlargement of the imagination. It implies exactly that imaginative intensity of appreciation which does not permit anything that might be vivid or significant to become trivial or vulgar.⁵

The discovery of the vastness of the word, education, is not in itself the curse. The curse lies in the way in which the discovery has been handled by educationists. "The

⁴Chesterton, G.K., A Handful of Authors: Essays on Books and Writers, N.Y., Sheed and Ward, 1953, 82 p

⁵Chesterton, G.K., "As I Was Saying" as quoted in Cammaerts, Emile, The Laughing Prophet, London, Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1937, 156 p. (Original unobtainable).

effect", says Chesterton, "of the great discovery has been precisely the opposite to that which it should have been."⁶ He goes on to point out that discovering such a vastness or inclusiveness of such a field as education should have been the occasion for a return to the liberal education but instead, educationists

have put the very follies of childhood into unimpeachable grammars and constructed the most illiberal education the world has ever seen.⁷

So Chesterton is not adverse to the discovery of the field of education. Above he calls it "The great discovery." What he is against is the illiberalizing effect which the discovery has surprisingly had. By illiberalizing effect Chesterton means a narrowing of education to facts and undesirable and impossible occupation with disconnected details. This he shows when he gives an example of the illiberalizing effect. Immediately following the quotation above about the educationists constructing the most illiberal education the world has ever seen, he says by way of example:

Let anyone who thinks such a description too strong to be appropriate turn to the last page of an edition of Shelley, which is called 'Teaching Exercises.' The first question is as follows: 'Discuss the suitability of the following expressions: lips of lurid hue; 'lorn bard ... arrowy odour ... ' ... the vital

⁶Chesterton, G.K., A. Handfull of Authors, op.cit., 82 p

⁷Idem.

objection to this question about the suitability of certain poetic phrases does not lie in the fact that no children could answer it, it lies in the fact that nobody in the world can answer it.⁸

Search must be made in another place to get a clear picture of what Chesterton is trying to portray. He explains rather well what he means by the curse of the discovery of the vastness of the word, education, and at the same time praises the enlargement which education implies. He plainly states that the chief object of education is simplicity.

For my part, I should be inclined to suggest that the chief object of education should be to restore simplicity. If you like to put it so, the chief object of education is not to learn things; nay, the chief object of education is to unlearn things. The chief object of education is to unlearn all the weariness and wickedness of the world and to get back into that state of exhilaration we all instinctively celebrate when we write by preference of children and of boys. ... I would insist that people should have so much simplicity as would enable them to see things suddenly and to see things as they are.⁹

The broadness of the field of education is not objectionable to Chesterton. As a matter of fact, he delights in broadening the field. "Culture is not only knowing the best that has been said: it is also knowing the best that has been done, and even doing our best to do it."¹⁰

⁸Idem.

⁹Chesterton, G.K., All Things Considered, London, Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1908, vi-220 p

¹⁰Chesterton, G.K., G.K.C. as M.C., London, Methuen and Co., 1929, xxii-272 p

But the disintegration which has followed upon the discovery of this broadness or vastness is objectionable. In brief, there is nothing to hold the field together. The discovery of this vastness of education is good. The logical thing would have been to tie the field together, to have kept the vastness in an ordered simplicity. When objects are multiplied principles must be more emphasized. But for this to be achieved something else is necessary. That thing is authority, or principles, or dogma, as we shall presently see.

II--Authority Basic to Education

Chesterton thinks that the disintegration which exists in education is owing to the absence of any authority. Without authority education is not made liberal but just the opposite. When authority disappears, liberal education disappears.

In the style so characteristic of Chesterton, he makes the startling statement, "Of course, the main fact about education is that there is no such thing."¹¹ He goes on to explain this statement. He says that education is not a word like theology or geology but rather a word like inheritance or transmission. In brief, "... it is not an object but a method.

¹¹Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1910, 243-244 p

... Theology and education are to each other like a love-letter to the General Post Office. ... Education is tradition....¹²

Chesterton here continues to give examples. One teacher, a gangster, will teach certain things, another, a vegetarian, will teach other things etc., but they are all educating, are all educators. That is the only thing they have in common. Then comes Chesterton's striking conclusive statement.

The truth is, that there is nothing in common at all between these teachers except that they teach. In short, the only thing they share is the one thing they profess to dislike; the general idea of authority. It is quaint that people talk of separating dogma from education. Dogma is actually the only thing that cannot be separated from education. It is education. A teacher who is not dogmatic is simply a teacher who is not teaching.¹³

This conviction that authority is the most basic element in education is further explained by Chesterton in another essay. There he states that man has a responsibility of affirming truth and of handing it on with an unshaken voice of authority.¹⁴

That is the one eternal education; to be sure enough that something is true that you dare to tell it to a child. From this high audacious duty the moderns are fleeing on every side; ... they cannot convince themselves enough to convince even a newborn babe.¹⁵

¹²Ibidem 244 p

¹³Ibidem 246 p

¹⁴Ibidem 254 p

¹⁵Ibidem 254-255 p

In still another essay Chesterton shows the logical conclusion to his statement that there is no such thing as education. What he says is in brief that, speaking of education as a substance, it does not exist. But considered as an abstract expansion then it is everywhere. The only trouble he notes is that most people are not correctly educated. People are being taught every waking minute of their lives, by posters, advertisements and so on. They see nothing of principles. They see only results.¹⁶

What is the answer to this problem? Chesterton repeatedly says, authority. Of course, the authority must be valid if the education is to be valid. "All educationists are utterly dogmatic and authoritarian. You cannot have free education; for if you left the child free you would not educate him at all."¹⁷ Thus, by authority, by some kind of principle the vast field of education can be simplified, can be a science, and would not be a mere mass of facts or results, as Chesterton calls them.

It is good that the field is broadened. But principle or dogma or authority must be there to keep the field from be-

¹⁶Ibidem, 263-264 p

¹⁷Ibidem, 260 p

coming a mere mass of objects. The task of culture is one of selection and selection is impossible without some authority or creed.¹⁸

III.-Nemo dat quod non habet

Two important ramifications follow immediately from this doctrine of authority and are inseparably related to it. One has to do with the educator and the other with the educant. Chesterton consistently maintains that authority is absolutely necessary for any kind of education. If this is so then the educator must be authoritarian or a dogmatist, or a person of principles. Thus Chesterton rejects the modern cry of "Save the children." This slogan, in his mind, implies that the fathers are hopelessly lost, cannot be saved. Education, he defines as "truth in a state of transmission."¹⁹ He asks how can the children be saved if the transmitters are not saved. Unless the fathers are saved the children can't be saved. How can children be taught citizenship if the fathers are not citizens? How can children be taught an ideal manhood if we cannot find one for ourselves? In short it is the application of the old philosophical principle of Nemo dat quod non habet.²⁰

¹⁸Ibidem, 275 p

¹⁹Ibidem, 248 p

²⁰Ibidem, 247-249 p

The second ramification which has to do with the educant is the necessity of refuting the common opinion that education is principally a process of drawing out what is by nature or heredity, latent in the educant. Obviously authority would not be nearly so necessary if education were merely a method of uncovering what is already present.

First of all Chesterton disagrees with that interpretation of the word, education, which says that it comes from the Latin, meaning to draw out. He mentions the possibility that it may also have come from the Latin, meaning, to take out for a walk as was the custom of the Roman schoolmasters. He is not particularly interested in the history of the word, however. But he emphatically denies the doctrine consequent upon the first interpretation, the drawing-out opinion. He refers to those maintaining this theory as "crazy pedants."²¹ Immediately following this appellation he proceeds in his characteristic manner to show the absurdity of such an opinion.

Somewhere far down in the dim boyish soul is a primordial yearning to learn Greek accents ... and the schoolmaster only gently and tenderly liberates this imprisoned purpose. ... The educator only draws out the child's own unapparent love of long division ..."²¹

Later he settles the matter as far as he is concerned. To quote a brief excerpt will in this case serve better than a

²¹Ibidem 249 p

²²Idem.

summary account of his words.

... I do not agree with the doctrine; I think it should be about as sane to say that the baby's milk comes from the baby as to say that the baby's educational merits do. There is, indeed, in each living creature a collection of forces and functions; but education means producing them in particular shapes and training them to particular purposes, or it means nothing at all. Speaking is the most practical instance of the whole situation. You may indeed "draw out" squeals and grunts from the child by simply poking him and pulling him about, a pleasant but cruel pastime to which many psychologists are addicted. But you will wait and watch very patiently indeed before you draw the English Language out of him. That you have got to put into him; and there is an end of the matter.²³

IV.-Summary

Chesterton's thoughts presented in this chapter may be summarized as follows:

The discovery of the vastness of the field of education is, in itself, a great discovery. Unfortunately the discovery has resulted in a disintegration of education. Men have been taken up with the numerous objects and divisions while losing sight of the principles or the authority necessary to keep the science intact. When objects are multiplied, principles must be more emphasized.

²³Ibidem, 251 p

Authority is indispensable to education since education is nothing but truth in a state of transmission. Obviously truth can't be transmitted without authority. Thus every teacher is a dogmatist or else is a teacher who is not teaching.

Consequent upon the necessity of authority is the necessity of saving the fathers before saving the children. One cannot transmit what one does not have. One must be convinced before one can convince. The fallacious opinion that education is a mere drawing-out of what is innate in the child must be disproved. There are certain functions and forces in each living creature. These, however, must be produced and trained. In short the educant must be instructed. For example the English language cannot merely be drawn out of the educant. It must be put in.

