

ENDS AND MEANS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

RELIGIOUS education faces unique problems in a modern democracy. In the past, static cultures have often limited religious instruction to the faithful transmission of the traditions of a particular religion. Democratic societies, as more dynamic and complex, tend to minimize the effectiveness of this form of training. Their emphasis on political freedom encourages criticism of established dogma and practice. Indeed, the variety implicit in a democratic society demands a more flexible approach to religious knowledge. Reverence for truth and respect for persons are expressed in freedom and tolerance.

Not alone democracy, but the religious life itself requires a creative approach to training in religion. Faith and devotion are in many respects personal and private. Although facts and interpretative perspectives can be taught specifically, the individual's response to God necessarily transcends group attitudes and accepted social norms. All attempts to impose ideas or behavior are in the end bound to meet opposition from genuinely creative persons. Moreover, the prophetic criticism of belief and practice makes a valuable contribution to both institutions and doctrine.

Of course, it may be argued that no significant education in religion is possible because faith is entirely the gift of God. On this view, an individual's religious attitudes cannot be redirected positively either by training or cultural change. An anti-intellectual prejudice often appears among the defenders of this doctrine. They argue that conversion from sin is God's work and is accomplished in the soul apart from all human effort; education is unimportant in comparison with religious experience. In the last century, Horace Bushnell criticized

this one-sided view in his classic *Christian Nurture*.¹ He pointed out that even apart from its practical unworkability, it clearly confuses different perspectives of interpretation and meaning. Bushnell held that a drastic conversion experience is not necessary to mature religious development. He insisted that the child of Christian parents ought always to be regarded as a member of the household of God.

In spite of practical difficulties as well as sectarian pleading, religious education must remain a major concern in a democracy. No doubt, democracy and religion are too easily equated with each other in partisan apologetics. Yet there is ample evidence that the resurgence of tribal and national cults which inevitably follows the rejection of high religion has disastrous results for popular government. Value judgments and religious commitment continue at an immoral, often socially destructive level in totalitarianism. Religion is a perennial phenomenon in the life of man which expresses itself in a variety of attitudes and institutions, many of which are not ecclesiastically oriented. Events of the past two decades have made it increasingly evident that no comprehensive educational theory is justified in ignoring this all-pervasive aspect of human experience.² In attempting to re-orient and direct spiritual values, democracy touches man's life at the most fundamental level.

John Dewey, although committed to naturalism in philosophy, acknowledged the importance of positive belief and devotion in his Yale Terry Lectures, *A Common Faith*.³ Dewey criticized the sectarian, divisive character of the world's great religions, but none the less recognized the indispensability of the "religious attitude" in inspiring a spirit of sacrifice and unselfishness. Most theologians, in reply, point out that Dewey's interpretation is incomplete even at the

psychological level because it values religion for its usefulness rather than for its ultimate truth. They argue that significant religious genius seldom if ever remains disinterested in ultimate meanings. It is clear that new and complex difficulties as well as differences of interpretation emerge if Dewey's metaphysical agnosticism is rejected. However, questions of meaning cannot be appraised either positively or negatively unless the problems of faith are recognized as authentic and allowing of some limited answer in their context.

J. Paul Williams' *What Americans Believe and How They Worship* shows conclusively that religion has a more positive role in democracy than Dewey was prepared to allow.⁴ Williams does not deny that the world's great religions antedate the rise of modern democracy or that religious leaders in many instances retarded rather than encouraged its development and growth. Yet he does not believe that these facts support a complete disjunction between democracy and religion in either theory or practice. He argues rather that the democratic way of life requires positive religious affirmation for its preservation and continued existence. In particular, a belief in the dignity of man is sustained in adverse circumstances by religious commitment. Williams' study itself is evidence that religion's role has not been simply one of preserving tradition but of creative renewal of individual and community life.

A reappraisal of the place of religious values in democratic society is of special importance in view of the contemporary revival of religion in America. It can hardly be denied that there has been a widespread renewal of participation at many different levels of church life. At present, it is impossible to judge accurately whether the basic concerns of

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mature faith and religious living are being advanced by this resurgence of popular interest. Responsible leaders of all denominations have pointed out the many ambiguities and practical difficulties of mass phenomena:⁵ Selfish motives are often mixed with altruism in group expressions of religion. Significant criticism of existing social mores or personal selfishness is often lacking. Although large amounts of money have been devoted to buildings and program, a high level of religious knowledge has not been achieved.

