

Prevention or Repression

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The Reception of Don Bosco's Educational Approach in British Salesian Schools

The question that this paper seeks to explore is to what extent Don Bosco's educational approach was received and accepted in England and to what extent it was itself modified in the process of meeting a new and alien culture.

Part of the debate involves the English perception that some aspects of Don Bosco's *Preventive System*, especially the practice of "assistance" were to English eyes repressive and on the other hand, to the eyes of some foreign Salesians the existence of corporal punishment in Salesian schools was a direct contradiction of Don Bosco's approach to education, replacing prevention with repression.

In order to understand this cultural incomprehension, this essay looks at the nature of the English educational context in Victorian England. It will highlight one particular issue where the Salesian approach to education was significantly modified by its experience in England i.e. how corporal punishment came to be incorporated into the practice in the English Salesian schools.

It will then look at wider issues such as the Salesian ideas on "Prevention" and the "Call to youthful holiness" and

how they were received in the English Salesian schools. The fundamental question which underlies this study and which was raised by one of the Salesian pioneers in England, is: could the English ever become good Salesians?¹⁴⁹ or in other words, could the Salesian charism really be inculturated in an English setting?

The English educational context: different political and educational traditions

English education traces its origins back as far as the monastic schools set up by the first Christian missionaries in the late sixth and early seventh century both in the North by those from Iona and in the South by those sent by Pope Gregory to Canterbury. Outstanding among the scholar monks was St. Bede the Venerable whose Ecclesiastical History of the English still remains a model of historical insight, the careful use of sources, balanced judgment and testifies to the effectiveness of the monastic schools that were set up while the rest of Europe entered the Dark Ages. Similarly from Alcuin's school at York and through Charlemagne's school at Aachen the influence of the English educational tradition spread across Europe.

Despite the Reformation this English collegiate style and tradition of education was preserved especially in the University colleges at Oxford and Cambridge and in many of the great English public schools such as Eton, Westminster and Charterhouse and also in many of the Cathedral Choir schools such as Winchester and Durham. They remain the direct descendants of the ancient pre-Reformation schools that have maintained an uninterrupted educational tradition, which still has a very significant and influential place in English educational practice.

Separated from the direct influence of the French Revolution and the Code Napoleon by the Channel, the

¹⁴⁹ W. J. Dickson, *The Dynamics of Growth* (Roma, LAS, 1991),

Monarchy, and Parliamentary traditions, English schools remained largely untouched by the Enlightenment. Even the cultural and scientific revolution pioneered by Newton at Cambridge and Boyle at Oxford and David Hume in Edinburgh hardly touched the great Public Schools. The schools concentrated on teaching the Latin and Greek classics, history and mathematics, with almost no reference to science or modern languages or any modern technology. They were organized with a style of collegiate living that was largely medieval, often sadly marred by a reputation for bullying and fierce corporal punishment. They ignored almost totally the educational ideas of J.J. Rousseau's "Emile" and rather sought as a model, in so far as they had one at all, the English country gentleman amateur, with a strongly formed independence of outlook, loyal to King, Church and country and suspicious of foreigners especially the French and their revolutionary ideas.

However even in England there also existed a dissenting minority who were the descendants of the Puritan and Cromwellian tradition that had rejected the Church of England and its monopoly of ecclesiastical power and University education and set up their own schools. In the so called "dissenting academies" which were renowned in the 18th century for their interest in science and technology and useful subjects such as accounting and modern foreign languages, the pupils received a so called liberal education, often from dissenting ministers themselves educated in Edinburgh or the Netherlands. Among them, the Friends' School founded in 1702 by the Quakers was renowned for its rejection of corporal punishment. It was in these "dissenting academies" that the new generation of English industrial entrepreneurial families and scientists were educated: the Priestleys, the Darwins, the Wedgewoods, the Cadburys, the Daltons, and Sydney Smith's family, all of them dissenters and all of them open to the new ideas of education which were developed in the Enlightenment and in the Romantic movement that followed, but they remained isolated and outside

the predominantly Anglican mainstream of education because of their religious status as a dissenting minority.

England's Great Reform Act of 1832 was anything but revolutionary in its reform of Parliamentary systems of voting and did little to disturb the constitutional balance of power between Monarchy, Lords and Commons yet it still set in train a process of reform that was ultimately to radically change English government and society.

Dr. Arnold and Rugby School

It was partly because of a new generation of great headmasters like Doctor Thomas Arnold (1795-1842) who were in sympathy with this liberal urge to reform and partly as a consequence of the public Parliamentary scrutiny of the great Public Schools themselves that there began a process of change and reform which ensured that they continued to provide the model of English secondary education down to modern times. In his "Principles of Church Reform,"(1833) Dr. Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby supported the utilitarian Whig reforms of the Church and at Rugby "he set out to educate the sons of middle-class parents...into a high sense of duty and public service and of the importance of personal character."¹⁵⁰

As a result of these reforms, the Public Schools, themselves, became the vehicles for the upward mobility of the newly enfranchised middle class who flocked into them. Since these venerable institutions had educated them, it was their style and model that dominated the provision of secondary education in England almost to the present day.

Doctor Thomas Arnold was a fellow of Oriel College, Oxford (1815-1819) and a contemporary of the founders of the Oxford Movement: John Keble, John Henry Newman. A fine classical scholar and priest, he abhorred their Tractarian

¹⁵⁰ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livngstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (OUP,1983), 93.

approach to reform, which asserted the Church's complete independence of the state in fundamentals, rejected all intervention by Parliament in Church affairs and proclaimed the Church in danger. Arnold saw this as a narrow ecclesiasticism, verging on clericalism.

He became Headmaster at Rugby in 1828 and devoted his life to modeling in his school a vision of the unity of secular and religious, of Church and State where Christian values could act as a leaven to society desperately in need of reform. For him the universal priesthood of all believers had to bolster the Church against narrow claims to clerical privilege, which left the world abandoned.

In practice his vision inspired a revival of the influence of Christianity in the Public Schools. He insisted that his masters who were mostly clergymen should devote themselves solely to their charges, avoiding other ecclesiastical offices that obstructed the pastoral care of the young in their charge. He doubled their salaries and in consequence attracted a new breed of scholar clergymen to teaching. In the newly prestigious public schools, this sometimes became a direct career path to high ecclesiastical office. Even some of the later archbishops of Canterbury as recently as Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher (1945-1961) were headmasters first. Arnold himself took the pastoral lead as housemaster of the School House at Rugby and he also became the school chaplain himself, taking very seriously his Christian obligation to preach the Gospel to his charges every Sunday afternoon.

