

# The Educational Thought of Charles Kingsley (1819–75)

*Brendan A. Rapple*

Many English during the Victorian era were convinced of the necessity to preserve education free from the encroaching tentacles of governmental interference. They were adamant that Samuel Smiles' persuasive injunction of "Self-Help" was to be obeyed at all costs and the principles of *laissez faire* to be embraced earnestly everywhere. Although the first state money, a meagre £20,000, was granted for education work in 1833, it was as late as 1870 that a comprehensive state system of elementary education was established. Even then, it remained a dual system, with the several denominations zealously taking their part in providing schools. However, one cleric who stood apart from his peers, vociferous in his support of increased state involvement in the nation's schools, was the Rev. Charles Kingsley.

Charles Kingsley, writer of poetry, novels, historical works, sermons, religious tracts, scientific treatises, political, social, literary criticism, and, of course, *The Water-Babies*, was one of the Victorian age's most prolific authors. However, his was by no means the stereotypical writer's ivory-tower existence, as his extensive practical and public activities show. A parish priest for much of his life, Kingsley agitated for social reform, did scientific research, and was finally chaplain to Queen Victoria. He was an active educationist, and, in addition to promoting a state education system, conducted penny readings in his parish, campaigned for women's medical education, taught in industrial and mechanics' institutions, held office in various scientific educational organizations, lectured at F. D. Maurice's Working Men's College, and held the chairs of English Literature and Composition at the women's Queen's College, London, in 1849, and of Modern History at Cambridge from 1860 to 1869.

Kingsley usually receives a mention in general accounts of nineteenth-century education in England. More often than not, the brief treatment describes his promotion in Victorian schools of a vision of manliness united with godliness, namely "Muscular Christianity." His other educational views generally receive little attention. Kingsley's educational endeavours were not as momentous as those of such contemporaries as James Kay-Shuttleworth, Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer, or T. H. Huxley. Still, his activities in education were not insignificant. It may be that the general neglect of Kingsley the educationist is due to the great diversity of his educational views, many of which changed repeatedly throughout his life. He resists narrow categorization.

Oddly, Kingsley's educational theories and practices await a full treatment.<sup>1</sup> As a vanguard I here discuss certain educational issues that interested him, emphasizing his attitude to the young, his staunch belief that the State should be deeply implicated in the provision of education, the relation between Kingsley's "Muscular Christianity" and his views on education, his fervent conviction that science should figure more noticeably in the curriculum, his belief that hygiene and sanitary knowledge should be universally taught, and his advocacy of female education at all levels.

#### ATTITUDE TO THE YOUNG

Kingsley was a successful pedagogue, to judge by his many pupils' reports. He became private tutor in 1861 to the Prince of Wales, no small public recognition. His lectures at Cambridge were popular, more because of their style and presentation than their high intellectual content. For Kingsley, despite his versatility, was not a strong academic and may have been one of the worst historians to hold the Regius Chair at Cambridge. The main problem was that his lectures preached "moral lessons from the text of history." He did little to advance any scientific historiography.<sup>2</sup> Christopher Brooke observes that history at Cambridge "only became a serious study when Charles Kingsley departed from the chair in 1869."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Kingsley the educationist receives brief treatment in Howard Clive Barnard, *A History of English Education, from 1760*, 2d ed., rev. (London: University of London Press, 1961); W. H. G. Armytage, *Four Hundred Years of English Education*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1970); John William Adamson, *English Education, 1789-1902* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1930); Richard Lawrence Archer, *Secondary Education in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Cass, 1966). Somewhat more extensive treatment, particularly on Kingsley's views on manliness and "Muscular Christianity," may be found in: David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal* (London: Murray, 1961); Malcolm Tozer, "Charles Kingsley and the 'Muscular Christian' Ideal of Manliness," *Physical Education Review* 8 (1985): 35-40; Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978); Donald E. Hall (ed.), *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1994). However, the great majority of Kingsley criticism pertains to his fiction and poetry.

<sup>2</sup>Peter R. H. Slee, *Learning and a Liberal Education: The Study of Modern History in the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Manchester, 1800-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 35.

<sup>3</sup>Christopher N. L. Brooke, *A History of the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4: 210.

Yet Kingsley was gifted in understanding youth. As Charles Kegan Paul (1828–1902), author, publisher, and life-long friend of Kingsley, observed, his “insight into school-boy life [was] most remarkable, and his sympathy with the young unflagging.”<sup>4</sup> Children, Kingsley was adamant, were always to be happy: “there is no food, nor medicine either, like happiness.” Fear was to play no part either at home or at school, Kingsley believing that the body of a bullied or frightened child would never thrive but would grow up weak.<sup>5</sup> He held that if a child misbehaved or was weary at lessons, it was often due to physical causes such as sickness, and not necessarily because of moral or spiritual inadequacies.<sup>6</sup>

Kingsley had an unhappy upbringing and did not wish the same for his own offspring. Accordingly, his home was happy, friendly, and emotionally secure. Mrs. Fanny Kingsley, née Frances Grenfell, remarks that her husband became a happy boy with his four children and that he pondered whether “‘there is so much laughing in any other home in England as in ours.’” No corporal punishment was allowed, since he considered that young people’s lying frequently resulted from fear of punishment. Moreover, children do not learn to fear the sin of their wrongdoing but the punishment of it.<sup>7</sup>

As the Victorian age advanced and as more liberal theological attitudes prevailed, the influence of severe Evangelicalism’s unyielding puritanical dispositions toward children, their education, and their upbringing gradually decreased. Yet Evangelicals, many of whom were particularly influential in introducing social reform, were strict with their children because of their great affection for them. Their sternness aimed at lifting the stain of Original Sin from their defiled offspring and helping them to salvation. Still, Kingsley,

<sup>4</sup>Charles Kingsley, *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, ed. Mrs. Kingsley, 2 vols. (London: King, 1877), 1: 230.