In appraising the contribution of religious education, it is important to understand that it is not limited to church, Sunday or parochial schools. Liturgy and ceremony as well as holidays and festival occasions have dramatized the teachings of the major religions for many centuries.⁶ More recently, the media of mass communication—radio, television and motion pictures—have been employed by religious agencies. The total effect of these new vehicles cannot yet be appraised. On the one hand, they will break down parochialism and encourage devotion at many different levels; on the other hand, they may intensify sectarian conflict as well.

Religious education, to be effective, must address itself to the present context of religious ideas. It is evident that the popular interest in religion presents perils as well as new possibilities. In the immediate past, two extremes of theory have been dominant in church schools in the United States. Impressed by the child-centered character of much of public school practice, many Protestant church schools de-emphasized content and attempted to teach age groups almost exclusively in terms of appropriate life situations. Choices and decisions corresponding to the student's maturity level have been encouraged. No doubt, this approach has many values not present in simple catechization. Yet it has

been fairly criticized for its failure to communicate the full resources of the religious tradition even to its most carefully trained pupils.

Randolph Crump Miller's work *The Clue to Christian Education* represents a return to a more content-centered curriculum.⁷ Miller is explicit in his refusal to abandon the concern for individual growth and development which has found expression in so-called progressive educational theory. None the less, he intends a drastic re-orientation if not a rejection of its leading ideas. Miller emphasizes the important contribution of specific religious doctrines to personal growth and development. He believes that the major insights of a particular historical faith, in his case Christianity, must be made vital for persons receiving instruction.

A. Victor Murray's study entitled *Education into Religion* treats the problems of religious training more broadly than much of American educational thought and practice.⁸ Murray, President of Cheshunt College, Cambridge, and emeritus professor of education, gives special attention to the contribution of Biblical higher criticism as well as research in comparative religion to both education and piety. He points out that theological scholarship before the modern period was often encumbered with problems of the literal interpretation of the Biblical text. Now, higher criticism has made possible a new understanding of the growth and development of the ideas of the Bible; theology is able to range more freely. Murray urges that scientific research and sound scholarship have in large measure freed the teaching of religion from sectarian bias. In fact, this has become doubly clear as traditional exegesis has been reappraised with the new tools of criticism. He defends the teaching of religion as part of the general curriculum in schools supported by the Eng-

lish government on the grounds that there is a large body of common knowledge which cannot fairly be regarded as sectarian.

Murray emphasizes that a culture which accepts denominational division as normal is perennially in danger of conceiving of religious education too narrowly. It easily neglects the findings of critical scholarship as well as the profoundest spirituality of its own time. He argues, in particular, that sectarian controversy does not justify educational leadership in disavowing responsibility for transmission of the total religious heritage from one generation to another. A large common moral and spiritual insight has emerged in the history of the race. In the West, monotheism is in general accepted over polytheism, responsible moral personal decision over amorality, and a sense of the dignity and worth of human persons over promiscuous destruction of human life. This common faith should be available to all persons who seek broad cultural knowledge. The world's great religions have contributed significantly to the life of understanding as well as to responsible citizenship. Indeed, the intellectual legacy of the modern world cannot be explained apart from their leading ideas.

Moreover, it is clear that religious education cannot be limited to the disinterested study of the history of religion, much less to the heritage of a particular religion, if it is to fulfill its proper function in democratic society.⁹ Simply factual knowledge about the past does not provide the student with an adequate appreciation of either practice or belief. Rather, the religious heritage of the race can be appropriated in its fullness only from personal participation in its problems and responsibilities. In measure as each individual person has ultimate concerns and commitment, his life is

significantly religious. More than faithful acceptance of past knowledge is required because the religious life itself is one of creative discovery.¹⁰ It is a common fallacy to suppose that criticism of particular beliefs necessarily leads to the rejection of faith itself. In reality, inquiry and activity are both marks of vitality. Prophetic criticism and individual development require recognition that religious truth is complex because it has to do with the inner life of persons. Historically, orthodoxies have perpetuated ideas of varying worth and significance. Ethically sensitive religious leaders have perennially recognized that retrogression as well as growth is possible in the life of the spirit. No established framework can resolve fully the problem of individual choice and decision. Mature faith cannot escape the fact that each man must encounter destiny for himself.