Arnold's reforms however, had much less to do with a modern curriculum and liberal philosophy than with his own earnest Christian commitment as a priest and a teacher. He was convinced that what was needed in the school at Rugby was religious and moral reform. He wanted an end to bullying and intimidation among the boys and a much higher level of personal commitment and professional expertise among the staff. He proposed as his ideal the vision of the Christian gentleman, independent, honest, fair, courageous and ready to

defend the poor and the weak. He did not radically change the curriculum. Nor did he abolish corporal punishment or the hallowed custom of "fagging." In fact, he is often credited with promoting the popular tradition of "violent" team sports such as "rugby football." Rather he believed in infusing his charges with a Christian idealism that promoted a code of personal integrity, "team spirit" and "fair play" that despised meanness and arbitrary power and all manipulative control.

Arnold's reforms at Rugby became the model for the reform of all the other great schools. His greatest success and his abiding influence can be traced to a book that became the classic English schoolboy novel: *Tom Brown's School Days*. It accurately reflects both Arnold's Christian idealism and yet his deep English traditionalism that was to be the foundation of the modern English educational tradition. This novel became itself the model for a whole tradition of school boy novels which have continued to promote the values that Dr. Arnold espoused right down to the *Harry Potter* novels of today.

In one of the most revealing passages in the book, Tom Brown's young friend Arthur who was recovering from a near fatal outbreak of fever asked Tom to give up the dishonest use of cribs and vulgus books or shortcut-translations for the set classical texts,

"Why young 'un?"

"Because you're the honestest boy in Rugby and that ain't honest."

"I don't see that."

"What were you sent to Rugby for?"

"Well, I don't know exactly—nobody ever told me. I suppose because all boys are sent to a public school in England."

"But what do you think yourself? What do you want to do here and carry away?"

Tom thought a minute. "I want to be A1 at cricket and football, and all other games and to make my hands keep my head against any fellow, lout or gentleman. I want to get into the sixth before I leave and please the Doctor (i.e. Dr Arnold the headmaster); and I want to carry

away as much Latin and Greek as will carry me through Oxford respectably..."

"...I want to leave behind me", said Tom speaking slow and looking much moved, "the name of a fellow who never bullied a little boy, or turned his back on a big one."¹⁵¹

The characteristic English preoccupation with games, especially cricket, and Rugby football, and a manly reputation for courage, strength and fair play and enough Latin and Greek to get through Oxford were the educational ideals promoted by Arnold's school at Rugby that were largely adopted by Victorian England and are still motivating young people all over the world especially where English is spoken.

While there were in England in the 1870s and 1880s some liberal educationalists that sought to extend universal free elementary education in reading, writing and arithmetic to improve the laboring classes, there was no attempt to introduce free secondary education on this model. It was the public school model of Dr. Arnold that set the tone for the development of a whole system of secondary education. It shaped the curriculum and more importantly the ethos of the grammar schools and other secondary schools that were gradually introduced over the succeeding century.

What *Tom Brown's School Days* set forth was the educational ideal of Muscular Christianity, a version of the Gospel that emphasized above all the manly virtues: courage, strength, honesty, fairness and a desire to protect the little ones.

During the late 1850s, the tenets of Muscular Christianity became an integral part of the public school educational system. The primary reason was to encourage Christian morality and help develop the character of the future captains of industry and political leaders, and in turn strengthen the British Empire (Wilkinson). Edward Thring (1821-1887), headmaster of Uppingham between 1853-1857, sums this up when he states, "The whole efforts of a school ought to be directed to

¹⁵¹ T. Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days* (Blackie and Son Ltd, 1857), 240.

making boys, manly, earnest and true" (Rawnsley: 12). The main impetus for the integration of the Muscular Christian ethic into Public Schools was Thomas Hughes' book, *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857), a story of a boy whose character was shaped playing sport at Rugby School. Hughes had been heavily influenced by Rev. Dr. Thomas Arnold, his headmaster at Rugby during the 1830s, who instilled in him "...a strong religious faith and loyalty to Christ" (Brown: x). Although, it is Arnold that is most frequently cited in the literature as the driving force behind sports in public schools, the Rev. George Cotton had masterminded the sports program at Rugby School under Arnold. Cotton was perhaps the prototype of what Mangan called "a novel kind of school master—the athletic pedagogue" (23).

The Muscular Christianity movement within public schools relied heavily upon the notion of Kingsleyan (Charles Kingsley 1819-1875) "manliness." The sport of rugby was particularly popular as it gave plenty of opportunity to "take hard knocks without malice" (Mason 1981), a desirable trait in possible future leaders of industry and the military. Rugby, Dobbs suggests, was almost the perfect game for the promotion of Muscular Christianity, and if it had not already existed leaders of the movement would have invented it:¹⁵²

In the novel, Hughes who was a boy at Rugby under Arnold, describes the impact that the doctor made:

And then came the great event in his and as in every Rugby boys' life of that day—the first sermon from the Doctor...

More worthy pens than mine have described that scene: The oak pulpit standing out by itself above the school seats. The tall gallant form, the kindling eye, the voice now soft as the low notes of the flute now clear and stirring as the call of the Light Infantry bugle, of him who stood there, Sunday after Sunday, witnessing and pleading for his Lord, the king of Righteousness and love and glory, with whose spirit he was filled and in whose power he spoke.

...What was it that moved and held us, the three hundred reckless childish boys who feared the Doctor with all our hearts and very little else besides in earth and heaven; who thought more of our sets in the school than of the Church of Christ, and put the traditions of Rugby and the public opinion of boys in our daily life above the laws of God.

¹⁵² N. J. WATSON et al, *The Development of Muscular Christianity in Britain and Beyond* in *The Journal of Religion and Society*. Vol. 7 (2005). Nn. 19,20. <http://moses.creighton.edu/JRS/toc/2005.html>.