<sup>5</sup>Charles Kingsley, *Madam How and Lady Why or, First Lessons in Earth Lore for Children*, in *The Works of Charles Kingsley*, 28 vols. (London and New York: Macmillan, 1880–85), 13: 235–36. The following reveal that lenient views like Kingsley’s were becoming more widespread during the latter decades of the nineteenth century: Eric Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working-Class Children in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester, U.K. and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994); Penny Brown, *The Captured World: The Child and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in England* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993); Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood Since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell, 1991); David Grylls, *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Boston: Faber and Faber, 1978).

<sup>6</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 6.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

disagreed with Evangelicals who asserted the perfection of parents and the evil of children. He saw parents as often responsible for their children's faults.<sup>8</sup> In *The Water-Babies* he quotes approvingly the old aphorism: "'Maxima debetur pueris reverentia'—The greatest reverence is due to children; that is, that grown people should never say or do anything wrong before children, lest they should set them a bad example."<sup>9</sup> However, Kingsley knew that love and respect for children were not sufficient for a good education. It was high time the authorities institute appropriate schooling, and, above all, establish a State education system.

#### CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM AND A STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Kingsley, in common with F. D. Maurice, Thomas Hughes, and John Ruskin, was strongly influenced by the tenets of Christian Socialism, a short-lived mid-nineteenth-century movement which had as its primary aim the social and political reform of Victorian England. Its followers believed that the Church should be more socially active and pursue justice throughout society. Moreover, it should take a more forceful stand against capitalist excesses against the poor.

Although known as the "Apostle of Socialism," Kingsley was never particularly radical and as he grew older became more and more an establishment figure.<sup>10</sup> As John Saul Howson, the Dean of Chester from 1867 to 1885, remarked: "I should have described him as a mixture of the Radical and the Tory, the aspect of character which is denoted by the latter word being, to my apprehension, quite as conspicuous as that which is denoted by the former."<sup>11</sup> In Kingsley's Christian Socialism the emphasis was generally far more on the Christian than on the Socialism. Still, he was in his youth actively socialist and a strong Chartist, supporting the 1840s working-class movement which sought parliamentary reform. Moreover, his condemnation of grave social injustice, especially of bad working conditions, pervades his sermons, lectures, tracts, and such "social problem" novels as *Yeast* (1848) and *Alton Locke* (1850).

Kingsley firmly believed that education constituted a primary vehicle of social reform. No supporter of complete equal rights for all in society, he nonetheless advocated equality of education for all ranks and classes:

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<sup>8</sup> "'Fathers and Children,' " in *Works* 23: 9.

<sup>9</sup>*The Water Babies: A Fairy Story for a Land Baby*, in *Works* 9: 179.

<sup>10</sup>See Susan Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk: A Life of Charles Kingsley* (New York: Mason/Charter, 1975), 204.

<sup>11</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 411.

Let every boy, every girl, have an equal and sound education. If I had my way, I would give the same education to the child of the collier and to the child of a peer. I would see that they were taught the same things, and by the same method. Let them all begin alike, say I. They will be handicapped heavily enough as they go on in life, without our handicapping them in their first race.<sup>12</sup>

However, such equalitarian sentiments were far removed from the actual educational structure of Victorian society. Moreover, as Kingsley knew, there was little chance appropriate educational changes would soon be effected.

If Kingsley had a practically grounded understanding of public opinion, he was in some respects curiously blind. He denied that more educational provision for the working classes would lead them to desire to advance beyond their class.<sup>13</sup> Although an odd view of social change, it corresponds to Kingsley's strongly held attitude to social mobility. The living standards of the working classes were greatly to be improved—their education, their sanitary conditions, their opportunities for healthful living—but they were not to expect to rise out of their classes. Social harmony, not social mobility, was Kingsley's goal.<sup>14</sup> Kingsley was hardly alone in holding such sentiments, many of his class and background believing that the "two nations" were ordained by God. Moreover, it was not until the twentieth century that significant advance was made in building an educational "ladder."<sup>15</sup> As Smelser has observed, "the more specific link between education and mobility . . . was quite weak in nineteenth-century Britain . . . formal education for each class stopped at the *same* class and occupational levels from which the students originated."<sup>16</sup> Still, Kingsley was convinced that manhood suffrage should be allowed once voters are educated, the main vehicle for providing this education coming from the state. As he wrote to Thomas Cooper, the Chartist poet, in 1856, the franchise should be extended but only "if we have a government system of education therewith."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup>*Town Geology*, in *Works* 19: 16.

<sup>13</sup>As Kingsley wrote in 1851, "I believe, from experience, that when you put workmen into human dwellings, and give them a Christian education, so far from wishing discontentedly to rise out of their class, or to level others to it, exactly the opposite takes place" (*Letters and Memories* 1: 248).

<sup>14</sup>See Colwyn E. Vulliamy, "Charles Kingsley and Christian Socialism," in *Writers and Rebels: From the Fabian Biographical Series*, ed. Michael Katanka (London: Knight, 1976; Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1976), 187–88.

<sup>15</sup>John Lawson and Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen, 1973), 271.