Chapter II
STATE AND EDUCATION

I.-State Replacing Parents in Education

Chesterton sees a threat to the place which the family has in the modern mind. Some have gone to the extent of stating, in varying degrees of vagueness, that marriage can now be replaced by the state. Chesterton, of course, denies this and calls the idea a mere delusion. The idea, he says, is one found not in the real history of states but rather in pseudo ideal states such as the utopias of H.G. Wells. Nowhere in history has the state successfully usurped the work of the family. On the contrary, the state depends on the family. If mankind had not been organized into families it could never have been organized into states. The reason for this is that human culture is handed down in households. It can be done in no other way. The king or government cannot be present in every nursery. Many adversities may befall a government and it will stand as long as the nation's family life is preserved. As an example, Chesterton used China. When Chesterton wrote China was a so-called republic, governed by five contending armies. The only thing, he says, that has preserved China is its domestic religion. It had a domestic foundation.¹

¹Chesterton, G.K., The Man Who Was Chesterton, New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1902, 22 p

Government grows more elusive every day. But the traditions of humanity support humanity; and the central one is this tradition of marriage. And the essential of it is that a free man and a free woman choose to found on earth the only voluntary state; the only state which creates and which loves its citizens. So long as these real responsible beings stand together, they can survive all the vast changes, deadlocks and disappointments which make up mere political history. But if they fail each other, it is as certain as death that "the State" will fail them.²

The necessity of preserving the institution of the family and the impossibility of its being replaced by the state is seen best when applied to education. Social reformers who advocate the elimination of the parental function of education by the state base themselves on a "new superstition, the idea of infinite resources and organization."³ Reducing the reformers' tenets to absurdities, Chesterton in the same place points out that men cannot be educated by machinery, nor can a tutor be supplied for each child. Hence, the result would be that one harassed person would look after a hundred children and thus attempt to replace the parents. Worth noting too is the fact that the normal parent performs this normal function without salary. But the state-parent will have a salary.

²Idem.

³Chesterton, G.K., The Thing, London, Sheed and Ward, 1929, 39 p

In Chesterton's own words:

"If you cut off that natural force, and substitute a paid bureaucracy, you are like a fool who should pay men to turn the wheel of his mill, because he refused to use wind or water which he could get for nothing. You are like a lunatic who should carefully water his garden with a watering can, while holding up an umbrella to keep off the rain."⁴

The whole idea of replacing the parent by the State is wrong on many scores. But the most obvious thing is that it is an illusion of wealth.⁵ Among poorer people the five teachers per child necessary to even approach an attempt at such parental substitution would be quite impossible. Even in the case of a wealthy child such a thing is not clearly possible since specialists are scarcely a substitute for spiritual authority.⁶

Of course, the parent is not all-sufficient. Chesterton admits this and admits the necessity of "educational specialists in loco parentis."⁷ The parents cannot be complete educators. But as was mentioned above, they have the authority over the educant. Even though the parents must turn to others to help educate their children, yet those aiding the mother and father have certain obligations toward them. The complaint Chesterton has against these professional educators is that they do not work

⁴Idem.

⁵Chesterton, G.K., Fancies versus Fads, London, Methuen and Company, 1923, 194 p

⁶Ibidem, 195 p

⁷Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 311 p

with the parents but against them. Here he has in mind principally the poor. Instead of the educator capitalizing on the beautiful tradition of the poor, which Chesterton always champions, they replace these traditions with modern prejudices of the rich. "Instead of their Christlike charity, their Shakespearean laughter ... the poor have imposed upon them mere pedantic copies of the prejudices of the remote rich."⁸ Chesterton, in the same place, does not call for exact imitation but he does think that the basically high tradition of the poor should influence education and should not be replaced with vapid prejudices or modern veneer of the present-day rich.

The responsibility in such matters rests to a great extent upon the state. It is the state which so often assumes that a child must be educated by the established schools or else remain a barbarian. In brief, Chesterton's mind on this matter can be accurately stated thus. Everyone in modern society is in a certain sense educated before the school influences him. The schools, instead of realizing their responsibility to combat this street education derived from posters, signs and newspapers and radios, and movies, fall in line with these influences. Instead of correcting or simplifying the

⁸Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 311 p

chaos, the schools foolishly add to it. The state should not concern itself with making war on the ignorance of the poor but on their knowledge.⁹ The schools, as they now work, would be good for the uninstructed. But there are no uninstructed people now. There is no question of whether our elementary education is better than barbaric ignorance because there is no such thing as barbaric ignorance anymore. There is merely bad education, bad instruction. In following such a course education is combating the parental tradition, is adding to the confusion. "All the newspapers, all the new advertisements, all the brass of modern times -- it is against these that the national school must bear up if it can."¹⁰

Not only in parental substitution is the state a potential danger to education. Chesterton points out briefly another danger, the danger of a state using education as a part of its machinery for satisfying a political greed. He uses Germany as his example. National education in Germany was assigned the duty of proving everything against a totalitarian movement to be the result of ignorance.

It was pointed out that in Germany governments and great employers thought it well worth their while to apply the grandest scale of organization and the minutest inquisition of detail to the instruction of the whole German race. The government was the stronger for training its scholars as it trained its soldiers;

⁹Ibidem, 263 p

¹⁰Ibidem, 264 p

the big businesses were the stronger for manufacturing mind as they manufactured material.¹¹

Chesterton would have the power of the state very carefully watched and limited especially in the field of education, even in such a small matter as the censorship of books for the young. He merely notes that the ever-multiplying censorship is ridiculous. He does admit that there are some things which obviously the young should not read. But one cannot censor everything that may have a bad effect on a child simply because one can never tell what will have a bad effect on any one child. What affects one badly has the opposite effect on another. Here Chesterton has not primarily in mind moral effects but rather psychological effects.¹²

But how is the power of the state to be watched so carefully. It is not an easy matter. Chesterton has in mind England in particular but the application may fit nearly every government. Two things make it difficult to limit and watch against state encroachments on education. One is that the "heresy" of progress is so widespread today that even the modern conservatives are admittedly progressive. Anything with the label "progress" whether it is genuinely so or not is immediately championed by the modern legislator. The second reason for

¹¹Chesterton, G.K., A Short History of England, New York, John Lane Company, 1917, 276 p

¹²Chesterton, G.K., The Man Who Was Chesterton, 701-706 p

the difficulty in limiting the state is that the voter is not permitted to select a solution to the educational problem from the ten different solutions which are perhaps offered but is allowed to choose one of the two solutions offered by the leader and the opposition party.¹³

II.-Summary

The state often makes attempts to supplant the family. There are some pedants who advocate such parental substitution. Obviously this is impossible even from the merely practical economic viewpoint. It is based on a delusion of infinite resources and organization, on a failure to realize that a state depends on the family, and that human culture is handed down by means of the family.

Educators are necessary to supplement the family but must not work against it. Educators must use the beautiful family traditions, especially evident in the poor, and not attempt to substitute for it the modern prejudices of the rich. This responsibility lies in great measure with the state. The state should, by means of its schools, assist the parental

¹³Chesterton, G.K., Miscellany of Men, London, Methuen and Company, 1912 (6th ed. 1930), 44 p; and What's Wrong with the World, 273 p

function and the parental authority. The state fails to realize that its main function should be to destroy the false knowledge or education and as a result merely adds to the chaotic condition of education at the present time.

The state must be watched carefully and be limited in its influence in the field of education. This is difficult because of the modern heresy of progress and the bipartisan system which limits the choice of the voter.

Chapter III

EDUCATION AND THE FAMILY

Part of Chesterton's thoughts on the relation of the family to education has been given in the preceding chapter. One could hardly give his outlook on the relation of the state to education without involving much of his doctrine on the family. Then, too, the chief danger with regard to the relation between state and education is not so much that the state will sin by neglect but by excess, by trying to supplant the rights of the family. Hence this chapter will deal with Chesterton's thoughts on the family and education other than those previously presented. However, the thoughts of the last chapter must be a part of this chapter although they need not be repeated.

I.-Importance of Parental Authority in Education

Chesterton laments the fact that he has read thousands of times in the present day novels and newspapers

... certain phrases about the just right of the young to liberty, about the unjust claim of the elders to control, about the conception that all souls must be free or all citizens equal, about the absurdity of authority or the degradation of obedience.¹

¹Chesterton, G.K., The Thing, 37-38 p

Chesterton does not wish to take each of these things up one at a time and argue them out. That is not his style ordinarily. He proceeds along his characteristic pattern of applying a bit of logical deduction leading to absurdity. The next obvious question in Chesterton's mind is why should the parent be obligated to the child if the child is not obligated to the parent. He bases himself, as he implies, upon the philosophy of relationship. In the present order one created thing cannot be related to another without a mutual relationship. Relationship by its very nature requires two at least. He does not deny that the relationship may be one of equality but he does deny that it is one of similarity.²

Not all progressive pedants, in the Chestertonian sense, are in favour of such a violent disruption of nature as to wish to free the child from obligation to parental authority. However, this problem of the relation between parents and educants is one which interests so many educators that solutions are continually being offered.

The solutions offered represent nothing else than the old battle over the primacy of authority. Chesterton himself has not committed himself to any definite stand on the ideal

²Idem.

relationship between parent and educant except that he does demand the necessity of parental authority. In other words he discards any theory which does away with parental authority but has not taken a stand on which is the best way for parental authority to be exercised.³

I have never tied myself to a final belief ...; but I point out that the progressive, generation after generation, does elaborately tie himself up in new knots, and then roar and yell aloud to be untied.⁴

Chesterton elaborates⁵ on three general types of solutions which are frequently offered as solutions to the problem of the relation between parent and educant. The three types might be listed thus:

1. Reformed education.
2. Father with the stick.
3. Let the child find himself.

The first type which has been labeled "Reform education" was the type prevalent in later Victorian times, according to Chesterton. This was the school which advocated persuasive authority with most emphasis on the persuasive. As Chesterton admirably characterized the school, it was one which said, "You will not hurt father", rather than, "Father will hurt you."⁶ At the time when Chesterton was writing, this popular school of educators was violently rejecting the school

³Chesterton, Fancies Versus Fads, 137 p

⁴Ibidem. 138 p

⁵Ibidem 136-140 p

⁶Ibidem 136 p

which had just completed an apostolate of reforming education, which had meant reforming the father. Now they contend that such delicate and considerate treatment actually trains the child to deception and especially self-deception. Chesterton finds it very amusing to hear his contemporaries in the field of education accuse their parents of undue leniency.

