

## “A School Like Rice’s School”: The Beginnings of Edmund Rice Education

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**Abstract:** *“Waterford abounds in schools; it has one however, which is somewhat peculiar – and an inspection of which gave us much pleasure. It is named the School of the Christian Brothers, and was founded in 1803 by Mr. Edmund Rice. The benefits he has conferred upon his native city is therefore incalculable.”<sup>1</sup>*

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**Key Words:** Edmund Rice; Christian Brothers; Catholic education – principles; Catholic education – history; school teachers – pastoral care; education as liberation; education as formation; Waterford

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In 1802 Edmund Rice initiated a brotherhood, which was “the first religious congregation of men in modern times to be founded by a layman”<sup>2</sup> for the education of poor boys, something where there was no precedent in English-speaking Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of this paper is to identify the education principles underpinning “a school like Rice’s school.”<sup>4</sup> Such an endeavour may likewise result in the articulation of Ricean educational principles which could also be of relevance to twenty-first century educators. Such principles may be utilised as touchstones to critique an authentic Edmund Rice Education as well as be foundational in the development of a Ricean philosophy of education.

### RICE’S SCHOOLS

#### *New Street*

Rice’s education ministry in New Street in 1802 seemed unplanned. Accommodation and furniture had to be rapidly acquired and the schooling process developed in a very *ad hoc* way, with problems concerning both masters and children. The “seating accommodation in Br. Rice’s school was very limited apparently, because he used send some of his boys out to the neighbours in search of forms, the number depending on the number of pupils. Each evening they returned the forms to their owners.”<sup>5</sup> This apparent

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<sup>1</sup> S. Hall (Mr. & Mrs.), *Hall’s Ireland: Mr. & Mrs. Hall’s Tour of 1840*, vol. I (London, 1841), 116.

<sup>2</sup> Letter and presentation to Pope Paul VI, 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1977, *Christian Brothers’ Educational Record* (Rome, 1978), 61.

<sup>3</sup> O’Toole, 1:166.

<sup>4</sup> These words indicate that what the Bishops wanted was not just a school but a specific type of school, a “Rice” school; see Dr. John Power to Dr. Francis Moylan, 26<sup>th</sup> June, 1804, E. Bolster, *The Moylan Correspondence in Bishop’s House, Killarney* (Collectanea, no.15, 1972).

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Prince, 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 270.

disorder was uncharacteristic of Rice, and starkly contrasts the meticulous preparation expended with the development of the Mount Sion school and monastery. Indeed, it is very probable that his business acumen had led Rice to identify the land where he would build his future school and monastery years before 1802, a position Keane supports: "I am convinced that during the years between 1796 and 1798 when his friend Fr. Power was trying to fix up the Nuns at Hennessy's Road, he had formed the idea of getting for his own work the premises, Mount Sion, across Hennessy's Road from the Nun's Convent."<sup>6</sup> But it was in 1802, Edmund Rice, "who was not yet forty years old, and in full maturity of his physical and mental powers"<sup>7</sup> opened his school in New Street, and also "lived over his school in New Street for a short time."<sup>8</sup> Oral tradition universally concludes that "he did not intend to establish a permanent school in New Street."<sup>9</sup> So the questions to ponder are: why 1802? And why New Street? The answers would seem to be focused on the most precious person in his life, his daughter Mary. It is clear that from 1793, Rice planned a teaching brotherhood, but he embarked on it in 1802. His love and responsibilities to his only child claimed indisputable priority. That would seem the obvious reason that curtailed any prior, substantial engagement in his proposed education initiative. What may have happened quite unexpectedly was that his younger brother, Richard urgently needed assistance with his growing family to number eventually nine<sup>10</sup> and requested that the teenage Mary help his own young wife with the children. It was an unforeseen plea, but both Edmund and his daughter seemed to believe that Mary's relocation to her Uncle Richard's farm was an unwritten obligation to be honoured in the extended Rice family. Likewise, it was around this time or just before, that Joan, Edmund's almost fifty year old half-sister left Arundel Lane to marry. Not having Mary for whom to be directly responsible meant Rice now was free to commence immediately his education project. The evidence infers that Rice did not anticipated the start would be 1802 or in a venue not Ballybricken. This is a possible explanation concerning Rice's initiating his venture at New Street, a venue that had never been planned to be permanent.

The second question inviting consideration concerns the choice of specifically New Street.

In the eighteenth century this was a fashionable residential street, and the fine houses which had been erected here included many four-storey structures, a few of which became the town residences of some of the wealthier country families especially during the winter periods...In February 1776 a house with offices, turret and gardens was being offered for letting in New Street. The notice stated that it was fit for a gentleman, and was provided with a pump and a great flow of water, and was situated in a wholesome and pleasing situation. In 1793 the street was again to be paved, provided the inhabitants contributed half the cost of the work.<sup>11</sup>

"This street, some 250 yards in length, was then, on the whole, a Protestant residential quarter. There were two or three town houses belonging to wealthy county families. These houses were built on a grand scale...On the whole the locality was select in those days."<sup>12</sup> In 1802, "...New Street was a fashionable street and Comptons, a wealthy family

<sup>6</sup> Henry Keane, O'Toole, Vol I, 134. Implied in such planning is that Rice would start his education ministry once Mary was old enough to be independent, somewhere around 15 years.

<sup>7</sup> O'Toole, 1:122.

<sup>8</sup> Martin O'Flynn, 29<sup>th</sup> July, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 224.

<sup>9</sup> Seamus Upton, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 309

<sup>10</sup> Feheney, *Aspects of Rice Family History* (Carroll, 1994), 51.

<sup>11</sup> D. Dowling, *Waterford Streets: Past and Present*, Waterford (1998), 140.

<sup>12</sup> Canon Patrick Power, 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 252.

residing in the street, used to give balls to the gentry who came in their carriages for enjoyment and social engagements."<sup>13</sup> The following are transcripts of interviews from Waterford old folk, who had memories of Rice's first school: "Br. Rice began first with night school in New Street. He had few voluntary helpers. They got disgusted and left him after some time."<sup>14</sup> "When he began his first foundation, he engaged the services of two young men to assist him, and although he paid them a decent salary, yet they left him, disgusted with their employment either from fatigue or from the rudeness and roughness of their pupils."<sup>15</sup> "My father was very fond of talking of Br. Rice...I always heard that his first attempt at teaching was Night School or Evening School. He got together a group of helpers who agreed to teach the poor, after their day's work in Mr. Rice's rented premises, New Street. The house in which he (Rice) taught was very high, the lower portion of which was used as a stable; this was where he conducted his classes."<sup>16</sup> "He at first had voluntary helpers and from these the Brotherhood developed."<sup>17</sup> *Origin* says that he was later "joined by two other young men<sup>18</sup> who intended to devote their lives to the gratuitous education of poor boys."<sup>19</sup> "Rice and his companions lived above the stables and commenced living a religiously oriented community life. In time, the night classes evolved into a full-time day school. Probably, there were no more than fifty boys enrolled in New Street."<sup>20</sup>

From this information, there are a number of issues to ponder. Why New Street? One unsubstantiated reason is that it was "...a place he got through his wife. This house was known as Elliotts."<sup>21</sup> This assertion is challenged by a more reliable source in Patrick Canon Power,<sup>22</sup> Waterford's diocesan historian who believed Rice "rented a stable from the Barron Family; they were always strong Catholics."<sup>23</sup> It is more likely that a Catholic family would have rented these premises to Rice, knowing that it would be used as a school. The evidence is that the Protestant residents initially objected to Rice's educational initiative. Be that as it may, in the light of what Rice provided for his poor boys at Mount Sion, the reason for the selection of New Street may well be more a deliberate choice on Rice's part than mere availability. First of all it was a house/store with stables attached. The stables at New Street were not slums, for this was where the gentry stabled their horses and coaches, their most expensive commodities, second only to their homes. While this was not luxury, the children's new school was so much more superior than most of Waterford's charity and indeed most pay schools. This was a deliberate choice, reflecting Rice's respect for the dignity of poor children. He was not going to educate them in "miserable garrets," or "a miserable cellar," or a "miserable hovel" as the commissioners of education described so many of Waterford's pay schools.

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Upton, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 309.

<sup>14</sup> Seamus Upton, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 309.

<sup>15</sup> Br. John Norris, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 216.

<sup>16</sup> Frederick Swift, 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 305.

<sup>17</sup> Henry Keane, 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 163

<sup>18</sup> Probably Thomas Grosvenor and Patrick Finn.

<sup>19</sup> F. R. Hickey, *Inheritance: Collection Two, Origin* (New Rochelle, 1982), 373.

<sup>20</sup> J.D. Fitzpatrick, Our venerable founder's practice of the virtue of charity towards God, *Christian Brothers' Educational Record*, Dublin, 1963, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Prince 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 270.

<sup>22</sup> Canon Patrick Power D. Litt. was a Professor of Archaeology at University College Cork, and author of two books on Waterford.

<sup>23</sup> Patrick Canon Power, n.d but c.1912/13, Normoyle (1979), 252.

Secondly, his school for the rejects of society was opened in the same area where those who were the pinnacle of society lived. This seems hardly an accident. He was welcoming these urchins, *God's gentry* into this salubrious, residential area as having a right to be there. Given such provocative action, it was "but natural to expect that the inhabitants objected to his boys."<sup>24</sup> From its very genesis Rice's education was challenging and subversive. It deliberately attacked the class system that allocated people for life into categories set for them by those with influence and power. Rice welcomed these children into his society as his guests, having a right to be there because of the common humanity all shared. Their welcomed presence into this foreign milieu would have registered with these children and their parents. It certainly did with the residents, some of whom were Rice's colleagues. They wanted Rice to return to his senses and cease his dalliance with the lower classes. It was recognised that a wealthy victualler of his status was expected to contribute to charities but his identification with society's rejects, was something in which a gentleman did not engage. When challenged about his aberrant, seemingly futile behaviour, Rice is said to have replied "that indeed of himself he could not hope to effect great changes in the boys, but he felt confident with the blessings of God on himself and his helpers to be able to uplift these poor boys and raise them to the status of men."<sup>25</sup> Rice's education was more complex than a focus on the 4Rs; he provided an education for liberation.

When Rice established his first school in New Street in the midst of the comfortable gentry, he appeared to display none of his characteristic subtlety or prudence. In doing this, he publicly announced to the Waterford elite, the beginning of his new full-time career of service to the poor as well as his repudiation of the class system especially accepted in New Street. By this action, Rice robustly challenged Waterford's comfortable Christians to rethink their Christian beliefs and practices. Rice's integrity eventually won out, for it is recorded in the annual list of Mount Sion's contributors that Mr. Compton and many others in the Quaker community were most enthusiastic and generous supporters of Edmund Rice and his work.<sup>26</sup>

There is some irony in Rice initiating his educating the poor in New Street. In 1803, the sisters Brown opened in New Street an academy for the instruction of young ladies modeled on "the methods adopted on the most approved English seminaries."<sup>27</sup> Moreover, in 1807, schoolmaster Mr. Ardagh transferred his Waterford Academy to an extensive and commodious house, situated in the upper extremity of New Street, in a house formerly occupied by James Kearney. This school must have been only a few yards from Rice's original stable school. Ardagh's advertisement announced: "The spacious and lofty apartments, the beautiful and uninterrupted prospect of the adjacent country, with its several other local advantages, all combine to render it as eligible a situation for a seminary as well can be imagined."<sup>28</sup> Clearly, Rice's New Street 'academy' pioneered a trend in quality education in uptown Waterford!

