

A DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

A DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This project provides a theory for a programme of religious education which will attempt to mitigate the breakdown between belief and action in adolescence. It involves a critical analysis of the recent literature regarding the stages of religious development and an examination of how those stages compare to the stages of intellectual development as described by Piaget, and of emotional development as described by Erikson and Freud.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| CHAPTER I: COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION | 4 |
| Notes - Chapter I | 27 |
| CHAPTER II: EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION | 29 |
| Notes - Chapter II | 40 |
| CHAPTER III: IDENTITY THEORY | 42 |
| Notes - Chapter III | 53 |
| CHAPTER IV: A THEORY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION | 54 |
| Notes - Chapter IV | 73 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 74 |

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX A: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS
- APPENDIX B: MATERIALS TO BE USED

INTRODUCTION

The research of piaget regarding the stages of intellectual development has been used extensively over the years to plan educational programs that will maximize a child's intellectual development. Although Piaget's work is being criticized and questioned by scholars today, his theory of the progression of intellectual development still remains firm. A child learns in a progressive manner and therefore must first be taught simple concepts moving on to more complex ones only as development occurs.

Erikson and Freud have added another aspect to the development of the child. Emotional development and development of the personality are also progressive; however, each stage, rather than being left behind as Piaget suggests, is incorporated into the following stage. It follows that earlier stages must be complete and adequate in order for the later stages to be complete and adequate.

The work of Piaget, and of Erikson and Freud has provided much useful information for the development of educational programs.

As early as 1944, Harms outlined the phases that a child passes through in its thinking about religious issues. Goldman in 1964 extended this idea of phases in a child's thinking about religion, outlining specific stages of religious development in a fashion similar to the way Piaget outlined stages of intellectual development.

A comparison of Goldman's stages of religious development to the work of Piaget and of Erikson and Freud will be the starting point of

this project. From there we will go on to the implications that this theory has for the teaching of religion with special emphasis on the effects of religious education on adolescent rejection of religious beliefs.

It is the intention of this project to develop a theory of religious education which will attempt to mitigate the breakdown between belief and action that so often occurs during adolescence.

First, we need to establish what the relationship between belief and action is. Then we need to look at the causes for its breakdown during adolescence. The identity theory of religion helps to explain why it is particularly difficult to make the transition between childhood identity and establishing a new adult identity. During this transitional stage, grave doubts arise concerning the validity of childhood beliefs in light of more knowledge and understanding and of new ideas and modes of conduct. New beliefs have not yet been established but the old beliefs do not fit. The adolescent finds it must reject the old beliefs in favour of its new ideas, even though the new ideas are not yet clear or understood.

A developmental theory of religious education will teach the child in such a way as to make it a mature and whole person. Religious material and concepts will be presented when the child is developmentally ready to understand their meaning. This will mean that religious concepts will be introduced only when they are relevant to the needs of the child. The emphasis will be on wholeness, on the establishment of an identity that will be adequate and satisfying at each stage of life. Such a program of religious education should allow the child to adjust its view of religion to suit its needs without the trauma of total rejection. It is

perfectly natural for a child to change its world view as its understanding and its experiences grow, so also it is perfectly natural for the child's view of religion to change and adapt as well.

CHAPTER I

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The work of Jean Piaget, 1896-1980, has influenced the thinking of educators for many years. He constructed a broad detailed argument regarding the development of intellect and behavior based on innumerable tests and observations. It is only very recently that some of his conclusions are being seriously questioned and indeed challenged. Margaret Donaldson, in her book, Children's Minds,¹ points out that many of Piaget's findings could actually have been interpreted quite differently. She examines some of the tasks that Piaget's subjects were given and explains how the results could mean a thought process completely other than what Piaget assumed. Donaldson's conclusions are that a child's development is much more advanced than Piaget had indicated.

Robert S. Brumbaugh and Nathaniel M. Lawrence, in Philosophical Themes in Modern Education,² also criticize Piaget's findings. They indicate that Piaget had limited subjects and that his stages could be shown to be incorrect in broader surveys. They suggest too that Piaget did not stress enough the effect of cultural and social factors in the development of the intellect.³

Granting that questions and objections like those mentioned above may prove to be legitimate, for the purposes of this paper I will, nevertheless, make use of Piaget's findings. Even if Piaget's views prove to

be not entirely accurate, their consequences for religious education are worth examining, particularly because these views have been so widely accepted for so long. I intend to consider the implications of some of his claims about intellectual development for the question of religious education. Furthermore, it will be noted that the discrepancies between Piaget's views and those of Donaldson and Brumbaugh and Lawrence occur chiefly in the early stages of childhood and not in the adolescent stage which is the stage that I am concerned with most.

Let us begin with a brief summary of the four stages of intellectual development. I will place most emphasis on the adolescent stage as this is the age group that this paper deals with. The four stages are: "Sensory-motor", 0-2 years; "Preoperational", 2-7 years; "Concrete-operational", 7-11 years; and "Formal operational", adolescence.⁴

1) "Sensory-motor", 0-2 years.

This stage is best characterized by the word "ego-centric". The child sees only itself. Its actions are basically reflexes and devoid of personal meaning. It depends on these reflexes for interaction with the environment. The baby's cries are a reflex response to hunger or discomfort; it may smile or coo in an imitative way, but these gestures are simply blind behavior patterns.

Slowly the child's interest begins to extend beyond its own body. Its behavior patterns are now removed from the feeding situation. It is now progressing into the next phase.

2) "Preoperational", 2-7 years.

Language, mobility, and manipulative control are being developed.

The child is still ego-centric in that it cannot take into account any points of view other than its own. Its thought is inflexible and irreversible; in other words, the child can grasp a procedure but cannot reverse it or change it in any way to adapt it to a new situation.

At this stage, the child makes mental adaptations resulting from assimilating data and accommodating them to already existing understanding. It uses three types of explanation at this stage:

- (i) artificialism: natural phenomena are related to adult activity, e.g. night exists because someone has turned out the lights of the world;
- (ii) animism: human qualities are given to inanimate objects, e.g. the rain knows our plants need water so it rains;
- (iii) magic: supernatural qualities are given to otherwise incomprehensible phenomena, e.g. babies come from the stork.

3) "Concrete-operational", 7-11 years.

The child can now focus on several things simultaneously, is sensitive to transformations and can reverse the direction of its thinking. This stage is characterized by:

- (i) objectivity: the ability to separate oneself from an external reality;
- (ii) reciprocity: the capacity to extend equal value to other points of view; and
- (iii) relativity: the understanding that nothing the mind isolates has independent existence.

It is at this point that Piaget stresses the fact that intellectual

development does not occur in a vacuum independently of other factors. He implies that "not only should we expect a gradual and tested meaningfulness for the cumulative emergence of mature reason, we should also not expect the emergence of intelligence to be sound or significant unless accompanied by its moral counterpart".⁵

The social interactions of a child are vital to its intellectual development. There is another aspect of intelligence, a sense that one has that not only are there general laws that describe all types of physical events, but that these laws themselves must cohere, be comprehensive and, in principle, unifiable into one logical order. This is the sense in which "moral" is here used: This type of rational thinking leads the child to take into consideration not only what it envisages or perceives but also what is required for social behavior.

4) "Formal operational", adolescence.

"The egocentricity of previous phases is what might be called perhaps not a constant, but a rhythmically recurring orientation. It characterizes any phase at the advent; as the phase develops, equilibrium is approached and a new objectivity and a new subjectivity jointly materialize."⁶

Adolescence is the time when the child is liberated from the "actual", the "concrete". It is no longer bound strictly to what is observed. Hypothetical, abstract thinking is beginning to be possible. The adolescent can adapt to a variety of problems and combine methods and ideas, its thinking is flexible and it has available many cognitive operations.

The most striking characteristic of this phase is that possibility

dominates reality. Reality is now secondary to possibility, whereas in the previous phases reality was absolute. It is this "liberation of the actual"⁷ that is the heart of the emotional upheaval of adolescence. There are for the adolescent countless possibilities for testing old and new ideas against the ideas of others resulting often in confusion and insecurity. "The adolescent...attributes an unlimited power to his own thoughts so that the dream of a glorious future or of transforming the world through ideas...seems to be not only fantasy but also an effective action which in itself modifies the empirical world."⁸ At this time, there is great involvement in forming action groups. Within the groups is a tendency to conformity, but also a "decentering" or decompression of the ego-centric features of any phase. These groups are usually transitional, but they allow the discipline of the practical and the testing of ideas against the ideas of others. The results are unlikely to confuse the adolescent since it is capable of conceiving of many possibilities.

Adolescence is the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Piaget has shown that the world of the child is not a simplified version of the world of the adult; it is instead a very distinctive mental structure different from that of an adult.⁹ A child has a distinctive mental structure which is qualitatively different from the adult's and, therefore, it views the world from a different perspective from that of the adult. As a result of the cognitive structure of the child and this differing method of approaching reality, the child's view of reality may appear chaotic and unnatural to the adult. What the adult may assume from his learning experiences may not be applicable to

children. An idea or concept that the adult may find simple or self-evident may be quite complicated for the child because of its dependence of concreteness in the "concrete-operational" stage for example. This difference also manifests itself in language. The child's words may have a different meaning from that which the same words have for an adult because they are assimilated into the mental structure specific to the child's stage of development.

In adolescence there is a transformation of thought which involves "a total restructuring of the personality in which intellectual transformations are parallel or complementary to the affective transformation."¹⁰

Piaget's research has shown two basic concepts that are pertinent to education. Firstly, there do exist stages of intellectual development. The teacher must, therefore, be aware of the child's level of cognitive functioning. Secondly, interest and learning are facilitated if the experience presented to the child bears some relevance to what he already knows but at the same time is sufficiently novel to present incongruities and conflicts.¹¹ The teacher must make available experiences which facilitate development.¹²

In the following pages, I will look at the research of Harms and Goldman, both of whom concentrate on a cognitive-developmental approach to learning as it applies to religious education. Their work is loosely based on the work of Jean Piaget concerning cognitive developmental processes. They are attempting to determine at what stage of development various religious concepts can be understood. This research will form a basis from which to make decisions regarding the selection of materials suitable for a specific program of religious education.

It has long been recognized in other fields of education that the material must be suitable to the specific level of development at which the students are; however, it seems that in religious education this has not been seriously considered. Here it seems that the approach has been to present the same material pretty well at all levels and to expect the students to interpret and understand the material in different ways as they grow in intellectual development. Let me give an example of this sort of teaching.

The stories concerning the miracles that Jesus performed have been taught to children in very early years with the result that these miracles were seen as a sort of fairy tale happening. Young children do not find that sort of story hard to believe. When these children grow older they no longer believe in fairy tales but the same miracle stories of Jesus are still being told to them and they are expected to believe them. The result usually is that the child will disbelieve and reject the miracle stories just as it no longer believes in fairy tales. No thought was given to how the child would interpret the miracle stories. It was somehow assumed that as the child grew in understanding it would be able to adjust its thinking from an elementary and naive understanding to one much more mature and complicated. Had these miracle stories been presented at a much later time in the child's development, one would have been able to teach their meaning without having to first overcome the barrier that the child has formed against these stories because it still sees them in the category of fairy tale. I have used an example out of a Christian tradition, but other traditions have similar difficulties.

Ernest Harms in 1944 devised some methods which would attempt to

find out about the religious experience of children. He used these findings to formulate a theory of religious development. The standard testing procedures up till this time had relied on verbal responses. Harms decided that since a child is not able to use verbal forms accurately until its twelfth year, non-verbal tests must be used to test younger children. A second reason for his emphasis on the non-verbal especially in studying religious experience is that "Man's religious experience can be expressed only to a very small extent by his use of his rational and intellectual powers".¹³ "...religion is a social and cultural expression of man which ... is largely a part of the non-intellectual sphere..."¹⁴

Harms' results are based on the non-verbal tests using mainly drawings done by the children and observations of their behavior during the drawing. He has divided the religious development of children into three stages: the "fairy tale" stage, the "realistic" stage, and the "individualistic" stage. Let us look at each of these stages.

