EDUCATION IN RELIGION AND MORALS

GEORGE ALBERT COE

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BY

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PREFACE

The present place of religious and moral education in our civilisation is paradoxical. Everybody knows that the moral health of society and the progress of religion depend largely, if not chiefly, upon the training of the young in matters that pertain to character, yet no other part of education receives so little specific attention. The growth of popular government has increased the importance of high character in the people, yet no substitute has been found, one has scarcely been sought, for the dogmatic religious instruction that has been properly excluded from the people's schools. At a time when the massing of the people in cities is exposing children as never before to the forces of evil, family training in religion and morals suffers, according to all accounts, a decline. At the bloom period of the Sunday school, complaints arise that the populace is ignorant, perhaps growingly so, of the Bible, and that the rate of accessions to the churches is decreasing. The age of reform in education, when we fancy that the child is at last

coming to his own, is an age that neglects the most important end of education, and stands perplexed as to the means to this end.

We are, in fact, confronted by an emergency in respect to education in morals and religion. The emergency is not due, however, to poverty of resources. In the state school and the Sunday school we have two vast organisations which we may bring, whenever we will, under the more complete control of the highest educational principles. The nineteenth century made extraordinary progress in respect to the methods of teaching, and the results are ready to be utilised in church and home and school. Modern psychology, especially the child-study movement, is accumulating knowledge that has important applications to religious and moral culture. The store of biblical knowledge and of knowledge of religion is increasing, and it demands to be spread abroad.

To help bring this supply into closer touch with the need is the aim of this book. It is not chiefly a book of methods, nor is it merely a treatise on educational theory. It is rather an effort to bring the broadest philosophy of education into the closest relation to practice; to show how principles lead directly to

methods, and so to strike the golden mean between unpractical theorising and mere routine. I have tried, likewise, to exhibit the principles and forces of religious and moral education in their highest concreteness as factors in the general movement of human life. A large part of our present difficulty lies just in the fact that our philosophy of life has been isolated from practical methods of training for life, and that this training has been isolated from the actual life of the world.

I have made no attempt to separate the religious from the moral factors in education, for the simple reason that they belong together in practice. Morals are not religion, and religion is not morals; nevertheless full-grown religion includes morals. The standpoint of Christianity, moreover, is that of wholeness of life, from which no human good can be excluded.

The division of the book into relatively short chapters, and of the chapters into numbered sections will, it is hoped, help to adapt the whole to the use of classes for teacher-training without detracting from the comfort of the general reader. Readers who desire to pursue further any of the topics here-

in discussed will find information as to reading in the classified bibliography that is appended to the work.

GEORGE ALBERT COE.

Evanston, Illinois, September, 1904.

PART I
THE THEORY

CHAPTER I

THE PLACE OF CHARACTER IN EDUCATION

1. Three Factors in the Idea of Education. What makes schools necessary, and what are they for? These questions can be answered by a simple analysis of facts with which everyone is familiar. Schools exist, in the first place, because children exist, that is, because the race includes individuals who are incomplete but capable of developing. In the second place, schools exist because there are higher and lower kinds of mature life. Children are schooled *for* something. A conception of a goal, or a kind of life that is really worth living, presides, explicitly or implicitly, over all educational effort. Finally, schools exist because adults possess accumulated results of experience as to what is the better and what the less good life. Education gives to children the benefit of experience other than their own, and in advance of their own. Thus the factors involved in the idea of education are these: An immature being, a goal or destiny for life, and older human

beings who can help the younger to realize this goal or destiny.

2. Over-Emphasis upon the Adult Point of View. Each of these factors has been at some time so prominent in the minds of men as to obscure one or both of the others. Up to comparatively recent times, the value of adult experience has so occupied the thoughts of educators as to prevent them from seeing the necessity of understanding childhood. Adult interests, ways of looking at things, rules of conduct, were assumed as a standard for all, and the school accordingly aimed to produce conformity more than it aimed to secure development. "Modern" education is based, first of all, upon recognition of the child as one of the determining factors. The differences between the child mind and the adult mind are noted, and the whole notion of education has become an application of the notion of development.

