

jects." In fact, as we come to find all these expressive media so central to personal development, we may be moved to consider seriously a new kind of *core*—"a communication core," if you will, in which children can refine their communication skill in every medium to the point of serviceability in pursuing any interest.

To such a core the language teacher might contribute skill in using the language of journalism and politics, and the language of science and mathematics, as well as the language of letter writing and fiction—for they are all different, in ways that the language specialist knows well. The teacher of visual and plastic arts might contribute skills for interpreting and creating bulletin boards, charts, graphs, maps for

scientific data and experiments, as well as "pictures" in the conventional sense. The teacher of music might contribute skills in interpreting and playing music symbolic of our day, as well as performing concert pieces of another age. And all these teachers of communication arts and skills might gather their forces to develop skills for adequate handling of the powerful composite media of movie and television. Such a core, broadly considered, would not be a competing core, but a "core of cores" enriching every phase of school-life experience.

It may be that nothing short of this communication core, which consists of the processes of personality integration, will meet the world need for the new autonomous person.

The Common Denominator in Religious Values

MERRILL E. BUSH

A common denominator of religious values and prescriptions for daily living runs through the scriptures of the world's living religions. It is, this author asserts, these enduring values and *not the creeds* which should be taught in public schools.

TEACHING religious values in public schools is not only common practice, it is all but inescapable in our Judeo-Christian culture. The values taught command widespread, almost universal approval. Yet we witness today a vigorous controversy over the teaching of "religion" in public schools which often mounts to a bitterness and acrimony entirely out of keeping with the teachings of the great religious leaders.

Charges that the schools are "Godless" and "secular" (strange that "secular" should be used as an epithet!) are met with counter assertions that "religion has no place in the *public* schools," or that the critics threaten to "break down the wall of separation between church and state," or that "it is *unethical*" (if not also unconstitutional) "to compel children of many different religions to submit to religious teachings contrary to their own beliefs

or to those of their parents." If freedom of worship is guaranteed by the Constitution, then, it is argued, we have no right to use the state's power of compulsory education to indoctrinate children with religious beliefs contrary to their parents' wishes.

There is much truth and no little confusion, if not wilful distortion, in the current charges and counter-charges. The use of the term "secular" as an epithet in contemporary attacks upon the public schools is revealing. One meaning of "secular," according to Webster,¹ is "of or pertaining to the worldly or temporal as distinguished from the spiritual or eternal." But a second and more specific meaning is "Not under church control; nonecclesiastical; civil; as, *secular* courts or education." It is one thing to charge that the public schools are unduly "worldly" or are preoccupied exclusively with the "temporal" as distinguished from the "spiritual" or "eternal." It is quite another thing to object because the schools are "not under church control," are "nonecclesiastical" or "civil." Examination of many of the attacks upon our public schools suggests that what really disturbs the critics is not that the schools fail to teach religious values, but that they do not teach the particular creeds, doctrines or rituals peculiar to the critic's own sect or religious denomination. Similarly, many of those who protest the teaching of "religion" in public school appear in fact to object to the imposition of sectarian creeds, doctrines or rituals upon children of other sects or denominations. In the admittedly extreme case of Vashti McCollom, the objection

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would seem to be a protest against the teaching of any form of *institutionalized* religion.

Freedom To Worship

If we are to adopt the position that one's own particular sect or even denomination is the one and only "true" religion, to which everyone else must conform or be considered "heretic," "irreligious," or even "atheistic," then there is no solution to the conflict. We are headed for a religious war, or more accurately, a war among the adherents of differing religious concepts. It does not make the prospect any prettier that such conflicts in the past have been wryly labeled "holy crusades" even when directly violating the basic teachings of the religious leaders they professed to "defend." It is one thing to be convinced that my own pattern of religious beliefs is best (at least, best for me). But it is something very different to assert that anyone who does not agree with my beliefs is, ipso facto, a "non-believer." One thinks of a long line of devout persons castigated by their contemporaries as "heretics" and "atheists" who later have been canonized as saints. One thinks of Joan of Arc. One remembers Spinoza.