1) The "fairy tale" stage: age 3-6 years.

The children in this group expressed their view of a deity in a fairy tale conception. Most of the children were slightly hesitant to draw a deity possibly because the deity is seen with a little more awe than other fairy tale characters. Harms points out that verbally at this stage the child indulges in endless intellectual questioning on any topic including religion. However, intellectual the child's thoughts and questions may appear to be at this time "The real God experience is a fairy tale imagination glorifying the highest fantasies which the child at this age can catch with his little mind".¹⁶

2) The "realistic" stage: age 6-11 years.

At about six years of age the child's feelings and emotions have reached a stage of maturation which greatly influences its religious outlook. This is a stage of concretization and realism. Instead of the imagery of fairy tales, figures assume the human features of people whom the child sees in real life. It is now that the child is often most willing to identify with religious people and institutions. It no longer uses fairy tale figures; instead it uses symbols to depict its feelings. The child at this stage expresses its thoughts in a realistic way and understands concrete situations.

3) The "individualistic" stage: 11 years onwards.

This age group had the most diverse expressions of any of the groups. No one characteristic could be found to be representative of this group. There were, however, three general trends.

Group A expressed its religious imagination in a conventional and conservative way according to existing forms of expression. The drawings were not original yet the work was still much more sensitive and individualistic than most adults' drawings.

Group B showed considerably more originality and inventiveness. Their drawings were expressions of deep emotional experiences showing a high degree of sensitivity.

Group C was quite unique in that the drawings were not at all representative of any recognized religious forms of the children's backgrounds or experience. The drawings were filled with mystical elements and symbols which often were reminiscent of ancient cults.

The importance of the findings of this stage was in their diversity.

it truly can only be called the individualistic stage.

Harms states that the religious development of a child is different from its scientific development and slower as well. If this is so, Harms insists that we must give the child the chance to develop these religious leanings. Religious instruction must be age specific. At the first stage, instructors have been fooled by the many intellectual questions of the child and have attempted to answer religious questions intellectually. The child at this stage cannot comprehend the complex intellectual and rational religious concepts that it may be asking about. It is the task of the instructors to answer the child's curiosity by reference to the correct developmental and educational facts. Rational and realistic introduction into the religious life should not be started until the second stage of religious development.

The greatest problem for religious education is that "in each matured child we face a mature individual religious pattern which is congenital or, at least, profoundly connected with the child's natural disposition. Our task is to help the child find that individual religion."¹⁶

Let us now take a look at Goldman's findings. Goldman's work on the stages of religious development comes 20 years after that of Harms, but his results are strikingly similar. Once again, however, Goldman relied heavily on verbal methods. His tests consisted of telling children stories or showing them pictures and asking questions about them to draw out the children's opinions. It must also be noted that Goldman's work involved only stories and pictures out of the Christian tradition.

In Goldman's work, we see again three stages of religious development. Since his work is aimed at the school system, Goldman does not

include the pre-school child in his study. The three stages are: the "pre-religious" stage, the "sub-religious" stage, and the "religious" stage.

1. The "pre-religious" stage: age 5-9 years.

This is an ego-centric stage, a time when experiences center around the child and are not seen objectively. Experiences are seen only in relation to the "me". The child's thinking is ego-centric and irreversible. This means that it has no intellectual check to see whether its ideas are valid or even consistent. The child's irreversible thought processes do not allow it to relate facts one to another or to make any sort of generalizations.

What this means for the child's religious development is no different from its implications for other areas of development. Religious truths are abstract, of a propositional nature and are dependent on the capacity to see analogies from one situation to another and to understand the metaphors in which religious narratives abound.¹⁷ Clearly, the child at this stage in its intellectual development does not have this capacity. It simply cannot begin to grasp religious truth. Goldman agrees with Harms in saying that at this stage religion is fantasized.¹⁸

2) The "sub-religious" stage: age 9-13 years.

The thought processes have developed considerably by this stage. The child is now less ego-centric, reasonably objective, and able to relate facts one to another. This is the stage of literalism and concretization. Things are seen only as concrete situations or visual and sensory experiences. There is extreme pre-occupation with facts; did it

really happen? and is it true? are very serious issues at this time. If something is not true it cannot be accepted. Fairy tales are rejected as childish. They are not true.

This stage is critical for the religious development of the child. The child no longer accepts fantasy or stories of the super-natural. If events are not realistic, and if the child feels that they are not true, it will reject them.

If the child has been told stories during its first stage of development that it accepted as true, it will now reject them when it discovers that they are fantasy. So, too, it will reject those elements of its religious knowledge that were formerly accepted as true but which now appear to be fantasy. The child's imprisonment in concrete concepts and literalisms does not allow it to have a more spiritual understanding of religious truths.¹⁹ This rejection of religious stories as fantasy very often results in a total rejection of religion throughout the third stage of development.

3) The "religious" stage: age 13 onwards.

Judging by Goldman's titles for these stages, this is the only stage at which religious thinking can occur. The child is now capable of the sort of non-concrete, abstract, hypothetical thinking that is necessary when dealing with religious concepts. Religious thinking is the process of generalizing from various experiences, previous perceptions and already held concepts to an interpretive concept of the activity and nature of the divine.²⁰ The child's thought processes are now developed to the point where it can think in this manner.

Goldman insists that religious thinking is not something apart

from other types of thinking. Religious thinking is simply thinking about religion. As in any other field, unless the child has a wide range of experience to draw on, it cannot begin to interpret and relate its own experiences to a different world view and so too in religion it cannot relate new facts to a new religious world view.²¹ As a child's power of thought is developed so that it becomes more able to deal with intellectual concepts, so too it becomes more able to deal with religious concepts.

This would signify then that in religious education, as in any other subject area, we must present the child only with material for which it is intellectually ready. This is also Harms' opinion.

Let us take a look at the relationship between Piaget's stages of development of the intellect and Goldman's and Harms' stages of religious development. We will begin with Piaget's "pre-operational" stage (2-7 years). This corresponds roughly with Goldman's "pre-religious" stage (5-9 years). This stage is characterized by its inflexible and irreversible thinking and its ego-centricity. Piaget states that the child at this stage attempts to explain things by means of artificialism, animism, and magic. When turning its thoughts to religion at this stage, the child simply classifies this material in the same way. God is a magical being who controls natural phenomena and all objects, inanimate as well as animate, are subject to this God. Harms calls this the "fairy-tale" stage (3-6 years).

The next stage is Piaget's "concrete-operational" stage (7-11 years). Goldman calls this stage "sub-religious" (9-13 years). The main characteristic of this stage is the rejection of fantasy and the

emphasis on the concrete, on facts. The child now sees other points of view and understands that nothing exists independently. The emphasis on rationality makes the child highly critical of any concepts which may be of a super-natural quality as in many religious stories.

Harms refers to this as the "realistic" stage (6-11 years), again emphasizing the concrete and rational.

The adolescent stage is called "formal-operational" by Piaget, and "religious" by Goldman. Now the child is no longer bound by concretism and realism, it can indulge in abstract thinking. Goldman insists that most thinking about religion is abstract, the possibilities presented by religion are endless and, therefore, this is truly the "religious" stage. All other stages are mere preparation for this stage. Harms in naming this stage "individualistic" also emphasizes the innumerable possibilities of expression which this stage of development allows.

We will now look in much greater detail at what these findings indicate for the teaching of religion specifically.

The results of Harms' and Goldman's research have profound implications for religious education. Goldman says that religious material has been written for adults, by adults; neither the concepts nor the language are easily understood by children. Children, before the third stage of their development, cannot be expected to appreciate, much less actually understand, such material.

In the "pre-religious" stage, religious stories and narratives are classified by the children along with all other stories. They may be enjoyable and interesting, but they have no meaning other than that

for the children. Goldman states that the aim of telling religious stories should never be to make children familiar with them on a purely descriptive level. Religious stories serve only as vehicles for religious truths and at this stage these truths are beyond the grasp of the children and, therefore, religious stories should not be told to them. These stories should be left until such a time when they can be understood and interpreted for their religious meaning.

Piaget pointed out that at this age the child is ego-centric and very concerned with the magical. This is the time then to tell stories which are close to the emotions of the child. Stories telling of human characteristics such as loving, sharing, and caring are excellent at this stage. The child will accept these with awe and wonder and will relate them to itself.

In the "sub-religious" stage, fantasy is no longer accepted. The child now rejects religious stories which it accepted as fantasy at an earlier stage. The child, with its great concern for facts, will now accept only what it sees as being true, historically true or verifiable. Religion now is seen as history and only those things which "really happened", which "are true", are accepted. Religious educators have leaped at this as a chance to present virtually all the religious writings at this time in the guise of history. This may seem at first glance to be a valid plan; however, on closer examination one soon sees that a very large proportion of any religious writings is not based on historic truth. Most religious writings include various literary forms used to present spiritual truths. In focusing attention on only what is historic truth we are reinforcing the child's belief that only what is "true" in a

historical sense is worthy and thereby we are closing the door to that immense aspect of religious writing which cannot be taken literally. Once again, we must remember that the reason for telling religious stories is to convey religious truths, not to make children aware of particular events, historical or other. Religious stories are not to be seen as fantasy or as pure history, and are best not told in this stage.

Stories of bravery, courage and strength are suitable here since, as Harms says, children at this stage like concrete examples to look up to and follow. Such concrete examples will exemplify the human characteristics which have been introduced at an earlier stage. For the most part, these stories do not need to come from any specific religious writings although with extreme care one could use those from this source. It would be unfortunate if a story with a spiritual meaning were to be used superficially at this stage if in so doing the story would lose its potential for revealing this spiritual meaning at a later stage in the child's life. The story of David and Goliath in the Hebrew Bible is a good example of this. This story has often been used to show David's courage and bravery in attempting to kill the giant Goliath. However, the point of the story is David's faith in God and God's reaching out to help free his people. It has much less to do with courage or bravery and should not be used for that purpose.

Religious thinking is a process of generalizing from various experiences, previous perceptions and already held concepts to an interpretation of the religious traditions and teachings. It follows then that the child must have a broad base of experiences built up in its early years which it can draw on in adolescence. This is true in all

areas of the child's development and especially also in its religious development. The religious development of the child depends on its real-life experiences and these can be provided by religious education in its early years. Religious education in the younger years is a preparation, a laying of the foundation for the explicit religious education in adolescence. This implicit religious education will never involve the explicit and overt teaching of religious principles, ideas or concepts, and it may indeed never involve the telling of religious stories or the use of characters or examples from sacred writings.

No one would argue with Goldman and Harms about the developmental nature of learning and of its application to religious learning. Serious exception has been taken to Goldman's conclusions though especially by educators in religious institutions. Lawrence O. Richards states the argument quite clearly in his book A Theology of Christian Education, Chapter 15.²² Richards insists that a child should be made familiar with sacred writings and religious concepts as early as possible so that these will be available to it when it constructs its world view. A person is constantly restructuring his concept of reality as new data become known to him or as he understands old data in different ways. So too will religious information be re-evaluated constantly. Richards says that a world view without religious concepts is not realistic because religion plays a vital part in the world and, therefore, we must provide the child with religious data to use in its structuring of a world view.²³

Richards is not concerned that the older child will reject religious truths because it has first accepted these at a childlike level. He feels that the child rather than reject these ideas will simply

re-interpret them and use them in a new construct of reality. The religious narratives have given the child a sense of wonder and awe in religion, and though it now no longer sees religious narratives as purely fanciful it embraces them even more now that it sees that they are not just stories, but that they convey deeper meanings of life.²⁴

Richards accepted religious stories as truth in his early childhood and he still accepts them as such. He finds it no more difficult now to accept as truth the fact that Jesus rose from the dead than he did in his "fairy-tale" stage. This is the fundamental difference between Richards and Goldman and Harms. Richards accepts religious stories not only for the philosophical meaning that they convey but also at their face value. Therefore, Richards has no questions about presenting religious material at too early an age. The young child will accept the stories literally and will add to that literal acceptance an understanding of the deeper meanings when it is intellectually able to do so.