<sup>16</sup>Neil J. Smelser, *Social Paralysis and Social Change: British Working-Class Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 54.

<sup>17</sup>*Letters and Memories* 1: 387.

As the 1850s drew to a close, despite advances in the voluntary elementary schools since the first state grant in 1833, Kingsley thought the schooling of the lower classes was appallingly lacking. He was not alone in this belief. The findings of the Newcastle Commission, appointed in 1858 to enquire into the state of England's popular education, were a mixture of praise and criticism for the elementary schools. The Commissioners recognized that more children were now attending school than during the early decades of the century, when the rigid monitorial system of Bell and Lancaster held sway.<sup>18</sup> However, the frequent irregularity and uncertainty of this attendance was not conducive to systematic education. Moreover, very few stayed on after age thirteen.<sup>19</sup> Further, the Commission doubted the adequacy of the system's "basic" provision of literacy and numeracy.<sup>20</sup> Kingsley, who clearly agreed with the Commission, was convinced that a main reason for the elementary schools' gross inadequacy was the absence of governmental control and involvement. The voluntary system, he believed, was unable to provide adequate schooling for everyone and, furthermore, "the *self*-education of the masses . . . is a failure."<sup>21</sup>

To encourage more governmental participation Kingsley joined the National Education League, even though the League was condemned by many clergy and the voluntarists for its secularism. In 1869 he delivered his Inaugural Address as President of the Educational Section of the Social Science Congress, later published by the Education League. Positing that few parents can provide appropriate education for their children, he asserted categorically that the State had to participate to a far greater extent in the educational sphere.<sup>22</sup> He acknowledged the great debt England's schooling owed to the voluntarists, but was adamant that the day of denominational schools was over. It was time to eradicate "that denominational system, which I must confess is to my mind

<sup>18</sup>*Newcastle Commission*, 1861, *Report* [Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers, Education General] (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1970), 3: 87.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 3: 188.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 3: 168; also 3: 273.

<sup>21</sup>*Letters and Memories* 1: 382.

<sup>22</sup>Kingsley was categorical in this *Address* that the State "has no right to delegate its own duties in this matter to any voluntary associations, however venerable, earnest, able. The State, and the State alone, is responsible to the existing citizens for the training of those who are to become citizens. It alone ought to do the work; and it alone can. If it will not accept its responsibilities, then the work, being done by supplementary agents, will be inefficiently done" (*The Address on Education Read Before the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science at Bristol, on the 1st October, 1869* [London: Wilfred Head, 1869], 5).

an evil; an inevitable evil, it may be in some cases, but still an evil to be escaped if possible by the wise man who loves his country."<sup>23</sup> Moreover, a State system of education would enact compulsory attendance.<sup>24</sup> However, Kingsley did not consider that all State intervention in education was commendable. For example, he abhorred the system of "Payment by Results" which underlay Robert Lowe's Revised Code of 1862. This was a system whereby the annual governmental grant for elementary schools depended for the most part on how well pupils answered in the examination conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Kingsley satirized the anti-educational effects of "Payment by Results" to good effect in *The Water-Babies*. Little Tom the chimney-sweep comes to the Isle of Tomtoddies where the children, all heads and no bodies, spend their time learning meaningless facts to be regurgitated before Her Majesty's Inspectors. Being turned into turnips and radishes they sing the refrain "*I can't learn my lesson: the examiner's coming!*" to their great idol Examination.<sup>25</sup> Kingsley has Roger Ascham's stick declare that the foolish parents of these poor children

instead of letting them pick flowers, and make dirt-pies, and get birds' nests, and dance round the gooseberry bush, as little children should, kept them always at lessons, working, working, working . . . till their brains grew big, and their bodies grew small, and they were all changed into turnips, with little but water inside.<sup>26</sup>

In 1870 Kingsley welcomed Forster's Elementary Education Act for its establishment of a State Educational system even though "Payment by Results" continued and though no provision was made for compulsory schooling. Perhaps feeling its work was done or perhaps due to its growing conservatism, Kingsley then withdrew from the Education League.

#### MUSCULAR CHRISTIANITY

Although Kingsley wrote sixty books, he was chary of instruction from the mere printed page. This, Kingsley thought, was "now miscalled education."<sup>27</sup> As he wrote in the preface to his children's work *Madam How and Lady Why*: "mere reading of wise books will not make you wise men: you must use for

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 6.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 8. See also "Toleration," in *Works* 26: 288-89.

<sup>25</sup>*The Water Babies*, in *Works* 9: 350.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 9: 355.

<sup>27</sup>*The Ancien Régime*, in *Works* 17: 230.

yourselves the tools with which books are made wise; and that is—your eyes, and ears, and common sense."<sup>28</sup> He was certainly to some degree an anti-intellectual figure,<sup>29</sup> and this desire for simplicity complemented his religious outlook. As he reminded his congregation in his 1856 sermon "The Woman of Samaria," "God does not ask for learning, but for goodness and holiness: he does not ask for knowledge, but for a right life."<sup>30</sup> He did not deny the value of basic instruction for young children, yet believed that "the Church Catechism must be the main point of instruction."<sup>31</sup>

Kingsley's anti-intellectualism was partly responsible for his association in the public mind with the vogue for "Muscular Christianity," a phrase he detested.<sup>32</sup> He indeed displayed the patent attributes of a "Muscular Christian" in his whole-hearted involvement in social movements and aid to the poor. This was a "real" Christianity removed from "the conflict of religion and science, as well as abstruse disputes relating to episcopacy and the Articles."<sup>33</sup> However, Kingsley's "Muscular Christianity" may also be viewed in a different light. He consistently argued that man's spirituality can be aided by energetic bodily activity, of the sort abundantly displayed by Amyas Leigh, hero of his novel *Westward Ho!*, and by enjoying the appetites and passions rather than suppressing them. Accordingly, physical activity was an essential aspect of any true education, "Mens Sana in Corpore Sano" being clearly part of Kingsley's educational ideal.<sup>34</sup> Kingsley's great energy and activity, despite consistently less-than-robust health, meant he could live by that ideal, a perfect advertisement for "Muscular Christianity."<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, Kingsley was by no means

<sup>28</sup>*Madam How and Lady Why or, First Lessons in Earth Lore for Children*, in *Works* 13: vii.