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<sup>24</sup> Henry Keane, 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 163.

<sup>25</sup> Seamus Upton, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 310.

<sup>26</sup> Normoyle, 1976, 64.

<sup>27</sup> Dowling, 1998, 140.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

## Mount Sion

In contrast to the New Street initiative, there is ample evidence of Rice's careful and reflective planning in the establishment of Mount Sion. This time, his site was at the top of the ridge, past New Street, adjacent to the Hennessy's Road Convent,<sup>29</sup> close to but outside the city walls, where the "laneways of the inner city slums met the cabins of the displaced country folk."<sup>30</sup> It was a strategic location and would serve the same catchment area for poor children as the Presentation Sisters' girls' school. This is hardly surprising, since Rice had selected both sites.<sup>31</sup> Rice purchased three acres of land at Ballybricken in which he built his Monastery and school later to be called Mount Sion, costing about £2,000.<sup>32</sup> "A Mr. Wyse gave to Br. Rice the grounds on which Mount Sion now stands and his personal regard was no small factor in determining Mr. Wyse to give a permanent lease of this place."<sup>33</sup> Rice probably transferred his pupils to the specially planned school at Mount Sion around mid 1804. The building consisted of two storeys. On the upper storey were seven bedrooms. On ground level was a "chapel within the walls of their school-house,"<sup>34</sup> where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved,<sup>35</sup> and two large classrooms, which were soon filled to capacity with 200 pupils.<sup>36</sup> Canon Professor Patrick Power D.Litt, has provided an insightful description of Mount Sion of this time:

From my experience and knowledge of houses built about the 19th century or during the late years of the 18th century I conclude that Br. Rice's first monastery and schools was a small building. He had three classrooms<sup>37</sup> underneath with the Brothers' sleeping apartments. The house was built on the most economic lines. The bedrooms were small, and possessed little furniture save a stool, a table, and some religious emblems. The head of the wooden bed fitted into a recess of the thick wall. An alcove in the wall served as a wardrobe.<sup>38</sup>

Rice's success became the stimulus for him to accept the invitation in 1814 to conduct another establishment<sup>39</sup> also of two rooms for another two hundred pupils nearby, beside St Patrick's chapel. "St. Patrick's was a branch school to Mount Sion and the two classrooms there were conducted by Brother Rice's companions."<sup>40</sup> Likewise, in 1816, two

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<sup>29</sup> Rice's planning is so much evident in the Mount Sion project. His monastery was situated in close proximity to the Presentation convent chapel thus ensuring the opportunity to assist at daily Mass.

<sup>30</sup> O'Toole, 1:121.

<sup>31</sup> Francis Wyse to Rice, *Printed Rentals, City of Waterford*, Public Records Office, Dublin, Vol. 53, No.857.

<sup>32</sup> *Origin*, F. R. Hickey (1982), 379.

<sup>33</sup> James O'Rourke 4<sup>th</sup> May, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 232.

<sup>34</sup> J. Ebenezer Bicheno, *Ireland and Its Economy: A Tour Through the Country in the Autumn of 1829* (London, 1830), 280.

<sup>35</sup> See *Positio*, 47; An 1845 Rescript from Rome authorising the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in the Brothers' chapels reveals that " ...it has been the custom in Ireland from the commencement of the Institute." W.L. Gillespie, *The Christian Brothers in England, 1825-1880* (Bristol, 1975), 155.

<sup>36</sup> O'Toole, 1:146.

<sup>37</sup> One of these classrooms was used as a chapel. In applying for entrance to the National Board Rice indicated: There are four schools (classrooms) attached to this establishment." (National School Board Applications for Waterford and Lismore, ED/86 no.4, ED/86 no.5, National Archives of Ireland, Bishop St. Dublin.) Two were built by 1803 and the other two in 1816.

<sup>38</sup> Patrick Canon Power, n.d. but c 1912/13, Normoyle (1979), 251.

<sup>39</sup> See footnote 49 of this Chapter.

<sup>40</sup> M. Lawlor, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 171.

additional classrooms were added, increasing Mount Sion's numbers to 400.<sup>41</sup> Ten years later in 1826, 650 students were being taught by ten Christian Brothers at Mount Sion.

The Ricean education vision meant that it was important to provide relatively fine school buildings, equal to if not better than Waterford's other schools be they charity or pay schools, of which most of the latter were private houses or lodging houses or "miserable garrets."<sup>42</sup> A Government report described Mount Sion as "built of stone and lime and slated; cost £2,400."<sup>43</sup> Rice's pupils were taught in enriched surroundings. The boarded-floor classrooms were spacious, well lit, well ventilated and appropriately heated. They had new writing desks, and all were provided with the necessary writing materials. "The school furniture was of meagre proportions in comparison with modern requirements but it was ultra modern as against prevailing conditions in poor schools."<sup>44</sup> The following description from a purchase order for desks for the Mill Street School in 1832 provides some idea of the school furniture needed to seat a hundred boys: "8 new desks 13 ft. long with 4 trestles under each, framed of two inch scantling, top rail of do. inch thick, back and front rails  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch thick. Top of desk, inch thick with ledger to bottom edge of do. Seat  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick, 6" wide, to be made on same plan of old desks, of good white deal. Cost of purchasing and making 8 desks: £8.8.0."<sup>45</sup> Rice also purchased adjacent plots of land, which he converted as a safe play yard for his boys. Edmund Rice was providing more than education. He was honouring their human dignity by offering the poor a sense of self worth.

When Rice initiated his education mission, it is estimated that his assets were £50,000.<sup>46</sup> After consulting his bishop, Dr. Power and his brother Fr. John Rice, Rice chose

<sup>41</sup> *Origin*, F. R. Hickey (1982), 379

<sup>42</sup> Normoyle (1976), 440, 449; *Positio*, 129.

<sup>43</sup> *Second Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry* Vol II (Dublin, 1826), 89.

<sup>44</sup> Patrick Power, n.d. but c. 1912/13, Normoyle (1979), 251.

<sup>45</sup> *Applications*, National Archives of Ireland, ED 1/28/18

<sup>46</sup> Property in the possession of Edmund Rice (Ascertained from the Registry of Deeds Dublin)

Year	Situation	Nature	Extent of Property
1795	Huntstown, Co. Kilkenny	76 acres	Leased by E. R. to Keirwick & Garter Inn, Mill Meadow, Damask,
1796	Callan, Co. Kilkenny	64 acres	Minauns & Prentas Fields leased to E.R.
1800	Barrack Street Waterford	3 acres	Nine houses
1800	Little Barron Strand St, W'ford	10 acres	One house in Fee Simple
1802	Mount Sion Waterford	28 acres	Plot & premises Cost £1,500
1806	Liberties* of Callan	285 acres	Lease to Stevenson Annual Rent £85.14.0
1809	Liberties of Callan	700 acres	Sold to E.R. for £1,500
1810	Leashantagart, Co. Kilkenny	500 acres	Lease of House & Lands to Rev Usher Lee, Dean of Waterford to E.R.



to retain his considerable property and other investments to finance the long-term viability of his educational enterprise.<sup>47</sup> No doubt, the prolonged negotiations needed to establish the Waterford Presentation Convent and school and the problems of providing for the ongoing maintenance of the Nuns and school offered Rice salutary experiences that would guide him in his own initiative.<sup>48</sup> Likewise, he would have appreciated and learnt from the Presentation Sisters, their approach to teaching large groups of children.

1810	Kilmac Dernog, Co. Kilkenny	120 acres	¼ share from Purcell, Ballyraget
1810	Ballyboden, Leix	60 acres	¼ share from Purcell, Ballyraget
1810	Ballyboden, Demesne	172 acres	¼ share from Purcell, Ballyraget
1818	Ballycullen, Co. Tipperary	1 acre	Lease held by E.R. and others
1823	Ballykeeffe Co. Kilkenny	1 acre	Inherited from his father Robert
1825	Broad Street, Waterford	5 acres	1 House from W. Foley in discharge of £500 debts due to E. Rice
1828	Nos. 135, 136, 137 Stephen's Green W., Dublin	20 acres	Sale for £265 &c. to E.R. from Dr. Michael Burke
1833	Liberties of Waterford Newtown		Houses &c. from Alex Pope to E.R.
1838	North Richmond Street		House and Schools Cost £3,000 (circ)
1838	Peter Walsh, Belline Carrick-on-Suir		House and Schools Cost £3,000 (circ)
	"Weston" Lr. Newtown Liberties of Waterford		Decree in Court of Chancery against Walsh for £4,700 in favour of E.R.
	Lombard Street, Waterford		Houses and Lands &c.
	The Mall, Waterford		3 Dwelling Houses
	Mall Lane, Waterford		4 Dwelling Houses
	Cappaghmore, Co. Tipperary		3 Dwelling Houses; Houses and Lands
	*The liberties were privately governed counties that formed part of the system of royal administration. (S.J. Connolly, <i>The Oxford Companion to Irish History</i> , Oxford, 2004, 329.)		

J.D. Fitzpatrick, The virtue of prudence as practised by our revered Founder, *Christian Brothers' Educational Record* (Dublin, 1954), 60-61.

<sup>47</sup> Edmund's bishop, Dr. Hussey and his brother Fr. John, Superior of the Callan Augustinian Priory advised him to retain these business interests (Fitzpatrick, 1945, 130).

<sup>48</sup> Rice was responsible for negotiating and paying the 91 year lease from Francis Wyse for the land in Hennessy's Road in 1796 for the Presentation establishment. The rent was 13 Irish pounds per annum (Walsh, 1959, 152). He was also in charge of building the convent and school. "...through the efforts of Mr. Rice the work of construction on the new site was pushed forward and in the last week of 1799 the sisters occupied their new convent and schools" (Walsh, 1959, 154). See also Fitzpatrick (1945), 123.

However, as was his practice, he adapted what the Sisters were doing and reinterpreted much according to his own educational vision. Right from the foundation of Mount Sion, Rice established a two-school system. There was a lower school to teach the basic 4Rs and an upper school to teach the vocational-oriented subjects. When he started in New Street and Mount Sion, Lancaster was still pioneering his monitorial system in London.<sup>49</sup> Its success in the education world was the catalyst for the Cork Charitable Society to send a school master to England to study the method for its implementation in Cork. Rice used the monitorial system, but characteristically adapted this system before Lancaster visited Dublin in 1811,<sup>50</sup> incorporating the individual tutoring strategies used in Hedge Schools when needed, and occasionally simultaneous teaching (class teaching by the school master), particularly in religious education and later on, where a third and fourth classroom existed.<sup>51</sup>

It is of interest to note that in 1815 "Mr. Joseph Lancaster lectured in the Schools under the care of the philanthropic Mr. E. Rice of this City (Waterford). The children behaved worthy of their education and teachers."<sup>52</sup> Eventually, a typical Rice<sup>53</sup> school was a two storey building with two large classes called schools, a lower school and an upper school.<sup>54</sup> In each room were eight benches seating twelve pupils and a long seat at the rear for the most junior boys. The first two benches were for monitors, so that about twenty-four students acted in some way at times as teachers to their younger or less advanced class-mates. The class was divided into two divisions with approximately the same numbers of children in each. The lower school focused primarily on competency in literacy and numeracy, while the upper school was more tailored vocationally to the boys' future prospects. In each room, there were 120 boys led by a Brother. Both schools had approximately the same number of boys in them with ages ranging from six to fourteen but the average age of the upper school was higher than the lower. The allocation of particular pupils to each school was based on knowledge and ability, not age. The following data from Cork's North Monastery annals<sup>55</sup> illustrate the classification of pupils.