Goldman and Harms on the other hand do not take religious narratives at their face value. They feel that these narratives have been told not as literal truths but as literary vehicles to express deeper spiritual truths. Young children cannot comprehend the more advanced use of literary technique and will misunderstand the narratives. Therefore, if one tells a child in its "fairy-tale" stage a story which it accepts as true, it will tend not to re-evaluate the data but simply to reject them as fantasy when it no longer accepts fantasy as part of its reality.

Richards and Goldman differ not so much in their method as in their intent. It is their acceptance and understanding of religious narrative that are at odds. The final outcome of religious education

for Richards is a literal acceptance of religious narratives along with their philosophical meaning, while Goldman and Harms expect an acceptance of religious narratives not literally but as conveyors of philosophical meaning only.

Richards' view is hardly appropriate in a multi-cultural public school system but it has been useful in showing that the outcome intended may determine the method of instruction used.

Richards advocates presenting the child with all religious material while Goldman wants to concentrate on teaching religious ideas implicitly instead of explicitly. Perhaps a middle road would be a better solution. I think Richards is certainly correct in saying that religious language, symbols and narratives need to be part of the child's data bank but I also agree with Goldman in saying that some, in fact much, of the religious material presents great problems for children as their thinking matures.

There are many stories and myths from both religious and non-religious traditions that show mystery and awe in the universe and in creation and life. Children of all ages should be familiar with these stories so that the concepts presented in them can be incorporated in their data bank of knowledge for the structuring of their identity. We need to stop shying away from all use of ideas and materials that originate from religious traditions. These are part of our lives and we should not deny that fact. They should be given their rightful place in education. Most teachers do not hesitate to teach about witch doctors or evil spirits when they are studying a culture far away from ours, but when studying familiar western cultures there suddenly is little or

no reference made to the religious factor. Religion when it touches us personally is such an emotion-laden subject that it is kept at a very safe distance. This is neither sensible nor right and we need to begin to approach it in a natural way as a vital part of our society. Every school child is well aware of religious traditions and differences and by making them taboo, not to be mentioned by the teacher, we are saying that religion does not belong in school. It may belong at home or in the religious institution, but it does not belong in school.

However, in all this one must not forget that religion is not a simple intellectual exercise. Religion has a strong element of emotion in it and, therefore, intellectual development is not the only requirement for development of religious thinking. Religious language is based on analogy, metaphor, simile and other literary devices and religious concepts are often hypothetical and abstract in that they are based on belief rather than on proof. It is only in adolescence that the child begins to understand these literary forms and to think in abstract, hypothetical terms and, therefore, it is in adolescence that one sees the greatest religious potential.

Adolescence may be the age of the greatest religious potential, but it is also a time for many to reject religion once and for all. Goldman sees several reasons for this.²⁵ Firstly, by the time children reach adolescence many of them have heard the same religious material so often that they are bored with it. It no longer captivates their interest enough for them to see new meanings in it. A child hears the Christmas story each year in December throughout its life. In what other field would a student be presented with the same material each year of

his schooling? Secondly, adolescence is a time for independence and freedom. Many religions come across as authoritarian and unyielding and are taught in a way which does not allow for doubt or questioning. This is very often a reason for rejection of religion at this time. It must be said, however, that in recent years, where emphasis has been on "doing your own thing" many young people are disillusioned with this freedom and in looking for directives are turning to religious groups, e.g. The Children of God, that are extremely authoritarian and demanding.

The third reason for rejection of religion at this stage is a direct result of the religious education that the child has received in its first two stages. In their pre-religious stage, children were told countless stories in the realm of fantasy which they accepted. In the sub-religious stage, these fantasy stories were rejected and only those stories that were seen to be true or real remained acceptable. Now in adolescence the child's critical mind rejects the literalism of the sub-religious stage as childish. By making children into premature literalists or fundamentalists we have sown the seeds for rejection and defeated the whole purpose of religious education. The child is now left with nothing that it can accept.

Children do not grow out of their misunderstandings; they carry through into adolescence and then find them crude and unacceptable and may reject them as intellectual nonsense. Presenting religious material too early results in the child's crystalizing its thinking and closing its mind to further exploration of the material. Misconceptions, verbalisms and a focus on trivialities result in a period of arrested

religious development which may remain with the child throughout not only its childhood but its entire life.

AGE IN
YEARS

PIAGET - COGNITIVE

- 1) Sensory-Motor
 - thought is directly tied to action and sensation
- 2) Preoperational
 - ego-centric and intuitive reasoning
- 3) Concrete-Operational
 - emphasis on concrete events and objects
- 4) Formal-operational
 - ability to think abstractly, to think about thoughts

HARMS - RELIGIOUS

- 1) Fairy-tale stage
 - rational, radical realistic thinking
 - belief in supernatural as in fairy tales
 - fantasy is reality
- 2) Realistic stage
 - concrete thinking
 - definite realism
 - disbelief in fairy tales
- 3) Individualistic stage
 - emotional
 - denial of formalized opinions
 - spiritualization
 - personal thoughts predominate

GOLDMAN - RELIGIOUS

- 1) Pre-religious
 - ego-centric thought
 - irreversible thinking
 - inconsistency and inadequacy of thought
- 2) Sub-religious
 - concretization of experiences
 - literalism - restricts a spiritual understanding
- 3) Religious
 - abstract, hypothetical thinking
 - desire for spiritualism
 - emotional and sincere

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CHAPTER II

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

It was emphasized in Chapter One that the rate of development of intelligence was basically a straightforward predictable progression but other factors such as social interaction and emotional attachment did play a part. This chapter will concentrate on the stages of identity within a life cycle, the emotional attachment to these stages and the effect that religion has on this attachment. We will begin with Erikson's stages of identity.

Erikson describes human growth from the viewpoint of inner and outer conflicts which the person weathers re-emerging from each crisis with an increased sense of inner unity, with an increase of good judgment, and an increase in the capacity to do well according to his own standards and to the standards of those significant to him.¹ The healthy child who is given reasonable and proper guidance can be expected to obey inner laws of development. These laws create a "succession of potentialities for significant interaction with those persons who tend and respond to him and those institutions which are ready for him."² Erikson has divided the life cycle into six stages. At each stage the person begins with a set of assumptions, new encounters in the environment test these assumptions and cause them to change. Each stage then is a potential crisis because of a radical change in perspective. Erikson uses crisis here as a turning point, a time for adjustment and growth.³

Let us examine briefly each of Erikson's stages.

1) "Infancy and the mutuality of recognition".

The earliest sense of identity comes out of the encounter of material person and small infant.⁴ The child is the receiver, it receives not only food but many other things such as love. This stage should be handled in such a way that the infant will develop a basic trust. This trust implies confidence in a provider and in one's ability to cope with one's private needs and urges and to relay these to the provider.⁵ This trust depends not on quantities of food or love, but on the quality of the maternal relationship. Mothers create a sense of trust in their children through a combination of sensitive care of the infant's individual needs and a firm sense of personal trustworthiness within the framework of their community's life style.

2) "Early childhood and the will to be oneself".

This stage sees the child's first emancipation from the mother. There is a conflict between cooperation and willfulness, between self-expression and compliance, between loving good will and hateful self-insistence.⁶ The balance between free will and obedience is easily upset. The child still needs much guidance and instruction, but it has a great desire to be a free agent. Man has a basic need for a delineation of his autonomy. The degree of a sense of autonomy which parents are able to give their children depends on the dignity and sense of personal independence which they themselves have.⁷

3) "Childhood and the anticipation of roles".

The child now has more freedom of movement, a greater sense of

language and an expanded imagination. It is beset by irrational fears and guilt feelings. The child moves further outside itself and looks for new identifications. Its learning leads away from its limitations into future possibilities. This "Initiative" stage is important because here the child's initiative and a sense of purpose for adult tasks are freed.

4) "School age and task identification".

Now the child is eager and ready to learn, to share, to conform, to perform. It is a time of imitation and attachment to older models. The sense of industry which characterizes this stage is quickly turned to a sense of inferiority when the child realizes that its worth is measured by factors other than its intrinsic qualities, for example by skin colour or background. At this time, one must concentrate on building the child's confidence in its competence. This is the basis for co-operative participation in productive adult life. However, work is not the only worthwhile accomplishment in life. The child must be shown that creativity, imagination, and playfulness must not be sacrificed.

5) "Adolescence".

This is the transition between childhood and adulthood. Physical maturation combined with the uncertainty about adult roles lead to much confusion. Consequently, adolescence is a time to establish a subculture which appears to be final and adult but which in actuality is transitory.

The adolescent needs to integrate the identity elements of his childhood stages into an adult-like mode. This is problematic precisely

because of its nature. The adolescent wants to hold on to what was learned in childhood but without appearing childish. This is so important that the adolescent will often behave in such a way as to deny its earlier identities, e.g. the child that learned basic trust in stage one will now fear a foolish, too trusting commitment and will express this in blatant and cynical mistrust.

The most well adjusted adolescent is the one most able to pursue "expanding technological trends and is, therefore, able to identify with new rules of competency and invention, and to accept a more implicit ideological outlook".⁸ This stage is beset by "identity confusion". Our society tends to limit the choices of the adolescent so severely that the self-reliant individual dependent on a degree of choice and committed to the freedom of self-realization cannot cope with this restrictiveness.

These then are the four stages within adolescence: (i) a need for people and ideas to put one's trust in expressed in mistrust and cynicism, (ii) a need for opportunities to decide freely on available avenues of duty and service, (iii) a need to be creative and imaginative, and (iv) a need to make something work in a unique and satisfying manner.

6) "Beyond identity".

This stage is characterized by "intimacy" as opposed to a "sense of isolation" and "distantiation": the readiness to defend one's territory of intimacy and solidarity.

This stage usually follows adolescence and, therefore, need not be examined in detail here.

Before we examine more carefully Erikson's stages of emotional development, let us take a look at what Freud has to say on the same topic. We will then be better able to see the aspect of emotional development as a whole.

Freud talks about stages of development of the personality and of the attachment that one has to these stages.

1) "Id".

The id is that undifferentiated bundle of instinctual drives or energies which man brings with himself into life. It is a reservoir of biological and psychological energy.⁹ This id is integrated and organized in the womb, then as the world imposes itself on this unwilling, intransigent id, two modifications develop; the ego and the superego.¹⁰

2) "Ego".

The id is passion. It is restrained by the reality of the world around. The small infant is ruled by the "pleasure ego", but it must take into account reality which stands in the way of one's desires.¹¹

This is the stage of oral and anal eroticism, the first stage in the development of personality.¹² The infant is a pleasure-seeking, pain-avoiding constellation of unconscious drives and urges. This sensual urge dominates its life.¹³ The first method of satiating these sensual urges Freud calls "oral". The infant's pleasure-seeking finds satisfaction in sucking, wriggling, eating, and so on. It's every action is aimed at giving pleasure to itself.

In the next stage, the anal stage, the infant moves from receiving pleasure to giving pleasure. Freud says that the best gift that the

infant has is its discharge from its own body. It can control this discharge, withhold it as punishment, or give it up as a gift to show love.¹⁴

At about the age of five, the child shifts from oral and anal eroticism to the all oerotic stage in which the genitals take precedence as erogenous zones.¹⁵ It is now that, through the inescapable conflict between the individual and the world the oedipus and castration complexes develop. The child is aware of its genitals and has intense sexual feelings. The boy loves his mother in a sexual way and feels himself a rival to his father. His hate for his father leaves him feeling guilty and afraid that he will lose his genitals as a punishment for his feelings. This then is the oedipus complex and its resulting castration complex. In girls, this works in reverse. The girl feels that since she has no penis she has already been punished for her feelings of sexual love for her father and the resultant rivalry with and hatred for her mother. It must be noted that these things are all happening subconsciously.¹⁶

3) "Super-ego".