If we as educators are to be true to the spirit as well as the letter of our American heritage of religious freedom, we need to remember that no one may be compelled to adopt another's form of worship, that each must be free to worship, or even not to worship, as he pleases. Particularly in a Protestant

¹ *Collegiate Dictionary*, 5th edition, 1948.

culture, we must be mindful that the individual's relationship to his God is a matter for his own individual conscience. To use the compulsory power of the state's school system to enforce attendance by children at any sectarian form of worship is a clear violation of the spirit if not also of the letter of the First Amendment. The 1953 *World Almanac* lists 230 separately organized "religious bodies" in the continental United States alone. Thus to give preferential treatment to one, or several, as against the others would seem to violate the provisions against "establishment." But it does not at all follow that the schools must therefore be "irreligious" or indifferent to religious values.

If we are to live up to our responsibilities as educators of the future citizens of "one world," we must also be mindful that even our Judeo-Christian tradition does not represent a majority of the world's nearly two and a half billion people. Among the great living world religions today Christianity has the second largest following, with an estimated 500,000,000 adherents.² But Buddhism is first, with 520 million; Confucianism has 400 million; Hinduism and Islam, some 300 million each; as of 1936 there were roughly 17 million followers of Shinto and (as of 1939) 16 million believers in Judaism. Although Christianity represents the stated religious conviction of a little over one-fifth of the world's peoples, no one Christian sect can claim the loyalty of more than a relatively small fraction of humanity.

This is not at all to say that numbers

² These statistics will be found in *Readings from World Religions*, compiled by Selwyn Gurney Champion and Dorothy Short; Beacon Press, Boston, 1951; cf. the chart on p. 331.

of followers are valid indexes of the truth or worth of any set of religious beliefs. Indeed, different religious bodies compile their lists of members in different ways and the statistics are not strictly comparable. It is strongly to suggest, however, that one must indeed be provincial in outlook to assume that his own particular religious creed is the one and only possible approach to the values of religion. If he goes further and insists that all views other than his are false, heretical or even "atheistic," he may expect only amazement from the rest of us at his presumption, combined with a bitter resentment at his effrontery.

Values for an Interdependent World

Like it or lump it, we *are* citizens of a rapidly shrinking and increasingly interdependent world. The world's peoples must somehow learn to live together—with all the richness of their diversity in culture, economic development, aspirations and religious convictions,—or face the destruction of civilization as we have known it. We should be false to our trust as educators if we did not seek to acquaint our pupils with the great enduring religious values which have lifted mankind above the level of the animals throughout recorded history. Back of the welter of varied, often seemingly conflicting rites, creeds, symbols, rituals, dogmas and doctrines which distinguish the multitudinous religions stands the deeper underlying and developing body of spiritual insights which mark the history of religion.

Here one finds common ground. There is a common denominator in

religious values to be found in the scriptures of the great world religions. Some religions, like the Buddhist, have been primarily concerned with the ethical implications of one's beliefs; others, like Medieval Christianity, have been preoccupied with theological concerns; but common to both traditions is the assertion of the intrinsic worth of man—of all men—and this assertion is strongest in the teachings of the founders of the great world religions.

The scope of this article does not permit detailed illustration of the religious values which are widely, some of them universally, shared. The details may be found in the growing wealth of literature in the field of comparative religion and the history of religion. Let us take by way of example certain basic guides to conduct (the "Golden Rule" and related values) as expressed in various religious scriptures.

Turning first to one of the older religious traditions, the Hindu, we find the values expressed in these words:³

"This is the sum of all true righteousness—

Treat others, as thou would'st thyself be treated.

Do nothing to thy neighbor, which hereafter

Thou would'st not have thy neighbor do to thee.

In causing pleasure, or in giving pain,

In doing good, or injury to others, In granting, or refusing a request,

A man obtains a proper rule of action

³ The following quotations from the scriptures of various religions, except for some direct quotations from the *Bible*, may be found in Champion and Short, *op. cit.*

By looking on his neighbor as himself." (From the *Mahabharata*, 13, 5571)

And from the Christian, in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, comes this precious religious heritage:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged.