No of pupils	Subject allocation
210	Spelling and reading
200	Arithmetic
20	Geometry & Mensuration
20	Bookkeeping
67	Apprenticeship for Trade

<sup>49</sup> D. Salmon, *The Practical Parts of Bell's Experiment and Lancaster's Improvements* (Cambridge, 1832).

<sup>50</sup> Goldstrom (1972), 53.

<sup>51</sup> D.S. Blake, *Contributions of the Christian Brothers to education in nineteenth century Ireland*, unpublished M.Ed. thesis, University College Cork, 1977, 163.

<sup>52</sup> *Waterford Mirror*, 26<sup>th</sup> April, 1815.

<sup>53</sup> Mount Sion, Our Lady's Mount, Cork and Mount Sion were not typical since they had many hundreds of students and offered a wider curriculum.

<sup>54</sup> The standard dimensions of each room were 40 feet long, 30 feet wide and 14 feet high.

<sup>55</sup> Walsh (1959), 193.



The practical orientation of the curriculum must have had its genesis, at least in part from the professional experiences of the early Brothers, prior to their entry into the brotherhood. The first generation of Brothers were well educated and had successfully met the challenge of earning a living. Rice's long time deputy, Austin Dunphy was described as a most capable manager "having both discretion and ability";<sup>56</sup> Patrick Ellis who became novice-master, had been a Professor of Mathematics in the diocesan seminary;<sup>57</sup> Francis Manifold was a major in the Wicklow Yeomanry;<sup>58</sup> Thomas Watson<sup>59</sup> and Thomas O'Brien<sup>60</sup> were both wine merchants; Joseph Ryan "had been extensively engaged in the leather-trade";<sup>61</sup> Joseph Keane was "engaged in the silk trade";<sup>62</sup> Joseph Murphy whose "literary attainments were both extensive and accurate,"<sup>63</sup> came from a wealthy family; Jerome O'Connor and Baptist Leonard are described as "well educated" and having "good business capacity";<sup>64</sup> Joseph Leonard was a bank manager;<sup>65</sup> Br. Austin Reardon had been an architect and builder;<sup>66</sup> Paul Riordan had been "the principal employee in the counting-house of Messrs. Murphy & Co., Cork;"<sup>67</sup> James Dollard had been "an excellent businessman and held a high position before entering;"<sup>68</sup> and John Wiseman was a qualified civil engineer,<sup>69</sup> as well as being erudite in English, Irish literature, Latin and Greek as was Patrick O'Flaherty.<sup>70</sup> Clearly, Rice's first followers were substantially educated, some conversant in the classics, while all had been engaged successfully in the workforce. They not only brought with them an appreciation of what boys needed to have to gain meaningful employment, but also sound business sense, organisational acumen and a practical and relevant orientation in the conduct of their schools. The early Brothers were religiously motivated and committed school-masters, enthusiastically focused on the children's development and their achievement. They provided a powerful, alternative role model to the children's struggling and illiterate parents, often "overburdened by the persisting struggle to reconcile resources with children's needs."<sup>71</sup> They likewise demonstrated a superior model of school-mastering than the majority of the profession at that time, the hedge school-masters, who "... were the products of educational incest, men trained in hedge schools to teach in hedge schools...Immoderate claims and a touch of charlatantry were often matters of economic necessity."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> W.A. Swan, "Memoir of Br. Edward (sic) Austin Dunphy," *Christian Brothers' Educational Record* (Dublin, 1909), 53.

<sup>57</sup> *History of the Institute*, 1:24.

<sup>58</sup> Normoyle (1976), 180.

<sup>59</sup> *History of the Institute*, 1:37.

<sup>60</sup> *History of the Institute*, 1:17.

<sup>61</sup> *History of the Institute*, 1:153.

<sup>62</sup> *History of the Institute*, 1:24.

<sup>63</sup> *Christian Brothers' Educational Record* (Dublin, 1910), 19.

<sup>64</sup> *History of the Institute*, 1:17.

<sup>65</sup> *History of the Institute*, 1:22.

<sup>66</sup> *History of the Institute*, 1:25.

<sup>67</sup> J. Hennessy, *A Century of Catholic Education* (Dublin, 1916), 97.

<sup>68</sup> *Christian Brothers' Educational Record* (Dublin, 1896), 428.

<sup>69</sup> W.A. O'Hanlon, Brother John Wiseman and his contemporaries, *Christian Brothers' Educational Record* (Rome, 1980), 122.

<sup>70</sup> *Christian Brothers' Educational Record*, Dublin, 1896, 459.

<sup>71</sup> Jordan, 1998, 100.

<sup>72</sup> Akenson (1970), 53-54.

The Brothers' eclectic,<sup>73</sup> sensible approach to education was underpinned by lofty ideals. The spiritual fabric of Rice's education was honoured in the daily horarium: "We have a clock in the school... and at every time it strikes, silence is observed all over the schools and every boy blesses himself and says the Hail Mary, and makes some short pious aspirations which continues about a minute when they bless themselves again and resume work."<sup>74</sup> Also, "(a)t the half-hour before twelve o'clock the bell rings for giving general moral instructions, at which time one of the Masters whose turn it is, having the boys all assembled, explains the Catechism..., or... gives instructions suited to the capacity of the children..."<sup>75</sup> In addition, Rice's respect for God's poor and his view of education meant that he took upon himself the responsibility to ensure his pupils were fed,<sup>76</sup> shod,<sup>77</sup> and clothed,<sup>78</sup> at Mount Sion and elsewhere.<sup>79</sup> Hungry pupils simply could not learn: "Not only did Brother Rice educate the poor but he fed them too...as I visited Mount Sion I noticed the old bake-house where the bread was baked and delivered to the poor and hungry pupils."<sup>80</sup> Over the bake-house, Rice constructed a tailor's workshop where "he kept six or seven tailors employed in making suits of corduroy for poor children who stood very much in need of clothes."<sup>81</sup> But the manner in which the clothing was provided, honoured the dignity of the recipients and had an authentic liberationary agenda, as noted by contemporary observers: "The most destitute of the children are clothed – but in such a way that their dress does not distinguish them from the other scholars. Boys leaving school for situations are, when in need of it, provided with decent comfortable clothes."<sup>82</sup>

## EDMUND RICE EDUCATION

Within two years, Rice's education had made great impressions on many, including Bishop Francis Moylan of Cork, who was in correspondence with the Bishop of Waterford: "Pray my Lord, what do you intend about establishing a school like Rice's school. You mentioned it to me you had it much at heart."<sup>83</sup> Indeed, by 1810, Ricean education had developed into a system, which Rice detailed in a lengthy letter to Dr. Thomas Bray, Archbishop of Cashel.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, Rice's system was described in 1815 in a Government Report: "We have visited one of the Dublin schools situated at Hanover Street East and those at Waterford, Cork, Limerick, and Thurles...the system is prescribed by Mr. Rice and the persons assisting him, as is the same in all the schools established under this

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<sup>73</sup> Blake, 1977, 533.

<sup>74</sup> Rice to Bray, 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1810, Normoyle (1977), 5.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

<sup>76</sup> Br. Pius Cuskelly, n.d. but c.1912/13, Normoyle (1979), 72.

<sup>77</sup> Normoyle (1976), 63.

<sup>78</sup> *Positio*, 82.

<sup>79</sup> The students at Limerick were particularly poor (*Positio*, 109-110): "...there were 200 boys of the poorest class, so poor that about 60 had to be decently clothed, and breakfast had to be provided every morning for many of the most needy" (Normoyle, 1976, 155).

<sup>80</sup> James O'Rourke, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1912 former student of Mount Sion who said he was educated by Brother Rice and the Mount Sion Brothers, Normoyle (1979), 231.

<sup>81</sup> Mary Flynn, n.d. but c. 1912/13, whose mother was employed at Mount Sion during Edmund's lifetime, Normoyle (1979), 111.

<sup>82</sup> S.C. Hall (Mr. & Mrs.), *Ireland: Its Scenery & Character, Vol I* (London, 1841), 306.

<sup>83</sup> Bolster (1972).

<sup>84</sup> Normoyle (1976), Appendix A.

Institute."<sup>85</sup> When applying for the affiliation of Mount Sion and St. Patrick's schools to the National Board in September, 1831, Rice wrote: "...they are called Rice's schools."<sup>86</sup> Such an observation was likewise recorded as early as 1818 by the authors of the *History of Dublin*:

The Presentation Order for the education of the poor, commenced in Ireland in the year 1804, by an (sic) humble individual named Rice, under the auspices of Dr. Hussey, titular Bishop of Waterford. From that period, schools on the same plan, or rather branches of the original one, have extended their beneficial effects to Cork, Carrick-on-Suir, Dungarvan, Thurles, Limerick, Cappoquin, and Dublin. The gentlemen of the order after approbation of two years make vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. But their principle vow is the gratuitous instruction of youth, to which they devote their whole time and attention. In the school of Lime-street are six brothers, who live in seclusion and community. Some of them are very young, and all of them gentlemen of independent circumstances. They voluntarily left the world, without entering into holy orders, at a time when others begin to enjoy it, and feel more pleasure in a society of the poor children they instruct, than any other source of social enjoyment.<sup>87</sup>

Perhaps the best description of Rice's system operating at Mount Sion is from the pen of Protestant observers:

There are at present upwards of 600 boys in attendance, the average number through the year is 550.<sup>88</sup> The system of Education pursued combines what is most excellent in Lancaster's and Bell's with what is most practical and useful in recent improvements. The course of education comprises reading, writing, arithmetic, book-keeping, English grammar (and for those who are in the trades) geometry, mensuration and architectural drawing. This is besides a good deal of miscellaneous information incidentally furnished to pupils. The conductors of these schools endeavour to ascertain the taste, talent, and intended trade or business of each boy, in order to give a proper direction to his studies. But their great concern is the training of the affections, the manners, and the habits of their useful charge. Many of the boys have already made the education they have received in these schools the means of an honourable maintenance, and have their present prospects considerably brightened by the possession of an education suited exactly to their condition in life. Subscriptions collected annually in the city and vicinity are the principal support of the establishment. All denominations contribute liberally. Those among the subscribers who contribute most bountifully according to their means are such as have been educated in the school...A circulating library, containing four hundred religious and literary works, is attached to the school...The scholars are admitted 'without religious distinction.'<sup>89</sup>

As previously mentioned there were two main philosophies of education being espoused in Ireland at the time. Both aimed at some form of social control. The Irish population was to be educated or not according to their station in life, determined by the authorities. Alternatively, education for the lower classes aimed to make them satisfied and contented with their position in society, thereby generating national stability. In contrast, Ricean education repudiated both these philosophies of education. Though Rice neither espoused

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<sup>85</sup> *First Report of the Commission of Irish Inquiry*, Vol 12 (Dublin, 1815), 85-86.