Out of these oedipus and castration complexes develops the super-ego. The id is being restrained by humans who care for the child. Super-ego is an internalizing of an external authority. It represents the child's parents, an internal parent so to speak.¹⁷ Super-ego is an outgrowth and modification of ego, but it is unconscious and independent of it. It is in contact with the id as a psychic censor, protecting the ego from knowledge of the id's socially unacceptable urges and preventing the oedipus and castration complexes from either entering into the ego or being manifested directly in action.¹⁸

Freud sees in life a continual struggle of the individual with the world around him.¹⁹ The process of personality formation does not end with the formation of the super-ego. Id, ego, and super-ego are dynamic. It is their constant changing, unceasing conflicts which cause them to be continually modified.²⁰

The oedipus and castration complexes are repressed so severely that a period of latency exists into adolescence. In adolescence these complexes again come forward. We see here again the boy being rebellious to his father and protective of his mother, forming a close relationship with her. The girl too shows rebelliousness with her mother and love for her father.

The stages of oral, anal, and genital are re-lived and modified. There is a pre-occupation with oneself as an object of love. Much time is spent in front of a mirror and much emphasis is on clothes and beauty. Once again, the best gift one can give is one's body. The emphasis on genitals revives with the resulting sexual exploration so prevalent amongst adolescents. This sexual activity is not an expression of "love", it is simply a working out of the seeking for pleasure through the genitals.²¹

Adolescence is a time for integrating the various elements of the childhood stages into an adult being. At each stage of infancy, the child must be allowed a free play of his natural drives. If this does not happen, these remnants of infantile eroticism will carry over into adulthood. The strong remnants bring with them certain character traits, normal or neurotic and certain "perversions".²² This strong remnant is called a "fixation". It is an arrest of development, an early halt from which

personality failed to proceed. At the end of each stage, the dominant instinctual drive should be given up because it has been satiated.

At each stage, then, one must attempt to insure that the desires and urges will be satisfied. In the oral stage, the child should not be weaned from its sucking, be it the breast or an artificial nipple, until it has entirely satiated its need for oral stimulation. Too early weaning may cause dependency and insecurity in later life. In the anal stage, too, early or severe toilet training creates stubbornness, revengefulness and contrariness. One must allow a free play in a peaceful and serene way to encourage a sense of natural affection and love in the child. Overprotection or overindulgence is apt to fixate a child on an infantile level as much as strict prohibitions and frustrations do.²³

Eros is a force. Its energy is called "libido". The source of this energy can be traced to organs or systems of organs called erogenic zones. The carriers of libido are organic and physiological. The libido creates a force that seeks release.²⁴ This energy can be attached in varying quantities to different objects and complexes. This attachment is called "cathexis".²⁵ The greater the cathexis is in any one direction, the smaller quota of libido is left at the individual's disposal. The passing of the individual from one stage to another is hindered if the cathexis to the stage is very strong.

These stages might be seen as progressive in that the needs at each stage must be met in some satisfactory way before the child can successfully cope with the needs at the next stage. The adolescent stage is the time when the needs of the other stages are all incorporated and changed. If then the child's needs were not satisfactorily filled in

the earlier stages, it will face a difficult time now. The whole person is the one whose needs have been adequately met at each stage.

There are several differences between Piaget's developmental theory and the developmental theories of Erikson and Freud. In the first chapter we saw development in an orderly progression. Each stage had its own specific characteristics. The child then grew out of those characteristics and advanced to a new stage. This progression was harmonious and predictable. The process could be speeded up by presenting the child with situations or problems which required a thought process based on its present cognitive level, but just slightly more advanced. Through this sort of stimulus, the developmental process could be speeded up; all other factors remaining constant.

In this chapter we are told that the developmental process is not harmonious, that logic and abstraction are not all that matters. Erikson shows that each stage has a separate identity that goes with it and the individual has a strong emotional attachment to this identity. This attachment or commitment to a stage of identity makes it difficult to move from one identity to another.

Piaget describes development taking place as a series of steps. One climbs from one step to another leaving each step behind as one goes. Now we see that the individual steps or stages are not left behind, they are instead incorporated into the next stage. Therefore, at each new stage, the old identities are changing and modifying to form a new identity. It is, therefore, an adaptation rather than a progression. It could be said then that in a progression one could presumably miss a step without any dire consequences; however, in an accumulation this is not so.

If a stage has not been successfully assimilated, it will be difficult to become a "whole" person since some of the necessary components for such a being will be missing.

Freud too has shown that not only are there specific stages of development of personality, but that there is a considerable emotional attachment to each stage. This makes the transition from one stage to another even more difficult.

Once again, we see that development is not a straightforward progression. The needs of each stage must be totally met before they can be integrated into an adult identity. If needs have not been met, that aspect of development becomes troublesome. It is only when needs have been properly satiated that they can be left behind and forgotten. Society suppresses the needs of the young child so that development is latent from five years until adolescence when, once again, these needs come to the fore. Those adolescents whose needs were most fully met as infants will have the least difficulty in forming an integrated, acceptable personality.

Both Erikson and Freud emphasize the fact that the needs of each stage during childhood must be met fully in order for the individual to become a "whole" person in adulthood. If the needs are not met, the adolescent, who is building a new identity, will have an inadequate base to work from. What does this imply for the religious education of the child?

Freud says the infant is ruled by the "pleasure ego".²⁶ If its needs are satisfied, it will develop a sense of trust which is what Erikson sees as the necessary outcome of the infancy stage. First of all, then, the child is lovingly cared for. In the second stage, the child begins

to move away from a strictly receiving situation into a giving situation. The child is dominated by the desire to be a free agent. It begins to delineate its autonomy as a worthwhile person in its own right. The child now is given opportunities to express this independence. This independence later displays itself in an imitation and attachment to older models. Freud sees this stage as one of severe conflict as the child wants to take over the role of the parents. Early childhood is the time to develop a sense of trust and a sense of self-worth and later in childhood the child needs models to follow.

When we now look at Harms' and Goldman's suggestions for religious education at these stages, we will see that they are based on these same premises. Stories of loving, sharing, and caring were suggested for infancy and early childhood. These will help to develop the sense of trust necessary at this stage. The young child must also be given opportunities to express its love towards others through sharing and caring. In this way, it develops a sense of self-worth. In the following two stages of childhood, the child is looking for new identifications. It is, as Erikson says, a time of imitation and attachment to older models. Religious education now must provide these models. Stories of people which depict desirable human characteristics are suitable here.

One might well ask how such a programme as Harms and Goldman suggest for the early childhood stages which appears to be concerned mostly with the development of personality could be considered religious education. Let us attempt to clarify this issue by taking a look at religion as the sacralization of identity.

NOTES - CHAPTER II

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CHAPTER III

IDENTITY THEORY

In Chapter One we saw that development of the intellect occurs in an orderly progression which could be speeded up through appropriate stimulation or slowed down through the lack of stimulation. Chapter Two makes the point that each stage of development has an identity that accompanies it. The individual has a strong emotional attachment to this identity which makes a move to another stage difficult. Furthermore, the separate stages are not merely left behind, they are incorporated into each of the following stages. One cannot skip over a stage and go on to the next one. Each stage must be complete for wholeness to occur at the next stage.

In this chapter, it will be seen that there is yet another factor which influences the development of the child. Identity theory of religion states that the individual's identity at each stage of development is affected by religion. Just as a mother expects the child to behave in a certain way in keeping with its age, so too religions expect certain behaviours from children which are different from what is expected of adults. Religion gives the child a separate identity, putting a boundary around the childhood identity, but also giving the child the means to "break out" of this identity and to accept a new adult identity which then in turn is protected by boundaries.

The identity of the child is sacralized by religion and may make

it more difficult for the child to move to the next stage. Religion, then, is another factor in the progression of the child's development.

Dr. Mol defines religion as the sacralization of identity.¹ Religion sacralizes identity, i.e. it "protects identity, a system of meaning or a definition of reality and modifies, obstructs, or (if necessary) legitimates change".²

Identity is an interpretation of reality and of one's place within that reality, it is a stable niche in a predictable environment. The need for identity is the most pervasive and powerful need among all species.³ Since this need is so strong, steps are taken to protect identity by making it sacred. Sacralization is, therefore, the process of safeguarding and reinforcing an interpretation of reality. It provides protection and immunity. There are four mechanisms of sacralization: objectification, commitment, ritual, and myth. Let us examine each of these in more detail.

1) "Objectification".

"Objectification is the tendency to sum up the variegated elements of mundane existence in a transcendental frame of reference where they can appear in a more orderly, more consistent, and more timeless way."⁴ Something that is sacred is apart from the mundane and is, therefore, safeguarded. If one's view of reality is seen in a transcendental way, it takes on more significance and meaning and is less likely to be shaken by opposing views. However, simply to make something sacred is not enough. It is the accompanying awe for anything sacred that binds one to it. This awe for the sacred leads to commitment.

2) "Commitment".

Commitment is the "emotional attachment to a specific focus of identity".⁵ Commitment reinforces identity; systems of meaning, or definitions of reality. The effect of this is consistency, predictability, and motivation. It is this commitment which has developed from a feeling of awe for that which is sacred that serves to protect identity.

3) "Ritual".

We now have an identity which is expressed in a transcendental frame of reference and to which one is emotionally attached. This identity is further strengthened by ritual. The re-enactment of sameness affects identity positively.⁶ The ritual of the individual in his daily routines strengthens his personal identity and the rituals performed in groups as in religious institutions or labour movements, strengthen the place of the individual within the society. The individual's participation in ritual, either alone or within a group context, helps him to "articulate and reiterate a system of meaning, and prevent it being lost from sight. Rituals "restore, reinforce, and redirect identity".⁷ The repetitiveness of ritual establishes an action in the mind of the individual firmly and thereby makes it much more difficult for the individual to make any changes.

4) "Myths, theology, and dreams".

Myths make a statement about man's place in the universe. They interpret reality, but they also sacralize experiences.⁸ Radcliffe-Brown says myths:

"serve to express certain ways of thinking and feeling about the society and its relation to the world of nature, and thereby to maintain these ways of thought and feeling and pass them on to succeeding generations."⁹

Theology is not quite the same as myth although it serves the same purpose. Theology may deal more with sin and salvation than with the antithesis of nature and culture.¹⁰

"Dream is the myth of the individual."¹¹ We have myths, theology and dreams all serving to sacralize and thus insulate one's interpretation of reality; one's identity. They are the reiteration of belief whereas ritual is the acting out of belief.¹²

Since the need for identity is basic to mankind, and since religion is the means of sacralizing identity and thus protecting it, religion, in this large sense, may be a very necessary part of life.

The "identity theory of religion" as explicated above implies that religion reinforces identity stages. The stages of identity already exist, but they are sacralized by religion. By reinforcing these phases, religion insulates them against change.

Let us take a closer look at the implication that this might have for the development of the child.

Religion bolsters values and actions typical for child behaviour as distinct from values and actions typical for the adult. The child is not expected to behave in the same way as the adult. It is accepted that the child cannot fully understand religious beliefs and values and, therefore, cannot be expected to behave in accordance with them. In most societies, the child is given the freedom to simply play and enjoy itself while the adult provides for it and protects it. Upon reaching adulthood the individual role changes to one of responsibility. An

adult must make his own decisions. What was acceptable in the child is no longer acceptable in the adult. The adult is responsible for his actions and beliefs and he is punished if he does not carry out the expectations set out by the society.

