

# BLACKFRIARS

## A MONTHLY REVIEW

Edited by the English Dominicans

Published at Blackfriars, St Giles, Oxford

---

Vol. XXIX

DECEMBER 1948

No. 345

---

CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS	The Editor .....	545
THE CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHY	Marthinus Versfeld .....	548
OF EDUCATION		
SHALL WE LOSE OUR SCHOOLS?	W. J. Woollen .....	561
WHITHER WOMEN?	Helen Parry Eden .....	566
REAL EDUCATION	Ronald Richings .....	571
OBITER	Aldate .....	573
CORRESPONDENCE .....		576
REVIEWS .....		577

---

### CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

EDUCATION for Christians today is more often considered from the point of view of Education than from that of the Christian. It is often said—with what justice it is not our purpose here to consider—that the education given in most Catholic schools lags far behind that of the ‘undenominational’ schools. If Catholics are to save their schools they must certainly see to it that the schools are worth saving; and such considerations imply comparison with all these other educational establishments whose reputation stands so high as purveyors of culture and knowledge.

But there is a more fundamental question, far too often taken for granted, concerning the kernel of Christianity which must lie within all this culture and knowledge if it is to be a Christian education. For beyond the limits of the small minority of convinced Christians life and experience are almost wholly pagan, with only a few relics of Christianity in the form of a watered down morality. All successful modern education therefore tends, and for the most part consciously strives, to make it easy for the educated to be at home in that pagan atmosphere. This does not apply simply to the utilitarian teaching which aims solely at handsome salaries and supremacy in society. Classical culture and the humanities extracted from a Christian setting make at best a good and balanced pagan whose happiness is attained in this world and who cannot hope

for much in posterity.<sup>1</sup> A Christian, if he be true to the grace that is in him, must inevitably stand out against this accepted attitude to life. His faith contradicts the major assumptions of the society in which he has to mix. That is one of the greatest difficulties of the day for him, because he is made a social animal so that it is natural for him to rely on his fellow beings, and he is supported and built up by those around him. It is therefore against nature to have to resist the ideas and ways of life of his neighbours. In the ideal order he should not have to swim against the full tide of his own civilisation. But that he must do if he is to preserve his Christianity and refuse to accept the pagan assumptions of the modern world.

A Catholic education, therefore, has to put forward first of all the Christian values which will militate against the standards of society. If we say that a good Catholic education should prepare a man to live a good Christian life in the world today, we should understand that the phrase necessarily implies a conflict, an unnatural, because in a certain sense anti-social, conflict. But such phrases glibly uttered may so easily imply the acceptance, by way of some sort of compromise, of the principles upon which this society is based. The most outstanding example of the divergence which exists between the two manners of life, Christian and pagan, lies in the fact of sin, the need for redemption and the supernatural reality of grace, upon which truths the Christian's life and culture are based. The average citizen today has no idea of sin except in so far as it may have anti-social effects. Thus the non-Christian will be brought up to restrain himself from despising his fellow men not because it is an offence against God to do so, but because human life may be made difficult and even dangerous if he does despise others. The whole of morality is adjusted to the purpose of avoiding physical pain and discomfort, a purpose which can lead to euthanasia as easily as to cocaine for tooth extraction. The cross remains the stumbling block, and 'grace' describes the way a well-poised woman moves.<sup>2</sup>

The culture which is supported and developed by modern education is therefore man-centred, devoid of the sense of the reality of

<sup>1</sup> St John of the Cross has some telling words on the deserved success of good pagans who because they followed virtue were granted 'longer life, greater honour, dominion and peace'. But this, he says, is not the way of the Christian who has the light of faith and can see beyond the merely temporal. (Cf. *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, III, 27, 3-4).

<sup>2</sup> The implications of all this in relation to the education of the human *person* are brought out very well by Professor M. V. C. Jeffreys at the first National Adult School Lecture. Catholics will read it with great profit if they read into it the full Catholic teaching about grace and redemption. (National Adult School Union; 6d.)