<sup>29</sup>As he advised in an 1842 letter: "Do not be too solicitous to find deep meanings in men's words. Most men do, and all men ought to mean only what is evident at first sight on their books. . . . Beware of subtlety again. The quantity of sounding nonsense in the world is incredible!" (*Letters and Memories* 1: 89).

<sup>30</sup>"The Woman of Samaria," in *Works* 21: 369. Elsewhere Kingsley declared that in the "vast, muddy, blind, contradictory book-ocean" there was only one truly important book, the Bible (*Letters and Memories* 1: 111).

<sup>31</sup>*Letters and Memories* 1: 110. For the ultimately religious nature of Kingsley's pedagogy see John C. Hawley, S.J., "The Water-Babies as Catechetical Paradigm," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 14, 1 (Spring 1989): 19.

<sup>32</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 105, 186.

<sup>33</sup>John W. Derry, *Reaction and Reform, 1793–1868: England in the Early Nineteenth Century* (London: Blandford Press, 1963), 203.

<sup>34</sup>See "North Devon," in *Works* 15: 235.

<sup>35</sup>It is with distinct pride that Kingsley refers to himself as "a strong, daring, sporting wild man-of-the-woods" (*Letters and Memories* 1: 180).



a fanatic for organized school games, the mania for which was quickly increasing during the second half of the nineteenth century. He much preferred to see boys active in nature.

It would be a misrepresentation to claim that Kingsley was interested only in physical character. In 1866 he preached at Cambridge on "David's Weakness," seeking to define the significance of the phrase "Muscular Christianity." An "utterly immoral and intolerable" meaning is that which implies "that provided a young man is sufficiently brave, frank, and gallant, he is more or less absolved from the common duties of morality and self-restraint." This, Kingsley declared, is a doctrine of primitives, savages, heathens and has nothing to do with being a gentleman or a Christian.<sup>36</sup> On the contrary, although a true Christian should indeed have muscle, he should also be imbued with a love of Christian tenderness and brotherhood, and be always willing to help his fellow men.<sup>37</sup> This was an ideal at which education should aim. To categorize Kingsley, as frequently happens, as a proponent of a narrow physical development in children with scant regard for other aspects of their personality, intellect, emotions, and spirituality is to miss his educational aims.

#### SCIENCE IN EDUCATION

During the first half of the nineteenth century England's education system lagged behind those of many Continental nations in the teaching of scientific subjects. However, the claims of science on school curriculum were more and more put forward, especially after the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, with the help of T. H. Huxley, Michael Faraday, Lyon Playfair, Herbert Spencer, and Dean Frederic Farrar. Even the Clarendon Commission into the Public Schools (1864) recommended more science be taught. Four years later, the Taunton Commission, which examined secondary schools other than the elite Public Schools, still more insistently supported science in the curriculum.<sup>38</sup>

One of the most fervent supporters of science was Kingsley. He became a fellow of both the Linnaean and Geological Societies and was even cited by

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<sup>36</sup>"David's Weakness," in *Works* 25: 261.

<sup>37</sup>See Allan John Hartley, *The Novels of Charles Kingsley: A Christian Social Interpretation* (Folkestone: The Hour-Glass Press, 1977), 166.

<sup>38</sup>*Schools Inquiry Commission, Report of the Commissioners 1867-1868* [Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers. Education General] (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1970), 17: 34.

Darwin in *The Descent of Man*.<sup>39</sup> Besides being an active scientist, he was also "a powerful spokesman for science education." Many of his works, even his Sunday sermons, were suffused with praise of biology, geology, botany, and all aspects of natural history.<sup>40</sup> He was especially pleased to be appointed president of the Devonshire Scientific Association in 1870.<sup>41</sup> A year later he was prime mover in establishing the Chester Natural History Society.<sup>42</sup> He lectured on scientific subjects at Wellington College, where his son was a pupil, and where he helped establish a museum of natural history.<sup>43</sup>

It is true that Kingsley as fervent Christian sometimes worried lest science be put on too high a pedestal and supplant belief in God.<sup>44</sup> Still, he was convinced that science could be a moral and spiritual, as well as a practical and economic, boon to mankind.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, he consistently wished to emphasize that by studying science one was in effect studying the work of God and getting to know Him better.<sup>46</sup> He observed of *The Water-Babies* (1863): "I have tried, in all sorts of queer ways, to make children and grown folks understand that there is a quite miraculous and divine element underlying all physical nature."<sup>47</sup> Moreover, Kingsley was uncommon among his fellow clerics in battling with the religious and moral problems introduced by the onslaught of Darwinian theories, meanwhile seeing few conflicts between the teachings of science and the teachings of religion.<sup>48</sup> We read in Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son* that Kingsley wrote to Philip Gosse, a staunch creationist despite his great

<sup>39</sup>Mary Wheat Hanawalt, "Charles Kingsley and Science," *Studies in Philology* 34 (October 1937): 591. Sir Charles Bunbury had high praise for Kingsley's scientific skill: "He had not, indeed, had leisure to prosecute those elaborate researches, or to acquire that vast knowledge of details, which belong to the great masters of science; but his knowledge was by no means superficial. He had mastered the leading principles and great outlines of scientific natural history, in its principal branches; and the large generalizations in which he delighted, were based on a well-directed study of facts, both in books and in nature" (*Letters and Memories* 2: 120).