In Christianity, for example, there are prayers and lessons reinforcing what a "good" child is expected to do, i.e. the "good" child will be obedient, loving, fair, thankful, and so on. At the birth of a child, it is the parents who must promise to see to its well being and to its religious instruction. The onus is on the parent, not on the child.

In the Hutterite communities, the separation between child and adult is very distinct. Children are allowed free play with few restrictions. During adolescence they are allowed to do "the things of the world" without reprimand or punishment. Once they reach adulthood, however, their religious responsibility is well defined and deviations are not tolerated.

The position of the child is protected by religion. Religion makes the identity of the child sacred and puts a boundary around it to protect it. This may make it difficult for the child to move on to adulthood. Therefore, religion also provides a means to "break out" of this childhood stage and be initiated into the next stage, that of adulthood. These "rites of passage" and initiations serve to strip the individual from one phase and to weld him to another. The transition of the child to the adult is the most difficult transition to make in our society, possibly because there is not a definite time for this to happen. It happens instead over a period of several years, which we call

adolescence.

It is because of the emotional attachment to the childhood identity stages that transitional rites, rites of passage, and initiation ceremonies become so important. Transition presents a threat to the stability of one's identity. During the period of transition, identity is vulnerable and it is at this time that the sacralization mechanisms do their work.¹³

Primitive societies had a definite time for the child to move into adulthood. Elaborate rites and ceremonies let the male child prove that he is no longer a child and that he is now ready to adopt the responsibilities of an adult male. Through the ceremony, the male child can prove to himself and to society that he is truly no longer a child, that he is capable of being an adult. After the ceremony, the male child no longer plays with the other children; he must now join the adult males in the society in their tasks of hunting or going to war. It is a definite break and the new adult knows exactly what is expected of him in his new role.

Modern societies also have ceremonies to mark the passage from one stage to another. There are "ceremonies of birth, childhood, social puberty, betrothal, marriage, pregnancy, fatherhood, initiation into religious societies, and funerals".¹⁴

In Christianity, some church traditions have ceremonies such as confirmation, at which time a child is accepted into the church as a member and, therefore, has the responsibility to the church of an adult member. In the Anabaptist tradition, the child is baptised and allowed to become a church member when it feels that it is ready for the

responsibility of an adult member of the church. In Judaism, the move from child to adult is signified by a bar-mitzvah (males) and bat-mitzvah (females) at which the child acknowledges its ability to accept adult responsibility in the religious tradition.

Even though these ceremonies do exist in our traditions, the break between childhood and adulthood is not nearly so well defined as in primitive societies, except perhaps in groups such as the Hutterites who were mentioned above. Added to that is the fact that many families today do not adhere to the traditions of the church in a strict fashion and the ceremonies have lost some of their meaning. The adolescent in that case is often left to find its own methods of showing that it is no longer a child. There are, however, other ways of indicating to the child and to society that the transition is taking place. Often, the child at this time is given more responsibility, e.g. babysitting the younger children, cooking meals, repairing the car, or accompanying parents in their work; and more freedom, e.g. dating, getting the keys to the car, or buying one's own clothes. This is usually a gradual transition rather than something occurring at a given time. In this way, the adolescent can establish independence and declare that it is no longer a child.

Adolescence is a time when physical as well as emotional and intellectual maturation are occurring. The beliefs and actions of childhood are no longer suitable, yet the beliefs and actions of adulthood have not been fully appropriated. Society makes it very difficult for the adolescent to declare independence. The adolescent is often expected to behave in an adult fashion long before it is emotionally or

intellectually ready to do so. The result is the establishment of an adolescent identity which appears permanent, but which is in actuality an identity which denies both childhood and adulthood identities and which must of necessity be temporary.

Religion too has addressed itself to what is expected of children and of adults, but has left the time of adolescence without direction or guidance. It is at this time then that we see what has been referred to as "rites of rebellion".¹⁵ These rites, instead of reinforcing beliefs, attempt to thwart them.

Religion tends to reinforce obedience rather than independence and may be associated with an earlier phase. The adolescent is forced to declare independence by denying its childhood beliefs in a belligerent and forceful manner when in fact those beliefs may still be held as valid. Gluckman explains "rites of rebellion" as "cathartic release mechanisms which by allowing the expression of tension minimize actual conflicts."¹⁶ This "ritual expression of commonly felt hostilities and frustrations has integrating consequences. In the same way as in a dream, repressions are re-enacted and rendered less libido-absorbing and more harmless, so rites of rebellion may restore social equilibrium by taking the pressure off social repressions and restraints".¹⁷ Rites of rebellion help to make the transition from child to adult more smooth. This is a time when childhood beliefs are not acceptable any longer and adult beliefs have not yet had time to form.

We can summarize the causes of trauma in the adolescent search for Identity under three categories: intellectual development, emotional development, and religious development.

1) "Intellectual Development".

Adolescence is the time when the child is beginning to have the ability to move away from concrete to abstract, hypothetical thinking. The child's view of reality is, therefore, no longer acceptable and the adolescent seeks to formulate a new interpretation of reality. It is not willing to simply accept a ready-made adult interpretation, yet its own powers of abstract thinking are not very useful and, therefore, the adolescent is left without any clear formulation of identity.

2) "Emotional Development".

Erikson showed us that adolescence is a time when the identity phases of childhood are re-incorporated into a new identity. This could be a smooth operation if each phase had been successfully established during childhood. However, as Erikson points out, if there are identity elements missing, it will be very difficult for the adolescent to build a "whole" identity.

Freud sees adolescence as a time for re-working childhood stages. Once again, if the needs of the childhood stages are not adequately met, it will be difficult for the adolescent to re-work them.

Both Erikson and Freud see the importance of childhood as the base on which adulthood is built. The firmer the childhood base, the less trauma there will be during the formation of adult identity.

3) "Religious Development".

Dr. Mol points out that religion sacralizes childhood and also adulthood identities. It is precisely this sacralization that creates boundaries around the childhood identity and makes it difficult to break

out of. The child is protected from full responsibility, the adult is not. The adolescent has to move from this safe protected spot to a new unfamiliar and unprotected spot. This is not an easy undertaking and the child both wants to move away from the protection and to stay within it.

In all three categories, adolescence is treated as a difficult period. How then can this time be made easier, less traumatic? Identity is recognized as a basic need of all species. Religion is the sacralization of identity. Should not, then, religion provide means to facilitate the transition from childhood to adulthood?

It was pointed out earlier that there are indeed several ways in which religions have attempted to deal with the transition from child to adult in order to make the transition less difficult. Yet, in spite of ceremonies and rites signifying the move into adulthood, it is during adolescence that religion is often scorned as childish and irrelevant. It is most often during adolescence that religion is totally rejected.

There are numerous reasons for the rejection of religion during adolescence. Some have to do with a natural tendency to be independent and, therefore, rejecting anything which parents and other authoritative adults represent, others have to do with the nature of religion itself. Many religions are inflexible and do not allow for adaptation to a changing society and the adolescent sees them as irrelevant and, hence, unnecessary.

Goldman and Harms have suggested that one of the reasons for the rejection of religion during adolescence lies in the religious education of the child. Religious education has often been inappropriate to the

child's level of cognitive development, religious concepts have been oversimplified, the child has been over-exposed to certain religious material and religious views have been presented as absolutes, inflexible and unadaptable to changing society. The result of such a religious education has been that the adolescent who is at a more advanced level of thought than the child, rejects the over-simplified religious concepts which it has heard time and time again as childish or even as untrue. At the same time, it is not ready to accept a ready-made adult ideology either. Adolescents need to establish an identity that is both satisfying and unique and all too often religious structures do not allow for such a combination.

Is it possible to present religious concepts to the child in such a way that they will not be rejected during adolescence, that they will instead be acceptable to the adolescent and to the adult as well? It is this religious education of the child that this paper is interested in.

NOTES - CHAPTER III

1. Hans Mol, Identity and the Sacred, Agincourt, Canada: The Book Society of Canada Ltd., 1976, p. 1.
2. Ibid., p. 6.
3. Ibid., p. 2.
4. Ibid., p. 206.
5. Ibid., p. 216.
6. Ibid., p. 235.
7. Ibid., p. 233.
8. Ibid., p. 246.
9. Ibid., p. 255.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 259.
12. Ibid., p. 258.
13. Ibid., p. 242.
14. Ibid., p. 238.
15. Ibid., p. 243.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

A THEORY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As educators we are concerned with the wholeness of the student. In this paper we have examined intellectual and emotional development and we have discussed how identity becomes sacralized. Now it is time to try to formulate a theory for a religious education programme that will maximize the child's chances of wholeness.

First, we must examine the concept of belief, the relationship between belief and action, religion, and the causes of breakdown between belief and action in adolescence.

1) Belief and its relationship to actions.

If someone perceives a relationship between two things or between some one thing and a characteristic of it he is said to hold a belief.¹

Beliefs are the product of several factors. They most often stem from one's own direct experience but can also be a derivation from other basic beliefs, faith in our own sensory perceptions and experience, or from unquestioned acceptance of a source of knowledge either external or internal. Usually this source is another person or some written material. A young child, for example, will believe whatever its parents or teachers tell it or whatever it reads in a book or magazine.

We do not hold a random collection of beliefs. Instead, the

beliefs that we have are interconnected and interdependent though they may not be logically derived from each other. Our beliefs are comprehensive and persistent, even without fully rational justification.

Both beliefs and a commitment to those beliefs are ways to reinforce or sacralize identity. Commitment is an emotional attachment to a specific focus of identity.² Through reinforcing identity, commitment brings about consistency, predictability, and motivation.³ "Commitment contains directives for action",⁴ however, it also results in specific feelings and emotions. A strong commitment brings with it the feeling of obligation to make particular decisions or to act in a particular way, happiness when these decisions are made consistent with the beliefs held and guilt when they are not. It also gives one confidence and consistency in dealing with new situations and in carrying out decisions that one has made.

It has usually been assumed that the beliefs come first and from them derive attitudes, decisions and behaviour. If this is correct, then in order to change someone's behaviour one must first change their beliefs. This line of thinking is, of course, exemplified in the person who experiences a religious conversion. His thinking and beliefs are changed and one then can expect a change in his behaviour. Bem argues that this may well be so, but that it is not necessarily the only way in which beliefs and behaviour are related. Bem states that the opposite is often true as well; that is, that behaviour influences and changes belief.⁵

As stated earlier, one's belief system tends to be comprehensive and consistent; therefore, a commitment to this system tends to lead

to consistency in behaviour. Accordingly, if one behaves in a fashion that is not consistent with one's beliefs, there is discord and discomfort. One will then attempt to relieve this discomfort. This can be done in two ways: either one can change the behaviour or one can change the beliefs. Bem insists that very often it is the beliefs that will change rather than the behaviour, especially so if one is pleased and comfortable with the behaviour. The new behaviour, therefore, has provided a source from which to draw a new set of inferences about believing and feeling and about one's self-perception.⁶ The behaviour has preceded the belief. The belief changes to be consistent with the behaviour and the discomfort is relieved. Bem cites the example of school busing in the United States to show this point.⁷ Negative racial attitudes are being changed to positive ones because children of one race are associating with children of other races and finding it a positive experience. The action of associating with other races is causing children to change their beliefs about them.

Whether we go with Bem's theory that behaviour can change beliefs or we stay with the theory that the beliefs must change first or we agree that both are true, we have not changed the fact that beliefs, attitudes, decisions and behaviour are integrally linked together and must be seen as a complete unit. From this we can then go on to say that if we observe man's behaviour we can arrive at certain conclusions about his beliefs, his thoughts and feelings.

Although this assumption may be true in theory, the relationship between behaviour and thought is much more complex than that. There are always many external factors in any given situation that

may cause someone to behave in a way contrary to their thinking. Therefore, it is impossible to make definitive statements about someone's thoughts simply by observing their behaviour.

