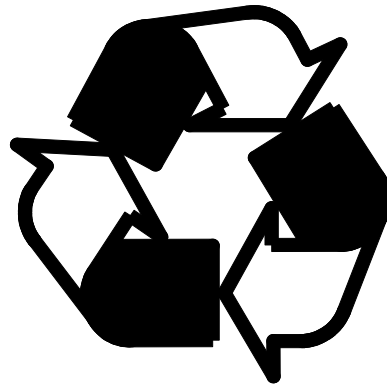


# REACH

Religious Education Association Clearing House

October-November-December 2003

## RELIGION AND EDUCATION IN RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT INSIGHTS FOR REFLECTION



A SPECIAL ISSUE IN CELEBRATION  
OF  
THE CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

1903 - 2003

## IN RETROSPECT

### 1903 - The Religious Education Association: A New Phase in the Study of Religion

The 2003 Centennial Anniversary of the Religious Education Association (REA) draws our attention to the organization's journey on behalf of the inter-relationship of religion and education across time and to the nature of religious education yet to come. This special issue of the Religious Education Association Clearing-house invites us to remember significant points from its beginning forward and perspectives on the future through articles written by past and present leaders.

This issue begins with the 1903 address of William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago, who is regarded as the founder of the Religious Education Association. The issue follows with reflections on the organization and religious education from the mid-twentieth century forward to the centennial anniversary.

#### **The Scope and Purpose of the New Organization By President William Rainey Harper**

The University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

Originally published in: *The Religious Education Association: Proceedings of the First Convention, Chicago 1903*. Chicago (1903): The Religious Education Association (230-240).

It is a source of very great disappointment to all of us, and I am sure I may say especially to myself, that the eminent gentleman whose name was placed (sic) upon the preliminary program for the address this morning cannot be with us. President Butler of Columbia University, as many of us know, has been called by divine Providence to pass through very deep waters in these last weeks— the greatest sorrow perhaps which can come to a man has come to him— and has left him unable to meet the engagement which he would otherwise have been glad to fulfill. President Butler has been in close touch with the preliminary work for this Convention for the past six months, and it is the occasion of very great regret to him that he cannot be with us this meeting.

I thought that I should like to have my words this morning entirely within your reach; so I have had a syllabus printed, which the ushers will now distribute. It contains twenty propositions relating to the scope and purpose of the new organization

I should like, first of all, to deny that I am in any way the author of any one of these propositions. This sheet is a composite affair; it contains, so far as I am able to understand it— and I think perhaps I understand a part of it— the consensus of opinions of many persons so far as it was

possible to secure such a consensus. It may fairly and honestly be said that one hundred men, perhaps two hundred, have contributed to this small sheet of four pages. I shall do nothing but read the propositions, and the eminent gentlemen who follow will discuss them. The first proposition stands by itself:

1. The desirability of a new organization depends upon the scope and purpose conceived of in connection with the proposed organization. No new organization is needed merely to antagonize and to disturb organizations already in the field, or merely to duplicate the work of such organizations. Unless, therefore, there is a scope and a purpose for this proposed organization which will give it a field (sic) outside of and above or beyond organizations now in existence, there is no excuse for its establishment; and I believe that is the opinion of every man and woman in this Convention.

The second, third and fourth propositions relate to the service, which may be expected of such an organization.

2. The new organization, if established, will undertake to render service in unifying the efforts of the different agencies already engaged in various lines of work; in correlating the forces already established, to the end that these agencies may accomplish even larger results than have yet been accomplished. The acceptance of such service on the part of the other organizations and agencies will of course be wholly voluntary and will in no case involve giving up of independent positions; for the work of the new organization will be something like that of a clearing-house.

You remember that the figure of a "clearing-house" was used yesterday by some of the speakers; and some of us who are familiar with the work of charity organizations in the city, the bringing together of the various organizations under one centralized force, know what a clearing-house means in connection with an organization.