<sup>40</sup>W. H. Brock, "Glaucus: Kingsley and the Seaside Naturalists," *Cahiers Victoriens et Édouardiens* 3 (1976): 34.

<sup>41</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 318.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>44</sup>"Ezekiel's Vision," in *Works* 27: 108.

<sup>45</sup>"Science," in *Works* 19: 257.

<sup>46</sup>As he wrote to F. D. Maurice in 1869, the study of nature should lead to a greater reverence for and trust in God (*Letters and Memories* 2: 292).

<sup>47</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 137.

<sup>48</sup>See John C. Hawley, S.J., "Charles Kingsley and the Book of Nature," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 60 (December 1991): passim.

eminence as a marine biologist, "that he could not 'give up the painful and slow conclusion of five and twenty years' study of geology, and believe that God has written on the rocks one enormous and superfluous lie.'"<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the "best-known Darwinian in Cambridge" was not in the least perturbed that with the demise of the traditional doctrine of creation the theory of final causes was also demolished: "We might accept all that Mr. Darwin, all that Professor Huxley, all that other most able men, have so learnedly and so acutely written on physical science, and yet preserve our natural Theology on exactly the same basis as that on which Butler and Paley left it. That we should have to develop it, I do not deny. That we should have to relinquish it, I do."<sup>50</sup>

Kingsley was convinced the day was coming when ignorance of basic science would be considered an inadequacy "only second to ignorance of the primary laws of religion and morality," so it is unsurprising that he wanted to increase science content throughout the curriculum.<sup>51</sup> He urged the establishment of science societies, naturalists' clubs, and science museums. Above all, he recommended that public schools and universities curtail their teaching of the Classics and impart much more knowledge of botany, zoology, and geology.<sup>52</sup> It should be stressed that Kingsley, who took a Classical first at Cambridge and who hoped Greek books would continue to constitute the basis of England's liberal education, by no means wished to denigrate Greek and Latin.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, it was now high time, he was adamant, that the Classics' stranglehold be broken.

One of science's great benefits for young people, Kingsley held, was its effect on the training of the mind. For example, natural history, a dispassionate study in which personal likes or dislikes should not be at issue, helps to foster logic and mental honesty in young people.<sup>54</sup> In particular, the inductive habit, coming from the study of science, is to be strongly recommended.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, science nurtures children's imagination, a very necessary attribute in Kingsley's opinion. He was pleased the day was over when the imaginative impulse was denigrated by such educational theorists as Franklin and

<sup>49</sup>Edmund Gosse, *Father and Son: A Study of Two Temperaments* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973), 77.

<sup>50</sup>Owen Chadwick, "Charles Kingsley at Cambridge," *The Historical Journal* 18 (1975): 313; "Preface" to Westminster Sermons, in *Works* 28: xxii. See also *Town Geology*, in *Works* 19: 22; "How to Study Natural History," in *Works* 19: 304.

<sup>51</sup>*Town Geology*, in *Works* 19: 7.

<sup>52</sup>See *Glaucus; or, The Wonders of the Shore*, in *Works* 5: 226.

<sup>53</sup>"North Devon," in *Works* 15: 287.

<sup>54</sup>"How to Study Natural History," in *Works* 19: 294.

<sup>55</sup>*Town Geology*, in *Works* 19: 13.

Edgeworth,<sup>56</sup> and convinced that after obedience and morality the most important thing for a boy to learn was scientific observation, a skill that natural history was particularly efficacious in developing.<sup>57</sup> There was the added benefit, as Kingsley pointed out in *Madam How and Lady Why*, that examination of everyday things would produce understanding of greater and rarer things.<sup>58</sup> Kingsley further saw science as a great good for society at large. He considered that a primary purpose of the study of science was in taking from humankind the chains of superstition, prejudice, and ignorance. Each year the world was gaining a greater appreciation of the importance of science and was learning to live more in accordance with the laws of physical science which are none other than, as Kingsley declared following Bacon, "the Word of God revealed in facts." Moreover, the world was "gaining by so doing, year by year, more and more of health and wealth; of peaceful and comfortable, even of graceful and elevating, means of life for fresh millions."<sup>59</sup>

In his preface to his 1872 work "Town Geology," Kingsley discussed at length science's ability to act as a vehicle of social equality, an important reason why the young should study it. Above all other subjects in the school curriculum, science allows the poor child to compete on equal terms with the rich. Because it has hitherto been neglected in schools, the wealthier child generally has little more knowledge of it than the poorer one: both can start on an equal footing. Again, because success in science requires patient, individual, self-study rather than teaching, the rich man cannot depend on his purse to buy scientific knowledge. Another benefit of science study is the collegiality of fellow scientists, a brotherhood which considers scientific intellectual ability more than artificial social barriers:

If you want a ground of brotherhood with men . . . all over the world—such as rank, wealth, fashion, or other artificial arrangements of the world cannot give and cannot take away; if you want to feel yourself as good as any man in theory, because you are as good as any man in practice . . . if you wish to have the inspiring and ennobling feeling of being a brother in a great freemasonry . . . then become men of science.<sup>60</sup>

#### HYGIENIC MOVEMENT

Scientific knowledge was not just for training the mind. Kingsley consistently urged that science was essential for promoting practical reforms in society,

<sup>56</sup>"How to Study Natural History," in *Works* 19: 300.

