

THE TRUTH ABOUT
SECULAR EDUCATION

ITS HISTORY AND RESULTS

BY

JOSEPH McCABE

(Formerly Rector of St. Bernardine's College, Buckingham)

LONDON :

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1906

PREFACE

THE aim of the following essay is to elucidate several points in connection with our system of education about which the most improper and injurious fallacies are current among us.

Various circumstances have forced the question of education upon our notice at the present time. The settlement of 1870 could not aim to be a final and ideal scheme, because it had to effect a compromise between religious sects, whose strength and fortunes were subject to variation. A good compromise has been well defined as a manœuvre by which you take all you can get of a good thing, and wait until you can get more. The two parties to the compromise in 1870 may be described as the party that wanted much religious dogma taught in the schools and the party that would be content with little; a third party, that desired the total exclusion of religious dogma, was then too small to have a share in the deal. The event that thus brought the idea of a settlement once more into the practical area is that one of these parties—the ultra-dogmatic or denominational bodies—is considered by the other to have obtained undue favour at the hands of the late Government. Once more the war-cries of the contending parties resound in the land, and a new compromise is said to be inevitable.

In the meantime the third party has been steadily growing. Clerical influence has shrunk in the most remarkable manner during the last thirty years. Rationalism has, to judge from the enormous success of its publications, attained a very considerable power. The organisation of the workers has revealed a strong feeling among the millions—as shown in the vote of

Trade Union Congresses—to sever our educational system entirely from the teaching of sects. A large number of educationists, scholars, and politicians have declared that the time has come for the complete secularisation of our elementary schools.

My essay has been written for those perplexed readers, of every school, who desire to have a full and clear statement of the facts before they help to commit the nation to another thirty years of compromise. The issue is fraught with the most serious consequences to the country, for no Government is likely to make any further drastic interference with our educational scheme for decades to come. No doubt there may be changes in the interest of particular sects with the oscillations of the political pendulum; and those changes will lead to bitter recrimination with the return of the opposed party. But if we decide for compromise now, we shall have compromise in some form or other for another generation.

I offer in the following pages some serious and carefully compiled material bearing on the situation. It seems to be of importance, in determining our whole attitude towards the clerical schools, to examine the historical development of education, and see how the clergy came to exercise the control they do over our schools. The next point that requires careful elucidation is the outcome of purely secular education in the countries which have as yet adopted it. Here the reader will find a sufficient correction of the reckless calumnies that are being so assiduously circulated. Finally, I offer a few considerations, largely based on my own observations as a teacher and a theologian, on the use of the Bible in the school, and a number of facts that may help the puzzled reader to decide how far the country is generally prepared to accept a scheme of purely secular education.

J. M.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	5
CHAPTER I.	
EDUCATION IN PAGAN AND IN CHRISTIAN DAYS	7
CHAPTER II.	
THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY	15
CHAPTER III.	
THE REVIVAL OF SECULAR EDUCATION	33
CHAPTER IV.	
THE RESULTS OF SECULAR EDUCATION	49
CHAPTER V.	
SECULAR EDUCATION IN JAPAN	70
CHAPTER VI.	
BIBLE LESSONS AND MORAL LESSONS	80