The second type, which was busy, when Chesterton was writing, at supplanting the school of leniency and delicate treatment, was the type labeled, "Father with the stick".

After having condemned the great-grand-father of early Victorian times for his disciplinary measures, modern pedants, are returning to his methods. Chesterton implies that very likely these modern educators would not readily admit that they are returning to the educational methods of the early Victorian period. But that he claims, is what most of them are doing when they condemn the discipline or lack of discipline of late Victorian times. Obviously when one laments the lack of discipline the only other logical course is to approve the use of discipline.

However, not everyone is logical in offering a solution to the problem at hand. There is a third group or type labeled, "Let the child find himself."

For the case of these moderns is worst of all when they do try to find any third ideal, which is neither the authority which they once condemned for not being persuasion, nor the persuasion which they now condemn for being worse than authority.⁷

Chesterton can find no words sufficient to ridicule this group. They have substituted for authority a kind of freedom and for persuasion some vague idea of drawing out the personality of the child.⁸ In refutation Chesterton merely asks how the child is to decide whether he has found his true personality. How do these educators propose to find out if the transcendental notion of true personality has been realized. The problem for the educators is especially great if we recall Chesterton's opinion that they are at present working among a multiplicity of details or objects oblivious of the principles necessary.

What is summarized above covered several pages in Chesterton's essay. However, when he gives the only answer to this third school, he becomes quite serious and terse. Hence, nothing better can be done than to give his own words.

Therefore, without feeling any fixed fanaticism for all the old methods, whether coercive or persuasive, I do think they both had a basis of common sense which is wanting in this third theory.

⁷Ibidem. 138 p

⁸See Chapter One for Chesterton's comment on the interpretation of education as meaning to draw out.

The parent, whether persuading or punishing the child was at least aware of one simple truth. He knew that, in the most serious sense, God alone knows what the child is really like, or is meant to be really like. All we can do to him is to fill him with those truths which we believe to be equally true whatever he is like. We must have a code of morals which we believe to be applicable to all children. If it seems to be a part of his personality to be a swindler or a torturer, we must tell him that we do not want any personalities to be swindlers and torturers. In other words we must believe in a religion or philosophy firmly enough to take the responsibility of acting on it ... And I respectfully reply that God alone knows what there is to draw out; but we can be reasonably responsible for what we ourselves are putting in.⁹

II.-Importance of Family Life in Education

Although there are many different schools of educators, all of them, modern and old, admit the necessity of education. Everybody admits the importance of education.¹⁰ A little note of the satirical is evident when Chesterton makes the above observation. The underlying reason for this attitude is not that Chesterton thinks education unimportant but that he refuses to go along with those who would sacrifice everything to education, at least so-called, whether it is the family or the faith. He says very beautifully:

⁹Chesterton, G.K., Fancies Versus Fads, 140-141 p

¹⁰Ibidem, 194 p

No man who worships education has got the best out of education; no man who sacrifices everything to education is even educated. ... What is wrong is a neglect of principle; and the principle is that without a gentle contempt for education, no gentleman's education is complete.¹¹

Nevertheless, everybody is agreed that education is important. Chesterton wants this fact well established and openly admitted. The reason is that he uses it to explode some other modern trends in thinking.

If education is so important why then do so many modern thinkers advocate the so-called emancipation of woman? Why work to liberate woman from one of the highest functions in the whole world?

Domestic education is larger than public education because it involves the whole child and his whole life. The professional educator deals with more children but with only a certain period in their lives. The educator deals with the school life of the scholar and usually only a section of the child's mind. The parent, especially the mother sees fewer children but sees the whole of childhood and the whole of the life of the child.¹² It is obvious then, that if one exaggerates education, one must exaggerate the place of the parent.¹³

¹¹Chesterton, G.K., The Common Man, London, Sheed and Ward, 1950, 40 p

¹²Chesterton, G.K., Fancies versus Fads, 203 p

¹³Ibidem, 197 p

Still, illogically, this is that from which many modern thinkers want the woman emancipated. She is to leave this exalted position for the narrower work of the public. If education were a trivial or merely mechanical matter, then the mother could do her part in a few minutes every day and thus leave herself free for public work. But these modern educators tell us that education is a matter which concerns every minute of a child's life.¹⁴

Once again when Chesterton gives his conclusion to the problem he is very terse.

If you exalt the education, you must exalt parental power with it. ... If you depreciate parental power, you must depreciate education with it. If the young are always right and can do as they like, well and good; let us all be jolly, old and young and free from every kind of responsibility. But in that case do not come pestering us with the importance of education, when nobody has any authority to educate anybody. Make up your mind whether you want unlimited education or unlimited emancipation, but do not be such a fool as to suppose you can have both at once.¹⁵

It is not just the mother who is necessary for education. The entire homelife is necessary. The lower animals require no homelife or at most very little. They live by instinct and need little education about how to live. But

¹³Ibidem, 197 p

¹⁴Ibidem, 194 p

¹⁵Ibidem, 197 p

man is different. Man needs education. In answer to those who say no education is necessary, Chesterton dismisses the objection by noting that even these people needed education to acquire a language with which they could speak such nonsense.¹⁶

The necessity of homelife and home-education is one reason why the union of man and wife must be permanent and not like that of the lower animals. Permanence of marriage is necessary even after the maturity of the offspring because there is needed a sense of security and an atmosphere of safety, an idea of the durability of the home. If the child could suspect that the home would disintegrate as soon as he becomes mature then obviously the atmosphere could not exist.¹⁷ Here, it might be well to recall from the previous chapter, is where the state is prone to interfere at the invitation of many modern thinkers. This possibility of the state replacing the parents or giving the necessary stability for the education of the children is simply a delusion.¹⁸

Chesterton admires the Irish method of education. In his mind, the Irish put the home above the school. He is in hearty agreement with W.B. Yeats who says, "Irish

¹⁶Chesterton, G.K., The Man Who Was Chesterton, 19 p

¹⁷Ibidem, 19-20 p

¹⁸See Chapter One, p. 11 of this thesis.

Education must always depend on the fact that the child's mind is full of the drama of the home."¹⁹

III.-Summary

Some modern thinkers wish to free the child from any obligation to parents. The next logical step would be to free parents from obligation to children. A relationship implies two bases. There can be no relationship merely on the part of one. Not all will go this far. Many solutions to the problem of the relation between parent and child are offered. One is that the parent must use a delicate, inoffensive, persuasive authority. Another violently rejects this school and calls for a severe parental control such as was prevalent in early Victorian times. A third group wish to leave the child entirely alone except for assisting him in drawing out his personality. Chesterton does not take sides as regards the first two schools but he violently rejects the third. Only God knows what can be drawn out of a child. Our responsibility lies in what is put in. We must have a creed which we can impose on any child because we believe it is true and hence applicable to any child.

¹⁹Yeats, W.B., Essays Irish and American, quoted by Chesterton in, The Uses of Diversity 42 p

If education is important as everyone is agreed, then it is completely illogical to emancipate woman from the home where she exercises this very noble duty in a higher or larger way than it is exercised even in public education.

The permanency of the home is also required for education. The young educant must have an atmosphere of safety and permanence furnished only by a permanent union between his father and mother.

Chapter Four

EDUCATION AND RELIGION

I.-Secularistic Education

Chesterton's attitude toward the much discussed matter of whether education should be secularistic or sectarian is one of weariness. This attitude might be called the background of his thinking on the matter. He says:

If it be really true that men sickened of sacred words and wearied of theology, if this largely unreasoning irritation against "dogma" did arise out of some ridiculous excess of such things among priests in the past, then I fancy we must be laying up a fine crop of cant for our descendants to grow tired of. ... Gibbon thought it frightfully funny that people should have fought about the difference between "Homousion" and the "Homoiousion." The time will come when somebody will laugh louder to think that men thundered against Sectarian Education and also against Secular Education; that men of prominence and position actually denounced the schools for teaching a creed and also for not teaching a faith. The two Greek words in Gibbon look rather alike; but they really mean quite different things. Faith and creed do not look alike, but they mean exactly the same thing. Creed happens to be the Latin for faith.¹

From the above quotation it can be seen that Chesterton is weary of the discussion. Usually this means that he is out to settle a question with finality; for example, the discussion of the doctrine of "drawing out" as the main process of education.² The quotation above is of more importance in that it

¹Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 242-243 p

²See p.10-11 of this thesis.

shows Chesterton quite convinced that the problem of secular education is not a permanent one. Indeed, the time will come, he thinks, that discussion of the matter will be quite forgotten.

Before presenting the new matter of this chapter, it will be helpful to recall Chesterton's opinion that modern education ignores the tradition of the poor; that it helps so little, if at all, in forming families. Since many of the traditions of the poor are rather intimately tied up with the faith, the two problems, of education ignoring the family and the problem of secular education are rather intimately linked. Chesterton himself does not explicitly make this link in so many words but a review of what he has to say of education's ignoring the family would seem to link itself with the present problem.³

The most basic trouble with modern thinking on the problem of education's relation to religion is in Chesterton's mind the very same trouble which is experienced when any modern thinking is examined. There is no authority, there is no genuine thinking. Instead of thoughts, modern phrases have been substituted. Chesterton mentions three

³Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 311 p and p. 16 of this thesis.

words which are favourite substitutes used to avoid discussing what is good, namely, liberty, progress and education. He sums up this modern attitude as being logically rendered thus: "Let us not decide what is good, but let it be considered good not to decide it."⁴ This refusal to get at the seat of today's illness and actually discover what is good, is especially dangerous in the matter of education. So many modern thinkers, according to Chesterton, say in so many words, "Neither in religion nor morality, my friend, lie the hopes of the race, but in education."⁵ Chesterton immediately notes that this thought clearly expressed, means, "We cannot decide what is good, but let us give it to our children."⁶

The modern educationist, our author says, is seeking for religious liberty without determining what is religion or what is liberty. The old priests may have forced certain statements on the people but not without first making the statements lucid. The moderns are persecuting for a doctrine without even stating it.⁷ Thus Chesterton shows that, in his opinion, those favouring secular education are doing so in the absence of principles,

⁴Chesterton, G.K., Heretics, London, John Lane, 1905, 25 p

⁵Idem.