Although critical re-interpretation is inevitable, the individual's response to moral and spiritual values is not simply one of idea. Religious education must seek to influence the attitudes and feelings of the whole person. Murray calls attention to the fact that it relates emotions and thought.¹¹ He argues at length that the conative, volitional aspects of man's life are ignored only with great peril. In appraising the training of the emotions, Murray emphasizes that man's feeling life is cumulative, taking on more or less definite character with maturity. An individual's religious responses are particularly dangerous when limited only to random reactions. Unless the emotions are informed and directed to positive, creative ends, irresponsible moral actions as well as bigotry are likely to follow.

The problems of religious education at this level are very difficult and complex. Both psychologists and theologians recognize that religious experience does not always continue at a single level of meaning or life. A mature faith by its very

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nature requires perennial self-criticism and re-appraisal. Previously accepted values and objectives are re-evaluated, criticized and even rejected; vitality of life is expressed in negative as well as positive judgments. In fact, the religious history of the race is in part a record of such re-evaluation. It is fundamental for the understanding of succeeding generations that they in part relive the growth and development of the past, continuing the process of evaluation. Apart from such criticism, there can be only incomplete and truncated appropriation of the insights of the past in either personal or group experience.

The world's great religions are specific and concrete in the way in which they seek to close the gap between thought and emotion. Their teachings are more appropriately described by Professor Tillich's phrase, "ultimate concern," than Dewey's "religious attitude"; the former directs attention to man's search for ultimate reality which the latter disregards. Tillich's Yale Terry Lectures, *The Courage To Be*, make clear that authentic faith must give a creative basis to morality as well as assure mature self-acceptance.¹² Tillich emphasizes the Judeo-Christian rejection of Stoicism. Historically, theism has found unity of life in God's providence and the divine will. Monotheism is not simply an abstract doctrine, but the affirmation of a single moral purpose which gives meaning to all of life and existence. Its rejection of idolatry, the integration of the self around a plurality of goods, is in effect a recognition that a diversity of absolute goods is self-defeating. This is true not simply at the primitive level, but throughout all man's higher spiritual life. Polytheism is ultimately destructive because it directs man away from his ultimate loyalty to the one God.

Theism emphasizes as well that man is a finite creature. Although he has a unique place in the order of creation, he

cannot by himself fulfill his own destiny. In particular, he does not have the resources to achieve his own last end in life everlasting. Rather, human persons are believed to be dependent on a transcendent good for their ultimate hope; the complete integration of the self on lesser, finite goods or communities is regarded as drastically inadequate. Of course, acceptance of such a view of the self is of fundamental importance for religious education.

The claim of the theistic religions that the fullness of selfhood and community is possible only from divine grace requires careful examination. Their universalism is not simply philosophical in motivation or exclusively an expression of human goodness. Rather, these religions teach a concern for all mankind which derives from the active love of God. Service of the neighbor is believed to have its basis in God's self-giving activity which is directed unceasingly toward all men.¹³ Active dedication of life to God's service ideally overcomes racial, national and social barriers as well as the distinction between friend and enemy. God's providence toward all men makes possible a universal positive response toward all his children.

Theism regards with drastic seriousness all factors which destroy human personality, even as acknowledging the deep-seated persistence of evil in the lives of individuals and groups. Religious education cannot ignore the fact that the first half of the twentieth century has been a time in which perspectives of depth, narrow but intense, have often captured men's allegiance. Fascism and Communism have both had strong motivating power against democracy and common sense, in part because of their "religious" appeal. Humanitarianism sometimes has more comprehensive loyalties without a comparable intensity of dedication. The religions

of brotherhood derive their inclusiveness from their moral concept of deity; they embody a universal dimension of breadth as well as depth at the level of ultimate commitment. Moreover, they insist that spiritual progress is not self-sustaining; transition from low to high religion, as well as creative living in difficult circumstances, requires sacrifice.