<sup>86</sup> *National School Board Applications for Waterford and Lismore*, ED/86 no.4, ED/86 no.5, National Archives of Ireland, Bishop St. Dublin.

<sup>87</sup> J. Warburton, J. Whitlaw and R. Walsh, *History of the City of Dublin Vol II* (London, 1818), 811-812.

<sup>88</sup> This indicates that children were regular attenders. Truancy was common in schools. Likewise, parents often withdrew their children to help in making the family living. One of the reasons for Rice's success is that his boys regularly went to school and went to school longer.

<sup>89</sup> Hall (1841), 306-307.

nor articulated a formal educational philosophy,<sup>90</sup> an analysis of his practices logically characterises his education as radical. Proponents of radical education believed that education was the prime catalyst for upward social mobility of the poor. Such a stance attracted few advocates other than the philosophers of the United Irishmen Society.<sup>91</sup>

While Rice was no protégé of the United Irishmen, he shared their belief in the radical egalitarianism of all humans; for Rice this belief was buttressed by his understanding of the implications of Christ's incarnation. He believed that all of humanity were images of their loving creator and the aim of his education was to help his "dear little ones" discover that image and liberate it. The fundamentals of this sacred subversiveness were articulated by Rice's confessor, Fr. Fitzgerald at his funeral oration in 1844. Rice's students were said to be educated with knowledge, skills and attitudes aimed at rescuing "the child of poverty from the degradation to which ignorance would assign him; (in order) to lift him up in the social scale which providence intended he should occupy..."<sup>92</sup>

Jordan has sympathetically labeled Rice's innovation as "child-rescuing,"<sup>93</sup> but in so doing he failed to appreciate adequately that Rice's education was not only addressing the poverty which the children suffered but also attacked the political and social constructs that contributed to the generation and maintenance of that poverty. From an analysis of how Rice conducted his school, the following general characteristics emanating from Rice's sense of radical egalitarianism seemed to characterise his schools.

- A respectful sense of the sacred
- An education for liberation
- A fatherly care for students

### *A Respectful Sense of the Sacred*

Rice believed that the education he offered was a sacred responsibility. Those who knew Rice and experienced what he was doing in education invariably described him as a "man raised up" by God to do God's work.<sup>94</sup> His Brothers were seen to honour the same sentiments as noted in an 1870 Parliamentary inquiry into Irish education: "This Institute is, after the strictest sort, a religious society. Its members live an ascetic life ...they wear a particular dress, and they are bound by vows of celibacy. Teaching is, however, their profession, and through it they seek to promote the interests of their church...They entertain enobled and lofty ideas of the vocation to which they are called."<sup>95</sup> Social historian Br. Phil Canny (Liam Ó Caithnia) makes the case for this conclusion:

When the Christian Brothers first determined to have his (Rice) cause introduced to Rome during 1911-1913 with the blessing of the Irish Hierarchy, one of the Brothers was given the task of collecting whatever memories of him still lingered on in the minds of the people who knew him best especially in Waterford. I find nothing so remarkable in the testimony of these informants (about 250 of them) as the strange uniformity of the opinion, constantly repeated, that he was 'a man raised up by God.' So universal was this extraordinary conviction that I became concerned that the informants must be answering a trigger question...Three things convinced me I was

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<sup>90</sup> Br. Mark McDonnell's reply to Professor Ó Tuathaigh, Christian Brothers' Education Development Office, *The Visions and Values of Edmund Rice Now and in the Future* (Dublin, 1997), 42.

<sup>91</sup> R. McDowell, *Public Opinion in Ireland 1750-1800* (London, 1944), p126; 181; 199-200.

<sup>92</sup> Fr. Richard Fitzgerald 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1844, Normoyle (1979), 100.

<sup>93</sup> Jordan (1998), 95.

<sup>94</sup> Normoyle (1979), 266; 271; 274; 295; 297; 299; 304; 314.

<sup>95</sup> *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland)*, vol II (Dublin, 1870), 553.

wrong: there was a note of unmistakable integrity echoing all these simple unpretentious men and women had to say about the servant of God whom they or their fathers had known or remembered ...Secondly, Br. Mark Hill whose task it was to seek and question, noticed soon enough the frequency of this refrain and wrote to his Superior-General to assure him that he had noticed the phenomenon but he was not triggering a desired answer. Thirdly, ...some informants added casually that this is what *people always said* about Brother Rice.<sup>96</sup>

Below are extracts from interview transcripts exemplifying Br. Canny's thesis:

This was and is my own belief and there is no doubt in my mind but that Br. Rice was a man of God and a saint sent by God at a time he was very much needed.<sup>97</sup>

The people spoke of him as a man raised up by God to do a great work.<sup>98</sup>

He (James Kavanagh) referred to Br. Rice as an Apostle of the Poor, that he was a Prophet having a heavenly mission.<sup>99</sup>

Consequently, Rice's education began and ended with faith as stated in Chapter Two of the 1832 *Rules* and noted by so many of his contemporaries: "He had a great faith in Providence, and he would patiently wait for a long time to have the Divine Will accomplished."<sup>100</sup> For Rice, all of human experience was permeated with Providential presence. His education aimed to sensitise his students to this reality and they were formed to nurture their lives with Jesus in their hearts.<sup>101</sup> This was the fundamental basis of Ricean education with the outcome aiming at personal reformation and social transformation. Rice's first extant letter, to Archbishop Bray in 1810, detailed much about the conduct of his schools. His education focused on formation indeed "...a Reformation in the Children."<sup>102</sup> This implied that the children were given much more than basic education, but something that cultivated certain beliefs, values, attitudes and character, the building blocks of "reformation."

Particularly from the 1820s when for far too many, education was identified with religion it unfortunately became an agency to cultivate intolerance and manipulation, rather than enlightenment: "Religious differences were not opportunities for people to demonstrate tolerance; rather, they led to defensiveness, well-articulated dislike, and a sense of tribalism within the confessions. Overt violence was not unknown, and liberality was construed by many to be tolerance of what was palpably wrong and probably evil..."<sup>103</sup> In contrast to these extremists, Rice's education was noted for its genuine inclusivity, care and practicality. Ricean education offered a sense of the sacred, which was unashamedly Catholic but was respectful of the freedom and dignity of the children he taught, as one of the first students of the Brothers recalled: "The spirit of morality and religion permeated all the school work but was not forced upon you as a task but came as a pleasure."<sup>104</sup> This respect was tactfully demonstrated when the Brothers commenced teaching two hundred and fifty Protestant boys in Sunderland, England in 1836. The boys' parents seemed to have trusted these Irish Brothers to honour their children's religious tradition as one of the early Brothers narrated:

<sup>96</sup> Ó Caithnia, *The Man from Callan* (Carroll, 1994), 22-23.

<sup>97</sup> Richard Strang, 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1913, Normoyle (1979), 304.

<sup>98</sup> John Rice, 12<sup>th</sup> August, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 274.

<sup>99</sup> Sr. Patrick Kavanagh, 18<sup>th</sup> September, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 260.

<sup>100</sup> Julia Buggy, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1913, Normoyle (1979), 17.

<sup>101</sup> 1832 *Rules*, Chapter 2, art.5.

<sup>102</sup> Rice to Bishop Bray, 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1810, Normoyle (1977), 1.

<sup>103</sup> Jordan (1998), 95.

<sup>104</sup> Joseph Butler, n.d. but c. 1912/13, Normoyle (1979), 28.



In the beginning of 1839 I was sent there and saw these schools and boys and found that but  $\frac{1}{3}$  were Catholics, and all the others Protestants, or what you like to call them. They all, Protestants as they were, said the same prayers; all said Catechism, all received religious instruction after the same manner...We told the parents we could not teach them Protestant prayers. 'No matter,' Protestant parents would say: 'teach them what you please, I know you will teach them nothing but what is good.'<sup>105</sup>

Indeed, "Protestant boys and Protestant co-operation remained a feature of this school as long as the Brothers were there."<sup>106</sup> Such a positive rapport was no accident, for Rice's schools from their foundation could not be accused of being an agency of Catholic proselytism. In an 1816 newspaper advertisement, soliciting contributions for extra accommodation at Mount Sion, Rice unequivocally and publicly stated that his Brotherhood aimed "to extend, as widely as possible the benefits of Education among the poor of the City, without parochial or religious distinction..."<sup>107</sup> Likewise, in 1825 Inquiry into Irish Education the Commissioners described the Christian Brothers in the following terms: "The first object of the Congregation was the education of the children in the Roman Catholic religion; they are not prohibited from giving literary instruction to Protestants, and they teach charity and good-will to mankind without distinction of religion."<sup>108</sup> In a similar vein, Daniel O' Connell was reported as emphasizing this characteristic for the proposed Brothers' teacher training school in North Richmond Street, which he proclaimed would be: "...a school which would be founded on liberal and not sectarian principles ...In this national seminary...no means would be adopted to proselytize the Protestant child, he would be educated and taught with as much anxiety as the Catholic but with his religion there would be no intermeddling."<sup>109</sup>

This very point was noted by the Rev. Standis Grady, the Protestant Vicar of Carrick-on-Suir, writing in support of the Brothers' schools in 1829: "The religious order to which the petitioners allude is that of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, which has as its principal object the gratuitous instruction of the poor without distinction or exception of creed."<sup>110</sup> Clearly, Rice and the first generation of Brothers seemed to have cultivated an open, tolerant, welcoming Catholic Christianity that resonated with and was supported by so many Protestant Christians. Such a view was both inviting and liberating, demonstrating Rice's belief that peoples of different faiths have more that united them than divided them. Sadly and understandably, probably because of the politics of the time, the antipathy caused by the enormous tragedy of the Great Famine and the bitter divide that became more pronounced between Catholics and Protestants, Superior General Aloysius Hoare submitted to the Powis Royal Commission on education in 1870 that, "...the Institute of Christian Brothers was established solely for the education of Catholic youth."<sup>111</sup>

Clearly then, Rice believed that his students needed to acquire a respectful appreciation of the sense of the sacred, for he believed such a sense was a necessary prerequisite to embracing an ethical life. For Rice, personal meaning and social transformation had its basis in faith, expressed through an authentic, living relationship

<sup>105</sup> Stephen Carroll, 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1888, Normoyle (1979), 37.

<sup>106</sup> W.L. Gillespie, *The Christian Brother in England: 1825-1880* (Bristol, 1975), 67.

<sup>107</sup> *The Waterford Mirror*, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1816.

<sup>108</sup> Hennessy (1916), 24.

<sup>109</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1828.

<sup>110</sup> Letter and petition from Rev. Standis Grady, to Marquis Landowne, 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1829, *History of the Institute*, Vol.I, 131.