We couldn't enter into half of what we heard; we hadn't the knowledge of our own hearts or the knowledge of one another; and little enough of the faith hope and love needed to that end. But we listened as all boys in their better moods will listen (aye and men too for the matter of that) to a man we felt to be, with all his heart and soul and strength striving against what ever was mean and unmanly and unrighteous in our little world. It was not the cold clear voice of one giving advice and warning from the serene heights, but the warm living voice of one who was fighting for us and by our sides and calling on us to help him and ourselves and one another. And so wearily and little by little but surely and steadily on the whole was brought home to the young boy for the first time the meaning of his life: that it was no fool's or sluggard's paradise into which he had wandered by chance but a battle field ordained from of old where there are no spectators but the youngest must take his side and the stakes are life and death. And he who roused this consciousness in them showed them at the same time, by every word he spoke in the pulpit and by his whole daily life, how that battle was to be fought; and stood there before them their fellow soldier and the captain of their band. The true sort of captain, too, for a boy's army, one who had no misgivings and gave no uncertain word of command, and let who would yield or make truce, would fight the fight out (so every boy felt) to the last gasp and the last drop of his blood. Other sides of his character might take hold of and influence boys here and there but it was this thoroughness and undaunted courage which more than anything else left this mark and made them believe first in him and then in his Master.¹⁵³

Within this mental picture the presence of corporal punishment in the school did not seem totally unfitting. Dr. Arnold discovered a school where Bullying was rampant and apparently impossible to rule out and adults were strictly the enemy. The system of "fagging" whereby younger pupils acted as servants for older pupils and as a result received protection were a hallowed part of public school tradition. Rather than try to suppress it, Arnold tried to make it an occasion for the exercise of responsibility. In the novel, Tom and his friend East lead a strike against some of the senior boys who abused the "fagging" system and for his insubordination, Flashman, the villain of the

¹⁵³ T. Hughes, *op. cit.* 114-115.

piece, famously roasts Tom over the open fireplace till he passes out with the pain. In a rough world where fighting and bullying were part of the culture even among the upper classes, where dueling though illegal was still considered a matter of "honor," it is not to be surprised at that when corporal punishment was administered fairly and justly then it was considered unremarkable.

In another passage, Dr. Arnold is pictured dealing with bullying by allowing the bully to be beaten. He decided that rather than expel the bully whom he knew to have some good qualities it would be better to allow a sixth former to administer corporal punishment. He explained his actions to a young teacher.

"Good night, Holmes. And remember," added the Doctor emphasizing the words, "a good sound thrashing before the whole house."

The door closed on Holmes and the Doctor in answer to the puzzled look of his lieutenant explained shortly. "A gross case of bullying! Wharton, the head of house is a very good fellow but slight and weak and severe physical pain is the only way to deal with such a case; so I have asked Holmes to take it up. He is very careful and trustworthy and has plenty of strength. I wish all the sixth had as much. We must have it here if we are to keep order at all."¹⁵⁴

That "corporal punishment" was part of the culture and educational background of the Public School system can hardly be doubted. At Eton till the late 1970s the sixth form could cane younger pupils for breaches of discipline.

It was into this alien prevailing cultural and educational setting that the Salesians came in 1887. How the Salesian educational traditions and practices were received and accepted forms the theme of this paper.

One of the most striking differences between the English educational practice and that of the Salesians was the prevalence in all English schools of corporal punishment.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 164.

How the culture that involved corporal punishment actually became part of the practice of the Salesian schools in England is one of the questions now to be addressed.

Don Bosco's Educational Approach

Don Bosco's educational approach was one that he developed in various contexts from his own education by Mamma Margaret:

Her greatest care was given to instructing her sons in their religion, making them value obedience and keeping them busy with tasks suited to their age. When I was small she herself taught me to pray...I remember well how she herself prepared me for my first confession. She took me to church, made her own confession first, then presented me to the confessor.¹⁵⁵

Don Bosco was first of all a religious educator, but one who was personally aware of the diversity of the human spirit and of the need for each to have the space to develop his or her own personality. This insight he traced back to his mother.

Now you might ask me: Did my mother mind my wasting my time playing the magician?

I assure you that my mother loved me dearly and I had boundless trust in her. I would not take one step without her approval. She knew everything, saw everything, and let me do it. Indeed if I needed something she willingly came to my help.¹⁵⁶

If one seeks for Don Bosco's views on education then perhaps his *Memoirs of the Oratory* or the *Letter from Rome of 1884* may sometimes provide a more significant source than even his famous pamphlet of 1877, *the Preventive System*.

As he so often reminded his Salesians, education is a matter of the heart and as educators they had to learn how to make themselves loved.

¹⁵⁵ Don Bosco, *Memoirs of the Oratory* (New York, 1984, 1989), 9.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 29.

In his pamphlet, written at the insistence of the French Cooperators for the opening of his work at Nice in 1877, Don Bosco tried to explain his insights on education. He called it "Preventive" to distinguish it from the "repressive system" then in use in many public institutions. But he insisted its foundation lay in the teaching of Christ:

The practice of this system is wholly based on the words of St. Paul who says...Love is patient and kind...Love bears all things hopes all things endures all things.¹⁵⁷

His view was that "reason, religion and loving kindness" form the heart of the Salesian method and its aim was to educate "honest citizen and good Christians," people who could play their part in civic life and at the same time achieve holiness. Reading the pamphlet now one cannot but be struck by its great and good intentions:

...my sole purpose is to help in the difficult art of the education of the young.¹⁵⁸

At the same time it is clear that it is far from being a systematic exposition of a method of education, similar to the Jesuit *Ratio* or the Instructions of St. John Baptist de la Salle. What Don Bosco sets forth is the headlines of his approach and central to his approach was his view of punishment.

The system is based entirely on reason, religion, and above all on kindness; therefore it excludes all violent punishment and tries to do without even the slightest chastisement.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ *Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales* (Roma, 1984),

248.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 246.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 247.

Prevention or Repression: contrasts and cultural differences

Ostensibly, one of the most obvious differences between the Salesian educational system and the English tradition is the whole question of corporal punishment. Don Bosco's well known slogan: "*o religione, o bastone*" would suggest that his insistence on "reason, religion, and loving kindness," did away with corporal punishment in all Salesian schools from the very outset. Yet, in fact, in the Salesian schools in England, corporal punishment was commonplace until the European Courts rulings in the 1980s. How can such an apparent contradiction have existed for so long unchallenged?

For Don Bosco the whole question of any punishments is one he finds very difficult to address as he says in his little pamphlet: *Il Sistema Preventivo*: He goes so far as to say:

First of all, never have recourse to punishments if possible...¹⁶⁰

(He uses the strong word *castighi* whose overtones indicate pain or torment).