A religious appraisal of the growth and maturity of personality is not justified in minimizing the persistence of negative factors in the moral life.¹⁴ Alienation takes place at the highest levels of man's life as well as at the more primitive. It appears in the individual's relation not only to the deity, but also to his own self and the community. The problems with which the religious tradition has attempted to deal in the doctrine of human sin have psychological as well as ontological implications. Alienation is of singular importance in modern society as pressures from both within and without the self make for its disintegration. Individuals experience alienation at the deepest levels of conscious and unconscious life concerning both their highest ideals and the norms of society. It is important to note that this is the case even when the validity of moral judgment is denied. Religious education has unique resources for the reconstitution of the self in the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation. The fullness of growth and maturity is not possible apart from the vital personal apprehension of both in individual experience.

Yet, the concerns of the religious life are fundamentally positive. Faith and devotion are not motivated simply by duty but by joy and love of God. Integration and wholeness of life have their inclusive context from God's intention for the welfare and final beatitude of his human creatures. For the religious man, integrity is not imposed on the self as the demand of an arbitrary Providence, but is a response to the

gift of life which is accepted humbly from the Creator. The authentic positive inspiration of high religion derives from the fact that it appraises realistically the highest potentialities of human existence even as it refuses to deny them when they remain unrealized.

Religion's total appropriation requires aesthetic sensitivity as well as ethical insight. Appreciation and understanding are as fundamental as logical analysis in its interpretation. Respect for the total context of reality is prerequisite in all religious knowledge. An inclusive perspective as well as a sense of wholeness and balance distinguishes the religious genius from the sectarian. The large contribution of Platonism to Western theism is itself evidence that careful logical analysis and intuitive insight may complement each other in new and inclusive insight.

Religious education by its very nature seeks to extend the individual's understanding of the total dimensions of truth. Yet the validation of religious experience takes place in part from within the circle of faith itself. Religious truth is not accessible to the critic who chooses to ignore both its data and content. The criticisms of secular humanism have their answer in part from this claim. The religious man finds that the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation is basically liberating and yields increasing illumination. Although he reassures his critics that social benefits follow from personal religion, he maintains that the truth of its insights can never be appraised exhaustively from a simply moral point of view. Socrates' devotion to the Good, for example, makes clear that religious dedication has a more inclusive context than simply loyalty to ethical values. A vital relationship to the truth of God himself alone sustains the religious man when evil presses him sorely in difficult circumstances. Participa-

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tion in the life of religion, for the theist, requires the integration of purposes and ideals around the reality of a higher being.

To be sure, not all religion is either prophetic or creative. Indeed, the contrast between the high and the low is perennial in the history of religion.¹⁵ Mankind often seeks security and peace of soul by rejecting the ethical demands of mature faith. However, a negative judgment concerning spiritual reality ultimately contributes little to individual or social accomplishment. Ethically sensitive religious faith has a positive role both as sanction and challenge to the existing order. Whitehead has delineated its double character with great clarity:¹⁶ On the one hand, it conserves value and establishes a moral and meaningful framework for human life; on the other hand, it is a continual challenge to new aspiration and a changed way of life.

Durkheim's analysis in many respects supplements Whitehead's appraisal.¹⁷ In particular, Durkheim's interpretation shows that religious education can only restrict its effectiveness if it ignores the social character of the persons and ideas with which it deals. No individual can separate himself completely from the group heritage and experience. No doubt, the religious traditions of mankind are in part a record of the interaction between outstanding individuals and the group. However, it is important to note that the relation between the religious genius and the group is not simply negative. The prophet looks to the deity to sustain him against his fellows when he stands for righteousness. Confidence in God delivers him from an overpowering sense of loneliness. None the less, prophetic criticism has often influenced established institutions and traditions and has been appropriated through organized religion. The religious leader's rejection

of one type of social participation does not necessarily exclude his influence even on the context he criticizes.

The widespread religious illiteracy at many levels of American life must be explained in part from the failure of institutional leadership. Ligon's studies show that growth toward religious maturity is a small fraction of the possible in the average American adolescent between the eighth and twelfth grades.¹⁸ Very often, little is added in religious outreach or knowledge even at the college level. There are, of course, notable exceptions to the cases studied. Yet, these conclusions are confirmed, on the whole, by the fact that responsible adults are often asked to accept and participate in a particular tradition without clear and definitive knowledge of its teachings. It is not surprising that their loyalties are sometimes expressed in devotion to secondary if not unimportant practices and ideas.