3. But the new organization will not simply unify, it will undertake to render service in stimulating present agencies to greater effort, such aid being furnished through suggestion; through the publication of information concerning the work at large; through the provision of larger and better opportunities for these agencies to confer together; and through the help derived from the personal contact with each other of those interested in the same divisions of work.

A body of men working together, looking out over the whole field, surely ought to be able to make suggestions to the different agencies in different parts of the field. What is needed more than anything else is a bureau of information, and organization to collect statistics and give information to those who desire it. A large part of our inefficiency is due solely to ignorance of the facts with reference to work now being done. Further, the beneficial results of such a conference as this, of men and women coming from different states and from different organizations, are easily

understood. Thus this new organization will at once unify and stimulate, but more than this:

4. It will undertake to render service in creating new agencies where no agencies now exist— agencies for special lines of work in which as yet no united effort has been exerted; as well as in working out new plans which may be found helpful in lines of the educational work for the people at large in church art and architecture and in church music— a field (sic) that is almost wholly neglected; of effort from a new point of view in relation to religious and moral education in the public schools, according to the lines that were indicated yesterday; of the proposal of new plans of using to advantage the many libraries established in our villages and cities. Think what a power the Carnegie libraries throughout the country may be made to be if they are brought into touch with the Sunday schools and with religious work, and hundreds of these libraries have already indicated their willingness to come into such a relationship; all that is needed is a guiding hand to bring them together. Then, again, there are the fields of the Sunday school, the Young People's Societies, and the Christian Associations. It is perfectly evident— the speakers gave us this information yesterday— that much is to be done still in every field of religious education, and that some fields have scarcely yet been touched. This should be the purpose— to unify, to stimulate, to assist, to create. But now, how will the organization attempt to do this? A few propositions, if you please, upon that side:

5. This work would be undertaken in part through the holding of an annual convention. Such a convention will lead men to formulate and pronounce important thought upon these particular subjects: for example, a great text-book will have been given to the world when the Proceedings of this Convention are published. It will bring into sympathetic touch with each other those who are interested in subjects and who are able to attend the meetings; a convention held every year in some great center will quicken the life and interest of the community in which the convention is held. It will furnish literary material of the highest value for the use of those who are not able to attend the convention itself, but who desire assistance and information along these lines. There are many conventions being held— perhaps too many; but after all there is a work which a convention can do— a convention like this, an annual convention— that can be done in no other way.

6. Again, the new organization will work through the instrumentality of departmental organization, in which each special division of the subject of religious education will form a separate department.

Sometimes I think we are prone to suppose that the Sunday school is the only agency; more emphasis seems to be given to that agency than to any other. It deserves all the emphasis that can be placed upon it, but I think we ought to remember that the Sunday school is only one of fifteen or sixteen departments of religious and moral education. Each department thus constituted will hold special conferences

and conventions intended to further an intelligent interest in the subject; while the representatives of different departments, living within a certain district, where a county, or a state, or a group of states, will join in combined effort along all the lines thus organized.

Among these departments would be perhaps a department of Universities and Colleges, and there is no field today more open influence in this respect. Too many colleges, especially in connection with Christian denominations and in fact under ecclesiastical control, are doing less than they ought— to say the least— for religious education and for biblical study. Another department would deal with Theological Seminaries. We heard last night, indeed two or three times yesterday, of the need of a new kind of training in theological seminaries for the ministers of the future. Other departments would relate to Churches and Pastors, Sunday Schools, Public Secondary Schools, Public Elementary Schools, Private Schools— for the work in private schools must be put upon a different basis from that of public schools, Training schools, Christian Associations, Young People's Societies, the Home, the Libraries, the press, Correspondence Instruction, Religious Art, and Religious Music. There are many others, but these are some of the great branches of the work; and of these it will be seen that the Sunday school is only one agency.

7. The new organization, in addition to the annual convention which it ought to conduct, and in addition to these various departments which it ought to establish and organize, will include the establishment of a central Board of Directors, which will constitute the executive body of the Association, and, as such, arrange the programs of special and general conventions, secure by proper means the co-ordination of the work of the departments, and carry into effect the decisions of the Association at large of these several departments.