⁶Idem.

⁷Ibidem, 14 p

in the absence of thought.

Above, Chesterton speaks of the secularistic mode of thinking or not thinking, to be more precise, in a broad impersonal way. In another essay he speaks of the same secularistic tendency but in a way which would probably be more popularly convincing. He here endeavours to show the stupidity of the frequently heard phrase, "I don't want to teach my child any religion. I don't want to influence him; I want him to choose for himself when he grows up." This, Chesterton notes, is like refusing to introduce a child to his uncle or aunt so that he may be left free to choose his own friends when he grows up. Of course, he admits that a mother can rear a child without giving him any religion. But she cannot bring him up without an environment and an environment without religion is an unnatural environment.⁸ Just as educationists in general, clamour for freedom in the religio-educational field so do many modern mothers in their role as educators.

It would not be fair to leave the impression that Chesterton blamed only the poor mental operation of the moderns for the secularistic tendencies of education. Chesterton realized full-well that there had been external influences.

⁸Chesterton, G.K., The Man Who Was Chesterton, 152 p

One influence of which he speaks is the Germanic influence. Germany, Chesterton thinks, used education as a means of protecting corrupt ideals and the execution of these ideas. Anything contrary to the purposes of the totalitarian state was attacked by another state institution called education and was called ignorance. German education had also been warped as regards religion. Lutheran Germany painted a beautiful picture of Protestant Germany and a picture of corruption and a black future for Catholic France. This warped view and use of education certainly had its influence in England although Chesterton is happy that it did not succeed absolutely.⁹ However this influence surely was a great aid in bringing about the modern secularistic trends.

II.-Views Consequent on Secularistic Doctrine

Obviously an education built on secularistic tendencies has many facets, each of them dependent on the absence of principle or as has just been discussed, the refusal to discover what is good. Chesterton briefly mentions several of these in various places. The half-educated (and certainly the products of secularistic education are half-educated) "regard school not as a normal social institution ...; but as some sort of entirely

⁹Chesterton, G.K., A Short History of England 277-278 p

supernormal ... factory, in which perfect men and women are made by magic."¹⁰ With no religion, even with no philosophy, to turn to, man has unduly exalted the science of education. He has set it up as a kind of god to whom everything else must be sacrificed. This state of things prompts Chesterton to make the interesting observation that a man is not completely educated if he does not have some contempt of education. He obviously means that education is not the God and all of man. He feels no contempt for education as such but only for education as it is thought of by so many of the modern secular school.¹¹ It must be subservient to higher principles.

Such topsy-turvy thinking in education, such lack of religion or morality has an influence deep in the life of the individual. Chesterton with his vigorous manner points out that educationists, avoiding discussion of moral and religious training have put their attention on physical cleanliness and have made it appear much more important than moral cleanliness. "It would really seem that so long as a little boy washes his hands it does not matter whether he is washing off his mother's jam or his brother's gore."¹²

¹⁰Chesterton, G.K., The Common Man, 39 p

¹¹Ibidem, 39-40p

¹²Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 304 p

The modern educationists, Chesterton believes, have made the Socratic error of assigning a moral virtue to the habit of knowledge. Religion has no place in the modern education of the secular type and so the emphasis is entirely on the intellectual side.¹³ The products of such an educational system are indeed remarkable; at least Chesterton finds them so. He takes D.H. Lawrence for an example.

... He confessed himself (D.H. Lawrence), in effect, that he could only worship Demeter from the neck downwards. He could only do it by setting the subconsciousness against the consciousness, or in other words, the dreams against the daylight. It is surely a remarkable gospel ... In a famous passage he wrote, "In my dark heart gods are", but added that in his "white mind" they were not, having been washed or whitewashed out by elementary education. But the modern educated mind is not white; it is only pale.¹⁴

Chesterton is aware that, sometimes, without the religious motivation schools become playgrounds. This he says is the present situation in the great universities. Since paradise is a playground, he has no objection to a university being such but since sanctity is demanded before one uses the playground of paradise he would demand a certain amount of sanctity before the university should be made such. Without sanctity

¹³Cammaerts, Emile, The Laughing Prophet, 157 p

¹⁴Chesterton, G.K., The Common Man, 200 p

it is a vanity.¹⁵ One cannot be content "to enjoy the pleasures and deny the perils."¹⁶

Secularistic education is also the mother of the scientists who exceed their field and infringe on the field of theology or philosophy. Science is not expected to be scientific; it is trying to replace the priest, the wife or ourselves. One hears people speak of science shaking one's belief in religion as if religion were the object of science, like a gas.¹⁷

"I want my ... physician to tell me whether this or that food will kill me. It is for my private philosopher to tell me whether I ought to be killed."¹⁸

III.-Catholic Schools

Although the most important reason for wanting sectarian or religious education is for the sake of religion and the salvation of souls, Chesterton notes that even from a profane view, religious or sectarian education is the only thing reasonable. A creed is needed, some authority, some criterion of selection. If it is not a theological creed it must be as firm as theology.¹⁹

¹⁵Chesterton, G.K., All Things Considered, 71-79 p

¹⁶Ibidem, 79 p

¹⁷Ibidem, 142 p

¹⁸Ibidem.

¹⁹Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 275 p

They say that noadays the creeds are crumbling; I doubt it, but at least the sects are increasing; and education must now be sectarian education, merely for practical purposes. Out of all this throng of theories it must somehow select a theory...²⁰

It is also better for the mere process of instructing if the teacher has religious dogma to use. Thus thought is not explicitly proposed by Chesterton although one feels it in all he says about education. It is part of his theory of simplicity being the object of education as was shown in Chapter One. There is good pedagogy behind this insistence of Chesterton according to an expert on Chesterton, Emile Cammaerts. He says:

Dogmas are forbidden, but prejudices are encouraged. Even if they were not there would be no escape from them, for science cannot be adapted for school consumption without becoming to a certain extent unscientific. Religious dogmas, when simplified, lose nothing of their essential value. Even a small child can understand when he is told that he has a Father in Heaven, while he cannot possibly grasp the full meaning and implication of a word like "heredity".²¹

Enough about the natural reasons for sectarian or religious education. The fact that Chesterton regarded the necessity of a religious education as dependent on the necessity of religion has been shown above. An important matter in any consideration of religious or sectarian education is the topic of Catholic Education, if for no other reason than that most sectarian

²⁰Ibidem, 276 p

²¹Cammaerts, Emile, The Laughing Prophet, 157 p

education is Catholic, at least in that part of the world which Chesterton wrote for. The thing which is most important for G.K. Chesterton in Catholic education is, as might be suspected, the authority with which it teaches. In modern education the intellect is left free to destroy itself and thinking is being reduced by one generation telling the next that there is no validity in human thought.²² The absence of that authority which is of the essence of Catholic education makes it impossible for education to function properly. When religion goes, reason goes, says Chesterton. The reason for this is that they "are of the same primary and authoritative kind"²³, that is, God is the author of both. While modern educationists have been busy destroying the idea of divine authority, they were apparently unaware that they were also destroying human authority. Chesterton himself sums up what he has been saying in his own inimitable style. "With a long sustained tug we have attempted to pull the mitre off pontifical man; and his head has come off with it."²⁴

In a letter to his friend Maurice Baring there is a clear summary of his thoughts on the authority of the Church

²²Chesterton, G.K., Orthodoxy, N.Y., John Lane Company, 1909, 57-58 p

²³Ibidem, 59 p

²⁴Ibidem, 59-60 p

in its teaching mission. The Church, Chesterton thinks, which really has divine authority must be a power capable of being decisive first and proved right afterwards; an authority which does not discover but knows.²⁵

Chesterton, as we shall see, did not speak as much as might be expected on the problem of Catholic education. Why he did not is not too evident. Of course, little would be expected in his pre-conversion writings. Perhaps the reason why there was not more after his conversion was that he was afraid of offending the powers of England, thus making it even more difficult for the future of Catholic education. Perhaps he thought that his reading public would be logical enough to apply what he said on a broader plane to the matter of education.

It is most interesting to note that Chesterton had a certain evolution of thought in the matter of Catholic education. In general very little difference can be detected in his pre-conversion writings and in his post-conversion works. As he himself says:

The change I have made is from being an Anglo-Catholic to being a Roman Catholic. I have always believed, at least for twenty years,

²⁵Chesterton, G.K., From February 14, 1923 letter to Maurice Baring, quoted in Ward, Maise, G.K. Chesterton, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1943, 457-459 p

in the Catholic view of Christianity.²⁶

However it is easily seen that he was not always fully appreciative of the traditional Catholic view of education. In 1902, the Education Bill was introduced by the Conservative Party and this bill advocated financial support to Church schools. Chesterton was in general in agreement with the opposition, namely the Liberal Party. He thought that parents could give at home the religious instruction which they thought their children should have.²⁷

At the very same time, however, he refused to go along with the Liberals in what was called the Bible compromise. This compromise offered as a solution to the teaching of religion in the schools that simple Bible teaching would be given to all alike. Chesterton considered this unfair to the Catholics. He was not yet a Catholic, of course. He thought the compromise favoured the Protestants over the Catholics. The Protestants, he noted, held that this book, the Bible, is the means of salvation, whereas Catholics held that the Church is the means of salvation and that the Sacred Scriptures are a part of that one means of salvation and must be taken as a part

²⁶Chesterton, G.K., from a letter to the correspondent of the Toronto Daily Star, undated, quoted in O'Connor, John, Father Brown on Chesterton, London, Frederick Muller, 1937, p 139-140.