<sup>111</sup> *Inquiry into Primary Education, Ireland*, Vol. 2, (Dublin, 1870), 154.



with Christ. His education overtly and systemically served this fundamental premise. While respectful of the religious sensitivities of all, the atmosphere permeating Rice's schools was unambiguously Catholic as a Protestant observer noted: "We are next introduced to the *Brothers of the Christian Schools of Ireland*, as an association which 'deserves peculiar notice.' The schools under this brotherhood emanate from the head of the Order, a Mr. Rice of Waterford and are all of the most exclusive type, commencing instruction in the catechism and the prayers of the Roman Catholic Church, as soon as they begin the alphabet."<sup>112</sup> The Commissioners of the 1825, *Inquiry into Irish Education*, disapprovingly identified this same characteristic of Rice's schools: "We have observed in our examination of these schools that they possess a character so peculiar and distinct ...In the practice of these schools, religion and general instruction are so blended together, that unless the course of teaching should be wholly changed, they would never afford any other than a strictly Roman Catholic Education."<sup>113</sup>

Rice institutionalized a holistic, integrated education system, where the sacred and secular were unified. The school year honoured the Church's liturgical cycle, and preparation for the sacraments was incorporated into the school's fabric of activities. A library of spiritual books was established and books were exchanged weekly.<sup>114</sup> Students were encouraged to read them to their parents. The school day began and ended with prayer and the hourly chiming of the clock invited the children to a short prayerful reflection. In addition, there was the mid-day explanation of the Catechism, which Rice particularly noted as "suited to the capacity of the children."<sup>115</sup> Rote learning and unreflective acquisition of dogma were robustly eschewed. Such diligence had its cost, as Rice explained: "The half hour's explanation of the catechism I hold to be the most salutary part of the system. It's the most laborious for the teachers; however if it were ten times what it is, I must own, we are amply paid in seeing such a reformation in the children."<sup>116</sup> The Brothers took very seriously this responsibility, so much so that in a very short time they earned themselves a reputation as experts in religious education as two Presentation Nuns recalled: "...particularly in giving religious instruction ...the early Christian Brothers made it a speciality to excel in this department."<sup>117</sup> Such conclusions are confirmed by former students: "...even more than sixty years after, I retain a vivid recollection ...of the daily catechetical instruction given in simple and homely language and often illustrated by a story that deeply interested the listener."<sup>118</sup> From its very beginning, the sacred focus of Edmund Rice's education was always evident: "secular education is attended to but religion is made to sit like a queen on her throne."<sup>119</sup> What is of interest is that in Rice's schools, "(n)ine-tenth of the day...was spent in teaching those things which would help poor boys make their way in a hard, competitive society."<sup>120</sup> Comparatively little time was allocated to the formal religious side of things, though the spiritual element was the school's chief element:

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<sup>112</sup> W. Phelan & M. O'Sullivan, *Practical Observations upon the Views and Tendencies of the First Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education* (London, 1826), 33

<sup>113</sup> *First Report of the Commission of Irish Education Inquiry* (Dublin, 1825), 91.

<sup>114</sup> Rice to Bishop Bray, 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1810, Normoyle (1977), 4.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>117</sup> Srs. Joseph Meager & Philomena Bergin, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1913, Normoyle (1979), 269.

<sup>118</sup> Joseph Butler, n.d. but c. 1912/13, Normoyle (1979), 28.

<sup>119</sup> J. Shelley, *Edmund Ignatius Rice and the Christian Brothers: A Compilation*, Kilkenny, 1863, 12.

<sup>120</sup> Gillespie (1975), 38.

(The Brothers) begin and terminate the day's business with prayer; they frequently recall the attention of the children to the presence of God (hourly chiming clock); they give catechetical instruction to the children in the Christian doctrine; they usually inculcate moral and religious truths in the reading class, if the lesson admits of it...from this it is evident that religion is the leading principle nay, the very spirit which guides and directs their whole educational system.<sup>121</sup>

In contrast, the Protestant Bible Schools spent considerable time in religious instruction, hymn singing and bible reading: "As soon as children are capable of reading the Bible, no other book is used in the school."<sup>122</sup> The Presentation Nuns had the children say daily, the Rosary. The De La Salle Brothers had many more timetabled devotions, including the Rosary and Mass,<sup>123</sup> which likewise, Nano Nagle had in her original horarium.<sup>124</sup> Rice's timetable reflected his belief of the unity of the sacred and the secular, and the cultivation of a sacred, respectful atmosphere which should permeate the school throughout the entire day.

### *Education for Liberation*

#### *Raising up the poor*

"Raising up the poor" was one of the most common motifs generated from an analysis of approximately 250 interview transcripts conducted with Rice's contemporaries or relatives and/or friends of Rice's contemporaries by Br. Mark Hill from 1912 to 1914 and Br. Berchmans Cullen in 1949 and edited by Br. Columba Normoyle.<sup>125</sup> The memory of Callan and Waterford folk is that the focus of Rice's education was to "raise up the poor." The evidence for such a conclusion is from an analysis of these interview transcripts by Kenttabulated below.<sup>126</sup>

References to the poor	Frequency
Benefactor of the poor	24
Lifted up the poor	16
Clothed/ fed poor	16
Provided quality education for the poor	14
Gave his personal fortune to the poor	8
Gave his life for the poor	7
Built schools for the poor	5
Provided a Christian education for the poor	4

<sup>121</sup> Br. A. Hoare cited in *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland)*, Vol III (Dublin, 1870), 83.

<sup>122</sup> W. Clarke, *National Education: A New and Practical System of Instruction Capable of Effecting the Reformation of all Mankind*, London, 1834, Rule XV.

<sup>123</sup> A. Calcutt, *De La Salle* (Oxford, 1993), 308.

<sup>124</sup> Nagle to Miss Fitzsimons, 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1769 (Walsh, 1959), 344.

<sup>125</sup> Normoyle (1979).

<sup>126</sup> J.E. Kent, "The Educational Ideas of Edmund Rice Founder of the Presentation and Christian Brothers" (Masters' thesis, National University of Ireland, Cork, 1988), 108.

Other miscellaneous references to assisting the poor	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>

The following are extracts from interview transcripts exemplifying this motif:

"He taught his people to be proud of their religion and country. He uplifted the poor every way he could."<sup>127</sup>

"He made his scholars clever and when instructed by Br. Rice they were able to do for themselves."<sup>128</sup>

Br. Rice must have been a single-hearted and a zealous man to endeavour to lift, as he did, the poor.<sup>129</sup>

Indeed, later pupils in the wake of the Great Famine identified that the social mobility of their pupils was a respected outcome from the education the Brothers offered:

We held the Christian Brothers in profound respect but we were not foreign to them. They were the same kind of people as us. After all, Ignatius Rice was a Callan man. They understood us only too well and we understood them. We might have a fellow from Kerry who was a walking terror but we understood each other. They were practical educationalists who taught the poor when nobody else bothered. I always stand up for the Christian Brothers, what they had done socially for the people after the famine. With the Christian Brothers we did learn...<sup>130</sup>

In addition to basic literacy, Rice's education offered subjects that were not offered in poor schools, but were deliberately available to his students in order to assist their upwardly mobile career opportunities. One 1827 newspaper report noted that Rice's education "system embraces every branch of elementary knowledge necessary for accountants, shopkeepers and mechanics..."<sup>131</sup> Since Waterford was a sea port, particular focus was made on assisting lads acquire navigation skills: "Advanced subjects such as navigation was taught by Br. Rice and his companions."<sup>132</sup>

My brother went to school to Br. Rice to learn navigation. He could learn navigation in Dunmore but such a book would cost him at the time 20/-. My brother was too poor to expend so much money. He then went to Mt. Sion and was taught navigation without buying a book. He learnt other subjects too and became a good scholar and so was able to earn a little livelihood.<sup>133</sup>

Thomas Wyse M.P. reported to a Parliamentary Inquiry that the higher classes in Rice's schools were receiving an education that allowed students to readily gain employment: "I visited the establishment lately and I found the higher classes occupied with navigation, geometry, mensuration and other portions of the mathematical science."<sup>134</sup> Likewise, a 1838 newspaper reported the following concerning an exhibition that occurred in the North Monastery, Cork: "The course of examination on this day embraced architectural drawing, including linear, perspective and the distinctive character of Grecian and Gothic

<sup>127</sup> Michael Quinn, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 272.

<sup>128</sup> Michael Delaney, n.d. but c. 1912/13, Normoyle (1979), 77.

<sup>129</sup> John Commins, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 64.

<sup>130</sup> A. O' Malley, *Inscape Life and Landscape in Callan and County Kilkenny* (Nolan & Whelan, 1990), 620.

<sup>131</sup> 'Cork Almanac,' 1827 (Hennessy, 1916), 26

<sup>132</sup> J. Mooney, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 195.

<sup>133</sup> H. Shea, 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 295.

<sup>134</sup> *Report of the Select Committee on the State of the Poor Together with Minutes of Evidence* (Dublin, 1830), 626.

architecture, hydrostatics, hydraulics, and the philosophy of heat."<sup>135</sup> This did not mean that the Brothers were offering comprehensive secondary education as Normoyle<sup>136</sup> has asserted, but their post-primary courses were vocationally oriented and directed to their boys becoming skilled tradesmen. Such courses were specifically tailored and could last from a few weeks to some months depending on how long parents kept their teenage sons in school. It must be remembered that such sons were potential bread providers for the family. A former student of the North Monastery Cork related this *modus operandi*: "In these times the master would always find out what a new boy's parents would want him to be, so as to get a suitable education, so as not to be wasting time on things he could do without, for it was uncertain when they would be taken away to business...."<sup>137</sup>

In addition over time, Ricean education offered a number of value-added extras to the curriculum. Singing was taught, since it was considered a refining influence on the unpolished children of the poor. It was believed not so much to be "an activity to be enjoyed but as moral influence, which softened the dispositions of the pupils."<sup>138</sup> Indeed, "(o)ut of Hanover Street came some youths skilled in elementary vocal music, amongst whom may be mentioned one in his youthful manhood, became Professor of Singing in the National Model School, Marlborough Street, Dublin."<sup>139</sup> Br. Bernard Duggan, who introduced singing to the Cork school in 1839, shared a similar view concerning music: "I think it is a very important element of education provided it be carried to a certain extent and no further; and that the children are taught to sing moral and religious songs."<sup>140</sup> Likewise, a systematic induction in good manners became part of the curriculum with the translation from the French of the De La Salle Brothers' text, *Christian Politeness*. As a result, Ricean education seemed in many cases to be successful in achieving upward social mobility among their students as one Protestant Parliamentarian, Lord Clifden wrote to the House of Lords: (The Christian Brothers have sent) "...forth from their schools, numbers of well-educated and well-conducted boys, by which means they have not only become useful members of society but have attained respectable situations in counting houses, shops and trades so as to enable them not only to support their own parents but also, in many instances, to acquire for themselves very independent establishments in various branches of business."<sup>141</sup>

Even critics of Rice and his Brothers were impressed with "(t)he number of intelligent and respectable tradesmen, clerks and scholars which they have sent forth,"<sup>142</sup> some of whom "....rose to positions of trust and eminence both in Church and State."<sup>143</sup> A Waterford newspaper editorial of 1816 supporting Rice's public appeal for funds to provide extra classrooms in Mount Sion reflected how society perceived the outcomes of Ricean education: "...to the schools, society has already been largely indebted. They have

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<sup>135</sup> *Cork Southern Reporter*, 1838.