In his Goodnight given in 1863¹⁶¹ Don Bosco said:

I tell you frankly, I abhor punishments (*castighi*), giving warning with the threat of punishment to those who are failing is not my system.

In the letter of 1884 he re-echoes the same theme:

Why the replacement little by little of loving and watchful prevention by a system that consists in framing laws? Such laws either have to be sustained by punishment and so create hatred and cause unhappiness, or if they are not enforced cause the superiors to be despised and bring

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 252.

¹⁶¹ MB XI, 17.

about serious disorders. This is sure to happen if there is no friendly relationship¹⁶²

Even more explicitly, in *the Preventive System* he adds:

...to strike a boy in any way, to make him kneel in a painful position, to pull his ears and other similar punishments must be absolutely avoided, because the law forbids them and because they greatly irritate the boys and degrade the educator."¹⁶³

In the circumstances of 19th century Turin, it is interesting to note that Don Bosco states that the law forbids such punishment as well as being abhorrent to his educational outlook. For him what was endangered was the fundamental relationship of trust which was the foundation of all education.

Corporal Punishment in Piedmont

Piedmont had come under French control during the revolutionary wars in 1796 and later Piedmont was incorporated as a new department of France with direct rule from Paris. Hence the first educational document that speaks of punishment in education comes in a regulation signed at St. Cloud, Napoleon's favorite palace outside Paris dated the year XII, or 1804-5.

Under the heading, punishments and rewards:

LVII: The punishments will consist in extra work, loss of recreations, or walks, of detentions or the prison

LXIII: The lesser punishments such as extra work, impositions, and the deprivation of recreation of a walk can be ordered by the teachers, that of prison will only be given by the Director.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² *Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales* (Roma, 1984),

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 252.

¹⁶⁴ *Arrêté portant règlement pour les Ecoles Secondaires Comunales daté de St. Cloud, le 19 Vendémiaire an 12. [manoscritto conservato*

The influence of the French Revolution's ideas of the Rights of Man and Citizen are seen clearly here in the protection of pupils from what the contemporary American Constitution calls "cruel and unusual punishments."

In the Restoration period, in Piedmont, with the return of the House of Savoy, and indeed in Don Bosco's own education, we can see a return to the ideas and practices of a previous period. Corporal punishment is reluctantly sanctioned, but only in extreme case, in boarding schools.

After *The Regulations for Schools* were approved by Royal Patent on July 22, 1822, there also emerged several regulations for applying them. Only in those for Boarding schools did they refer directly to punishments:

General regulations for Boarding schools (Jan. 23, 1827)

VII: on Punishments. Art 24.

Punishments should be limited ordinarily, depending on the gravity of the case, to remaining on your knees during school time or in the refectory; to writing out "quotations" during recreation, but never after meals; to the restriction of walks; to the deprivation of part of the food or wine; but may never consist in missing the bread or soup. The deprivation of food should be used sparingly lest it lead the suspicion that it is done for motives of saving money.

nell'Archivio di Stato di Torino: Istruzione pubblica – Scuole secondarie e Collegi in genere e pratiche complessive, m. 1 (1720-1820).]

[...]

Peines et Récompenses

LVII. Les peines consisteront dans des surcroits de travail, dans des privations de récréation ou de promenade, dans les arrêts et la prison.

LXIII. Les peines légères, telles que le surcroit de travail, les arrêts et la privation de récréation ou de promenade, pourront être ordonnées par les Professeurs.

Celle de la prison ne le sera que par le Directeur.

[...]

Solely in extraordinary cases and when it has become inevitable will it be permissible to use the stick, or whip in the presence of some superior: but all other forms of blows or grievous punishments are rigorously prohibited.

Art 25: The most grave punishments may not be inflicted by any superior or assistant but only by the Rector of the Boarding school or his representative.¹⁶⁵

Evidently Don Bosco's own school experience in the Royal school at Chieri was lived out in this sort of restoration atmosphere within the tradition of Jesuit style education that allowed corporal punishment in exceptional circumstances.

With the revolution of 1848 and the advent of Italian unification in 1859, the famous *Lege Cassati* re-introduced the principles of the French Revolution into Italian education including an end to corporal punishment in schools.

In the regulations for national boarding schools, the prescribed penalties are restricted to a list of 11 possible punishments which range from deprivation of part or an entire recreation to expulsion from the boarding school and includes time spent in detention, in the reflection room which can be seen and watched from outside.

¹⁶⁵ *Regole generali per li convitti. Emanate con lettera del Magistrato della Riforma in data 23 gennaio 1827*

[...]

§ VII – *Delle punizioni*

Art. 24. Le punizioni debbono limitarsi per l'ordinario secondo la gravità del caso, a stare in ginocchio nel tempo della scuola o del refettorio; ai *pensi* da scrivere nel tempo della ricreazione, non però mai dopo il cibo; alla privazione del passeggio; alla privazione di una parte del cibo, o del vino, quale privazione non comprenderà per altro mai quella del pane nè della minestra; la privazione del cibo si userà con parsimonia onde evitare di far nascere il sospetto che si ordini dal rettore del convitto per propria economia.

Nei soli casi straordinari quando sarà affatto inevitabile potrà usarsi la sferza o staffile in presenza di qualche superiore; ma sono rigorosamente proibite tutte le altre specie di percosse o di punizioni afflittive.

Art. 25. I castighi più gravi non potranno infliggersi da qualunque superiore o assistente; ma soltanto dal Rettore del convitto, o da chi lo rappresenta. [...]

What is also interesting is that these regulations also allow for rewards for goodness (*bonta*), diligence and moral merit such as visits to museums and galleries, or visits home, or formal commendations written or oral in front of the whole company.

In these regulations the strictest penalties are now reserved to the Council and even to the Minister.¹⁶⁶

Similarly for the secondary schools (*ginnasi* and *licei*) the disciplinary punishments allowed for the maintenance of scholastic order and good manners are the following:

1. Admonitions, 2. Suspension from courses, from the promotion exams and from the license(final) exams, 3. Expulsion from the institute.¹⁶⁷

These penalties were reserved to higher authorities depending on their severity, with recourse on appeal to a higher authority. Clearly the protection of rights of the individual is carefully guaranteed by such a provision. However, access to such prestigious institutions as the *ginnasi* and *licei* was probably so

¹⁶⁶ Regolamenti per Convitti Nazionali approvato con Regio decreto N.4292 25Agosto 1860. (art 52-55).