An Association, with this annual convention and its district conventions, with its departmental organizations along the lines suggested, and with this central body working and guiding and helping all, surely will be able to unify, to stimulate, to assist, and to create.

8. In this organization the Board of Directors should surely be made up of officers and members selected annually in open convention from among those who are deeply interested in the cause. The members of such a Board of Directors, who are given this responsible position of directing the work as a whole, should represent the various countries (for this work should not be limited to our own country), states, territories, and districts, which furnish the membership of the Association. But not only this; such a Board of Directors should represent as fully as possible also the various religious denominations, and the various schools of religious opinions recognized as Christian. Still further, such a Board of Directors must represent the various divisions of Christian activity, whether they are educational, evangelistic, or philanthropic.

9. A large Board of Directors, representing in this way all the different sides of the work, must of course have an Executive Board made up of the membership of the Board of Directors— a small body, which will act as the legal corporation for the Association, secure, and invest or expand the funds of the Association— since funds will be needed for the work— and will represent the directors in the interval for their meetings.

10. Such an Executive Board will need Secretaries. Among these there will be the General Secretary, whose entire time will be devoted to the interests of the Association; an Editorial Secretary, to whose care will be committed the charge of all the printed publications of the Association; and a financial Secretary, who shall be charged with securing the means needed to defray the expenses of the work of the Association.

This will indicate the consensus of opinion gathered from conference after conference in many of the great cities East and West, concerning the scope and purpose, the whole extent and plan, of the proposed organization. But now let us go one step further.

11. This Association, through its Boards and Secretaries, will have first the task of securing the funds needed for this work.

A large part of the Christian work carried on is greatly hampered by lack of funds. We do not wish such an organization as this to be in any sense commercial, or to be dependent in any way on publishing relationships; but there must be funds with which to conduct the work. These funds are needed for the defraying of the ordinary expenses of the Association; also, for conducting the special investigations proposed by the Departments. Investigation is one of the chief things, which should be undertaken, and it cannot be conducted without money. Money will also be needed for the printing and publishing of the proceedings, reports, and other literature of the Association; and for the endowment of special phases of the work, which will always require assistance. A large sum of money will be needed— as much as \$25,000 a year— to pay the expenses of this organization, if it is to do its work.

12. The Association will also print and publish reports, bulletins, documents, and books, including the proceedings of the annual and of special conventions, reports of committees appointed to make special investigations, and important contributions to the cause of religious and moral education, which the Association may deem it desirable to issue.

13. The Association, through its Boards and Secretaries, will aim to encourage in various ways individual and institutional effort in the direction of religious and moral education. This will include, for example, assistance in the work of grading Sunday schools; effort to secure the introduction of courses and instruction in the curricula of colleges and universities; aid in the training of teachers; preparation of lists of books on the different subject of religious work and thought; provision of special material for

the use of the daily press; organization of work for mothers' clubs; and many other similar kinds of work

Let us now look at the movement from another point of view.

14. The Association, through its Departments, will propose to make new contributions to the cause of religious and moral education, and this will be done through the light of scientific investigations. Some of these will attempt to define more closely the true relation of religious and moral instruction to other branches of instruction, and to indicate the part which religion should perform in the development of the individual and of society. Others will undertake to correlate religious and moral instruction with the instruction in literature, history, and science now provided in the public schools. Others will seek to determine the place of the Bible in religious and moral instruction, and to set forth the best methods of using the Bible for this purpose. Still others will endeavor to point out the application of the established results of modern psychology, modern pedagogy, and modern Bible study, as these stand related to religious and moral instruction.

There is work in these lines of investigation— real, definite, scientific investigation— to occupy the time of thousands of men and women, if they will undertake it.

15. The organization must undertake, through these various departments, to carry on practical experiments. Perhaps we should not distinguish these from scientific investigations, but there may be a distinction. Some of these practical experiments will have to do with the application of religious and moral instruction to different stages of physical, mental, moral, and spiritual development; others with the adjustment of the material employed for purposes of religious and moral instruction to the needs of the special sociological groups included in the Christian Associations, Young People's Societies, Bible clubs, and the like; and still others with the working out of an approximately ideal curriculum for the Bible school— a curriculum which will embody the larger substance and the better methods of a religious and moral education that is in accordance with the present status of biblical, theological, ethical, psychological, pedagogical, and scientific knowledge.