<sup>136</sup> Normoyle (1976), 35.

<sup>137</sup> Kelleher (1988), 16.

<sup>138</sup> McCann, "The Development of Elementary Education in Cork City: 1791-1870" (M.Ed. thesis, University College Cork, 1978), 384.

<sup>139</sup> W.A. Swan, "Memoir of Br. Michael Bernard Dunphy," *Christian Brothers' Educational Record* (Dublin, 1908), 63.

<sup>140</sup> *Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the endowments, funds and actual conditions of all schools endowed for the purpose of education in Ireland*, (Kildare), Dublin, 1858, 77.

<sup>141</sup> Normoyle (1979), 237.

<sup>142</sup> Ryland, 1824, 95.

<sup>143</sup> Stephen Heaney, 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 133.

withdrawn multitudes from the dangers of idleness and vice, and have reared them in the pursuit of useful knowledge, and in the habits of virtuous and honest industry...A general confidence is placed in the character of those who have been educated in these schools, and merchants and traders are anxious to have them in their employment."<sup>144</sup>

The theme of successful upward social progression attained by many of Rice's students is a constant thread emanating from inspectorial reports, statements made at the various Parliamentary inquiries into Irish Education throughout the nineteenth century and encomiums appearing in newspaper columns in Ireland and England. Though Kent<sup>145</sup> has argued persuasively that such success stories were from the minority of Christian Brothers' students, their success does illustrate that Ricean education was making an influence both on a personal level and to some extent nationally. This is illustrated by a Dublin accountant's evidence offered in the 1857 *Endowed Schools Report*:

The person who represents me in my absence was a pupil of the Monks' school. He is more competent to represent me than I am myself. He is better able to write than I am, and he is much better accountant than I am. I have the most perfect confidence in him. He is (if I was in Dublin or elsewhere) quite competent to receive and reply to letters of business, and has every qualification of integrity and responsibility that a man in his position can have.<sup>146</sup>

#### *Character Formation*

Yet social mobility was a qualified goal. In itself, Rice saw relative value in it. Throughout Ireland, he had witnessed many examples of Catholics who had achieved beyond their parents' status, enjoying the fruits of their education, while simultaneously ignoring the plight of the poor, and energetically advocating the maintenance of structures, which favoured the privileged and further disadvantaged the poor.<sup>147</sup>

Rice believed that education alone could not address the egocentricism of such people. Social transformation had to be preceded by personal reformation, and so character formation of students was an integral fabric of Ricean education. This concept was first elaborated upon by one of Rice's initial followers, Br. Baptist Grosvenor in a letter to Fr. John Dunn of Preston, who was enquiring about the possibility of establishing Rice's Brothers in England, as early as 1814:

First, then, the members of this society undertake to educate and improve the poor..., considering that to instruct them carefully, and deeply to impress on their young and tender minds a knowledge and love of their social duties, is an exercise whereby they can render great Glory to God and the greatest service to his creatures....(The Brothers) watch over them (children) with truly paternal solicitude...Hence the virtuous impressions which have been made upon the infant mind, being carefully cultured and brought to maturity, produce the happy effects which are necessarily and naturally combined there with.. This society being founded on charity and guided by its dictates, has succeeded in drawing its poor pupils to a steady application to their school and other duties, more in a spirit of love than of fear...a plan which is found to answer the best purposes for the formation of youth.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> *The Waterford Chronicle*, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1816.

<sup>145</sup> Kent (1988), 322.

<sup>146</sup> *Report of the commissioners appointed to enquire into the endowments, funds and actual conditions of all schools endowed for the purpose of education in Ireland (Kildare)* (Dublin, 1858), 81.

<sup>147</sup> Ó Caithnia, *The Man from Callan* (Carroll, 1994), 15.

<sup>148</sup> J.B. Grosvenor to Fr. J. Dunn, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1814, *Christian Brothers Roman Archives*, 007/0064.

Grosvenor carefully chose his words. He explained that the aim of Ricean education was to "improve the poor," through transformation or "formation of youth," who in turn developed a "love of their social duties." Such an outcome was achieved through the special relationship ("a spirit of love") nurtured between students and Brothers. Br. Austin Grace in 1826, commenting upon his school in Preston, likewise re-affirmed the notion of education as formation as well as emphasizing the practicality of Ricean education: "The religious Brothers who conduct this establishment, direct their attention in a special manner, to impress on the tender minds of their pupils the duties and obligations of a Christian to train them up in habits of solid virtue; and by a suitable education, to qualify them for business and the various departments of commercial life."<sup>149</sup>

Rice himself, in 1829 in appealing for funds to complete the foundations of the North Richmond Street School, articulated the fundamentals of his education system:

Their (the Brothers) system of education not only imparts knowledge to their Pupils in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Book-keeping, English Grammar, and Mathematics; but it moreover strongly inculcates the maxims of a virtuous life, and makes the moral improvement of the Scholars a duty of the first importance: hence the Brothers labour to train up the Children in early habits of solid virtue, and to instill into their young minds principles of integrity, veracity and social order.<sup>150</sup>

Likewise, an English publication summarised succinctly the focus of Rice's education:

...we allude to the system adopted by the 'Religious Brothers of the Christian Schools.' This Society was first established in Waterford by their present Superior, Mr. Rice, in the year 1803...The quiet and unostentatious exertions of this pious Order to impart the blessings of a sound moral and religious education to the children of the Catholic poor render them not extensively known; but we are happy to say that their worth and utility are beginning to be appreciated on this side of the channel, where there are at present seven establishments under their direction, viz. three in London, one in Liverpool, one in Manchester, one in Preston and one in Sunderland.<sup>151</sup>

Yet, perhaps it was Rice's friend, Barrister-at-Law, Stephen Curtis who best identified the core of Rice's education, when speaking of Rice and his education in 1845:

But for my part, it was not the vindication of our liberties alone, and the promotion of the social condition of the Irish people that called forth his assistance. These motives influenced him not a little in his purpose, but there was another motive and that was the inculcation of great religious principles. This great man looked beyond the world. He counselled others to do so, and if he were not persuaded that more than temporal blessings would follow in the train of education to the Irish, I am convinced he would not spend a single day in its advancement... He wished men charitable, he wished them just, he wished them meek, he wished them godly; affluent and free he wished them too, provided that freedom was based on virtue...The basis of that education was religion and virtue, and the mind of youth was taught to look heavenward whilst it read the things of earth.<sup>152</sup>

These were lofty goals Rice set for his education. The question to entertain is, were these goals were ever attained? A Waterford journalist in 1816 has made this evaluation of Rice's schools:

We would enquire confidently of any person who knows Waterford and its suburbs now, and who knew the place ...thirty, twenty or even ten years ago, whether there be not a palpable improvement in the morals and in the behaviour of the body of the

<sup>149</sup> W.A. Swan, Br. J. A. Grace, *Christian Brothers' Education Record* (Dublin, 1893), 180.

<sup>150</sup> *Positio*, 375.

<sup>151</sup> *The London and Dublin Orthodox Journal of Useful Knowledge*, Vol. VII (1838), 74.

<sup>152</sup> Stephen Curtis, *Waterford Freeman*, 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1845.



people ...whatever co-operation may have taken place, we may safely assume, that this blessing has been conferred chiefly through the extension of education, and that the school in Barrack Street, has been, beyond comparison, the principal contributor to this valuable fund of local and national amelioration."<sup>153</sup>

In 1824, a Protestant, who as a matter of principle could not condone Catholic education, reaffirmed this aspect of Ricean education in the following words:

Amongst a distressed and unemployed population who religious opinions militate against the system of education offered them by their Protestant brethren, these schools have been of incalculable benefit: they have already impressed upon the lower classes a character which hitherto was unknown to them; and in the number of intelligent and respectable tradesmen, clerks and servants, which they have sent forth, bear the most unquestionable testimony to the public service of Edmund Rice.<sup>154</sup>

A school inspector reported his findings of his visitation of Mount Sion in 1825:

In the town of Waterford there is another, under a person of inferior rank in life, it is true, but one who has devoted his time in a most praiseworthy manner to the benevolent purpose of educating the ignorant and destitute part of his countrymen. I inspected that school by his permission, and feel great pleasure in being able to add, that everything was admirably conducted. I never saw more order, more regularity, or greater system than in that school; and there were on the books about six hundred, as far as I can recollect, under the superintendence of a Mr. Rice.<sup>155</sup>

The *Dublin Review* summarised the Brothers' contribution to education as follows: "...The success of the Brothers in mastering these difficulties deserves, undoubtedly, peculiar applause. But above all things it would be the greatest injustice not to notice with particular emphasis the fruits of early piety and strict observance of religious duties which these establishments have established in so many of the pupils."<sup>156</sup>

An 1843 London *Tablet* critique on Catholic education in Waterford offered some insight, expressed in rather hyperbolic terms:

The poor are taught by lay monks vowed to poverty and the education of the poor. And by Nuns who rival the Christian Brothers in zeal and efficiency. The poor are instructed and the Catholic Churches are thronged to suffocation with pious worshippers in rags. Drunkenness is utterly unknown. Crime is decreasing; the jails are emptying (there are only twelve people in the jail including debtors), the character of crime is becoming lighter and disease is decreasing among the poor. But the most remarkable fact with regard to the moral condition of Waterford is this- the knowledge of religion is so universal and the dispositions to practise its obligations so general that Waterford is a Christian City.<sup>157</sup>

Finally, this dynamic is poignantly described by Carlo Bianconi in 1845, when he became Lord Mayor of Clonmel. Rice financially underwrote this young Italian immigrant, who later was to become Ireland's pioneering transport mogul:

The children of the poor and the humble are rescued from the worst evils of poverty and ignorance. They are trained to regular habits of life; they are taught a love of industry and honest independence, the best sources of earthly happiness. Their minds are stored with useful knowledge, not confined to mere book learning; but carefully adapted to their different capacities and future prospects. They are thus sent out on the world, fully prepared to undertake the duties of their state of life, and amply

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<sup>153</sup> *Waterford Mirror*, 29<sup>th</sup> June, 1816.

<sup>154</sup> Ryland (1824), 187-188.

<sup>155</sup> Mr. Donnellan, W. Phelan & M. O'Sullivan, A digest of evidence before the Select Committees of Parliament, *Haliday Pamphlets*, RIA., 1825, Vol. 1335, 253-4.

<sup>156</sup> *Dublin Review* (1840), 334-351.