¹⁶⁷ *Legge 13 Novembre 1859 (N. 3725) sull'ordinamento della pubblica istruzione.*

(detta: "Legge Casati") [...]

Art. 229. Le pene disciplinari che le Autorità proposte ai Ginnasi ed ai Licei potranno pronunciare per il mantenimento dell'ordine scolastico e del buon costume, sono le seguenti, da graduarsi con apposito Regolamento: - 1° l'ammonizione; - 2° la sospensione dai corsi, dagli esami di promozione, e dagli esami di licenza; - 3° l'espulsione dall'istituto. - Si potrà ricorrere per far riformare la seconda di queste pene, la quale non potrà eccedere un anno, all'Autorità immediatamente superiore a quella che l'avrà pronunciata. Il ricorso per la riforma della terza pena si potrà in ogni caso portare al consiglio provinciale per le scuole. - Il Ministro potrà mitigare le pene, per le quali saranno esauste le vie di ricorso. - Colui che si troverà sotto il peso della terza di queste pene, non potrà essere ammesso in nessuno degli stabilimenti istituiti da questa Legge senza speciale decreto del Ministro. [...]

relatively restricted that the threats of expulsion must have been a severe enough punishment.

The contemporary Regulations for Elementary Education state:

Article 97. The means that the teacher may use to maintain discipline among his pupils are the following: 1. Admonitions; 2. Obliging the pupil to repeat work done badly or lessons badly learned; 3. Notes of demerit on the school register; 4. Keeping the pupil away from his companions; 5. Temporary leave of absence with notice to the parents; 6. Suspensions from school for a period of not more than 8 days, with the agreement of the parents; 7. Expulsion from the school.

Article 98 specifically forbids hurtful words, blows, signs of ignominy, corporal punishments, such as forcing pupils to stay on their knees or with their arms up, etc., impositions when they are not the simple repetition of work badly done. In the other regulations the careful graduation of penalties also required recourse to higher authorities such as the municipal superintendent and for expulsion it required the express consent of the Mayor.¹⁶⁸

What can be gathered from this evidence is that in the newly formed Italian kingdom which had Piedmont at its heart the ideas of the Rights of Man and Citizen had clearly reached the level of public education and the traditional means of disciplinary control in schools had been radically reformed in line with modern legal and penal practice.

¹⁶⁸Regolamento per l'istruzione elementare, approvato con regio decreto n. 4336 da 15 settembre 1860. [...]

Art. 97. I mezzi che il maestro può usare per mantenere la disciplina fra i suoi alunni, sono i seguenti: - 1° ammonizioni; - 2° obbligo di ripetere lavori eseguiti male o lezioni male imparate; - 3° note di demerito sui registri scolastici; - 4° allontanamento dello scolare dai compagni; - 5° licenziamento temporaneo dalla Scuola con avviso ai parenti; - 6° sospensione dalla Scuola per un tempo determinato non maggiore di otto giorni, con partecipazione ai parenti; - 7° esclusione dalla Scuola.

Art. 98. Sono vietate le parole ingiuriose, le percosse, i segni d'ignominia, le pene corporali, come il costringere a star ginocchioni o colle braccia aperte, ecc. i *pensi*, quando non siano la semplice ripetizione di un lavoro mal fatto.

One can also admire the efforts, however reluctant they may seem, to introduce a system of rewards as well as the organization and systematization of punishments in state schools. This then forms an interesting background to Don Bosco's word on punishments in his Preventive System. He lived in a society that was in a rapid process of liberalization and the traditional form of school discipline was being replaced by a modern education system based on the ideas of the French revolution where the Rights of Man and citizen were taken for granted. Don Bosco's catch phrase "honest citizens and good Christians" suddenly takes on a new significance; he decided to take a creative view of the new order and accept its view that corporal punishment was no longer acceptable. One wonders if he had lived in a society like England's where more traditional methods prevailed to what extent he would have had a different view of punishment to that which was common in the society in which he was brought up.

Salesians and School Punishments

The Salesians came to London in 1887 to take over the Sacred Heart Church, actually a tin shed, in West Battersea, London.¹⁶⁹ As part of the foundation, the parish already had the Trott Street elementary all age school which had separate girls and boys sections. The boys section was started in 1890 with 53 pupils and received a Government grant depending on the results of an annual school inspection.¹⁷⁰

Fr. Macey was faced by the difficulties of training some of the early aspirants for Salesian life and his solution was to train them as pupil teachers at what was then called The Sacred Heart elementary school and then if they passed the exams they could receive their Teachers' diplomas. Six of the early

¹⁶⁹ W. J. Dickson, *The Dynamics of Growth* (-Roma, LAS, 1991), 99.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 109 footnote 10.

Salesians are recorded as having trained in this way.¹⁷¹ Among them was Walter G. Austen. In the annual Inspection report for 1900 John McCourt was recognized under article 68. In the following year Walter G. Austen was also recognized. In 1902 John Mc Court continued under article 68, while Walter G. Austen received his Teacher's Certificate. Aloysius Sutherland also is mentioned in 1904.¹⁷² These were among the first generation of Salesians who were to lead the later development of the Salesian secondary schools in England.

In the Sacred Heart School archives from this early period, we have the official *London County Council Punishment Book* which records the date, the amount (the number of strokes) and the signature of the teacher administering the corporal punishment. Under the regulations of the London County Council, the use of such punishment was carefully regulated and recorded. As the Salesians became members of a mixed staff of laymen and clerics under a lay head they clearly had to accept the regulations then prevailing.

In the punishment book for 1905, the punishments recorded are all initialed by WGA, (Walter G Austen) by then the Head teacher of the Boys' section. Later on, each teacher seems to have signed himself. This indicates that when Walter Austen was the Head of the Boys section, as a Salesian cleric, he administered corporal punishment as part of the prevailing system.

Between Oct 9th 1905 and November 8th there are 26 entries, almost one a day for pupils, the youngest being 9 years of age, the oldest 13 years old. What is notable is that all the punishment is recorded as on the hands and never more than 4 strokes being administered. The reasons given for the punishment are usually stated as "troublesome." The only occasions on which more than two strokes are inflicted are for

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 115 footnote 25.