<sup>57</sup>1863 lecture to pupils at Wellington College, *Letters and Memories* 2: 161–62.

<sup>58</sup>*Madam How and Lady Why*, in *Works* 13: 243–44; also 49.

<sup>59</sup>*Town Geology*, in *Works* 19: 9.

<sup>60</sup>*ibid.*, 18.

especially in sanitation and the improvement of hygiene. In 1849 when the cholera epidemic started in Jacob's Island in Bermondsey, a district in London's East End which had already achieved notoriety in *Oliver Twist* (1837–38), Kingsley and his friends, manifesting the practical stress of the Christian Socialist Movement, worked incessantly in the district to arrest the outbreak. This desire to introduce greater awareness about sanitation and hygiene into his contemporaries' lives remained a life-long preoccupation. He became so well known for his work in sanitary reform and his eagerness to instill an appreciation of the rules of public health that he was asked in the spring of 1854 to discourse before the House of Commons on the unhygienic conditions prevalent in urban areas and the low remuneration of Parish Medical Officers.<sup>61</sup> The following year he led a deputation on the issue of sanitary reform to Prime Minister Palmerston. Kingsley's horror at the atrocious sanitary conditions in Victorian cities account for some of the most striking passages in his novel *Alton Locke* (1850), whose principal aim was to highlight the dreadful working conditions, especially the shocking lack of hygiene, of tailors in London's West End.<sup>62</sup>

Kingsley vehemently desired that the laws of health, utterly neglected in the curriculum, be taught at all educational levels.<sup>63</sup> He even urged professorships in this subject at both Cambridge and at Oxford, proposing that every young landowner and student for holy orders be required to attend the lectures.<sup>64</sup> He also desired every large town to have a public school of health, or that equivalent facilities be made part of existing educational institutions. These would provide practical lectures on health at a fee low enough to make them accessible even to the very poor, those who most needed such knowledge. For, why, Kingsley asked rhetorically,

should not people be taught. . . something of how their own bodies are made and how they work? Teaching of this kind ought to, and will, in some more civilised age and country, be held a necessary element in the school course of every child, just as necessary as reading, writing, and arithmetic.<sup>65</sup>

Although Kingsley's wish to include more about hygiene and sanitation in educational curricula was patently practical, he also thought of young people's

<sup>61</sup>Halcy, *The Healthy Body*, 116–17.

<sup>62</sup>Kingsley, under the nom-de-plume Parson Lot, had earlier published a passionate account of the same subject in his pamphlet *Cheap Clothes and Nasty* (1850).

<sup>63</sup>"The Science of Health," in *Works*, 18: 21.

<sup>64</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 391.

<sup>65</sup>"The Science of Health," in *Works*, 18: 33–34.

cleanliness in a moral light. A frequent preacher of "the Gospel of godliness and cleanliness," he suggested that excessive contact with adverse and unsanitary physical conditions would render it difficult for one to lead a holy and Christian life.<sup>66</sup> As he advised in his "Second Sermon on the Cholera": "keep your children safe from all foul smells, foul food, foul water, and foul air, that they may grow up healthy, hearty, and cleanly, fit to serve God as christened, free, and civilised Englishmen should in this great and awful time."<sup>67</sup> Again, at the conclusion of *The Water-Babies* he promises his readers salvation if they do not succumb to temptation and pleasure but lead a "clean life": "Meanwhile, do you learn your lessons, and thank God that you have plenty of cold water to wash in; and wash in it too, like a true Englishman. And then, if my story is not true, something better is; and if I am not quite right, still you will be, as long as you stick to hard work and cold water."<sup>68</sup>

It lies beyond the province of this paper to discuss the oft-argued psychological theories that Kingsley's stress on children's washing mirrors a guilt about sex, or that his emphasis on washing away all dirtiness reflects a deep concern with the evil effects of masturbation.<sup>69</sup> However, Kingsley's advocacy of increased attention to sanitation and the laws of health in school curricula of all social classes certainly was uncommon for the time. Of course, Kingsley was not alone in worrying about the health of England's schoolchildren. Still, it was not until 1907 that the Medical Inspection Act made it a duty for local authorities to hold health inspections. It is hard to know how far Kingsley, his views owing much to mid-nineteenth-century theories of science and of Muscular Christianity, influenced twentieth-century school hygiene programs. Nevertheless, Kingsley's contributions to education presaged the hygienic movement in education.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 460.

<sup>67</sup>"Second Sermon on the Cholera," in *Works* 22: 152.

<sup>68</sup>*The Water-Babies*, in *Works* 9: 388.

<sup>69</sup>Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk*, 220–21; Maureen Duffy, *The Erotic World of Faery* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1972), 283–84.