<sup>157</sup> *Tablet*, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1843.

impressed by peculiar moral teachings with the responsibility of fulfilling them conscientiously.<sup>158</sup>

This sense of social responsibility was characteristic of Ricean education from its beginning. Rice's past pupils were expected "to give something back," to respond with compassion to the poor, whom they were taught were images of a loving God. The inculcation of such a social responsibility on these boys was not lost on a pair of English tourists who visited Mount Sion in the 1840s:

...but their (Brothers) greatest concern is the training of the affections, the manners and the habits of their youthful charge...Subscriptions collected annually in the city and vicinity are the principal support of the establishment. All denominations contribute liberally. Those among the subscribers, who contribute most bountifully according to their means, are such as have been educated in the school.<sup>159</sup>

### *Parent and Adult Education*

Rice believed that it was inadequate to educate the children of the poor, if the home environment, in which children grew, was unhealthy or incomplete. He recognized that much of the reforming work of his school education was undermined by the unreformed children's parents, so "he used to instruct grown up persons as well as boys."<sup>160</sup> Probably, as a result of his reflection on his childhood and his role of father to Mary, Rice recognized that family beliefs and attitudes had substantial influences on religious, social, educational and occupational aspirations of poor children, a reality that only contemporary research has confirmed.<sup>161</sup> Consequently, "any child whose parent was poor or a drunkard, Brother Rice singled out that child as the object of his special care. He then sought out the father and advised him to lead a better or a more sober life."<sup>162</sup> It seemed that throughout his life, Rice went out of his way to educate fathers to be more caring to and responsible for their own children. It is not surprising then that "(h)e used to instruct grown up men."<sup>163</sup> Clearly, parenting education was a very early feature of Rice's system.

After his day's work in the schoolroom in Mount Sion, Br. Rice used to hold a night school for the accommodation of adults. A very large number was in the habit of attending on those occasions for religious instructions and Brother Rice was in the custom of preparing them himself for the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist....these classes were not over until nearly ten o'clock."<sup>164</sup>

Br. John Norris, who nursed the elderly Rice, has provided an account of his memories: "Our Founder was not content with the education of young boys. He established at Mount Sion an evening or night school for adults who attended in good numbers for religious instruction and the recitation of the Holy Rosary of the B.V. Mary."<sup>165</sup> Night schools also became a feature of the Brothers' education in Liverpool, Manchester and Preston,<sup>166</sup> where not only apprentice boys attended but also workmen, beyond

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<sup>158</sup> *History of the Institute*, 2:83.

<sup>159</sup> Hall, *Ireland*, 1:305-6

<sup>160</sup> J. Bolger, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 5.

<sup>161</sup> B. Caldwell & R. Bradley, Environmental issues in developmental follow-up research, S. Friedman & H. Haywood (Eds.), *Developmental follow-up: concepts, dynamics and methods*, San Francisco, 1994.

<sup>162</sup> Mary Flynn, n.d. but c. 1912/13, Normoyle (1979), 111.

<sup>163</sup> Thomas Burke, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 23.

<sup>164</sup> Ellen de Courcey, 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1912, Normoyle (1979), 76.

<sup>165</sup> Br. John Norris, 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 216.

<sup>166</sup> Gillespie (1975), 18, 97-98.

middle age, who came two or three evenings weekly as well as Sundays. However, what is little appreciated is that "old people used to go to Mount Sion to get religious instruction from Brother Rice."<sup>167</sup> He did this, while he was Superior General and after his retirement from that office: "...he used to instruct the grown up people at Mount Sion until old age and ill health prevented him carrying on this work which was so dear to his heart."<sup>168</sup> "I heard my grandfather say that Br. Rice used to send for him and other old people at 10 o'clock on Sundays to give them religious instruction. He was in the habit of sending other old people in the same way."<sup>169</sup> Rice's education apostolate to the elderly seemed rather innovative. Perhaps, he saw school education of the poor youth was all the more effective, only when there was an outreach to the entire family, with the grandparents' authority and modeling being especially respected and influential in the extended family. The old folks came to the elderly Rice, because "(t)hey regarded him as a saint."<sup>170</sup> Again right from its genesis, Ricean education had cultivated this family dynamic in its educational outreach.

### *Critical Education*

Embedded in Rice's education was the cultivation of an ethic of critique, whereby students were educated to think critically. This is insightfully illustrated when a Protestant clergyman inquired of a pupil of the North Monastery Cork: "My boy, I am a Protestant minister, shall I be damned?" "I do not know, sir," was the reply, "that is a matter between yourself and God."<sup>171</sup> Likewise, the students were taught to be present to the inequalities of their social reality and not just alleviate them, but ask the questions about their cause, a point emphasised by Stephen Curtis in 1845:

To you (referring to the deceased Rice) I attribute most of the advancement this country has made in civil and religious freedom; and are we wrong in doing so?...Am I wrong in supposing that the body of the Catholics could not have been struck off, and have been changed from being trodden upon, and elevated to the position they at present occupy, were it not for him (Rice)? ...Could this be the case were we unenlightened? No, never! The people should read – they should read, if not universally, in large numbers before they could be amenable to his tuition. They should be able of understanding the state of the parties, and reason upon them; they should read these plans and concoct plans of operation; and Edmund Rice that they were so able, no man can deny was your achievement.<sup>172</sup>

The comments were referring to critical dynamics entertained by Rice's pupils, who educated their illiterate elders by reading to them the politically reactive press: "...His (Rice's) pupils were often seen reading the newspapers of the day to groups of thirty or more. My grandfather often read the *Nation* to such groups. He had frequently to read the same edition for several parties with the result that he had learnt by heart a lot of the poetry published in the newspapers."<sup>173</sup> It is hardly surprising then that as early as 1828, the Brothers published their own texts incorporating appropriate literary, poetic and dramatic selections, which were used for a variety of curriculum subjects including voice

<sup>167</sup> John Mc Gillicuddy, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 181.

<sup>168</sup> Michael Lawlor, 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 171.

<sup>169</sup> Anne Cummins, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1912/13, Normoyle (1979), 70.

<sup>170</sup> Geoffrey Dobbryn, 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 79.

<sup>171</sup> Hennessy, 1916, 25.

<sup>172</sup> Stephen Curtis, 1845, Normoyle (1979), 363

<sup>173</sup> Thomas Lynch, 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 1949, Normoyle (1979), 175.

training, pronunciation and public speaking.<sup>174</sup> In February 1828, the *Waterford Chronicle* announced:

The patrons, managers and superintendents of Schools for the Education of poor Children are respectfully informed that a series of Spelling Lessons and Reading Lessons containing select Subjects from Natural History and Moral Instructions founded on the Principles and Precepts of the Christian Faith have been printed for the 'Religious Brothers of the Christian Schools' and are now on sale at the schools Hanover Street East, Mill Street...and at other Schools of the Institution in this country and in England.<sup>175</sup>

These texts supported the Brothers' liberatory education and stand in contrast to those offered later by the National Board in the 1830s. While these books were neither anti-Catholic nor anti-Irish, they seemed focused on the maintenance of social class conservatism, since many stories aimed to persuade the young Irish reader that labour unions were useless and that the poor Irish were destined to always hold at most a modest place in the social order.<sup>176</sup> "Children learned of the division of labor and the logic of the prevailing social structures in general."<sup>177</sup>

Rice, in addition, addressed one important issue that seemed to be ignored by so many involved in Irish education at the time. This issue is precisely described by Belfast educationalist, Robert Bryce in 1828: "In all schemes of popular education that have recently been presented to the British public, either on paper or in practice, there is one *radical error*, namely, they are calculated only for the poor...a good system of education for the lower classes, distinct from the rest of the people, cannot exist."<sup>178</sup> Archbishop Murray likewise identified the same lacuna in Irish education: "I see schools for the poor, schools and colleges for the rich both at home and abroad; but for the middle class – too poor for the colleges and too proud for the poor schools – I see no provision made."<sup>179</sup> The Bishop of Limerick also complained about this deficiency: "Dr. Ryan...has been for some time requesting our brothers to open pay schools so that the class of children who are above the poor may get a Christian education and be no longer the most abandoned in society."<sup>180</sup> Not surprisingly then, the middleclass came to admire the superior accommodation and education offered in Rice's schools and held no reluctance to send their children to be educated alongside the children of the poor: "...for after a few years, my said granduncle (John Power) told me, the better class of Catholics were so impressed with the education given to the poorer class of boys that first attended Br. Rice's schools, that they took their children from the lay academies that were then common, and sent them to the Christian Brothers to get a sound Catholic National education."<sup>181</sup>

Consequently, within a short time "rich and poor went to school to Mount Sion to Br. Rice."<sup>182</sup> "He educated the rich and the poor, and if he gave the preference he gave it to the

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<sup>174</sup> Christian Brothers, *The Literary Classbook* (Dublin, 1845). (Allen Library, North Richmond St.)

<sup>175</sup> *Waterford Chronicle* 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1828.

<sup>176</sup> D. Akenson, *A Protestant in Purgatory: Richard Whately Archbishop of Dublin* (Hamden, 1981).

<sup>177</sup> Jordan, 1998, 101.

<sup>178</sup> R. Bryce, *Sketch of a Plan for a System of National Education for Ireland* (London, 1828), p. v.

<sup>179</sup> History of the Institute, Vol. I, 303

<sup>180</sup> Br. Bernard Dunphy to Archbishop Murray, 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1841, Normoyle (1976), 333.

<sup>181</sup> Patrick Buggy, 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 19.

<sup>182</sup> Thomas Burke, 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 23.

poor."<sup>183</sup> Rice's schools became "filled with youth of nearly all classes of society."<sup>184</sup> But there was a subversive element in such a strategy. This may be best illustrated by comparing Rice's schools with that pioneered by the Irish liberal Protestant education philanthropist, Richard Lovell Edgeworth.

When Lovell Edgeworth started the schools at Edgeworthstown, which his father had planned, he "admitted every class of pupil, gentlemen's sons, middleclass children, and the very poorest; and all were taught together."<sup>185</sup> He decreed that during school hours, linen smocks were to be worn to conceal the distinctions of rank which the boys' rags or fine clothes might betray. But after school, there was to be no mixing 'to avoid' said Lovell, 'the alarming appearance of a democratic tendency.'<sup>186</sup>

Edgeworth<sup>187</sup> had visited the Brothers' schools in Cork (1824) and Mount Sion (1823) where he spent "several days in the schools examining the various classes" and expressing his fulsome satisfaction with the enterprise.<sup>188</sup> Edgeworth wrote about the North Monastery school Cork in the following terms:

There is so much to say and approve of in this establishment that I really do not know where to begin. I was first struck with the appearance of discipline and obedience which seemed to pervade the whole. The countenances were in general cheerful, and, though many were in very indifferent clothing, yet their faces and hands were cleaner than in most schools of the same sort. I make no doubt that the acquirements are equal to what might be expected from the unwearied zeal and constant attention of the disinterested instructors of this *unique* establishment.<sup>189</sup>

Edgeworth made an extraordinarily positive impression on Deputy, Austin Dunphy,<sup>190</sup> "which led to a lasting intimacy."<sup>191</sup> The Brother historian recorded: "In Mount Sion he (Edgeworth) met Br. Ignatius Rice and conversed long and intimately with him."<sup>192</sup> Rice likewise provided clothing for his students but his motivation was diametrically contrasted with Edgeworth's design. The manner in which Rice provided clothing honoured the dignity of the recipients and had an authentic social justice agenda, as noted by contemporary Protestant observers, who visited Mount Sion in 1840: "The most destitute of the children are clothed – but in such a way that their dress does not distinguish them from the other scholars."<sup>193</sup> On his visit to Mount Sion, Edgeworth would have likewise observed that "mixing" between social classes was not only occurring but was expected and encouraged. Moreover, the boys were offered a curriculum that

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<sup>183</sup> Thomas Morrissey, 26<sup>th</sup> August, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 199.