¹⁷² *Trott St. Old Battersea RC Inspection reports 1900-1904* (Sacred Heart Primary School Archive, Este St. Battersea.)

the offence of "truanting." This was especially problematic because it also affected the school's government grant, if attendance was low. Though it is difficult to draw very general conclusions, one could probably adduce that the system of one person administering punishment made it fairer and also less arbitrary and probably less frequent.

Overall however, it must also be evident that the experience of teaching and being qualified as teachers in the state system affected some of the most significant early Salesians who were responsible for the development of the schools. Frs. McCourt, Austen and Sutherland were instrumental in setting up the secondary schools at Battersea, Farnborough, Pallaskenry and Bolton on the model of the English Grammar schools. In 1902 Fr. John McCourt became headmaster in the College at Battersea until 1919, introducing the public examination system beloved of the middle class and by 1915 according to a contemporary witness, corporal punishment was commonplace.¹⁷³ They were themselves educated in the State system of education where corporal punishment for boys was normal and that in taking responsibility in Catholic schools where they had to work with lay colleagues and support them, they were inevitably involved in administering the disciplinary system then prevailing.

How very much like the modern situation of many Salesian schools where in working within the national scholastic system Salesians must also work with lay colleagues who do not necessarily accept the Salesian outlook on education and both then and now inevitable compromises were and are made.

With the advent of Fr. Francis Scaloni as Provincial in 1909, one would have expected a change of direction in the style of discipline of the schools. Effectively, this did not really begin till 1919 because of the War 1914-18, when Fr. Scaloni was stuck in German occupied Belgium. Fr. Scaloni therefore, could

¹⁷³ W. J. Dickson, *The Dynamics of Growth* (Roma, LAS, 1991), 144, esp. footnote 43.

only play a relatively minor part in changing the attitudes of his collaborators who took the effective decisions at a local level. Nonetheless we can get a flavor of Fr. Scaloni's outlook from his booklet: *Outlines of the Salesian System of Education*. Here he presents his ideas:

...as a chapter of a small booklet which is shortly to be published with a view to spreading in England a knowledge of the Ven. Don Bosco and his work.

In having these pages printed separately it is my intention to offer them to you that they may serve in the difficult task of education particularly of the younger Confreres."¹⁷⁴

He presents the Salesian system as a unique system that offers the benefits both of the College and the home based systems of education. In his section on: "*Stern methods and corporal punishment to be avoided*,"¹⁷⁵ he says:

Under the Salesian system there is a general ban against sternness, sharp or overbearing language, the use of the cane, and all kinds of physical punishment. There are good reasons for this prohibition. It must be remembered that, on account of the strong natural love between children and parents, the latter may be able to resort to such methods of punishment without estranging their children; but the love and confidence on the part of the pupils cannot be obtained unless their hearts are won by self sacrifice, patience, charity and gentleness on the part of superiors. Hence as this confidence and esteem are a *sine qua non* if the training is to be successful, everything that militates against it must be avoided. There is injustice too, in the punishment of youth, for the young are often in the wrong without any malice.¹⁷⁶

Fr. Scaloni hoped to form a new generation of Salesians where the prevailing outlook would be a different one. In founding the new Aspirantate at Shrigley in 1929 part of the purpose was to

¹⁷⁴ F. Scaloni, *Outlines of the Salesian System of Education* (London, 1924), 3.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 30.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

offer a different style of Salesian school experience that could then be a model for the future. He summarized Don Bosco's method of education thus:

He like all educators desired to instill into the minds and character of his boys respect for authority, order and discipline, while aiming at the correction of faults.

This can be attempted in five ways:

1. By physical force on the part for the master—in other words by the stick. Don Bosco set his face absolutely against such methods.

2. By the repressive power of severe and humiliating punishments. Don Bosco was equally opposed to these.

3. By the kindness which gains all hearts and thus secures the free cooperation of the pupil. This is the method he followed.

4. By the persuasive force of reason. Don Bosco believed this to be a necessary factor, to give additional strength and stability to the promptings of sentiment.

5. By instilling motives based on the principles of Faith. He considered such motives indispensable for the success of his undertaking.¹⁷⁷

This the first publication in English dealing with the Salesian system of education attempted to reintroduce a method of which while many aspects of it had been adopted, in its attitude to corporal punishment certainly had not. That it did not, in fact, succeed immediately is not to be wondered at given the prevailing culture in England and the developing political antipathy between Italian fascism and British Liberalism which could easily if mistakenly be transposed into opposing systems of education.

Assistance and the Salesian Preventive system

At the heart of Don Bosco's outlook on education was his idea of the importance of the friendly adult presence among the young as a sure method of education.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 36.

"Here in your midst I feel completely at home."¹⁷⁸

As an educational ideal such a presence involves a fundamental disposition: "an empathy with the young and a willingness to be with them." At the same time it also involves a method:

We are actively present among youth in brotherly friendship, helping them to grow in what is good and encouraging them to cast off every form of slavery so that their weakness may not be overcome by evil. This presence affords us a true understanding of the world of the young and unites us with them in all the healthy aspect of their restless energy.¹⁷⁹

In Don Bosco's practice this presence was no doubt a creative and active way of engaging young people at the Oratory in a friendly relationship, and where till his late middle age Don Bosco would run races and be actively engaged in recreation with his boys. It is also clear that with the advent of boarding schools as the predominant Salesian apostolate that what began as a technique for outreach to young people from the streets that had lost their trust and confidence in adults, became a form of almost complete supervision and control.

The focus on "prevention," as central to the Salesian educational system with equal emphasis on "reason, religion and loving kindness" as the basis of an educational relationship took on a very exaggerated emphasis when it was read with his famous summing up of the Preventive System "as letting the youngsters know the rules of the Institute" and then assisting them without respite, by advising them, by guiding them, and correcting them, in other words he concluded awkwardly, "in

¹⁷⁸ MB. IV. 654.

¹⁷⁹ *Constitutions of the Society of St Francis de Sales* (Ed. SDB, 1984) n.39.

putting them in the impossibility of committing faults (*mancanze* which could also be translated as sins)."¹⁸⁰

This preoccupation with putting youngsters in the impossibility of committing faults soon became an unhealthy preoccupation in some Salesian boarding schools with preventing sin, particularly sexual sin.

The preoccupation of the Salesians to constantly supervise the youngsters meant that not only was any exercise of personal freedom immensely limited but the Salesians themselves became negatively preoccupied with unhealthy consequences for their own mental state.