The uncritical acceptance of religious ideas in the end leads to negative consequences for devotion and piety. Injury to moral and religious living follows from the refusal to re-evaluate particular traditions from a more ultimate reference. Western theism teaches that no religious object less than God is an end in itself. Neither the human person nor his community are absolute; both, as finite and fallible, are to be continually judged from God's goodness and love. The inadequacy and unworthiness of their holiest claims and practices stand out by comparison with God's transcendent reality. Authentic faith activates ethical sensitivity and understanding. Confronted by the ultimate goodness and righteousness of God, it discovers a new and profound dimension in existence.

Religious education must recognize that spiritual goods by their very nature are not the exclusive possession of any sin-

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gle person or community. The mutual influence of different traditions is evidence that the religious spirit is not as absolutely disparate in diverse faiths as much sectarian teaching has alleged. Indeed, no fair appraisal can ignore the divergence of interpretations of human destiny and ultimate meaning which appears in the history of religion. However, this acknowledgment may lead, positively, to the rejection of uncritical dogmatism as well as the acknowledgment of the importance of faith for the whole life of man.

In the end, a comprehensive philosophy of religious education is impossible apart from a critical judgment of the nature of religious truth itself. It is sometimes argued that religious interpretations are so diverse and contrary as to preclude the possibility of any authentic knowledge. Such agnosticism not only disregards the large common legacy of the religious traditions, but generally ignores the positive insights of philosophy as well. The *philosophia perennis* is neither reductionistic nor agnostic in its appraisal of reason, persons or ideal values.¹⁹ More than one conclusion can be drawn from the fact that religion often breeds diversity. Variety sometimes signifies profundity of meaning rather than lack of insight. In religion, diversity may be explained not only from the varied response of the human spirit, but from the richness of God himself. Most classic theologies acknowledge that the limited character of religious knowledge arises in part from the historical context in which it appears.

A thoroughgoing agnosticism must hold ultimately that the opinion of one person or sect is as good as that of any other. It precludes any authentic knowledge by presupposing that all claims to religious truth are equally relative. Many alleged "objective" views reveal the bias of an ar-

bitrarily limited metaphysics by insisting that all religious ideas must be submitted for final judgment to scientific reason. It is argued that any doctrine which cannot be verified by controlled experiment or analytical reason is untenable. Yet, a more balanced evaluation must allow that religious experience in part supplies unique data. The religious understanding of personal and historical life has an authentic rationale at its own level of meaning. Moreover, insight and knowledge often surpass their alleged limits in many different fields of study. There is no justification for supposing that religious truth cannot transcend arbitrarily imposed boundaries or be fructified by the critical use of reason.

Religious education, although concerned with individual growth and development, is not simply subjective or limited to personal opinion; in short, it cannot be reduced to merely moral training. Rather, its essential interests are directed to the whole world of reality beyond the self which brings inclusive meanings to existence. Mature religion as fellowship, worship and prayer as well as critical reflection seeks to relate the individual to the totality of the universe itself. Self-criticism, repentance and faith are all directed to a reality which is believed to transcend the individual even as present to him. Self-centered piety or reflection is likely to confuse the human and the divine, espousing the former rather than worshipping the latter.

Professor Tillich, in particular, has made clear that both philosophy and theology seek to discover the deepest meanings of reality.²⁰ Although the latter attempts to understand the meaning of existence from religious experience, it is not necessarily irrational. Truth for both transcends in principle all sectarian distinctions whether metaphysical or ecclesiastical. Tillich, to be sure, disavows positivism and pragmatism

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on the grounds that they destroy not only religious meaning but the possibility of philosophical inquiry as well. He believes that reason must remain open and growing, acknowledging new insights in a realistic appraisal of events and persons. A more comprehensive judgment of the intellectual life will acknowledge the contribution of the mystic, prophet and religious genius in the apprehension of meaning.

Reinhold Niebuhr in his *Faith and History* emphasizes that progress in physical science has a different character than growth in religion. Whereas scientific knowledge is cumulative and allows of continuous growth and development in time, man's inner life is more complex by its very nature. At the philosophical level, growth in maturity and wisdom must be distinguished from the external accumulation of factual knowledge. No single idea or world view can be accepted as valid simply because it is later in time sequence. Radical retrogression as well as new subtleties of insight appear perennially. Indeed, an oversimplified version of intellectual progress is likely to repeat old errors. This is even more the case in religion than in philosophy. Theism has its ultimate referent in the justice and mercy of God. Sin and forgiveness require a profoundly searching self-criticism which cannot be subsumed simply in categories of retrogression and advance.