<sup>184</sup> Mr. W. Scott Coward, *Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education (Ireland)*, Vol II (Dublin, 1870), 122.

<sup>185</sup> Dowling (1971), 105.

<sup>186</sup> H. Butler, "The country house in the life of the gentry 35," R. McDowell, *Social life in Ireland, 1800-45*, Cork, 1973.

<sup>187</sup> Richard Lovell Edgeworth continued to implement the educational philosophy of his father Richard senior. For an extensive appreciation of this man's perspective on education, T. Lyons, *The education work of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Irish Educator and Inventor, 1744 -1817* (Irish Studies Volume 9), Lewiston, 2003.

<sup>188</sup> Written record of Cork House Annals, 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1824, Normoyle, 1976, 160

<sup>189</sup> M. McCarthy, 1926, 218.

<sup>190</sup> Letter written by Dunphy to Patrick Corbett, 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1824, McCarthy, 1926, 217.

<sup>191</sup> *History of the Institute*, 1:75.

<sup>192</sup> McCarthy (1926), 217

<sup>193</sup> Hall (1841), 306.



celebrated their Irish heritage, as well as the equality of races and classes.<sup>194</sup> Rice, indeed deliberately and actively promoted a "democratic tendency" among his pupils of varying social stratifications. In contrast to Edgeworth's educational philanthropy and pseudo-social reform agenda, Rice's education was not just an agency to alleviate the poor, or to augur the upward social betterment of its pupils. Rice's schools at their foundation were about justice; and in practice this meant the schools were agencies to influence social transformation with "Christ and the establishment of his kingdom in the hearts of all."<sup>195</sup> To put it bluntly, this social integration was a strategy that attacked structures that privileged the powerful few, who were simultaneously abusing and denying the powerless. Rice keenly appreciated that social stratification was as a contributing factor in the generation and maintenance of poverty. Consequently, his education aimed not to merely mollify symptoms, but it deliberately incorporated structures, which attacked prejudiced social premises justifying inequalities. Rice challenged Irish class superiority as a cancerous homegrown paralysis, which impeded so many from recognising and accepting the fundamental equality of all humans. "Charity means helping the victim. Justice asks, 'Why are there so many victims?' and then seeks to change the causes of victimization, that is the way the system is structured."<sup>196</sup>

Ricean education is underpinned by a belief in the Incarnation's radical egalitarianism that all humans image the Christ presence, irrespective of class, race, creed or gender and that axiom was the rationale for Rice's exhortation to give to the poor in handfuls.<sup>197</sup> This sentiment was expressed in Rule One of the Presentation Rule: "Whoever receiveth these little ones in his name receiveth himself."<sup>198</sup> From its inception Ricean education was a subversive activity, even at odds with the current prevailing liberal ideas, which advocated that the lower one's social status the less education was needed.<sup>199</sup> This subversiveness had its basis in Rice's deep respect for all of humanity, particularly those whose humanness was camouflaged or distorted. Rice's feeding, clothing and educating poor children in decent buildings were primarily logical responses emanating from Rice's profound respect for human beings, and were less acts of charity or expressions of justice or social responsibility. He became present to the divine presence, and this graced insight generated in him a pervading sensitivity for the "dear little ones" he served all his life. Respect is the underlying, integrating dynamic for authentic Ricean education.

This respect for the incarnational Christ's radical egalitarianism was the basic reason Rice persistently requested Rome from the 1820s for authorization to have pay schools. Rome refused all three times. "Edmund Rice's viewpoint was not accepted and the rigidity of Rome on this question is not easy to understand as Edmund Rice had the full support of Dr. Murray, Archbishop of Dublin, on this matter."<sup>200</sup> This issue is important, since it clearly indicates a Ricean principle of education, one of which was at odds with the then Vatican bureaucracy, namely that to confine education to one social class, not only ignored in practice Christ's Incarnation, but also inadequately educated that social class.

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<sup>194</sup> *Waterford Chronicle*, 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1828. Although this text was written some four years after Edgeworth's visit, it is reasonable to expect that the curriculum of 1824-3 was imbedded with content later to be included in the 1828 text book.

<sup>195</sup> O'Toole, 2:79.

<sup>196</sup> M. Borg, *The Heart of Christianity: Rediscovering a Life of Faith* (San Francisco, 2003), 201.

<sup>197</sup> Rice to Mother Patrick Keeshan, n.d. but c. 1836, Normoyle (1977), 495.

<sup>198</sup> Presentation Rule for the *Fratres Monachi*, F.R. Hickey, *Inheritance: Collection Two*, New Rochelle, 1982.

<sup>199</sup> W. Boyd & E. King, *The History of Western Education* (London, 1975), 303, 308.

<sup>200</sup> Gillespie (1975), 146.



Rice was not using pay schools merely to support his poor schools. From the establishment of Mount Sion, Rice believed his education likewise would be beneficial to boys from the "middle and respectable classes." Not only would middle class boys benefit from the solid education he provided, but also sharing the education with the poor would challenge Ireland's social demarcations and accompanying prejudices, prevalent throughout society. Poor boys rubbing shoulders with the middle class would come to realise that the only difference between them and their better healed mates was nothing soap could not remedy. This education of mixed social classes was a truly revolutionary concept, which may have unnerved cautious Vatican officials, who had been recently bludgeoned by twenty years of "democratic" French revolutionary and Napoleonic philosophies. It seemed that Roman bureaucrats were as fearful as Edgeworth was that Rice's desire to educate all classes together would legitimise "the alarming appearance of a democratic tendency." Clearly, Rice's education for liberation was an aspiration not all Catholics welcomed. Rice's educational initiative seemed by many to be far too radical. It was universally understood and honoured that "class distinctions were registered in Heaven (and while) ...it was right to alleviate the sufferings of the poor,"<sup>201</sup> to treat the poor as equals was unadulterated subversion to be energetically repudiated.

#### *Liberator*

Associated with Rice's image of "raising up the poor" is the aligned motif of 'liberator.' Certainly, this image was applied to Rice by two Presentation Nuns, who had direct contact with Rice's contemporaries. They described Rice as a Moses figure:

Brother Rice seemed raised up by God at the beginning of the nineteenth century to shape Catholic Education for this and for many other countries. At this time also the social and political life of Ireland seemed so depressing that there was but little human hope of furthering Catholic interests. The country was after passing through a state of civil war, which had many of the aspects of a religious as well as of a political complexion. Then at the favourable time, he (Rice) did not hesitate to devote his life and his ample fortune to the noble work of instructing many unto justice. ...Irish Catholics had just breathing time after a century of relentless persecution. Penal laws forbidding Catholic education were still on the *Statute Book* of this country. They could be put in force at any moment. It was at this time that Brother Rice appeared, just as Moses appeared of old as a harbinger of hope and peace to his people.<sup>202</sup>

Similar to the Moses image, Rice is also paralleled with Daniel O'Connell, popularly dubbed Ireland's "Liberator." "He was in education, what O'Connell was as a political leader."<sup>203</sup> This was the image that Rice's friend Stephen Curtis chose to pursue in September, 1845:

... I do not want to diminish anything from the fame of the emancipator of the Catholics – his title to praise is indisputable; but this I say, that although the victory of 1829 could not have been won without O'Connell, next to him, no man did more to achieve it than Edmund Rice. One schooled the people for the guidance of the other; one smoothed the way over which the other led the people to the possession of their liberty...

In a similar manner James Healey, described Rice and his education:

God... raised up a man- like the prophets of old... He may be justly called the LIBERATOR – such title he deserved. O'Connell won for the people liberty years after

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<sup>201</sup> Butler (1973), 35.

<sup>202</sup> Sisters Joseph Meagher and Philomena Bergin, 30<sup>th</sup> April, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 266

<sup>203</sup> J. Forrest, 20<sup>th</sup> September, 1912, Normoyle (1979), 116.

Br. Rice started educating the people. Br. Rice gave the education, which taught them how to use that LIBERTY.<sup>204</sup>

Adopting such images invokes unquestionably the liberatory dimension of Ricean education. Certainly, the Bible references written by Rice in the fly leaf of his 1791 Bible, particularly the verse (2 Esd 5, 11: 1), which he added almost thirty years after the rest had a strong liberatory motif. Ancient Israel's and penal Ireland's foundational stories are narratives of liberation from bondage. In both cases, this oppression was personal, social, political, economic and religious. Rice's liberatory education likewise involved all these dynamics, but these earned their presence from Rice's belief in Incarnational egalitarianism. While the education offered by Rice had indisputable political implications, their objectives were not overtly political,<sup>205</sup> but their outcomes were namely the cultivation of educated adolescents, who had not only acquired 'pretensions' for upward social mobility, but also actively queried current political axioms and galvanized themselves and others to actively challenge the status quo. Such influence in the hands of mere laymen caused some concern among some in the Irish hierarchy. Indeed, Rice's own Bishop, Patrick Kelly<sup>206</sup> wrote to Rome opining that it would have been better if Rice's Brotherhood had never been started: "...what has been done here should not perhaps have been done,"<sup>207</sup> a position shared by some in the Protestant clergy.<sup>208</sup>

Consequently, it is hardly surprising that twice unsuccessfully the entire Irish hierarchy attempted to muzzle the Christian Brothers' independence in the 1870s during the Maynooth Decrees controversy.<sup>209</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Rice believed that all humans imaged their loving creator and the aim of his education was to help his "dear little ones" discover that image and liberate it. This was the focus of his liberatory education. Rice's quality, relevant and critical education offered his students formative experiences aiming to nurture personal meaning, ethical living, upward social mobility and national transformation. Rice believed that these goals could only be achieved through the nurturing of a *respectful sense of the sacred*. The key to achieving this aim was the *fatherly relationship* the Brothers had with their students. *Edmund Rice offered his students a liberatory education aiming at personal and social transformation, nurtured through a culture respectful of the sacred, and mediated by caring, fatherly teachers.* The fatherly aspect of Ricean education will be the focus of a future article.

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<sup>204</sup> James Healy n.d. but c 1912-13, Normoyle, (1979), 128. Normoyle has no date for this letter. It had been misfiled in the Roman archives as being part of Br. Cullen's 1949 research. Br Hill's pencil draft written at the time of the interview uses capitals in some words as well as underlining conveying the oral reception of the interview. Enclosed in the archives is Brother Hill's more polished ink version without these elaborations. Christian Brothers Roman Archives, HL-C-40 MH, s66.

<sup>205</sup> Coldrey (1988), 16.

<sup>206</sup> J.F. Prior, "Bishop Patrick Kelly of Waterford: Hostility to Edmund Rice," *Christian Brothers' Educational Record*, Rome, 1988, p 76- 94.

<sup>207</sup> Kelly to Holy See, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 1824, Normoyle (1978), 138.

<sup>208</sup> H. Inglis, *A Journey throughout Ireland*, Vol I (London, 1835), 65.

<sup>209</sup> E. Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the emergence of the modern Irish political system, 1874-1875* (Dublin & Washington, 1996), 370.

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