16. The Association will from time to time present constructive propositions, which shall be intended to serve as the basis for lesson-helps and text-books on various portions of such curricula.

I doubt whether the Association will ever feel inclined to undertake the issue of lesson-helps or text-books— I shall hope that it will not undertake that— but it can certainly undertake to present the basis for such. Further, it can do in its way what has been done in other ways by other Associations toward securing the ore adequate training of teachers— this certainly is a great thing to be accomplished. It can undertake to place religious and moral education on as high a plane as that on which secular work has come to rest; and that of all things is the necessary thing, for the boy

and girl must be led to respect religious education when it is put in comparison with secular education.

17. Now, how shall the Association do all this, with what spirit? First of all, with the scientific spirit. If there is any one point to which it seems to me ought to pledge ourselves, it is that all the work of this organization shall be done with the truly scientific spirit, and that consequently this Association, in all its undertakings, will proceed carefully and cautiously upon the basis of fundamental principles, seeking to observe accurately the facts and from these to make deductions, and aiming to co-ordinate and systematize the material presented for consideration. The time has come for such work to be done as it has not yet been done.

18. The Association must also be controlled by what I should like to call, for lack of a better word, the universal spirit, and this will forbid the placing of emphasis upon the distinctive views of any one denomination or any school of opinion to the exclusion of others; it may be confidently asserted that those who hold different theories of biblical history will be able to unite upon a constructive teaching of the Bible from a practical religious and moral point of view. It will likewise forbid the limitation of the work to any single phase of religious instruction, inasmuch as the time has now come for the existence of an organization, which shall not aim to supercede any of the existing agencies dealing with special phases of religious instruction, but will undertake to study and develop the subject in its entirety; this spirit will also forbid the restriction of the control to any one section of the country, or those interested in any one division of the work, or to those representing any one school of thought.

19. The Association will cultivate, above all, the cooperative spirit, and thus manifest clearly its purpose to assist all organizations working in the same field; to refuse to enter into rivalry with institutions or associations of any class; and to perform that general service which will promote the efficiency of all institutions.

An important lesson may be learned from the policy of the Carnegie Institution of Washington. The Carnegie Institution, with its ten million dollars, is not a new University, but a body of men using the income of the endowment to co-operate with existing universities, and with men wherever they may be found in any state who are carrying on scientific investigations—a splendid example of co-operation.

20. And just one last word. It seems to me that this Association, if organized, must be expected to require time to plan its work, and still more time to execute it. There are some of us, I fancy, who think that something can be done at once—in a week or a month. My friends, anything done in a day, or a month, or year, will be small. Let us plan work for decades; let us not try to do something at once, before plans can be perfected, before organization can be secured. The work we have in hand is not the work of days or months. Many years of careful preparation and labor will be required before large results will begin to appear. Let us not be

disappointed, therefore, when the organization is established, if the work does not begin to show results at once. Let us remember that good work, strong work, requires time.

As I have said, I have merely embodied in this statement points that have come from hundreds of men and women interested in this work.

### **(Mid-Century)Reflections of a Religious Educator By Harrison Sackett Elliott**

An address given at a banquet during the 1950 REA Biennial Convention in honor of Elliott's twenty-eight years of service at Union Theological Seminary and his inauguration as General Secretary of the REA. Appears in *Religious Education* XLV (4), July-August:193-202.