Hedley has pointed out that religious education cannot ignore the "superstitions of the irreligious."²¹ Niebuhr's critique is particularly telling against the persistent belief that science will sooner or later resolve all philosophical and theological problems. He has shown conclusively that it is beyond the scope of the physical or social sciences to replace all evaluative judgments with "objective data." In fact, the doctrine that "reason" must ultimately displace "faith" is it-

self a faith claim. Too many intelligent persons still equate Christianity with fundamentalism and Biblical literalism. At the popular level, C. S. Lewis has argued with unusual clarity that materialism is no more scientific than theism.²²

A simply external, descriptive view which treats human beings impersonally is of little value for religious education. Religious insight is motivated by concern and sensitivity; it appreciates significance as well as commitment. The responsible self-determination of human selves cannot be appraised in simply genetic, historical terms. Religious education must deal critically and rigorously with the fundamental question which all the great religions seek to answer, namely, what does it mean to be a human self with a particular destiny in space-time. It cannot affirm its own essential insights without rejecting all reductionistic views of the value judgments fundamental to the development of personality and character.

Mature faith inevitably recognizes that the fundamental problems of human existence cannot be resolved simply at the scientific empirical or historical descriptive levels. It seeks a more comprehensive as well as a more ultimate level of meaning in affirming that each man is dependent on a reality greater than himself for self-acceptance as well as for the final fulfillment of his destiny. The world's great religions join a sense of finitude with an appreciation of the authentic worth of human persons. No major religion claims a relation to a good beyond the temporal simply from the fact that man is limited or sinful. Indeed, the recognition of finitude does not of itself validate any positive religious insight. The transitoriness of human life as well as the persistence of evil even with knowledge of the good are both recognized as basic problems.

Although the major faiths claim to bring liberation and

freedom as well as increasing insight, they do not teach that mankind can find immediate release from finitude in such measure as to resolve the dilemmas of history. On the contrary, the religious man is called upon to exemplify "loyalty to loyalty," to use Royce's phrase. In difficult situations he can only expect "one step enough," as Newman wrote. In fact, religious education has its most practical test in its ability to inspire conviction which holds fast to the highest and best at the worst of times. Faith in God expects that present trust in divine providence will lead to greater insight in the end. The history of religion gives evidence that such a commitment has had positive results even when insight was limited. Human sacrifice and sacred prostitution, once widely practiced, have been rejected in an increasing recognition of the moral character of deity.

High religion, even as it encourages devotion and conviction, need not practice intolerance. Indeed, the test of tolerance is not indifference but the willingness to recognize the worth of persons whose views are rejected. A minimum of tolerance has been established on non-religious grounds. Religion can contribute positively to the community of understanding necessary for a meaningful common life. In Christianity itself, the ecumenical movement for Christian unity has had such wide influence that no major Protestant denomination regards religious education as a simply sectarian concern.²³ There is extensive interchurch cooperation in the International Council of Religious Education in the development of curriculum and program. Local and national councils as well as the World Council of Churches represent a recognition that denominational exclusiveness is inappropriate in view of the large common heritage of the major Christian bodies.

More generally, it is probable that the world's great reli-

gions will continue to exist side by side in the immediate future. Although there will be increased proximity between their adherents, no one faith will replace all others, Braden has shown that Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and Judaism all face common problems in encouraging thoughtful devotion in cultures which are influenced increasingly by scientific knowledge.²⁴ Readjustment of attitude, leading to greater tolerance, must take place in a milieu which includes vital non-religious forces. Unhappily, the religions which have encouraged mankind's highest aspirations have been responsible as well for controversy and even violence. Religious education can serve a positive function only as it helps to dispel intolerance by understanding.