England and the Preventive System

Part of the Liberal reforms that culminated in the Great Reform Act of 1832 were those to do with public order. Sir Robert Peel's Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 cast London's new police constables as impersonal agents of the law whose principal task was "the prevention of crime." However popular fears of a continental system of militarized police and spies led London's police to wear a distinctly civilian style uniform (originally top hats and swallow tailed coats) and not to carry firearms.¹⁸¹ In the period after the Reform act, Edwin Chadwick and the Benthamite reformers saw public health threatened by the rapid urbanization and industrialization and in the Public Health Act of 1848 sought to take often unpopular "preventative" measures to avoid epidemic disease.

While the concept of "prevention" was a familiar one to educated English audiences it was anything but popular and was met with considerable resistance both in Parliament from the Tory traditionalists and particularly in the countryside at a local

¹⁸⁰ F. Desramaut, *Spiritualita Salesiana, cento parole chiave*. (Roma, LAS, 2001), 573.

¹⁸¹ J. Gardiner et al., *The History Today. Companion to British History* (Collins and Brown, 1995) 605 and for Public Health 606.

level. Mandatory police authorities were only eventually introduced nationally in 1856 and Local Health Authorities in 1872. Prevention was seen as central government interference in local affairs. The traditional English reliance on voluntary, unpaid, amateur, local magistrates to organize local affairs was and is strongly resistant to centralist government intervention. In this context the Salesian use of the term, "preventive system" for education was easily misinterpreted as a subtle form of control. At one stage the clerics in one Salesian school who undertook most of the duties of "assisting" the boys were known as "The Black Watch," a reference to a Highland regiment raised to prevent rebellion suggesting that in the English context "prevention" was seen as a subtle form of repression.

In the English educational culture where personal freedom, responsibility and initiative were highly valued, the Salesian system was very easily perceived as amounting to nothing more than systematic form of control. The slogan "God sees you" which Don Bosco had displayed in the Oratory became almost an educational method. In England such a system jarred immensely with the Public school tradition.

In *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, the freedom of youngsters to roam around the countryside and swim and explore and get into scrapes with local farmers shapes the narrative and gives one an impression of giving youngsters the mental and physical space to grow and develop their personalities while evidently keeping them within the limits of the allotted times and boundaries set by custom.

The Preventive system at Battersea

The earliest Salesian educator to work in England was the much-revered Fr. Giovenale Bonvia. He acted as both Prefect of Studies and Novice master at Battersea, and with his gentle disposition he practiced the preventive system by his own good example. He joined the youngsters himself in evening study and encouraged the other priests to do the same. However not all the

new arrivals felt able to fit in and work within the English culture they found around them.

Fr. Aeneas Tozzi lamented what he regarded as the fundamentally Protestant and flawed quality of the English students who were sent to him as novice master.

In these countries, which have been Protestant for so long, they (the Catholics) live out every aspect of their lives and experience in every relationship, contact with that religion which brings death to any Christian vitality. Even Catholic schools are usually mixed and lack not just Catholic books but any really educational books; hence worldly reading material often of a voluptuous type is widespread. The comforts of well-to-do life must not be missing in the English family, hence this is not fertile ground for vocations to religious life or even for educators. In Battersea up till now...they have sought to work with material, which in itself was already defective.¹⁸²

Fr. Tozzi's rather pessimistic assessment of the quality of English students, written in 1898 certainly recognized the different culture in which he was working but had few hopes for its future possibilities.

In the first formal canonical visitation of the English Province in 1908, Fr. Paul Virion, the Provincial of Paris from 1902-1919 commented specifically on the lack of acceptance of the Salesian idea of "assistance." He wrote in his report:

Moreover one can say that there is no supervision. They say that "assisting" [the traditional Salesian word for looking after youngsters in unstructured situations] as it is conceived in general in Salesian houses is repugnant to the English character, which prefers to be left to its own initiative and conscience. It is true in part and agrees with the education that is given in the families and in the other Colleges in this country. But the other thing they dislike is the hard work and self-denial which is needed to give an acceptable "assistance" which is not

¹⁸² W. J. Dickson, *The Dynamics of Growth*. (Roma, LAS, 1991),

indiscreet nor humiliating for the boys and which nonetheless assures morality among them. Particular friendships are flourishing.¹⁸³

One can see here a particularly interesting insight into the English mentality able to offer a balanced view both of the cultural difficulties and the need to adapt Salesian methods in order to protect and support the young people being educated, often away from home.

It was as a result of Fr. Virion's visitation that Fr. Charles Macey, the first English superior was replaced by Fr. Francis Scaloni, who unfortunately because of the Great War was unable to effectively take up his post till 1919.

In Scaloni's exposition of the Salesian educational method, he balances any use of the concept of "prevention" with the overriding principles of "reason, religion and loving kindness."

As Fr. Francis Desramaut so insightfully points out, in the original bilingual edition of Don Bosco's treatise on the Preventive System, the French version offers a mistranslation of the Italian in order to make Don Bosco's summing up less open to reductionist interpretations.

He modified and sweetened the proposition, which was taken to sum up the system. He wrote on the parallel page: "and also by correcting them which is properly so called the true means for distancing the youngsters from the facility of committing faults." This mistranslation, which was very quickly ignored and then forgotten, actually respected Don Bosco's true intention in the educational field.¹⁸⁴

We can sum up by saying that the Salesian preventive system, especially in its reductionist form ran into serious opposition among many of the English and Irish confreres who saw it as a foreign interference in the natural freedom in which youngsters

¹⁸³ Ibid. 174.

¹⁸⁴ F. Desramaut, *Spiritualita Salesiana, Cento parole chiave*. (Roma, LAS, 2001), 573.

should grow up. This opposition was in serious danger of being misinterpreted by some of the Italian Salesians as laziness or some sort of complicity in sins against Holy Purity. In this regard see Fr. Albera's circular letter of 1917 which repeated the old formula but strengthened it by saying:

In second place this optimism can even be the cause that leads to a lack of that vigilance with the pupils that the preventive system itself suggests in order to put them in the *moral impossibility of offending God*.¹⁸⁵

Such an extravagant claim, however well intentioned, does clearly attempt to rob the individual young person of his fundamental moral freedom and does a terrible disservice to those who tried to implement it.

Grounds for understanding.