Man's behaviour, decisions and choices are directly related to one's system of beliefs. Many choices that one makes daily have no recurrence to deep philosophical principles, but there are many others which are more weighty. These more significant choices or decisions are decisively influenced by one's commitment to a system of beliefs. Beliefs about the nature of things or world view, whether one believes in a God, in a theory of salvation, or in life after death, are all factors that determine one's behaviour and decision making processes.

Some of these beliefs would be classified in the usual sense of religious beliefs while others would not. Let us take a brief look at what constitutes a religious belief system as opposed to a non-religious belief system. A definition of religion could be helpful here.

2) Religion.

Religion provides a coherent interpretation of the whole of human life and experience and involves a way of life that is based on this interpretation. Religion suggests answers to the ultimate questions which man asks about his existence, questions regarding the nature of God, the nature of man and life and of life after death. These are questions to which there are no definitive answers in the human sciences. Religion gives answers to these questions in various ways, in its beliefs, its code of ethics, its rituals, and in its traditions. It is these aspects of religion put together that make up

a comprehensive interpretation of human life and experience.

Religions are not static nor do they exist in a vacuum. A religion must be seen in its historical, social and economic context. However, even when all these aspects of religion are examined carefully, there is still something lacking without which one can gain but a superfluous knowledge of it. There is a body of ideas and concepts about the nature of religion and belief itself that one must come to terms with before any study of a specific religion can make sense. These ideas and concepts cannot easily be defined in words. They are not merely intellectual descriptions, but include the emotions and are vital to the understanding of religion.

There are two ways of looking at religion. It can be seen as a set of beliefs which provide values in the light of which practical decisions of living are made or it can be seen as a set of practical decisions which are justified and kept consistent by a theory of values, which are in turn explained and validated by the adoption of beliefs or hypotheses about the nature of things.

When speaking of religion, I prefer to understand it as defined in Tillich's words, namely, "that to which a man commits himself". Religion is then what one takes seriously and without reservation. The word "religion" has a Latin root meaning "to bind" and can, therefore, be taken to be that to which one binds oneself and which consequently influences life style, decisions and behaviour.

Religious belief systems are recognized by four characteristics: (1) a transcendental point of reference, (2) an emotional attachment, (3) rituals, and (4) a theology, myths or symbolism. There are many

other beliefs equally as essential that would not qualify as religious beliefs according to these standards. These non-religious beliefs may have to do with simple judgements of what is real and significant in the experience of the person. Every person holds many non-religious beliefs which influence one's behaviour and also many religious beliefs.

It is often the case that one is not aware of one's underlying religious beliefs or that one cannot clearly articulate them. This does not mean that they do not exist. The mature person will attempt to understand what their religious beliefs are since these are what give life meaning and purpose.

3) Causes for breakdown between belief and action in adolescence.

A person's religious belief system does not remain constant throughout his life. It is changed and modified as one's perceptions are heightened and as experiences increase. A time of great change usually occurs during adolescence. It is often at this time that the relationship between beliefs and action is severely strained or indeed broken. One possible reason has to do with peer pressure and adolescent rebellion against authority. Another reason directly relates to the religious beliefs of the adolescent.

Often a child is exposed to new belief systems through greater mobility outside of its home and family. These other belief systems become more visible and, therefore, competition with them arises. There often is less boundary protection at this time, again because of the child's greater freedom and mobility outside of the family.

Another reason for breakdown is a fault in the religious education of the child. Its beliefs and its understanding of those

beliefs have often been taken for granted with the result that the child cannot adequately articulate its beliefs. Therefore, in adolescence when those beliefs are being challenged by other beliefs it finds that it cannot defend its own beliefs adequately and assumes that it is an inadequacy in the beliefs themselves rather than in the articulation of them.

Possibly the most serious case of a breakdown in belief systems is the lack of integration of beliefs with a rapidly changing society. As society changes, the individual's needs also change and all too often the religious belief systems remain stagnant and are, therefore, no longer adequate. The interpretation of reality must change as reality changes in order to be acceptable. This process of change is heightened in adolescence because the adolescent has more contact with people and situations outside of the original family group and because the ability to think in abstract rather than in concrete terms increases.

To prevent a breakdown, the belief system must be acceptable and adequate in spite of these factors. If it is not, the adolescent will begin behaving in a manner that is inconsistent with the beliefs with the result that gradually the old beliefs which no longer fit the actions will be lost. New beliefs, which do correspond with the actions, are now accepted. This is often a very painful and lengthy procedure as the adolescent experiments with new behaviours and rejects old beliefs. Many people struggle for many years to find a new belief system which will lend support to their life style and be acceptable in the changing society in which they live.

It is the task of the religious educator to help a child to understand and articulate religious beliefs in such a way that they can be adapted throughout life without this upheaval and without breakdown.

More specifically, how can we mitigate the breakdown between belief and action in adolescence through religious education? We have no control over the influence of parents, religious organizations, playmates or society on the child. The only thing that we can control is the religious education of the child in school and what a small part that is!

Goldman states that one of the causes of the breakdown between belief and action in adolescence is incorrect religious education. Let us now attempt to put forth a theory of a religious education that would help the child establish an identity without the upheaval of adolescent rebellion.

There are two basic considerations to be emphasized in choosing curriculum material for religious education. First, all learning materials, including those for religious education, must be at the cognitive level appropriate to the child. Second, the material must serve the purpose for which it is intended.

If religious education were merely teaching facts or knowledge, our task would be straightforward. We would choose materials in the same way that a teacher in any other discipline does, and we would teach them in a similar fashion. However, we have agreed that religious education is not primarily concerned with facts and information; it is more an aid in the search for identity.

Goldman points out that religious writings are written for and by adults. They are written in a style that is unfamiliar to a child and they present ideas too complex for the child to grasp. Religious narratives, although they may appear simple and straightforward, are literary vehicles for religious concepts. The child does not have the intellectual capacity to interpret the religious narratives and understand their meaning. There is, therefore, no point in telling such narratives to children.

Although Richards agrees that the child cannot understand the philosophical meaning of the narratives, he insists that children should be told the narratives simply to become familiar with them.

Let us briefly outline what happens when, as Richards suggest, young children are presented with religious narratives.

In the "pre-religious" stage, using Goldman's terms, the child enjoys and accepts all the stories wholeheartedly without understanding. There is no differentiation between fact and fiction. Stories that arouse the imagination are accepted eagerly and on the same terms as more realistic stories. Stories from religious traditions are, therefore, in the same category as witches, giants, dragons, and wonder woman. The child's eagerness and acceptance of those stories make it very satisfying for the teacher to use stories from religious traditions at this stage. However, very soon the child moves into the "sub-religious" stage, a time when realism sets in. The miraculous and supernatural are discarded as untrue. Only what is "real" and "true" is valid. Witches, dragons, and wonder woman are no longer part of what the child recognizes as the "real" world and so they are

rejected. The religious stories are seen in the same way. They are also no longer believable and share the same fate as the witches, dragons and wonder woman.

Fearing that all is lost, religious educators hasten to capitalize on the child's interest in realism and present it with the religious narratives that can be proven to be historically true. In emphasizing only those religious narratives that are historically true, two problems arise: (1) the child is encouraged in the view that only what is historically true in the religious narratives is valid and that closes the door on most religious material, and (2) it ignores the fact that the essence of religion is not history.

The child is encouraged to forget that part of religious writings that is not history, and since very little of the writings is, in fact, historically true, it is left with very little indeed. Religion has become significant only in so far as it is history and the essence of religion has not reached the child. There is so little religious material left intact at this point that even what is left will probably be rejected as of no consequence.

In adolescence, the child finally begins to develop the necessary powers of thought to be able to come to terms with the philosophical meaning of religious narratives and other religious writings. Now the child is ready to examine religious writings to discover their philosophical meaning. Once again, these same stories which were told in early childhood and which very likely were repeated again and again, are presented. These stories have become fixed in the child's mind at a low level of understanding. A block has been formed against them

which makes it impossible for the child to see them in any other way than as childish or as fairy tales. The material has been pre-judged and found lacking. In order for this same material to have any new meaning for the child, this rejection must first be turned to acceptance. It would be much simpler and more effective to present completely new material at this time. Had the religious material not been used in early childhood it would be the ideal new material to present to the adolescent who is now capable of dealing with its philosophical meaning.

Instead of merely familiarizing children with religious material, presenting it too early and too often results in locking the door to understanding. The aim of religious education is not to familiarize children with religious writings and narratives, but to begin to form the basis out of which an adequate and appropriate identity can be formed.

We want to meet the needs of the child at each stage of development. Erikson and Freud outlined these needs for us. The very young child needs to develop a sense of trust and self-worth. Young children thrive on stories of loving, sharing, trusting, helping, and so on. These stories help to develop their sense of trust. In the second stage, the child needs models to follow so that it can fashion itself on those who exemplify the characteristics that were illustrated in stage one. Stories with true to life characters that portray these characteristics are suitable. We are concerned with the ideas which these stories represent, not with the factual details. Some stories can be found in religious writings that do deal with these down-to-earth concepts and have none of the supernatural about them. These

can successfully be used in this context. It matters little, however, whether the stories come out of a religious tradition or not. In fact, in view of all the problems encountered when using religious material, it may be better to stay away from material that is from specific religious traditions for this purpose.

In these early years, religious education is concerned with emotional development and development of personality. It is ideas rather than information that we want to convey and we must use whatever materials will be suitable for this end. Whether the material is from a religious tradition or not is not important. Our intention is to meet the emotional needs of the child adequately so that when it reaches adolescence it will be able to formulate an acceptable identity without undue difficulty.

It appears that perhaps it would be best simply not to include any religious materials at all until adolescence; however, we do want the child to begin to get a feeling of wonder and awe about the universe and about its place within the universe. Therefore, specifically religious materials can and should be introduced to the child throughout the school curriculum along with the other non-religious material.

How do we go about including religious material in the curriculum? In order not to appear biased, do we present material from all religious traditions and from all new religious trends? This, of course, would be not only impractical, but impossible. There are, however, many incidental ways in which religious material can be used. The most obvious way is in the social studies area. When learning about a society, also learn about its religious views, sing its songs,

perform its dances and rituals, and try to get a feeling of what it is like to live in that life style. In this way, the child can see religion as an integral part of the society, not something separate from it.

A second method is in the arts. Many beautiful religious works of literature, art and music can be introduced along with any other art form. They are not special because they have religious implications; they are special because they are beautiful expressions of life.

Yet a third method oddly enough is in the sciences. Every culture has stories, fables, and myths about the "how" of things in the universe. Creation myths are probably the most common, but there are many others equally as mysterious. These serve to add a touch of wonder and mystery to the cold facts of science.

Through the telling of these stories, we are laying the groundwork for the understanding of religious feelings and their expressions and manifestations.

In adolescence we can build on this foundation. A background that has introduced children to the sense of awe that religion inspires and to the complexity and depth of the feelings surrounding religions and their power to influence life styles and behaviour will provide the adolescent with the necessary attitudes to the study of the more complex and explicit aspects of religious thought.

We are now ready to take up a more direct approach in religious education. The student at this stage is capable of abstract, hypothetical thinking and can begin to grapple with some of the more theoretical points about religions. It must be remembered though that

religion is not simply an intellectual exercise and it cannot be grasped entirely by intellectual means alone. There is much in traditional religious material that cannot be intellectually explained. The child who has not become familiar with religious stories, language or symbols, and who has not felt the awe of religious art or myth will experience difficulty in feeling those things now at an age when it is much more critical of such feelings and is more interested in facts and figures and proofs than in feelings.