²⁷Ward, Maisie, G.K. Chesterton, 289 p

of it and in connection with it. He saw that the Liberals were not merely making a case on religious instruction but the whole issue was developing into an anti-Popery cause.²⁸ Chesterton, nevertheless, stood staunch and refused to be influenced by the irrationality which the movement took on. Some time later he pointed out that teaching the simple Bible or teaching it simply as literature would never be satisfactory. He said, "I should not mind children being told about Mohammed because I am not a Mohammedan. If I were a Mohammedan I should very much want to know what they were told about him."²⁹

We can see how much more definite he became on the issue of Catholic education when we examine an essay, The New Case for Catholic Schools. "Our demand for a complete culture, based on its own philosophy and religion, is a demand that is really unanswerable."³⁰ He thinks it is irrefutable even when presented to the most modern psychologists and this on the basis of their understanding of the word, atmosphere. They should realize that they are arguing in favour of Catholic education when they insist that education must be treated as a whole, that nothing stands alone and separated in the field of education. It is quite old fashioned to refuse to under-

²⁸Chesterton, G.K., from a letter to the Daily News, not dated, quoted in Ward, Maisie, G.K. Chesterton, 289-290 p

²⁹Ibidem, 290 p

³⁰Chesterton, G.K., The Common Man, 165 p

stand that Catholic children must have an entirely Catholic education. Those who do so, put themselves in that group of relics who insisted on a mere drilling in the three R's; in that group of uneducated men who shouted for education, who saw no connection between a boy learning his letters and a man of letters. These of the old school thought it sheer nonsense that things should be taught in a spiritual atmosphere or that there was a Catholic way of teaching the alphabet.³¹

Chesterton insists that there is a Catholic way of teaching everything, even the alphabet. He says:

There is a Catholic way of teaching the alphabet; for instance, it prevents you from thinking that the only thing that matters is learning the alphabet; or from despising better people than yourself, if they do not happen to have learnt the alphabet.³²

The solution offered by some, that of omitting religious education, is utterly impossible. Every education teaches a philosophy or it isn't education. It must convey some general view of life if it is education, at least by suggestion, implication, or atmosphere. Educationists agree with this and continually reassert it until the question of Catholic education is presented. These opponents are outrageous when they suggest

³¹Ibidem, 167 p

³²Idem, 168 p

that Catholic education be taken care of in a half an hour process and expect this to last all week, "in a world soaked through and through with a contrary conception of life."³³

The whole trouble can be resolved to this. The modern world has and holds two inconsistent ideals of education. It expands the scope of education and at the same time excludes religion and philosophy.

But this is sheer nonsense. You can have an education that teaches atheism because atheism is true, and it can be, from its own point of view, a complete education. But you cannot have an education claiming to teach all truth and then refusing to discuss whether atheism is true.³⁴

The only conclusion one can come to about modern educators who insist on bringing out the aesthetic, athletic, political, sides of a student and will have nothing to do with the religious side is that they are simply behind the times and not acquainted with scientific education.³⁵

SUMMARY

Chesterton is weary of the cant of modern educationists.

The basic trouble with the relation between education and religion is the same as the basic trouble in any other

³³Ibidem, 168 p

³⁴Ibidem, 169 p

³⁵Idem.

phase of modern problems. There are no principles, there are no dogmas. Phrases have been substituted for thoughts. Educationists are refusing to find out what is good but are at the same time trying to decide what to give their children.

From this kind of thinking proceeds the often heard opinion that children should be allowed to choose their own religion.

There is no denying that there has been some external influence towards this way of thinking and that influence has come from Germany where education was warped to fit the desires of the state.

Lack of religion and lack of philosophy which inevitably follows upon the reduction of religion have led to an undue exaltation of education. Thus a certain contempt for education is a sign of genuine education. This same spirit has led to an exaltation of science in general. Science has entered into fields where it does not belong. It has become such a great part of the process of education that it is now watered down for the consumption of the young until it is no longer genuine science. Theology, on the other hand, loses none of its essential character when simplified.

Chesterton speaks less than we would suspect on the problem of Catholic education specifically although his many thoughts on religion and philosophy could and should be applied

to education.

His thinking as regards Catholic education underwent an evolution. In the early part of the twentieth century he could not see why parents could not give their children the necessary religious instruction at home. About thirty years later he could not see why modern educators were so old fashioned as not to see that a Catholic education must be completely Catholic. This he bases on the continual re-assertion of modern educationists and modern psychologists that education is a whole, that an integral education is necessary, that atmosphere is so important for total education.

Chapter Five

PROBLEMS AND ERRORS OF MODERN EDUCATION

I.-Introductory Thoughts

"A great many of us think that education ... has got very much into a rut and is likely to become as narrow as any other routine."¹ Thus Chesterton gathers education into his vast sweeping criticism of the ills of modern times. Narrowness and ruts are unbearable to Chesterton. To some moderns, principles mean narrowness and ruts but as has been noted throughout this thesis principles, or dogmas, or authority are the only means of keeping away from narrowness and ruts. When principles are disregarded, something else takes their place, assumes their role of guidance. For example, when morals become less important, manners become more important. When men cease to fear God they begin to fear man, begin to sink into bondage. The result of breaking the great laws or principles is not liberty. It is not even anarchy but merely gives rise to the small laws.²

Chesterton maintains that the trouble with modern education is something very basic, is a matter of principles. Since it is a matter of principle, since the errors are evident in such huge gaps in our culture and in whole departments of education being lost to a generation, then not only may the

¹Chesterton, G.K., Come to Think of It, 160 p

²Chesterton, G.K., Charles Dickens; A Critical Study, New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1934, 200-201 p

experts in the field of education make an examination to find out what is wrong but every man may enter in since principles are the concern of all. Defects and such disproportion in learning give the ordinary man the right to question the logic of the experts.³

Already Chesterton gives evidence that modern education is going to fall under his general condemnation of the lack of thought, lack of principles, lack of logic. Education is misused today much like a spelling book may be misused. A spelling book is intended not primarily to teach people how to spell but ultimately and principally to teach them how to read and write. So today people learn tags or phrases of language which they have been taught to apply to a certain thing. They never dream of applying the phrases to some other object. They never experience a train of thought.⁴

The present task of educators is not to teach men to drink in science and knowledge in general. The present task is to turn drunkards into wine tasters; to guide the process of education by virtue of principles.⁵

So often, however, a school will boast of having the latest idea in education when it has not even the first idea. Education has come to mean the education of the people but not by the people. Everything rests in the hands of a little

³Chesterton, G.K., Fancies versus Fads, 186 p

⁴-----, The Man Who Was Chesterton, 151 p

⁵-----, What's Wrong With the World, 256 p

oligarchy. Chesterton's system of education presupposes that men who govern themselves can govern their children.⁶

III.-Criticism of What is Taught

Crudities of modern culture are not mere outbreaks of human nature but are the result of a systematic impression on that nature. Some of the more prominent education today has taken the form of schools of commerce or journalism, for example. There is a big distinction between such education and the classical education. People who think little of learning Latin and Greek will admit that they did lead the student to an admiration of the Latins and Greeks. The school boy had something to admire, something toward which he had a feeling of inferiority. The modern departments such as those mentioned above do not teach him to admire but to make himself looked up to. Journalism doesn't lead to a love of literature; nor does commerce lead to an admiration for Rockefeller.⁷ "... it is a fact that the school of commerce or the school of journalism might almost as well be called a school of impudence or a school of swagger or a school of grab and greed."⁸

⁶Idem.

⁷Chesterton, G.K., Sidelights on New London and Newer York and Other Essays, 89-90 p

⁸Ibidem, 90 p

The very simple explanation of this puzzling contradiction (that is, the timid rudeness with which the products of such an education ask questions)⁹ is that they were perfectly nice and normal people in themselves, but they had never been left to themselves by those who were always telling them to assert themselves. They had been bounced into bouncing and bullied into being bullies. And the explanation is the existence of this modern heresy, or false ideal, that has been preached to everybody by every organ of publicity and plutocracy; the theory that self-praise is the only real commendation.¹⁰

This education by facts unfortunately does not have its bad effect in external manners only. Facts do not always create a spirit of reality and often have a maddening effect. Men suffering from a delusion can amass a startling number of facts in favour of their argument. Men can be maddened by material facts. They lack proportion. Proportion is not something material. All this is merely another argument for classical education. Culture should really give a mental health comparable to physical health.¹¹

The body, like the mind, knows its own equilibrium. But it knows it better than the mind; because the problem is simpler and the physical instincts are less paralysed by false teaching. Now the true teaching, which strengthens and steadies the mind so that it knows and rejects madness at sight, has, in fact, come down to us very largely from the culture of those great languages in which were written the works of the last Stoics and the first Saints, the Greek Testament and the Roman Law.¹²

⁹Parentetical explanation mine.