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged;

And with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye,

But considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? . . .

"Ask, and it shall be given you;

Seek, and ye shall find;

Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. . . .

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you,

Do ye even so unto them." (*Matthew* 7: 1-12)

Or again, in other words,

"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these,

Ye did it not to me." (*Matthew* 25: 45)

Similarly, in the scriptures of Islam the followers of Mohammed may read:

"Do unto all men as you would they should do unto you, and reject for others what you would reject for yourself." (From the *Mishkat-el-Masabih*)

[For:]

"A man asked the Prophet what was the mark whereby a man might know the reality of his faith. He said, 'If thou derive pleasure from the good which thou hast done, and be grieved for the evil which thou hast committed,

thou art a true believer.' " (*Table-Talk of Mohammed*)

[And:]

"Verily, whether it be of those who believe, or those who are Jews or Christians or Sabaeons, whosoever believe in God, and the last day, and act aright, they have their reward at their Lord's hand, and there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve." (*Qur'an* [Koran] 2, 59 and 5, 73)

Let us look next at some of the teachings of K'ung Fu'tze (Confucius):

"Tzu Kung asked, saying: Is there any one maxim which ought to be acted upon throughout one's whole life? The Master replied: Surely the maxim of reciprocity is such:—Do not unto others what you would not they should do unto you." (*The Analects of Confucius*, 15, 23)

"What a man dislikes in his superiors, let him not display in the treatment of his inferiors; what he dislikes in inferiors, let him not display in the service of his superiors." (*The Great Learning*, 10, 2)

"True goodness is loving your fellow men.

True wisdom is knowing your fellow men." (*Analects*, 12, 22)

Confucius was born about 550 B.C. A few years earlier (around 563 B.C.) Siddhartha Gautama was born in an Aryan tribe, the Sakyas, living some 100 miles northeast of Benares. Born a Hindu, this boy grew up to become the Buddha (or "Enlightened One"). His teachings spread to many lands and took many forms. Among them are these:

"Judge not thy neighbor." (a Siamese Buddhist maxim)

"Hurt not others with that which pains yourself." (*Udanavarga* 5, 18)

"To see another's fault is easy; to see one's own is hard.

Men winnow the faults of others like chaff; their own they hide as a crafty gambler hides a losing throw." (*Dhammapada*, 252)

"Conquer your foe by force, you increase his enmity.

Conquer by love, and you will reap no after-sorrow." (*Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King*, 2241)

And in a somewhat different vein, but pertinent to our thesis, are the following Buddhist teachings:

"Wherein does religion consist? It consists in doing as little harm as possible, in doing good in abundance, in the practise of love, of compassion, of truthfulness and purity, in all the walks of life." (*Asoka's Edicts*)

"Never think or say that your own religion is the best. Never denounce the religion of others." (*Ibid.*)

"Do not decry other sects, do not depreciate others, but rather honour whatever in them is worthy of honour." (*Ibid.*)

Roughly contemporary with Gautama, and also in India, Vardhamana (or Mahavira, the "Great Hero") was revitalizing one of the oldest religious systems which has lasted down into the present, Jainism. From the scriptures of this prehistoric religion come the following:

"In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, regard all creatures as you regard yourself, and do not injure others with that which would injure yourself." (*Yogashastra* 2, 20)

"Non-injury is the highest religion." (Warren's *Jainism*, p. 6)

"Subdue wrath by *forgiveness*, conquer vanity by humbleness, fraud by straightforwardness, and vanquish greed through contentment." (*Dasha-vaikalika-sutra* 8, 39)

"Forgiveness, humility, straightforwardness, truth, contentment, restraint, austerities, charity, non-attachment and chastity are the ten *observances* to be followed." (*Purushartha Siddhyupaya*, 204)

If these passages seem reminiscent of the heritage from Judaism it is because precisely similar thoughts are found both in the Old Testament and in the *Talmud*. For example:

"What is hurtful to yourself, do not to your fellow man. That is the whole of the *Torah* and the remainder is but commentary. Go learn it." (*The Talmud*)

"He that is slow to *anger* is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." (*Proverbs* 16, 32)

"A soft *answer* turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." (*Proverbs* 15, 1)

"Behold how good and joyful a thing it is, *brethren*, to dwell together in unity." (*Psalms* 133, 1)

"Thou shalt not hate thy *brother* in thine heart. . . . Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge . . . but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (*Leviticus* 19, 17-18)

We might wish that the followers of the great religious teachers had a comparable humility, understanding, forgiveness and faith in their fellow man! This is not to ignore, nor to belittle, the very real differences in theology, in impact upon their followers, or even in

the concept of the nature, destiny and purpose of man in relation to God which may be found among the great living religions. It is to suggest, rather, that there is widespread assent to Jesus' formulation of the two Great Commandments:

"Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (*Matthew* 22, 36-39)

It may be objected that nothing has been said, in these quotations, about the nature of God, or the concepts of sin, salvation, eternal life, final judgment and numerous other concepts commonly associated with the province of religion. We might note, in passing, that of the eleven living religions representing well over two billion people,⁴ seven are distinctly or primarily monotheistic, one dualistic, two are not much concerned with theology, and only one (Shintoism) is clearly polytheistic. Four believe that man may have many lives on earth; all the rest that he has only one. All believe in some form of future life; four, in the form of absorption into the Divine Life (Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Taoism), and seven in some form of individual survival; but it should be noted that various sects in many religions either deny an after-life or are sceptical about or indifferent to life after death. Only

⁴The eleven are Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism.

three of the eleven (Buddhism, Christianity and Islam) may currently be regarded as proselytizing religions.

Values—not Creeds

More pertinent to our concern as educators, however, is the fact that the divisive effects of religion stem from the identification of *religion* with the creed, dogmas, ritual or doctrine of a particular sect or denomination, and the consequent adoption of an "holier than thou" attitude toward those whose beliefs and practices may differ—if indeed the resulting attitude is not one of open hostility accompanied by charges that the "others" are "infidels," "heretics," "non-believers," "pagans" or permanently beyond the reach of God's grace, and therefore to be despised, coerced or "liquidated." The sad, sorry story of religious persecution is not confined to any one religion or to any one nation or culture. If we are to profit from the ennobling and unifying values in religion, we might apply again the teachings of Jesus:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. . . .
Beware of false prophets, which come
to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly
they are ravening wolves.
Ye shall know them by their fruits. . . .

"Not every one that saith unto me,
Lord, Lord, shall enter into the
kingdom of heaven;
But he that doeth the will of my
Father
Which is in heaven." (*Matthew*
7, 1-21)

There is a great common denominator running through the scriptures of the world's living religions. It is to be found in the realm of religious values

and the prescriptions for daily living rather than in the fields of theology or apologetics. These enduring, developing *values* are widely shared. Many of them are universal. In our Judeo-Christian culture we may find deeper meaning for these values in the shared belief in One God and in human brotherhood. But *it is the values and not the creeds which we should teach our pupils*. The creeds belong within the province of the cathedral, church, temple, synagogue or meeting house—or in the home,—but not in a public school supported by the people of all creeds.

It is the shared values that we do teach, in the public as distinguished from the parochial or church controlled schools. Indeed, so deeply imbedded in our culture are these values that we can hardly avoid teaching them, unconsciously and indirectly if not intentionally and by specific inclusion in the curriculum. We might teach them better. We might point up the universality with which they command assent. We might even teach these values as a common denominator running through the great living religions.

One thing is certain. The teaching of sectarian creeds in the public school is divisive. It sets brother against brother and neighbor against neighbor. This can hardly be God's plan. In a world where fear, suspicion and distrust turn nation against nation we might do our pupils, and the world, a real service if we could acquaint them with the great common denominator of religious values which runs through the scriptures of the world's living religions. If this be heresy, let us make the most of it!

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