In the passage already quoted where Tom Brown describes the personal impact of Dr. Arnold we can almost feel this charismatic leader of young people inspiring them to fight for the true, the good and the holy against dishonesty, meanness and evil. Dr Arnold remained a scholar and an inspiring figure but took great care to know the boys in his charge and to guide their progress. His preparation of the senior boys for Confirmation and their subsequent Holy Communion he saw as one the highest moments of his ministry. There they exercised their freedom to choose whether to be confirmed or not and then admitted to Holy Communion and he personally prepared them.

In another revealing passage where East, Tom Brown's best friend, finally summed up courage to ask the Doctor if he could receive communion.

"It was almost an hour before East came back: then he rushed in breathless.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 574.

"Well it's alright," he shouted, seizing Tom by the hand. "I feel as if a ton weight were off my mind..."

"Well I just told him all about it. You can't think how kind and gentle he was, a great grim man, whom I've feared more than anybody on earth. When I struck he lifted me, as if I'd been a little child. And he seemed to know all I'd felt, and to have gone through it all. And I burst out crying—more than I've done this five years, and he sat down by me and stroked my head; and I went blundering on, and told him all; much worse than I've told you. And he wasn't shocked a bit, and didn't snub me or tell me I was a fool, and say it was all nothing but pride or wickedness, tho' I dare say it was. And he didn't tell me not to follow out my thoughts and he didn't give me any cut and dried explanation. But when I'd done he just talked a bit—I can hardly remember what he said yet; but it seemed to spread about me like healing and strength and light; and to bear me up and plant me on a rock, where I could hold my footing and fight for myself. I don't know what to do I feel so happy."¹⁸⁶

We know that Don Bosco himself had a similar personal impact on his boys both in the pulpit and even more in the confessional and that they reported that they felt that he had spoken to their hearts.

In Dominic Savio's biography, Dominic recalled having heard the preacher for that March Sunday developing three ideas: "It is God's will that we make ourselves saints; it is easy enough to achieve, and there is a great reward for those who become holy."¹⁸⁷ Don Bosco had preached on the text of the first letter to the Thessalonians: "This is God's will your sanctification" which was read on the second Sunday of Lent. They became the program for Dominic's short but heroic life of holiness.

Dominic found in Don Bosco a wise guide who taught him that "A sad saint is a sorry saint," or as Dominic told a

¹⁸⁶ T. Hughes, op. cit. 260,261.

¹⁸⁷ Don Bosco, *Vita del giovanotto Savio Domenico*, 50-52, quoted in F. Desramaut, *Spiritualita Saleiana*. (Roma, LAS.), 555.

companion: "You should know that for us here holiness consists in being very cheerful."¹⁸⁸

Fundamentally these two great practical Christian educators understood that young people needed both models and guides or mentors on the way to human and Christian maturity. Both in very different cultural and economic contexts sought to build the kind of community where those positive personal relationships between adults and youngsters would flourish.

In this aspect of education Dr. Arnold and Don Bosco were as one. They both believed profoundly that young people had an immense capacity for generosity and courageous service that verged on the heroic. Not only that, they also both believed that young people had an extraordinary capacity for a direct communion with God which many adults seem to ignore.

In the last section of *Tom Brown's School Days*, Tom's young friend George Arthur contracts a fever that carries off a number of his companions and nearly kills Arthur himself. In Arthur's fever he had a vision of being entombed:

Well on last Sunday morning, as I seemed to lie in that tomb, alone as I thought, for ever and ever, the black dead wall was cleft in two, and I was caught up and borne though into the light by some great power, some living mighty spirit...and we rushed through the bright air which was full of myriads of living creatures and paused on the brink of a great river. And the power held me up and I knew that that great river was the grave and that death dwelt there.¹⁸⁹

This other worldly vision convinced Arthur that he had a part in the great work still to play and that he would not die so that when after the afternoon chapel the Doctor (Arnold) brought him the Sacrament of Holy Communion, Arthur confidently told him that he would not die.

This passage is reminiscent of so many passages in the life of Don Bosco himself where he encountered God in dreams

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 556.

¹⁸⁹ T. Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days* (London, 1857), 244.

and visions. The voice of the dead Comollo returning to tell Don Bosco that he was saved is a good example of this kind of divine communication. It appears also in the lives of some of his boys like Dominic Savio who had his famous distraction or daydream of England.¹⁹⁰ For Don Bosco it was not surprising that young people should be sensitive to God's voice in their lives and in an age where there were high levels of mortality among the young the closeness of eternity to their experience was not to be surprised at.

Both Dr. Arnold and Don Bosco were of one mind in this that they believed that God's Spirit moved among the young and inspired them and as priests and teachers the highest element of their vocation was to bring young people close to God.

In those first days at Battersea, the same desire to share with the young that closeness to God overcame differences of culture and context. Some of the early Salesians were already impressed by some of the young people who Fr. Bonavia described thus:

I have found besides some very good Catholics: some boys who come to Church and serve Mass with a dutifulness and reverence that makes me marvel, and they tell me they come from afar and live in half-protestant families. They are employed and live in a world (you see enough every evening) that is not at all good.¹⁹¹

First among these boys to want to offer himself as a Salesian was John Paish (the son of the widow Paish who took in the Salesians on their first night in Battersea). He died in the odor of sanctity shortly after the death of Fr. McKeirnan. In this aspect the English tradition of public school education and Don Bosco's agreed. Holiness and heroic courage was the real fruit of a Christian education and that aspect of the Salesian outlook corresponded deeply to the English spirit.

¹⁹⁰ W. J. Dickson, *op cit.* 33.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.* 100.

Though separated by 100 years that tradition has never died. Young men such as Sean Devereaux, who was educated and taught in the English Salesian schools gave his life in the defence of the poor and the weak and was not afraid to confront the forces of evil, and his example still appeals with real force to a new generation of young English men and women.

While my heart beats I have to do what I think I can do, and that is to help those who are less fortunate.¹⁹²

In conclusion, we can say that the Salesian educational approach encountered in England a very strong local cultural tradition of Christian education. One surprising result of the encounter was that the Salesian practice was modified by the introduction of corporal punishment for a considerable period of time by the influence of the English educational tradition. At the same time it has to be said that much of the fundamental Christian idealism that was at the heart of both approaches found a ready audience among the young in Salesian schools in England.

¹⁹² D. Devereaux, *While my heart beats* (a biography of Sean Devereaux: 1964-1993.) (Pen press, 2002.)