¹⁰Chesterton, G.K., Sidelights on New London and Newer York; and Other Essays, 90 p

¹¹Chesterton, G.K., Come to Think of It., 49 p

¹²Ibidem, 50 p

There is a lot of talk, Chesterton notes in another essay, about antiquated pedantry. But the worst of all pedants is the one who is too limited to be antiquated. He cuts himself off from antiquity and thus cuts himself off from humanity. He refuses to learn from anything but theories. Ironically he insists on teaching by experiment but will not learn by experience.¹³ The oldest things should obviously be taught to the child first; only assured and experienced truths should be put to the baby. In modern school life the baby usually must submit to a system younger even than himself.¹⁴

This championing of the classics fits in well with another complaint against what is being taught in the schools of our century. The matter portrayed in the classics is profound but at the same time simple and easily understood, at least basically, by the child. But Chesterton thinks that today the most complicated things are presented to the child first. Why should a child be taught the atmosphere of puritanism or the evolution of the English Constitution when the child does not know his own community. The complicated morality of Puritan government, Chesterton thinks, must be very complicated indeed to a youth just learning that there is any morality at all. "The general truth remains that we should teach, to the young, men's enduring truths, and let

¹³Ibidem, 184 p

¹⁴Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 255 p

the learned amuse themselves with their passing errors.¹⁵

Even if children were allowed to speak for themselves and tell us what they want instead of what they are supposed to want, we would probably discover that the old rhymes are more like the mind of a child than anything they presently receive.¹⁶

Chesterton treats the teaching of history in the same way. Modern education emphasizes the need for knowledge of the present and consequently puts less emphasis on the past. History books now must be full of the realities of the modern world, the division of labour between countries, the application of sciences, new methods of transportation. This Chesterton thinks is exactly the opposite of what should be contained in the books. All these things are matters of daily experience and the child will learn them even if he has not a course in history at all. Chesterton very briefly shows what the object of history really is. He says:

The whole object of history is to enlarge experience by imagination. And this sort of history would enlarge neither the imagination or experience. The whole object of history is to make us realize that humanity could be great and glorious under conditions quite different and even contrary to our own. It is to teach us that men could achieve most profitable labour without our own division of labour. It is to teach us that men could be industrious without being industrial. It is to make us understand that there might be a world in which there was far less improvement in the transport for visiting various places, and there might still be a very great improvement in the places visited.¹⁷

¹⁵Chesterton, G.K., The Uses of Diversity, 108-109 p

¹⁶-----, G.K.C. as M.C., 224 p

¹⁷-----, Fancies versus Fads, 175 p

Were one to admit the necessity of teaching modern day discoveries and improvements, still Chesterton would criticize the commercialization of teaching these things. Education, he thinks, has been swamped with advertisement. Education has come too much from the town and has meant little else than teaching the things of the city to the people of the country who didn't want to be taught such. Chesterton advocates a reversal of procedure and feels confident that there are many in the towns who would welcome such an education.¹⁸

Perhaps an even greater error than that which Chesterton sees in the modern methods of teaching history is the modern attitude toward the teaching of English, both grammar and literature. The neglect of the study of English, Chesterton thinks, is the origin of the unhealthy type of nationalism which he believed prevalent in England. A study of English literature would make nationalism a generous and delicate thing simply because nobody can study the literature of England and still despise other nations for which England has done so much. It seems to Chesterton quite amazing that English is neglected in English schools. Even more amazing are the reasons given for such neglect. It seems that one principle reason given by educators is that much of what might be learned in the study of English is acquired in learning Latin and Greek. Chesterton observes that this is comparable to a

¹⁸Chesterton, G.K., Outline of Sanity, Leipzig, Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1927, 138 p

baby learning to walk in the process of learning to hop.¹⁹ Surely the obvious foundation of all education is the language in which that education is conveyed; if a boy has only time to learn one thing, he had better learn that.²⁰ Such a gross absence of study of the national literature is not only an intellectual error but a spiritual error according to Chesterton since it is much worse to fail to appreciate ourselves than to fail to appreciate other nations.²¹

III.-Criticism of Business Education in Particular

Of all the various criticisms which have been noted with regard to the subject matter of modern education, it is evident that Chesterton demands an education based on principles and an education which broadens and enriches the life of man.

Perhaps this is the reason why he attacks with exceptional seriousness modern business education.

Chesterton says that what is generally meant by a business man is "a man who knows the way in which our particular sort of modern education does generally work."²² Such a man is incapable of suggesting some other methods if the present

¹⁹Chesterton, G.K., The Defendant, 170-171 p

²⁰Ibidem, 171 p

²¹Ibidem, 172 p

²²Chesterton, G.K., All Is Grist, 17 p

method does not work. Obviously such an education is a very narrow thing. It is precisely the direct opposite of what an education should be. Chesterton realized the dangers, even in the economic field, of such an education. In 1931 he noted that the time was near when everybody would be looking for business men who could think, men who could find other ways of business.²³

The whole point of education is to give man principles or abstract standards or in other words to equip man to think. A little later in the same essay Chesterton says the object of education is to broaden the mind. Of course business education narrows the mind.

The people who are so practical as to insist on business education object to their son's having to study about ancient culture and civilization when these sons are going to be plumbers or doctors. Chesterton tells them that such a classical education will give the young man the power of comparison which is nothing but the power of reason and judgment. Classical education enables a man to be a critic whereas business education prevents that activity of the mind necessary for criticism.

They begin by stuffing the child, not with the sense of justice by which he can judge the world, but

²³Idem.

with the sense of inevitable doom or deducation by which he must accept that particular very worldly aspect of the world.²⁴

The child grows up being taught to admire certain existing principles of business but is never equipped to criticize these principles or to test them by general and eternal principles.

Needless to say, Chesterton is not against specialization as such but is violently opposed to specialization not built on a general or liberal education. Before anyone attempts to specialize in any field he should have a general view of the history of man, the nature of man, and the nature of God. Such studies equip a man to criticize whatever kind of community he belongs to whether it be cannibalistic or commercial.

If he is immediately initiated into the mysteries of these institutions themselves, if he is sworn in infancy to take them as seriously as they take themselves, if he becomes a trader not only before he becomes a traveller, but even before he becomes a true citizen of his own town, he will never be able to denounce those institutions -- or even to improve them. Such a state will never have the ideas or imagination to reform itself; and hustle and bustle and business activity will have resulted in the dead fixity of a fossil.²⁵

Chesterton noted that America is the seat of such business education and that the false ideal was spreading to England. He was much surprised to find one of the best defences against business education coming from an American business man. Chesterton gives no citation for his quotations from a speech

²⁴Ibid. 19 p

²⁵Ibid. 21 p

delivered by this outstanding business man but thoroughly agrees with him when he calls for an unpractical education and declares that a training to make a living is not education at all; that a practical education may be the very thing which will prevent a man from making a good living; that a practical training cannot be learned in a school anyway.²⁶

IV.-Criticism of the Methods of Modern Education

Many of the methods of modern education have already been treated in previous chapters especially with regard to the state, the family, and religion. In this section only those methods which have not been considered explicitly will be dealt with.

One of the basic reasons for unsatisfactory methods in education is the fact that a man can impose education without having it, although he cannot hand on education or tradition without having it. Today there is a vast increase in that type of education which is imposed and a decrease in the traditional or instructional type. A politician who decrees that a certain book must be distributed to every school, is in that sense ignorant. Learning the arts is a personal thing and so a labourer showing his son his method of doing a job is in that sense a learned man. Commercialism has made even educators commercial and thus there has been this dangerous increase in

²⁶Ibidem, 17-18 p

imposed education by people who are not educated.²⁷

Besides this basic error underlying the errors in methods of teaching there is another worth noting. The learned man today is highly specialized and often works in his particular field oblivious of the larger field of education. Since Chesterton here expresses the central idea very beautifully and briefly, his own words may be quoted:

It is rather a question of opening the mind wide enough to understand something easy. It is not to be obtained by years of labour; it is more likely to be attained in a moment of laziness; when the map-maker who has long been pouring over the map with his nose close to Cork, may lean back for a moment and see Ireland.²⁸

Thus having seen the two basic errors which might be called unqualified administration and short-sightedness, we can now approach some of Chesterton's specific criticism of modern methods.

In one of his less convincing essays Chesterton nearly condemns the doctrine of inheritance. He refuses to admit that we can know or base any conclusions on the fact of inheritance. He does not seem, however, so opposed to inheritance as such, but rather to inheritance as it was used and explained by psychologists and educators of his time. Chesterton understood some of **these** men to propose inheritance as a

²⁷Chesterton, G.K., G.K.C. as M.C., 232-233 p

²⁸Chesterton, G.K., The Common Man, 233 p

kind of simple addition or subtraction. Following their logic to its absurd conclusion Chesterton notes that they might as well say that since the mother had two legs and the father two legs, the child will have four. He notes that there has never been a case of anyone placing a bet on the basis of inheritance. He denies that there is any science of such subjects and that nobody has ever justified any theories of moral heredity in a truly scientific sense.²⁹ There is, to quote our author no science on such subjects, "But only a sort of ardent ignorance."³⁰

Chesterton can be easily misunderstood here. As mentioned above, he is not so opposed to inheritance as such but to inheritance as it was used and explained especially in education circles at his time. On grounds of research in the problem of heredity, endowments were sought and the poor oppressed. Unjustified conclusions were declared from insufficient certainty. These things would seem to be what Chesterton is so opposed to. However, he is not very clear on the matter and, as mentioned, this essay would probably not be one of his more convincing works. He admits that heredity is a notion like a dream and although not necessarily untrue is nevertheless a dim, groping and unsystematized notion.³¹

²⁹Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 235-236 p

³⁰Ibidem, 236 p

³¹Ibidem, 237 p

In an entirely different attitude Chesterton attacks in his usual sharp, accurate manner, the school favouring experimental education. As will be evident, Chesterton is concerned with a rather extreme school of experimental education and it must be borne in mind that it is this school which he condemns.

Chesterton deals with experimental education in his book on G. Bernard Shaw and selects education as an example of the madness of Shaw and some others advocating similar things. The madness of Shaw, Chesterton contends is consistency. What Shaw applies to adults he consistently applies to children. Thus Shaw uses the idea of Herbert Spencer, according to Chesterton, the idea of teaching children by experience.