God, 'and interested in religion only as a vehicle of ancient arts. Wherever this may lead, it certainly does not lead in the direction in which the Christian should be taught to look for the source of his life. But is the Christian really so taught in a Catholic school, for instance? That is a question which we cannot answer with ease. The large number who fall away from the Church when they leave school, the probably equally large number who remain outwardly Catholics but accept birth control, legalised murder and usury without question, all these suggest that the average Catholic is not taught as a Catholic throughout. Again, children born into this mechanist and scientific age early catch the fever from laboratory experiments and engines. Catholic schools consequently develop their laboratories and equipment to try to keep pace with the growing temper of the nation. But do they ever consider how far such scientific training is preparing the children to absorb the materialistic assumption around them? The ground of their minds is being well tilled in all these up-to-date schools, but what seed is being sown therein?

Naturally we do not suggest that children should be given a morbid interest in sin, nor that there is anything wrong in the up-to-date laboratory or the advanced classical studies and arts which make the Catholic schools as proficient in these subjects as their best opposite numbers in undenominational schools. But unless *all* their studies are Christian, based on the Creed and leading towards the Beatific Vision, then the pupils will not be prepared for the strong contrary tide into which they plunge on leaving school. Speaking of the challenge of the atom bomb to the Christian, Professor Donald Mackinnon in a broadcast in October said: 'What I am sure we have to do, if we are Christians, is to cease from our continual readiness to speak in terms of embattled abstractions, and to think always in terms of men groping in the dark. . . . What is the relevance to Christians here and now of that law of the new Israel delivered on the mount. I say "here and now" because we cannot ignore the peculiar situation of Christians in this present. To those for whom the truth of the world lies in its relation to God in Christ, the profound unrest of the present cannot be viewed out of that all-embracing setting. Ultimately the significance of what is happening to men as they struggle in the midst of that unrest or are terribly caught by it, is found in Him.' (*The Listener*, October 28th, p. 638). Such increasingly must be the attitude of the true Christian. The Gospels, teaching the truth about him, must be today more profoundly revolutionary than heretofore because the society is more profoundly pagan than heretofore. And when we

consider the majority of Catholic schools we cannot help wondering whether the ferment of that powerful leaven is working under so very placid a surface.

It is therefore a thing of great importance that the 'Association for Catholic People's Colleges' is about to open its first adult residential college—'a place of adult education whose corporate life flows from the daily Mass, where men and women can learn to take a more active part in the Catholic life of the country' (to quote its first Prospectus<sup>3</sup>). It is to be hoped that the education will be evangelical in the right sense, making the Gospel live in the students of the College, so that they can make a stand afterwards against the society in which they will find themselves. It will be an heroic undertaking. It will mean great hardship and suffering for those who take advantage of the facilities of such a college. But it is the only way in which a Christian can avoid the paganism into which he is born and to some extent inevitably bred.

THE EDITOR.

---

## THE CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

I AM going to define education simply as the process of making a man of a man. First, note that the thing is a *process*, that is, something that takes time. In understanding any process the most important consideration is its end, and this we have said to be the perfection in his own kind of the person educated. We must notice further that any being of which it can be said that it is perfectible, in its own kind, can be perfect only in a relative and not in an absolute way. What is perfectible, even when perfect, will lack the perfection of having always been perfect. It will be perfect only in a particular kind, since what becomes must always be of a particular kind. God alone is perfect absolutely and hence the notion of education is not applicable to him, as it is to the pseudo-god of W. James. Further, what is perfect of its own kind or in a relative way, cannot be the sufficient reason for its own perfection. It must exist in view of that whose perfection is wholly contained in its own act of existence, that is in God. We may thus say that education is the process of making a man of a man because God is God. In other words, being a man makes no sense apart from God,

---

<sup>3</sup> The College is to be opened at Swynnerton Park in Staffordshire if the sum of £10,000 can be raised: for this sum the Governors are now appealing.