<sup>70</sup>R. L. Archer, *Secondary Education in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Cass, 1966), 200; also Tozer, 37. For a comparative perspective on England's development of school health programs, it is interesting to examine the Canadian experience in "'To Create a Strong and Healthy Race': Children in the Public Health Movement, 1880–1920," Part 2 of Neil Sutherland's *Children in English-Canadian Society: Framing the Twentieth-Century Consensus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR FEMALES IN EDUCATION

Deeply interested in the growing women's movement, Kingsley considered that females should enjoy more social and political rights. Above all, they had a "right to an education in all points equal to that of men."<sup>71</sup> Certainly, at the elementary level it was generally accepted that girls were eligible to receive the same basic schooling as their brothers.<sup>72</sup> However, at the secondary level far fewer of Kingsley's compatriots sanctioned equality of opportunity for girls, and in practice secondary school boys very heavily outnumbered girls. One main reason was middle-class parents' general indifference to their daughters' schooling. Many, women as well as men, considered that girls had less mental ability than boys. Anyway, most would marry and their husbands would look after their needs. However, as the century advanced, more and more concluded that England's provision for education of girls and women left much to be desired. The Taunton Commission into non-Public School secondary education reported in 1868 that the nation's schooling for middle-class girls was "on the whole, unfavourable" and manifested many defects.<sup>73</sup> Very little endowment money was devoted to the education of girls and young women.<sup>74</sup>

Kingsley discussed female education at Bristol in his 1869 *Address on Education*. He argued that the most "dangerous" social class requiring educating and civilizing was composed neither of street arabs nor of thieves but of women. This was particularly true, he declared, of the two-and-a-half million working-class women who had often to provide for their children and even their relatives and

who, for want of due education, are too often unable to compete in the labour market against the better taught male sex, and are, therefore, too often beaten down to starvation wages.

Kingsley's anxiety about the woeful educational provision for these women was due more to practical concerns for their physical well-being and survival, and to the inevitable problems the unschooled lower-class female would pose for society, than to a regard for their intellectual improvement.

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<sup>71</sup>"On English Composition," in *Works* 20: 240.

<sup>72</sup>As Barnard wrote, "There was no question of female disabilities in this sphere of education, for girls had just as much—or, rather, just as little—chance as boys" (p. 156). See also Geoffrey Walford, "Girls' Private Schooling: Past and Present," in his *The Private Schooling of Girls: Past and Present* (London: Woburn Press, 1993), 10.

<sup>73</sup>*Schools Inquiry Commission*, 17: 548–49.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 564, 566.

If the vast and steadily-increasing number of women who must earn their own bread in these days are to be aught but a source of misery to themselves, and of confusion to society . . . then we must offer to them an education which will at least enable them to get their own bread.<sup>75</sup>

However, it was also cardinal that those middle-class women who spent their leisure enjoying vacuous novels, and who did not realize that life signified more than "finery and amusement," should be better schooled. He regretted how little appropriate secondary and higher education existed for them.<sup>76</sup> Acknowledging some slight intimations of improvement in the establishment of new institutions, he advocated the expansion of the trend: "Out of these and kindred institutions, I hope that a whole system of public education for girls of the middle and upper class will develop itself in due time. Some such organisation must arise, and arise soon."<sup>77</sup>

Not surprisingly, Kingsley lauded and fostered girls' rising interest in natural history. For content and intellectual development this was far superior to the "novels and gossip, crochet and Berlin-wool," to what he called "the abomination of 'Fancy-work,'" with which many girls were concerned.<sup>78</sup> Although he thought chemistry might be a little dangerous for "young ladies," he considered botany, zoology, and geology appropriate.<sup>79</sup> Kingsley even promoted the establishment of classes in physiology, which he wished to call "Human Physiology" or "The Science of Health," for mothers or married women, classes from which men were to be excluded.<sup>80</sup> These were to be taught by women "duly educated and legally qualified."<sup>81</sup> Kingsley went further, lending his voice and energies to an idea which, as his wife pointed out, "to the last had his entire sympathy," namely the full-scale medical education of women.<sup>82</sup> He wrote to John Stuart Mill, "Of woman's right to be a medical practitioner, I hold . . . that it is perhaps the most important social question hanging over us."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>*Address on Education*, 12.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 12, 13.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>78</sup>*Glaucus*, in *Works* 5: 4.

<sup>79</sup>"Thrift," in *Works* 18: 95.

<sup>80</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 388.

<sup>81</sup>"The Science of Health," in *Works* 18: 35.

<sup>82</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 327.

<sup>83</sup>*Ibid.*, 329. Shortly before Kingsley died, Elizabeth Blackwell, M.D., who had practised as a consulting physician for twenty-five years in America, persuaded him to serve



In his essay "Nausicaa in London; Or, the Lower Education of Women," Kingsley argued girls would be better educated if they followed the example of the illiterate, though refined and eloquent, Nausicaa, who appears in Book 6 of the *Odyssey* playing with her ball on the beach, and who epitomized, in Kingsley's view, the healthy exuberance befitting a girl. However, in contemporary England the modern working-class Nausicaas were all-too-often unhealthy, lacking in exercise, eating a poor diet, and cramped in stays and high heels, in addition to working and living in filthy, poorly ventilated rooms. Consequently, an improvement in girls' physical education was more important than mere book knowledge for the reformation of girls' education.<sup>84</sup> Some sort of training analogous to boys' games in the Public Schools was essential for girls, for example dancing to develop the lower body, singing to expand the lungs, ball games to exercise the upper torso, an abundance of fresh air and play to develop both mind and body. It was crucial also that tight stays and high heels be banished, along with anything interfering with bodily growth and movement.<sup>85</sup> In short, changes in female education must ensure that girls are taught

not merely to understand the Greek tongue, but to copy somewhat of the Greek physical training, of that "music and gymnastic" which helped to make the cleverest race of the old world the ablest race likewise; then they will earn the gratitude of the patriot and the physiologists, by doing their best to stay the downward tendencies of the physique, and therefore ultimately of the morale, in the coming generation of English women.<sup>86</sup>