#### I

I must confess to a considerable degree of embarrassment over a gathering in my honor; but that embarrassment is somewhat relieved because I realize that I am tonight but an available symbol of our untied conviction as to the contribution which can be made through educational programs and processes. It is probably worthwhile for those who have been engaged in this enterprise in connection with various agencies representing both general and religious education to have an occasion for coming together in order to recognized (sic) that we are all a part of a single movement and in order to have a sense of solidarity in a common cause. We have worked together in various enterprises over the years in general and in religious education, within our own particular denominations and across denominational divisions, in churches and in allied agencies like the Christian Associations, within our own faiths and on an interfaith basis. Some of us who are here tonight have gone through difficult times together. We have also participated in some victorious occasions. Working together cooperatively on these enterprises has developed a fellowship of which we all feel ourselves a part. Participating as we have in these various projects, there have developed not only mutual respect and confidence but genuine regard for each other. The friendships which develop out of this kind of cooperative and participating work are those we prize. We are also keenly aware that we are tonight representatives of wider fellowship which stretches across the nation and around the world.

This evening would not have been possible but for the influence of great teachers whom I had the good fortune to have at crucial times in my own development. I wish the privilege of paying tribute to them tonight. Among these, Dr. George Albert Coe, still alert in mind at eighty-eight, is the Dean of us all in Religious Education. Some of you, who like myself had the privilege of having him as a teacher and of arguing out with him the problems in religious education, are deeply grateful for the stimulus to courageous and incisive thinking in his classes.<sup>1</sup>

In making preparation for this evening, I have reviewed the experiences in which we have shared to try to formulate



what it is that binds us together in this fellowship. It is true that we represent a common conviction as to the importance of both education and religion and the need for a basic inter-relation between the two. But this inter-relationship of religion and education of itself does not build a fellowship. Certainly we are not bound together because we all think and believe alike. There are few, if any questions, on which all of us in this room would agree, and the wider fellowship, of which we are representatives, would be even more diverse in points of view. What has characterized our relationships has been respect for the convictions of others. But this has been more than superficial tolerance. We have believed that our own experience would be enriched and the common cause furthered by the contribution of these diverse viewpoints. There are significant movements today, particularly within Protestantism, where the effort is to unite around commonly accepted beliefs. Some of us in the wider movement of religious education are a part of these developments. But when we come together as religious educators, the significance of our fellowship grows out of the fact that distinctiveness and difference in convictions are magnified rather than minimized.

But diversity just as diversity does not make a fellowship. There must be unity in the diversity. The two words by which we are designated give the key to what had and does bind us together – religious education. On the face of it, these two words seems to represent our diversity rather than our unity. We have never had agreement as to what is meant by education and certainly we represent diverse interpretations of religious. But nevertheless these two words in combination do represent our unity.

Let us look at education first and see what the new emphasis upon education in religion at the beginning of this century meant and what this emphasis means today. It was and is recognition of human responsibility and possibility in the field of religion. It was more. It was and is recognition of the pertinence of human knowledge, secured through reverent research and experimentation, to the field of religion. It was even more. It was and is a recognition that in the development of character, in the realization of religious experience, in the transformation of individual and group conduct, there are conditions which must be met and processes which must be followed, its results are to be expected. A distinctively experimental attitude characterized these developments. Not only must conditions be met and processes followed, but these must be discovered. For example, Lincoln School in general education and Union School of Religion in religious education were experimental institutions in which efforts were made to work our improved curricula and to develop a more effective methodology. The New Lincoln School, represented in this gathering tonight, is the latest adventure in this emphasis upon experimentation in education.

The three-fold assumption of human responsibility, of the pertinence of human knowledge, and of the reliability of life

processes has been increasingly recognized in our common life in other areas than religion. If a farmer, an engineer, a physician, or a social scientist wishes successful results in his particular area, he recognized that there are conditions which must be met and processes which must be trusted. But at the opening of the century in the area of religion, the assumption was widespread, and it is still found today, that good intention and sincere purpose are all that are necessary. Those who were interested in religious education because convinced that this is a universe and that God works in and through the same orderly processes in the area of religion that He does in other aspects of that universe.