In the modern world, religious training must provide increasingly for a knowledge of the teachings of other faiths. There is positive gain when the adherents of a particular religion know the beliefs and practices of the members of another faith. Indeed, an individual cannot really understand his own major group or the particular denomination of his membership apart from some understanding of another point of view. Much is to be learned about religion itself from the realization that the world's great monotheistic religions are not absolutely different. Moreover, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism and Taoism share a large number of common moral and spiritual aspirations with the religions of the West. In the end, piety gains nothing from condemning another faith. The study of the world's living religions mitigates against the perennial tendency of piety to equate cultural differences with the central tenets of religious teaching. King has shown at length how the great motifs of devotion—ritual, law and mysticism—are variously expressed throughout the history of religion.²⁵

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Religious education must look for a more valid synthesis of faith and culture than is possible from obscurantism—either secular or religious. Because cultures change, this synthesis must remain always tentative and incomplete.²⁶ No human way of life, even a religious one, can be absolute for theism. Interpretations of creed, cultus and conduct must all point beyond themselves, directing the worshipper to God himself. In short, the Absolute, although present to the relative, need not be equated with it. A dynamic, living faith in God transcends in principle the cultural orientation of any single era.

In a democratic society, religious education has a new and difficult responsibility for the appropriation of truth which is little short of staggering. Religious leadership is never justified in ignoring the best knowledge of the time in any field. Piety is no substitute for serious inquiry or factual knowledge. The higher criticism of the Bible as well as the revolutionary discoveries of modern science have led to a new world view. Apart from all uncritical attacks on orthodoxy, many religious ideas of the past require serious reconstruction. Religious scholarship has a doubly serious responsibility, inasmuch as reinterpretation can have lasting significance only as it proceeds from positive insight.

Ultimately, worship is of fundamental importance in promoting creative attitudes in both the individual and society. The antithesis between the content-centered and the individual-oriented methodologies is resolved in the practice of devotion.²⁷ Worship is a unique resource for influencing the deepest wellsprings of personal life in terms of both attitude and idea. When it is creative and vital, it requires that the individual examine himself with special urgency in the presence of the deity. Of course, religious ceremony and ritual can reinforce bigotry and serve as an escape from reality.

Yet, fundamentally, their role is more positive. Personal freedom and creativity are heightened in response to the deity. The aesthetic, moral and specifically rational are understood to have their ground and goal in God himself. No theory of religious education is complete apart from the acknowledgment that criticism and devotion supplement each other in mature moral character.

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NOTES

1. Sheldon Smith comments at length on Bushnell's ideas in his *Faith and Nurture* (New York: Scribner's, 1954).
2. Bernard Iddings Bell, *Crisis in Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1948), Chapters 8 and 9.
3. John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).
4. J. Paul Williams, *What Americans Believe and How They Worship* (New York: Harper, 1954).
5. For example, A. Roy Eckhardt, "The New Look in American Piety," *The Christian Century*, LXXI, 1395-1397, November 17, 1954.
6. Lewis Joseph Sherrill, *The Rise of Christian Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1950).
7. Randolph Crump Miller, *The Clue to Christian Education* (New York: Scribner's, 1950).
8. A. Victor Murray, *Education into Religion* (New York: Harper, 1953), Chapter IV.
9. Kenneth Irving Brown, *Not Minds Alone* (New York: Harper, 1954).
10. Nels F. S. Ferré, *Christian Faith and Higher Education* (New York: Harper, 1954), Chapters 1-3.
11. Murray, *op. cit.*, Chapter VI.
12. Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).
13. Paul Ramsey, *Basic Christian Ethics* (New York: Scribner's, 1950).
14. Lewis Joseph Sherrill, *Guilt and Redemption* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1945).
15. Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, transl. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (New York: Holt, 1935).

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16. Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Macmillan, 1926).
17. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, transl. J. W. Swain (New York: Macmillan, 1915).
18. Ernest M. Ligon, *A Greater Generation* (New York: Macmillan, 1950).
19. William Marshall Urban, *Humanity and Deity* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1951).
20. Paul Tillich, *Biblical Religion and the Search for Ultimate Reality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).
21. George Hedley, *The Superstitions of the Irreligious* (New York: Macmillan, 1952).
22. Clive Staples Lewis, *Beyond Personality* (London: G. Bles, 1945).
23. Philip Henry Lotz, ed., *Orientation in Religious Education* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1950). The Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches has sponsored *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Ruth Rouse and Stephen Charles Neill (London: S.P.C.K., 1954).
24. Charles Samuel Braden, *War, Communism and World Religions* (New York: Harper, 1953).
25. Winston L. King, *Introduction to Religion* (New York: Harper, 1954), Part III.
26. H. Richard Niebuhr treats this idea in detail with respect to Christianity in his *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1951).
27. This is one of Miller's leading ideas in his *The Clue to Christian Education*.