Many beliefs are the cognitive embodiment of attitudes. Together they form a frame of reference, an area of meaning, by which life is interpreted and problems solved. This involves a pre-judgement or prejudice. All beliefs, by definition, involve this prejudice.⁹ It is this pre-judgement that is being formed in the early years of the child's life. Religious education at this stage is chiefly concerned with building up the child's confidence in life, in itself and in others.¹⁰

This brings us to the adolescent stage and this is the stage in which we are most interested for the purposes of this paper. Although the child can now begin to think in abstract hypothetical terms, we cannot expect that at the onset of adolescence its powers of thought are already totally developed. The extent to which the child's powers of thought are developed depends on its age, its intelligence and its past experiences. Age and intelligence are relatively easy for the teacher to discern and a course of studies can be planned accordingly. Past experiences are much more difficult to pin point. In most subject areas, a look at the curriculum of the previous grades will give one an idea of the concepts and the materials which the child has encountered

thus far. This is not the case in religious education since many children have not had a formal religious education in school up to this time. Any religious education that the child might have had has been provided either by the home or by a religious institution. It is, therefore, quite impossible to determine what sort of preparation the child has had for religious education at this stage. We said earlier that the first twelve years of the child's life consisted chiefly of implicit religious education and were a preparation for the actual explicit religious education that was to be presented in the adolescent years and yet it is precisely this preparation that we do not know anything about and can, in fact, not rely on.

The first years of high school or adolescence should then be an intermediary stage, a stage between the implicit and the explicit. At this stage, we should be concerned with those aspects of human experience which produce religions and belief systems and which determine human values.

It is known in education that the best place to start the study of any subject is with something that the pupils can see or experience at first hand. Religious education may more profitably begin by examining the decisions and actions of various people rather than their beliefs and mystic or spiritual experiences. Children can see that individuals do certain things, that they have trades, jobs, hobbies and customs, that they have, to an extent at least, chosen for themselves. At a later stage, children can examine the decisions which people around them have made and the grounds on which they have made them. Still later, children may be led to understand how one's spiritual intuition

of reality leads one to commitments which are deep and imperative, and which give direction to one's decisions and choices. It would be necessary here to have some appreciation of how the search for commitment is made and of the feelings and insights that go with both the search and the eventual discovery. This will involve some sympathy with spiritual search, stemming from an awareness of one's own intuitions and enquiries. Lastly, it will bring students to an acquaintance with the way in which persons of like commitments join together in organized religions and find encouragement and reinforcement in so doing.

Such a study would be more than an inspection of pragmatic choices. I do not want to give the impression that religion is simply a matter of human choices, but I do want to say that man's genuine beliefs are known to others through the way in which those beliefs affect his practical decisions and choices. Choices and decisions as an observable point of departure must lead on to an appreciation of commitment and its effects.

This framework for a course of studies at this point has the advantage of starting from an objective manifestation of human behaviour which all can see without assuming any prior set of beliefs on the part of the students and of coming at a time when students are beginning to be conscious of the importance of their decisions and are assuming consciously a life style for themselves.

The affective element in religious experience must be allowed for and students must be given an opportunity to explore feelings and emotions connected with religious commitment. Many human experiences that the students will deal with will be ones which they themselves

share, others will be unfamiliar and will serve to open up new avenues of feelings and thought for the students.

One of the biggest problems that the adolescent struggles with is that of personal identity. It is now that the child begins to search for meaning and purpose in life. It is thrilled with many aspects of adult life in which it can participate now that it is older, but it is also confused by poverty, misery, cruelty, and suffering. Increased awareness alerts the adolescent to the injustices of life and to the futility of the individual's attempts to change them. The child who has been touched by unhappy circumstances may well be hard put to see any meaning in life and even the child who has had a relatively happy life will see the suffering of others and will puzzle about life's purpose. This is a time to look for a meaningful philosophy of life. The adolescent needs many opportunities to discuss its opinions and to check them against the opinions of both its age mates and those of older people. This is not to say that this is done freely or without reserve: Quite on the contrary, if the child is in the least insecure, it will be very reticent to let others know of its innermost thoughts and feelings.

A mature person always has some unifying philosophy of life. This need not be articulated in words, nor entirely complete, nor does it need to be consistent with the philosophy of other individuals or groups. According to Dr. Mol,¹¹ identity depends on a continuous, fitting and consistent interpretation of the features and events in one's surroundings. "An interpretation of reality, (any interpretation) of reality is necessary for the wholeness (and wholesomeness) of

individual and society."¹² Order and continuity in this interpretation of reality is necessary for identity. Without the direction and coherence of some dominant integrated pattern, any life seems fragmented and aimless. All people are concerned, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, with establishing an identity. This identity is strengthened by the sacralization process that Dr. Mol has described. This process begins in earnest in adolescence. This is not to say that the child before that age does not have an identity. It does indicate, however, that the young child assumes the identity given to it by its parents, friends, teachers, or religious organization.

Let me emphasize that we do not want to give the child a ready made package with beliefs, theology, or myths, rituals and actions all laid out. If this were the intent, then one could begin teaching this in early childhood so that these things would be fixed in the child's mind and well established long before adolescence. This is how religious education is approached by most traditional religious organizations, but such an approach cannot be taken in a public school. Religious education in the public school has far broader aims which encompass all traditions. Children must recognize the importance of questions regarding man and his relationship to the universe and the meaning of life. They must be given the information on which to base their answers and guided in the sorting out of this information and the formulating of their own answers.

This is not an intellectual exercise. To begin with, one aims to fulfill the needs of the young child so that it can develop its emotions and personality. During the early years, the child cannot

understand religion in an intellectual fashion, but it can begin to appreciate the majesty of the universe and man's relationship to and place in that universe.

When the child gets to the cognitive level, at which it can begin to deal with abstract hypothetical concepts, one can begin a more explicitly religious study. We suggest that one begin with observable manifestations of beliefs, i.e. actions or life style, and work towards discovering the beliefs that lie behind the actions. The attempt is made to help the child see the relationship between beliefs and actions and how other people work out this relationship. At this stage, various belief systems, religious or otherwise, might be examined. At a more advanced level, the child will examine its own behaviour and beliefs. Only when one understands what one's beliefs are and how they influence one's behaviour can one attempt to change or modify what is inadequate and inappropriate in our belief system.

NOTES - CHAPTER IV

1. Daryl J. Bem, Beliefs, Attitudes, and Human Affairs (Brook-Cole, 1970), p. 4.
2. Mol, op. cit., p. 216.
3. Ibid., p. 218.
4. Ibid.
5. Bem, op. cit., p. 54.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. There are those who would insist that religious narratives are to be taken literally. If this is the case, one can have no objection to telling these narratives to even the smallest child. The theory of religious education which is presented here holds true only if we accept that religious narratives are to be taken figuratively not literally.
9. Ronald Goldman, Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence, op. cit., p. 31.
10. Ibid., p. 67.
11. Mol, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
12. Ibid., p. 9.

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APPENDIX A

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS

Can religion be taught and if so how can it be taught? Does religious education belong in the public school?

The question of whether or not religious education belongs in the public school seems easily answered. Religion has influenced our literature, our music, our art, our architecture, our laws, indeed it has shaped our society past and present. Although today many people do not follow a particular religious organization or group they do have beliefs which guide and direct them. Symbols, myths, and rituals are an important part of all cultures. It is, therefore, necessary for students to be taught about religion as an integral aspect of society. To leave religion out of the curriculum is like leaving oxygen out of the study of chemistry. It cannot be done. Religion has influenced society throughout history, it has shaped our present society and it continues to influence society into the future. To educate a child without teaching religion is not a complete education.

One can teach about religion, one can teach about the effects of religion on society, one can teach the history of religion and look at works of art, but can one teach religion per se?

To teach religion, one would have to say that there are religious truths that can be taught as truths the same as in any other discipline. One would need to present material as truth. There are those who insist that there is absolute truth that exists outside of

human experience or that there is a revealed truth. If this were so, one could teach this truth. Then one would be teaching religion as opposed to teaching about religion. There are those, however, who say that truth is not an externally imposed absolute; it is rather a construct reflecting transactions between the human organism and his social and physical environment. There is no truth outside of this framework and, therefore, religion cannot be taught as truth.

I would like to advocate that there is another dimension of religion that lends itself to study, the dimension of thought processes. Let me quickly add that there is no such thing as religious thought as such; it is simply thinking that goes on about religion or religious matters.

Since religious truths are not truths in the sense that they can be tested or proven, how can they be accepted by intelligent people living in today's scientific world? How does one come to hold a spiritual interpretation of reality? How does this interpretation lead to commitment and decision-making? How does one establish a personal identity and how can this identity become sacralized? What elements are involved in a search for meaning apart from the intellectual? These are some of the questions that arise in dealing with religious thinking and it will be noted that there are no simple clear-cut answers to any of them.

Goldman says that religious thinking is the process of generalizing from various experiences, previous perceptions and already held conceptions to an interpretative concept of the activity and nature of the divine. He goes on to say that truths in religious

material are abstract, of a propositional nature and are dependent on the capacity to see analogies from one situation to another and to understand the metaphors in which religious narratives abound. This does not, however, point out any difference between thinking going on about religion and thinking going on about any number of other topics. Religion surely is not unique in demanding abstract, hypothetical thinking.

Let us approach the subject from another angle. Religion includes a structuring of reality. Lawrence O. Richards has done a simple comparison of the non-religious structuring of reality and the religious structuring of reality. His argument appears like this: Reality is a construct of the data reflecting transactions between man and his social and physical environment, but these data are not "raw" data. The environment is essentially social and, therefore, the data are not neutral.¹ This process of reconstructing data is continually going on. The child cannot use data which it does not possess. The child, therefore, will build a world view with the data that it possesses...and if religious content is not part of its data bank, its construct of reality will necessarily leave it out. It is necessary to communicate through the social environment all the terms, symbols, concepts and meanings which can become and remain part of the child's construct of reality through the developmental process. At each stage of the child's development, all truths, including religious truths, will be reprocessed and ideas will grow.² This restructuring process does not take place in a vacuum, it takes place within a specific culture. It is rooted in the socialization process.³

Learning or thinking about religion is no different from any other types of learning or thinking. All learning and thinking are dependent on the development of the intellect and they all are also socialization processes since all data are perceived within the individual's culture. Richards goes on to say that if we want the child to think about religion we must teach it religious concepts. Understanding will always be limited by ability to perceive, but it is not necessary to know truth perfectly to know truth. We should not deny the child a partial understanding of truth because we feel it won't understand it in its entirety.⁴

We must now look to the emotional side of religion and religious thinking. This involves the whole of the sacralization process as described by Dr. Mol. Religion is life and, therefore, religious thinking is thinking about life. Religious symbols and language are the results of reflection on one's own and others' life experiences.

The dominant concern of religious education, according to Michael Grimmitt, is to build conceptual bridges between the child's experiences and what it recognizes to be the central concept of religion.⁵ Religious education, in this sense, is not concerned with presenting facts or theories. It is concerned rather with developing understanding and respect for the religious thinking of all people.

The students should develop understanding of the feelings that accompany a search for meaning and identity, of the experiences and emotions of oneself and of others, of how a religious interpretation of reality leads to commitment and decision-making, of what constitutes a distinctly human relationship between oneself and others, and of the

relationship between one's focus of identity and one's actions and decisions.

It is not easy to answer any of these issues because there are no absolute answers. Instead, we must satisfy ourselves with observing, analyzing, discussing and questioning and perhaps even participating in events that will give us clues and insights into the answers.

The principle aim of religious education is "To help children see....that questions regarding man and his relationship to the universe, and the meaning of life are necessary questions and to give them information on which to base their answers and to help them to sort out this information and formulate their own answers."⁶ The emphasis is on letting students decide and choose their own answers. This can only be expected of them after they have been provided, as Cox says, with the material necessary to make an informed and intelligent decision.

We do not present a ready-made answer and expect the students to adopt it, nor do we want them to answer their questions with reference to a set pattern of beliefs. The student is to work out its own beliefs and values which will be real and imperative. Most religious organizations take the opposite approach: they have a system of beliefs, rituals, myths, and so forth, already formulated and complete. These are presented to their members, who are expected to adopt them without question. This indoctrination type of approach is not appropriate in a public school system in spite of the fact that schools do indoctrinate their students in many ways. In a public school, we are dealing with various religious traditions and, therefore, must approach religious education from an individualistic point of view.