3. Over-Emphasis upon the Goal. Over-emphasis upon the goal or destiny of man is a general characteristic of mediæval education. The school was a handmaid of the church, and the church conceived her mission to men as that of saving their souls from eternal perdition. A religion broad enough to include

everything that is worthy of being a part of our temporal life, and a religious education equally broad, were not characteristic of the period. The mediæval view of religion was exclusive rather than inclusive; it contrasted the goods of religion with the goods of this world, the blessings of eternal salvation with the fleeting things of time; and as a result it could not utilise in education the whole of accumulated experience, but only a part of it. The educator was the priest—not the man within the priest, but the priest as representing the goal of life abstracted from the content of life. For the same reason the point of view of the child himself was ignored, and the way was left open for repression and forced conformity as distinguished from development.

4. Over-Emphasis upon the Child. At the present time this tendency is no longer dominant. Education has been brought close to the life that now is, so close, in fact, that we sometimes forget to ask what this life really signifies, what its goal is. Moreover, another temptation to forget what the child is to be educated for, grows out of the extraordinary emphasis that modern education places upon the child himself. The laws of

the child-mind yield laws for educating that mind. We are not to conform the child to adult points of view, but the teacher is to conform himself to the point of view of the pupil. As Froebel says, "Education and instruction should from the first be passive, observant, protective, rather than prescribing, determining, interfering."[1] From too exclusive attention to this principle, modern education (though not Froebel) tends to forget its own goal. It looks backward to the laws and forces of the child's mind, rather than forward to the destiny that is to be achieved. Nevertheless education is *for* something. It is development, but development toward something as well as away from something.[2]

5. The Aim of Education. Is it knowledge?

What, then, is the goal of education?

Most persons, if asked what the child is supposed to receive from the educational process, would reply that he receives instruction, knowledge, intellectual training. The success of a school

[1] W. H. Herford: The Students' Froebel. Boston, 1894, p. 5.

[2] "It is the danger of the 'new education' that it regards the child's present powers and interests as something finally significant in themselves."—John Dewey: The Child and the Curriculum (Chicago, 1902), page 20.

is popularly measured by the rapidity with which its pupils appear to increase their stock of learning. This notion arises in our minds in a natural way, for it is a result of a long historical process, and—we may add—of an ancient error. Man has been defined as a rational animal, and his moral and spiritual life have been supposed to rest upon and grow out of a set of ideas either reasoned out or believed in. Knowledge and intellectual culture were therefore regarded as the essential marks of an educated man. We shall have occasion in other chapters to discuss the relation of knowing and doing. Here it is sufficient to note merely that the intellectualistic notion of man has been abandoned by the thought of our time, or rather set into relation to the complementary truth that man is will as well as intellect. A corresponding change is taking place in our notions of education.

6. Is it Power? With the enlarging control over nature, and the vast expansion of commerce and industry that have followed the triumphs of modern science and invention, there has arisen a demand for men who can do things—men who can build railroads and steamships, manage

vast properties, organise and lead men. Under the influence of these practical demands, the populace has tended to modify its conception of the aim of education in the direction of power and effectiveness as distinguished from both learning and mental acuteness. Instead of the "clear, cold, logic-engine" which mere intellectualism regards as the proper product of education, the drift of popular thought is now toward another kind of mental engine, the kind that keeps the practical machinery of life in motion. But we cannot stop here. For modern commerce and industry are not more distinguished by a new relation of man to things than they are by a new relation of man to man. The relations between men are becoming wider and more complex; there is greater dependence of one upon another; and just at this juncture the modern city springs up to teach us that we are still in the rudiments of the art of living together. Meanwhile the experiment in popular government is seen to depend for its outcome upon the kind of character that prevails among the people.

7. Is it Social Adjustment? These conditions are forcing upon thoughtful men a conviction that the great need of our