... perhaps the most fatuously silly idea that was ever gravely put down in print. On that there is no need to dwell; one has only to ask how the experimental method is applied to a precipice and the theory no longer exists.³²

In the same category as experimental education is another closely related development for which Chesterton blames Shaw. This development is that a child should never be told anything without hearing the opposite opinion. Chesterton seizes this statement and gaily reduces it to a series of absurdities. However, the reason for Shaw's errors, Chester-

³²Chesterton, G.K., George Bernard Shaw, London, Bodley Head, 1909, 174 p

ton says, is his failure to understand the unavoidable paradox of children: "Although a child is much better than I, yet I must teach it. Although this being has much purer passions than I, yet I must control it."³³

In another place in the same book, Chesterton very briefly attacks the new educational school, which he accuses Shaw of later championing, which declares that education is to be disregarded; everything depends on breeding. Chesterton gives only what he calls the "first and most obvious objection" thus:

The first and most obvious objection to it of course is this; that if you are to breed men as pigs, you require some overseer who is as much more subtle than a man as a man is more subtle than a pig. Such an individual is not easy to find.³⁴

Rather closely allied to the suggestion that a child always be presented with the opposite opinion whenever he is told anything is the whole doctrine of freedom in education. This has been treated earlier in the thesis but might be well to recall in this connection. Chesterton maintains that a child is naturally bored with the infinite. His mind is naturally finite, even more evidently so than that of an adult. If limits are not given to the child he will invent his own.³⁵

³³Ibidem, 176 p

³⁴Ibidem, 206 p

³⁵Cammaerts, Emile, The Laughing Prophet, 164-165 p

Perhaps this is as good a place as any to mention Chesterton's method of trying and testing new suggestions such as these in education. First of all one needs ideals to test all realities. This is taken for granted by Chesterton and he does not dwell on it. The necessity of principles has been shown to be part and parcel of Chesterton's ideas on education. But he also notes that there must be a reality to test ideals too. Many ideals proposed by their exponents would die an early death were they but put to the test of reality. Thus Chesterton upon hearing an ideal presented applies it to an actual personality. Chesterton then proceeds to show by example an application of an ideal to a reality, in this case to a boy he knew in school. The example is not important but the method of testing used by Chesterton is very important as an aid toward understanding his mode of attack which often seems facetious to the superficial reader.³⁶

Another principal fault in methods is the failure of the teacher to understand the complexity of boyhood. Chesterton takes, for example, the matter of literature. People spare no expense to arouse the aesthetic sense of the little boy. But, illogically, when this sense has been aroused he is then

³⁶Chesterton, G.K., Alarms and Discursions, 49-51 p

"put off with books and papers which are not literature at all."³⁷ Neither do educators appreciate noble aesthetic sense of love of adventure. If a child loves colour he is applauded for his aesthetic sense but if it is adventure which he loves, the statement is merely tolerated. "... if a boy says, 'I like a story about priates', he is treated as if he had asked for another piece of pork."³⁸

Moreover, the instructor must realize the external attitude of a boy towards scholastic things in general and poetry in particular. Some are inclined to label boys as barbarous. The truth is that their school life is public and ceremonial and naturally the uninstructed is shy of what is public. Chesterton notes, "Boys, like dogs, have a sort of romantic ritual which is not always their real selves."³⁹ Chesterton goes on to say that by this he means that boys are really very sentimental and that the most sentimental thing possible is to hide one's feelings since it is merely making too much of them. Thus a boy hides his romanticism and pretends to be much more masculine and materialistic than he is. Chesterton concludes this main part of his observation with a final observation. "Stoicism is the direct product of sentimentalism; and school-boys are

³⁷Chesterton, G.K., The Common Man, 230 p

³⁸Idem.

³⁹Chesterton, G.K., Alarms and Discursions, 52 p

sentimental individually, but stoic collectively."⁴⁰

It logically follows then that the relationship existing between the teacher and the student is of great importance. As noted in the paragraph above, boys are more themselves when taken as individuals and not as a group. The tendency of modern education is not to deal with the boy on the basis of authority exercised by a private relationship, nor indeed to deal with boys collectively. Instead, many modern educators are constantly occupied with the object with which the boy is concerned. Chesterton elucidates by using a simple example. If one wishes to stop a boy from throwing stones it will avail little to attempt to remove all stones, or to start a reform for asphalt roads. The problem can only be solved by trusting "to your private relation with the boy, and not to your public relation to the stone."⁴¹

V.-Teaching Health

"Health is the most unhealthy of topics."⁴² This sentence of Chesterton gives a rather good synopsis of his opinion of hygienic culture. He notes that those who support this culture consider themselves very practical and compare their own materialism with the classicists who cared not much for this

⁴⁰Idem.

⁴¹Chesterton, G.K., The Man Who Was Chesterton, 715 p

⁴²Chesterton, G.K., Come to Think of It, 47 p

new culture. When they begin to put their opinions into practice, they do have some difficulties. There is no difficulty in treating of health and facts of nature in general. The difficulties arise when educators begin to teach this matter just as mathematics or science is taught. Morbid fears are aroused in the very young. Even many who belong to the school supporting the teaching of health will admit the inadvisability of preaching malformations and foul diseases to the very young. But they contend that the older children should be able to be given such instruction. Chesterton thinks they have it backwards. Little harm, he fancies, would be done to the small child by hearing such. But at the period of the boy's life at which they propose to give such instruction is precisely that period of life when it is most dangerous. Young people of this age are very often full of concentrated internal cares and commonly imaginary maladies are the object of the inward-working imagination. It is also a case of a little knowledge being a dangerous thing. Often, even in medical schools, students become a little unbalanced in such matters, Chesterton says a doctor told him. How much greater is such danger among the young receiving such ideas but in a less scientific atmosphere and manner.⁴³

⁴³Ibidem, 47-48 p

VI.-Sex Education

Proceeding through Chesterton's works one realizes that he always looks for principles or sources for any malady. He makes no exception in the matter of sex instruction. A basic error or an error in principle is the fact that the morality of the so-called gutter-boys is discussed while at the very same time people are discussing whether there is such a thing as morality. Chesterton's implication is that before much constructive thinking can be done about the morality of youth it is certainly necessary that the thinkers themselves be convinced of the principles of morality.⁴⁴

Chesterton attacks no problem of education as carefully as he attacks this one. Usually, as has been seen before in many instances, he will take the modern tendency or modern school on a particular subject and in a gay attitude reduce the tenets of that school to absurdities. Not so in the matter of sex education. He, first of all, points out that he will not deny that the modern tendency of analyzing sex is a good one. He does admit that there is entirely too much hypocrisy about sex in newspapers and books in England. He will not agree that there is any hypocrisy when one Englishman speaks to another on the matter of sex. He advocates a

⁴⁴Chesterton, G.K., The Man Who Was Chesterton, 619 p

complete absence of any hypocrisy in the matter. There are extremes to be avoided, however. One extreme has been the exaggerated chivalry of sex as portrayed by some Victorian poets. There has been the exaggerated realism of sex taught by the old monks. Neither of these is ideal. Chesterton concedes altogether that the modern method of dissecting sex and putting it into pigeon-holes is just and necessary. He does not say that the tendency has even gone too far. But his great warning, his only conclusion is -- what will happen if it does? The matter of sex is being handled in a satisfactory manner at present. Chesterton is merely aware of the chaos which would be the result of the modern tendency of dissecting if it should get out of hand.⁴⁵

The above is Chesterton's warning. However, he has a principle which he offers to guide all sex education including the problem of coeducation which will be discussed next. He states his principle briefly as follows:

It is better that they should not have the knowledge until they have the reverence and charity. We want no premature puppyish 'knowing all about girls'. We do not want the highest mysteries of a Divine distinction to be understood before they are desired, and handled before they are understood. That which Mr. Shaw calls the Life Force, but for which Christianity has more philosophical terms, has created this ... division of tastes and habits for that romantic purpose, which is also the most practical of all purposes. Those whom God has sundered, shall no man join.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Chesterton, G.K., The Common Man, 130 p

⁴⁶Ibidem, 143 p

VII.-Coeducation

The first thing to be ascertained about Chesterton's ideas on coeducation is his ideas on female education, since one's ideas on female education may well have a great influence in determining one's opinion on coeducation.

Chesterton has nothing against female education. He implies that a liberal education could be of great value to a woman. Chesterton declares that there are no new ideas on female education. The only thing that modern educators have done is to take a look at what they were doing in male education and proceed to apply it absolutely to girls. This is of course quite illogical. Anyone can realize that even from a physical viewpoint, not everything in our modern education which is good for the male is at the same time good for the female. And incidentally, Chesterton makes the very practical observation about homework. The same homework is handed out to both boys and girls despite the fact that the girl has homework other than that brought home from school.

Rather than to have woman a product of such indiscriminating education, Chesterton would definitely prefer the ultra-feminine product of the Victorian age. Several points of Victorian education Chesterton finds quite desirable.

If Chesterton were forced to give a brief and serious answer to the question of what kind of education should a girl receive, he would answer: a liberal education with no spec-

ialization. Naturally he presumes that the art of house-keeping is learned in the home. He is quite against specialization so that woman may be free to be a queen and not a private soldier.⁴⁷

The question of coeducation has already been answered to a certain extent in portraying Chesterton's thoughts on female education. More can be added, however, explicitly dealing with coeducation.

The entire question of the value of coeducation Chesterton would settle by examining the aims or object of coeducation. Otherwise he is indifferent to the problem and doesn't think it would make much difference. He passes over the problem as far as the very young are concerned and accepts coeducation at this age as certainly desirable. Nor does he think there could be much harm come from the practice in older groups. He bases this opinion on another opinion, namely, that the school is not nearly so important as commonly thought today. The home is the really important place.⁴⁸

In examining the possibilities and limitations of coeducation in the school, Chesterton examines its effects in the home. The school will certainly not be able to do more

⁴⁷Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 314-318 p

⁴⁸Chesterton, G.K., The Common Man, 141 p

in the field of coeducation than the home can do. Chesterton notes that even the home cannot make boys and girls ordinary comrades and therefore the school need not hope to accomplish such a feat by coeducation. There is a wall between the sexes which prevents such comradeship. The wall, according to Chesterton, can be broken down by two things, love or lust.