Kingsley supported for the rest of his life improvement of female education. On the other hand, as he wrote in 1870 to John Stuart Mill, he had disassociated himself to a great degree from the rapidly burgeoning women's movement and was becoming more closely bound to the male-centred Victorian age. Although he was a strong supporter "of woman's right to vote or to labour, and . . . to woman's right to practise as physicians and surgeons," he disliked that the whole woman's rights question was "mixed up with social, i.e., sexual questions."<sup>87</sup> Moreover, he believed the movement was increasingly influenced by the wrong sort of woman, that is, women who were far from

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as chairman of a committee which was campaigning to secure medical degrees for women (*ibid.*, 304–5).

<sup>84</sup>"Nausicaa in London; or, The Lower Education of Women," in *Works* 18: 122.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 125. See also "The Two Breaths," in *Works* 18: 69–70; also *The Water-Babies*, in *Works* 9: 230.

<sup>86</sup>"Nausicaa in London," in *Works* 18: 126.

<sup>87</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 329.

exemplifying the moral and spiritual ideals of genuine womanhood. Such women, more male than female, would never fulfill the very necessary female role of being "the teacher, the natural and therefore divine, guide, purifier, inspirer of the man." He was convinced that

any sound reformation of the relations between woman and man, must proceed from women who have fulfilled well their relations as they now exist, imperfect and unjust as they are. That only those who have worked well in harness, will be able to work well out of harness.<sup>88</sup>

The elderly Kingsley, though remaining a staunch friend of female education, was now far from the social equalitarianism of his Christian Socialist youth, and distant from the pervasive gender equalitarianism of his friend Mill.

#### CONCLUSION

Today, few read Kingsley's copious writings or study his manifold causes. Not many would place him in the first rank of eminent Victorians. His condition-of-England novels *Yeast* and *Alton Locke* continue to attract attention and his contributions to Christian Socialism and Muscular Christianity are widely agreed. But today, Kingsley is remembered primarily for his writings for children, work he held to be of minor significance. We remember the author of *The Water-Babies*, and to a lesser extent *The Heroes* and *Westward Ho!* Kingsley still attracts scholars, but in the majority, literary critics who concern themselves with his fiction, his poetry, and his writings for children.<sup>89</sup> Others, agreeing with the American writer John Whittier's 1876 comment, "since I have seen *him*, the man seems greater than the author," focus on the man as opposed to his written works.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, 330.

<sup>89</sup>It is beyond the scope of this paper, which deals with Kingsley's educational theories and practices, to specify any selection from the broad body of literary criticism of Kingsley's works. However, good starting points for anyone wishing to pursue this area include Styron Harris, *Charles Kingsley: A Reference Guide* (Boston, Mass. G. K. Hall, 1981), and the section "Victorian Bibliography" in the annual summer issue of *Victorian Studies*.

<sup>90</sup>*Letters and Memories* 2: 446. Some major biographical studies on Kingsley include: Stanley E. Baldwin, *Charles Kingsley* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1934); Margaret Farrand Thorp, *Charles Kingsley 1819-1875* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1937); Una Pope-Hennessy, *Canon Charles Kingsley: A Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1948); Robert Bernard Martin, *The Dust of Combat: A Life of Charles Kingsley*

Kingsley's opinions on a number of social and political topics were, by the standards of a later time, offensive and backward. He detested the Irish, Blacks, and Catholics. Nevertheless, he successfully propagated important ideas about education, advocating a State education system, supporting more science in the curriculum, militating for increased educational opportunities for women, and arguing for greater awareness of hygiene in schools and elsewhere. Some will consider his promotion of an encompassing character development, not always happily denoted by the term "Muscular Christianity," to have been progressive for the day. Also notable and prescient was Kingsley's belief that school should open up opportunities to the poorer classes in society. Although increasingly conservative as he aged and never a proponent of complete social equality, he consistently urged that everyone, even those of the lowest classes, receive as much education as would fulfill their abilities and needs. Whereas many of his contemporaries viewed education primarily as a vehicle of social control, Kingsley believed that education was a God-given right and good. Moreover, not only would greater educational provision go far toward improving society at large, it would help fulfill the individual, and not least as a Christian. Perhaps Kingsley's greatest characteristic was an enlightened attitude toward the young. He truly liked children and youth, and this strong affection underlay his beliefs and practices.

It is strange that Kingsley's myriad views on education still await thorough study a century-and-a-quarter after his death. One who could claim "In my eyes the question is not what to teach, but how to educate; how to train not scholars, but men; bold, energetic, methodic, liberal-minded, magnanimous" may still have something relevant to offer educationists.<sup>91</sup> This quintessential stereotypical Victorian, in the words of David Lodge, deserves to be just a little less "vulnerable to the irony of a more sophisticated and more cynical age than his own."<sup>92</sup>

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(London: Faber and Faber, 1959); Chitty, *The Beast and the Monk*, Brenda Colloms, *Charles Kingsley: The Lion of Eversley* (London: Constable, 1975).

<sup>91</sup> *Letters and Memories* 1: 198.

<sup>92</sup> David Lodge, "Introduction" to Charles Kingsley, *Alton Locke: Tailor and Poet*, ed. Herbert Van Thal (London: Cassell, 1967), xviii.