

Submitted by Ian William Cameron to the University of Exeter
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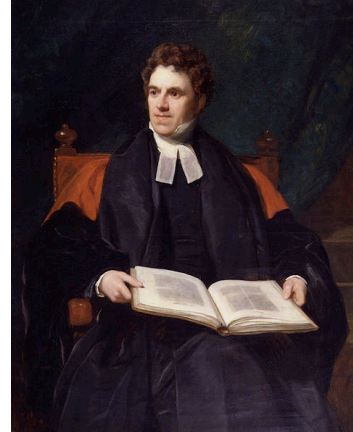
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Learning from the Master.

How Thomas Arnold's Christian convictions shaped his view of what makes a good education, with reflections and applications for the twenty-first century.¹

Abstract:

If we educate children without any knowledge of God, will we simply make them into clever devils? The question raises the issue of what kind of moral values should be upheld in English education if Christian ones are rejected, and what place God should have in state education. Should knowledge of God be taught only in churches and other faith groups? Thomas Arnold, Headmaster of Rugby (1828-1842) did not think so. This thesis



considers Arnold's Christian convictions and argues that it was his faith in Jesus Christ which was the predominant force in his pedagogy. Four areas of Arnold's thinking are considered at length. First, what did Arnold believe was God's will for the state and education generally? Second, what did he consider to be the place of Jesus Christ in a student's education? Third, how does human nature affect learning and classroom behaviour? Fourth, what did Arnold believe was God's purpose for discipline in the world generally and schools specifically?

After analysing Arnold's theology and educative practice, the final chapter considers applications that might be applied in the twenty-first century across a range of English schools. Could a fully maintained state school incorporate Arnold's model? What about an independent school, or a church school, or a Free School? While the social differences between nineteenth and twenty-first century England are vast, the thesis contends there are aspects of Arnold's pedagogy which could be incorporated into some English schools, while arguing that the current state-funded education system does not share enough of Arnold's Christian convictions in order to gain from his pedagogy.

¹ Portrait of Thomas Arnold (1839) by Thomas Phillips (1770-1845)

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