The school can hope to achieve the goal of getting boys and girls to work together in the classroom because the home shows us that they can work together in the breakfast room.⁴⁹

Even among teen-agers coeducation cannot establish a sexless comradeship. Even the older children will ignore or disdain the opposite sex. The reason is that the sexes never understand each other except by

"an exaggerated tender and mutual interest. To put the matter in one metaphor, the sexes are two stubborn pieces of iron; if they are to be welded together, it must be while they are red-hot."⁵⁰

Chesterton therefore maintains that it is better for the sexes to misunderstand one another until marriage.

He concludes as he began the discussion, that the good or evil of coeducation depends entirely on the objective sought.

It is, therefore, a question of what are really the co-educators' aims. If they have small aims, some convenience in organization, some slight improvement in manners, they know more about such things than I. But if they have large aims, I am against them.⁵¹

⁴⁹Ibidem, 141-142 p

⁵⁰Ibidem, 142 p

⁵¹Ibidem, 143 p

VIII.-Miscellaneous Errors in Modern Education

One need not read far in Chesterton before discovering that he is definitely not an enthusiastic promoter of the empirical sciences. He cannot be called anti-scientific but he is extremely critical of science and makes doubly sure that science observe its proper limitations.

He believes that most scientists are afflicted with too much of the wrong kind of knowledge; they are full of knowledge of the details proper to their field whereas their knowledge of man and society "is quite exceptionally superficial and silly."⁵² For this reason he so vehemently attacks the modern doctrine of inheritance already treated.⁵³

In a similar way Chesterton attacks the modern preaching of Calvinism by which Chesterton designates some modern opinions about pre-natal influence. He insists that in dealing with the child it is not eugenics which is important but education. It is not heredity which is important but environment. However, even in the matter of environment Chesterton is not all enthusiastic. He does accept the importance of environment but he does not accept the unlimited extent to which some modern scientists carry the matter. He insists that environment may work positively in one case and negatively in another. As one example he says, "It may be that the High-

⁵²Chesterton, G.K., Alarms and Discursions, 82 p

⁵³-----, What's Wrong with the World, 234-238 p

landers are poetical because they inhabit mountains; but are the Swiss prosaic because they inhabit mountains?"⁵⁴

Environment is, according to Chesterton, the modern term for what the word 'education' used to mean. Environment is the way by which a child must be molded. For example, environment is the method of correcting the present evil of class distinction. A child being taught by a woman of the lower class will always respect the lower classes simply because he has learned, while a child, to respect a member of that class.⁵⁵

In ending this chapter on Chesterton's criticism of the errors of modern education, it would not be fair to give the impression that Chesterton holds little hope for education and finds so much wrong with it that it would seem scarcely any good could come from it. It would seem that Chesterton often criticizes most severely those things of which he is most hopeful. The fact that he puts great stock in education and looks to it for great things, can be seen from the following quotation.

Nevertheless, it remains the working reality that what we have to deal with in the case of children is, for all practical purposes, environment; or to use the older word, education. When all such deductions are made, education is at least a form of will-

⁵⁴Ibidem, 239 p

⁵⁵Chesterton, G.K., Charles Dickens; A Critical Study, 199 p

worship, not of cowardly fact-worship; it deals with a department that we can control; it does not merely darken us with the barbarian pessimism of Zola and the heredity-hunt. We shall certainly make fools of ourselves; that is what is meant by philosophy. But we shall not merely make beasts of ourselves; which is the nearest popular definition of merely following the laws of Nature and cowering under the vengeance of the flesh. Education contains much moonshine; but not of the sort that makes mere mooncalves and idiots, the slaves of a silver magnet, the one eye of the world. In this decent arena there are fads, but not frenzies. Doubtless we shall often find a mare's nest; but it will not always be the nightmare's.⁵⁶

IX.-Summary

Since the main trouble with education is basic, a matter of principles, every man, and not only the specialists, has a right to question the logic of the experts. Today people learn tags of language which are substituted for thoughts. The trouble is not that people do not learn. They learn too much and never learn to think or discern. Much of this chaos is the result of education being in the hands of a small oligarchy. Education is of the people and should be by the people.

As regards what is taught in our modern schools, Chesterton sees that the main error lies in the fact that the matter is a factual education and does not give mental health nor promote mental activity. What is needed is the broadening effect of the classics. Experience proves the value of such an educa-

⁵⁶Chesterton, G.K., What's Wrong with the World, 241 p

tion but modern educators claim to teach by experiment but refuse to learn by experience. Not only do the classics give a firm, broad education but they are profound and yet simple and thus quite adaptable to the education of the young. Most of the things taught to the young today are quite complicated things, simplified until the substance is scarcely there at all.

Historians, too, err in teaching contemporary events which will be learned outside the school room anyway. Even in teaching modern events commercialization has marked the process.

Almost inexplicable is the modern practice of the neglect of the study of English. Whereas it is the first thing which should be learned, it is left to be picked up during the study of other disciplines.

Of all the subject matter of modern education none is so objectionable as business education. It has a narrowing effect on the mind and teaches nothing of principles and gives no abstract standards.

As regards the methods of education, the basic trouble is that education can be imposed by ignorant men who know nothing of education. Then too, the modern learned man is so specialized in his field that he often works forgetful of the whole field of education.

Chesterton condemns the doctrine of inheritance as a modern method employed in the science of education. With even more forcefulness he condemns the school of experimentalists,

that is, the school that holds that children must be allowed to learn for the most part by personal experience. Along with the condemnation of this school, Chesterton condemns the group who would never tell a child an opinion without at the same time telling him the opposite opinion.

An important factor forming the methods of education should be an understanding of the complexity of boyhood. Instead of the instructor working on the basis of a private relationship to the boy, he now works rather on the basis of a public relation to the problems of boyhood.

The teaching of health is one of Chesterton's complaints. He has no objection to discussion of health but does think the teaching of health in a way one would teach geometry may be very harmful to the mind of the young.

In the closely related field of sex education, Chesterton feels that it is quite necessary and just that the subject be thoroughly studied. He wants no hypocrisy in the matter. However, great caution must be exercised lest the matter get out of hand. As a guiding principle Chesterton thinks that the young had better be left in ignorance of sex until they have learned the virtues of reverence and charity.

Coeducation does not particularly interest Chesterton as a matter for discussion. He thinks that it is not very important whether there is or is not coeducation. If the aims

of those championing coeducation are small, then Chesterton will support them. If their aims are large and they hope to establish a sexless comradeship between the sexes then Chesterton is against them since their aim is unattainable. Not even the home has been able to unite the sexes thus. Also the education of females should not be conducted as is the education of males. Since girls are different from boys their education must be adapted to their condition and the methods of teaching boys should not be applied completely to girls.

In general, Chesterton thinks modern education is entirely too factual and specialized. The mind has no opportunity to be trained in the great broad principles. For this reason he is a strong advocate of the classical education. However, he is not pessimistic about modern education. It is our hope for the future but not the only hope, nor the first hope.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION OF THESIS

The object of the thesis was stated in the introduction as an attempt merely to investigate the essays of Chesterton in an effort to find out what he said about education and then to attempt to arrange this material in such a fashion as to present his scattered thoughts in a unified and logical manner.

The following is a summary of Chesterton's thoughts on the many topics on which he was found to have expressed his opinion.

The discovery of the vastness of the field of education has led to a preoccupation with objects and divisions which has caused educators to lose sight of principles. This is disastrous since authority, principles or dogmas, are absolutely indispensable.

The absence of authority causes education to be an unstable and insecure thing. The state tries to supplant the family. Obviously such a thing is impossible even from the economic viewpoint. The state is by nature incapable of usurping successfully the function of the family.

Modern educators have perhaps unconsciously aided the state in reaching too far into the process of education, by attempting to free children from obligations toward parents. Chesterton points out that philosophically speaking a relationship implies two parties. If the child has no obligation toward the parent why should the parent have such toward the child? There are three schools of thought on the relation-

ship between parent and child in the process of education. One advocates strictness, another advocates inoffensive persuasive authority and a third wants the child left completely alone except for assistance offered him in drawing out his personality. Chesterton does not take sides as regards the first two schools but severely condemns the third as omitting the importance and responsibility of instruction and formation.

Chesterton calls our attention to the incongruity between the great emphasis on education today and, at the same time and by the same people, the advocating of the emancipation of the woman, the chiefest of educators, from the home. Likewise permanency of the home, absence of divorce, is essential for good education.

Educators are denying religion a place in education. They try to decide what to give their children without deciding what is good. "Children should be allowed to choose their own religion", is often an expression of this type of unprincipled thinking.

At one time Chesterton himself did not see the importance of religious education to the extent that he would advocate separate Catholic schools. Some years later he emphatically proposed such necessity on the same basis used by so many modern educators in their proposals for other things, namely, an integral atmosphere or environment, or education.

Among other deficiencies in modern education Chester-

ton mentions the absence of real thought and the substitution of mere tags of language.

The subject matter of modern education is greatly in need of reform. Modern education is to a great extent factual with little or no emphasis upon principles or the development of mental faculties. The extreme in factual education is the new business course which tends to narrow the mind, offers it no object of admiration and teaches the young person greed and arrogance.

Science is also condemned by Chesterton for over-reaching its proper field. He condemns the teaching of health as a regular subject. However, sex education receives his approval providing it is watched carefully and not allowed out of hand at all. Coeducation, which is closely related to the above, does not particularly interest Chesterton. If the aims of those proposing coeducation are slight then he thinks it would be good. If they have as their object the establishing of a new comradeship between the sexes then he withdraws his support because such an aim is unattainable.

Although education is in a pitiable state it is still that to which we must have recourse when dealing with the child. It is the hope of the future but not the only hope nor the first hope.

Chesterton did not write explicitly as an educator nor as a critic of education. He very often used education in examples and frequently commented on the subject in brief. Since he is accepted as such a great mind his thoughts on the subject are most valuable and useful.

The work of this thesis has been to discover and analyze and present in an ordered manner Chesterton's thoughts on the subject of education.

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