The objection to this individualistic approach is that it opens the field up too widely, there are too many options and the student may become confused or may spend years experimenting with one or another system and never find just the right one. This is, of course, a valid objection and, in fact, this is precisely what is happening in our society today. What religious educators need to emphasize is that one cannot escape one's own traditions, cultural heritage and parental influence and, therefore, the answers to our questions will more than likely lie within this familiar background. Religious systems develop out of the needs of specific societies and cultures and will not easily be adapted to an alien culture or society.

NOTES - APPENDIX A

1. Lawrence O. Richards, A Theology of Christian Education, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975, pp. 186, 191.
2. Ibid., p. 186.
3. Ibid., p. 194.
4. Ibid., p. 185.
5. Michael Grimmitt, What Can I Do in Religious Education? Great Waking: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1973, p. 24.
6. Edwin Cox, Changing Aims in Religious Education, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965, p. 67.

APPENDIX B

MATERIALS TO BE USED

MATERIALS TO BE USED

The choice of material to be used by teacher and student is probably the most difficult task that the teacher of this course of studies will face. First of all, the material must be at the developmental level of the students so that they will be able to read it easily and with comprehension. Secondly, the material must be relevant to the experience of the students so that they will be able to identify readily with the situation and the people in it. If, for instance, the material is about a social reformer of the nineteenth century, the teacher may find that the students know little of the social conditions of that time and, therefore, do not appreciate the significance of the work that the reformer accomplished. The teacher does not have the time nor is this the intention of her subject to teach this background information. This is best left to the history department. The third criterion for choosing material is that the material must in some way lend itself to examination of the relationship between beliefs, attitudes, values and actions and behaviour, as this is after all the intent for which it will be used.

The last criterion is really the one that often gives the most trouble. The relationship between beliefs and actions is not always easily recognized. There are many instances when one's actions do not reflect beliefs at all. It is often only with difficulty that this relationship can be recognized.

It has often been the case where the teacher picks up a certain "lesson" from some readings while the students with their unique frame of references pick up something entirely different and perhaps undesirable. There are countless numbers of stories about white people who did great and marvelous works in the third world to aid those countries in their development. We adults may think of the white person and his great deeds whereas too many of these stories give students the distinct impression that all black people are poor and helpless and need the more clever and able white people to help them develop into something useful. This kind of stereotyping is easily accomplished.

Many religious education programmes in the past have used biographical material. It has been my experience that the use of this biographical material in school curricula presents problems almost too great to overcome.

There is, first of all, the fact that the majority of biographical material is not written for school age children. Not only is the language and reading level adult, the content is adult as well. It appears that most people about whom biographies are written have left their mark on the world as adults dealing with other adults and with adult issues. There have, of course, been attempts at writing biographies for students and smaller children, but for the most part these have not only a simplified writing style, but also have a simplified situation and character to go with it. What we are left with is an over-simplified character of an almost fictional nature which students cannot identify with in a realistic way. These characters unfortunately appear more like supermen or miracle workers than like human characters

with success and failure just like anyone else.

Another difficulty encountered in biography is that much of it takes place in the past or in other unfamiliar settings. The significance of the person's acts and achievements is lost because of the lack of understanding of the situation on the part of the students. As mentioned earlier, a lot of background work would have to be done by the teacher and the religious education teacher has neither the time nor is it in her field to provide this information.

The religious education teacher must be sure that the material which she chooses will indeed serve the purpose for which it is intended. The teacher may be focused on one aspect of the biography while her students are focusing and learning a completely different aspect. A careful balancing of material is necessary so that one does not give the wrong impressions.

It certainly is not an easy task to sort out material that will meet all three criteria adequately. There are a large number of biographies that have been written about missionaries and other very dedicated religious people where the relationship between beliefs and behaviour have already been drawn for us. The fault with these is that they are most often of a confessional nature written with the intent of conveying a religious message to the reader. They are certainly not unbiased and although they may be excellent in a church or church school setting, they are most certainly not suitable for a course of studies that purports to be unbiased and open.

In spite of all the negative aspects of most biographical work, I would certainly not like to suggest that no biography be used. There

are indeed several very good works that can and should be used in such a course and I have included these in my bibliography of materials to be used.

The second source of material is that of children's literature. Jean L. Holm, in her book Religious Education in the Schools, makes the comment that "good literature written especially for children is far better than simplified accounts of the lives of people whose actions are set in an adult world and whose achievements will appear distorted and simplistic if they are reduced to the level of understanding and experience of young people".¹

If we continue to recognize the inter-relationship between beliefs, attitudes, values and human affairs in general, then an examination of human qualities and characteristics is highly appropriate at this time. Much of children's literature is full of accounts that vividly reveal various aspects of human nature, problems encountered by young people, questions that they have and varying ways of dealing with life. Unlike much of the biography that we talked about earlier, these stories deal with the present, they are set in today's world, a world familiar to the students. The stories deal with the situations and questions that young people are facing in their own lives. They need no background information or explanation; they can be easily understood without any trouble.

The use of literature opens the door to scores of excellent books to be used. Not only are there many books written for every level of reading ability, but the books deal with most of the topics that could possibly be of interest or importance to the students.

Although this gives one a much broader choice of material, the three criteria must still be met. The teacher must be just as careful in her selection of literary works as of biographical works. Students of different age groups, economic classes or geographic locations will respond in various ways to the same stimuli and it is up to the teacher to be the judge of the situation and to choose appropriate material.

There might be an objection to the use of purely fictional material in this instance as opposed to the stories of real people in real situations. May I just point out again that the main aim of this course is not the passing on of information but of learning skills. If these skills can be taught more successfully through the use of a fictional character than of a real one, then I can see no objection to this type of material. So much of children's literature is written in true to life situations with very realistic characters, and it is this that makes these works such a valuable tool for this course.

A second objection to the use of literature may be that it very seldom makes direct reference to the character's actual system of beliefs. Biographies, on the other hand, often include statements about beliefs and so forth to help us to better understand the person. However, there are those works in literature such as Judy Blume's Are You There God, It's Me, Margaret? that are direct statements about all the things that a young person holds important and sacred. Whether the reference is spoken directly or not, the issues, the feelings, the questions and the search for answers are all there and that is what we are interested in.

Many students may share the feelings or fears of the character

in the story and through the lives of this fictional character they will discuss issues and concerns that they might be too afraid or embarrassed to discuss on a more personal level.

There is yet a third source of material that can be used here and that is material which the students themselves gather through interviews. This can, of course, be a very time consuming method of obtaining material, but it may also turn out to be the most successful. There are several distinct advantages, the foremost being that the material will be current. It will be about things going on now in your community with people whom you see or hear about regularly. Again, one has a wide choice of material, since the number of people or groups that could be interviewed is great. Material that is gathered in this way will carry with it extra importance because it is "real", it is happening now, it is relevant to the students' lives as members of the community. An interview can very easily lead to new sources of interest or information. For example, an interview with a political candidate might lead to information on social issues in the area, or an interview with a Rabbi might lead to an invitation to the local synagogue. The students thus become much more involved with the characters whom they are discussing and whose lives they are analysing. The interview also gives the students the opportunity to ask specific questions about the person's belief system and how it influences actions.

There are then three main sources of information: biographical works, literature, and student interviews. These three could be used in whatever proportion was appropriate. The student interviews take up time and require the students to work outside of the classroom. In

some situations this is not easily possible. The use of literature or biography requires extensive reading and, therefore, the success of this might hinge on the reading ability and interest of the students. This, however, could possibly be done in conjunction with the English department. The religious education teacher could perhaps use a work that has been read in English and save class time that way. It would not be advisable to spend large amounts of class time in reading. Use of all three sources of information will allow for a variation and will, therefore, probably be the most successful approach.

It is my opinion that the information learned through the student interviews will most probably be that which is most easily used since the students have been actively involved in the actual gathering of it. The students will feel a part of it and will be more easily interested in working with it. On the other hand, a gripping novel that appeals to the students can have the same result and with much less effort spent in getting it together.

NOTES - APPENDIX B

1. Jean L. Holm, Religious Education in the Schools. London: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 14.

BOOK LIST FOR THE SUGGESTED COURSE OF STUDY

| <u>Author</u> | <u>Title</u> |
|------------------------|--|
| Aibry, Claude | - Agouhanna |
| Bach, Richard | - Jonathan Livingston Seagull |
| Blume, Judy | - It's Not the End of the World |
| | - "Are You There, God, It's Me, Margaret?" |
| Brown, Susan | - The Black Tunnel |
| Burch, Robert | - Queenie Peavy |
| Canning, Victor | - The Painted Tent |
| Craig, John | - No Word for Good Bye |
| Dahl, Ronald | - Danny the Champion of the World |
| Dickinson, Peter | - The Weathermonger |
| Dunnett, Margaret | - The Gypsies Granddaughter |
| Dyck, Anna Reimer | - Anna: From the Caucasus to Canada |
| Garner, Alan | - Red Shift |
| Godden, Rumer | - The Diddakoi |
| Hautzig, Esther | - The Endless Steppe |
| Hunter, Mollie | - The Stronghold |
| Kaye, Geraldine | - Nowhere to Stop |
| King, Clive | - Stig of the Dump |
| Le Guin, Ursula | - The Wizard of Earthsea |
| Major, Kevin | - Hold Fast |
| Marshall, James Vance | - Walkabout |
| Maxwell, Gavin | - A Ring of Bright Water |
| Merrill, Jean | - The Pushcart War |
| Picard, Barbara Leonie | - One is One |
| Platt, Kin | - Hey, Dummy |
| Robinson, Joan G. | - Charley |
| Scoppettone, Sandra | - Trying Hard to Hear You |
| Shyer, Marlene Fanta | - Silver Fox |
| Smucker, Barbara | - Underground to Canada |
| Snyder, Anne | - My Name is Davy, I'm an Alcoholic |
| Southall, Ivan | - Josh |
| | - Hill's End |
| Sterling, Dorothy | - Mary Jane |
| Stucliff, Rosemary | - Warrior Scarlet |
| | - The Witches' Brat |
| Taylor, Theodore | - The Cay |
| Treece, Henry | - The Dream Time |
| Walsh, Jill Paton | - The Dolphin Crossing |

Biographies

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Campion, Nardi Reeder, | - Ann the Word |
| Carruth, Ella Kaiser | - She Wanted to Read |
| Dempsey, Hugh A. | - Crowfoot |
| Elliot, Robert | - Banners of Courage |
| Fisher, Aileen | - Jeanne D'Arc |
| Friedman, Russell | - Teenagers Who Made History |
| Gaeddert, Lou Ann | - All-in-All-Biography of George Eliot |
| Garnett, Emmeline | - Madame Prime Minister |
| Levenson, Dorothy | - Women of the West |
| Muller, Gerald F. | - Martin Luther King |
| Yates, Elizabeth | - Amos Fortune, Free Man |
| Zinkin, Taya | - Gandhi |
| The Macmillan Co., N.Y. | - The Seventeen Book of Very Important Persons |
| Pan Books | - The Diary of Anne Frank |
| The Personal Journal | - Scott's Last Expedition |
| Fitzhenry and Whiteside Ltd. | - The Canadians (a series on great Canadians) |

Fables, Myths and Legends

- | | |
|---|---|
| Coffin, Tristram B. (ed.) | - Indian Tales of North America |
| Every, George | - Christian Mythology |
| Hamlyn, London (1959) | - Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology |
| Weigel, James Jr. | - Mythology |
| Withers, Carl | - The Man in the Moon: Sky Tales from Many Lands |
| Wright, Hamilton & Helen and Rapport, Samuel | - To the Moon |
| Haviland, Virginia | - The Faber Book of North American Legends |
| Brown, Dee | - Faber Campfire Tales of the American Indians |