It is worth trying to recapture what the realization of all this meant to those who entered religious work in that period. Two main influences were found. Historical criticism in the use of the Bible and attention to improvement in educational method in the work of the churches and allied agencies. When I taught Sunday school class fifty years ago, we were passing verses around and speculating as to what they meant. What the human knowledge of the origin and setting of the Biblical records has meant to the significant use of these records, no one can really feel who did not try to teach in the period before that rich resources out of a critical and historical approach were available. As to methodology, I met up with the Herbartian method first in 1900-1901 in a Normal School in Northern Indiana and I still feel the glow of enthusiasm engendered as the possibilities of an improved methodology were presented. In my first professional position I was responsible for trying to be of help in connection with voluntary Bible Study groups under the Student Y.M.C.A. Students would enroll in these groups with great anticipation, hundreds of them in come of the universities, but before the end of the year, many of them had frittered away. There was strong promotion and sincere purpose, but the groups often failed. Even though I was a theological graduate, I had secured no help from my seminary training to meet that situation for I had my theological seminary course before Chairs or Departments of Religious Education had been established in those institutions. Accordingly, I asked for the opportunity for further training and went to Teachers College, Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary, bristling with questions. And I found answers to many of them.

The belief that there are conditions for effectiveness, which can be discovered, and processes which can be trusted meant for us in those earliest days the difference between blind and intelligent effort. For example, I got a cue as to what was the matter with those Bible Study groups. We had tried the widely-acclaimed Herbartian method, but it did not solve the problem. From a book on *How We Think* by John Dewey, published in 1910, and from other study I came to understand more thoroughly the exploratory thought processes available so mankind in finding the answers to his

questions. That there are thought processes which can be trusted, if sincerely and thoroughly utilized, gave us confidence in our endeavors.

We believed in democracy in those days. We wished to further democratic participation, but so often it was futile and irresponsible. Accordingly individuals from various agencies and three Faiths associated themselves together in what was known as The Inquiry to try to understand the conditions and to develop the processes for reliable democratic participation. Agencies like the Y.M.C.A. has pioneered in an emphasis upon the significance of groups and of group experience in religious education. But significant group experience did not just happen and there were many problems in connection with the formation and conduct of groups. With the cooperation of Professor Kilpatrick those of us who were related to the Boys Work of the Y.M.C.A. Worked earnestly on the problems of effective group work. With the formation of the Social Group Work section of the National Conference of Social Work, there was a medium for a wider cooperative attached on this problem.

Through the influence of Freud and other European psychologists, it was gradually recognized that in the area of personal life and personality difficulties human knowledge is pertinent and redemptive processes are possible. How strange this emphasis was in general as well as in religious education is evidenced by the fact that there was only one course in this field in all of Columbia University, a course entitled Mental Adjustments taught by the late Professor Leta Stetter Hollingworth. Taking that course opened up a new field of possibility in the application of human knowledge and in the utilization of reliable processes. The course in this area which we established at Union in 1924-25, I think was the first in a theological seminary, and it was literally an experimental project in which the instructor brought in outside persons in this field and learned as he attempted to conduct the course. Now competency in counseling is part of the requisite equipment of the religious educator and preparation in this field is available in various theological institutions and universities.

If I have succeeded in making clear what I have tried to say I think you will agree that the confidence in *education*, which binds us together, has been no superficial trust in methodological tricks and devices. It has been rather the belief that in the area of human life and experience there are creative and redemptive processes available which can be discovered, which can be utilized, and which can be trusted.

## II

The second word in our name, *religious*, has been equally important in binding us together as a fellowship. Despite the criticisms which have been made of us that we were long on methodology and short on theology, we have had definite religious beliefs. While many of us have shared in the beliefs of the particular branches of religion to which we

belong, there have been distinctive beliefs which have bound us together in this fellowship. There has been definite metaphysical grounding for our work. Those who have trusted a religious educational process have done so because they believe that man is so made and the nature of reality is such that it is through such a process that man finds his way through life. Some have interpreted this in definitely theistic terms and have believed that it is in and through such processes that God's will for human life become known and realized; others have thought in more naturalistic categories in terms of the good life or of spiritual values. But they have been in agreement that it is through an educational process that these values are defined and appropriated.

Religious education has also has its orientation to basic religious goals or purpose which gave directions to the process. There have been differences between us as to whether these basic purposes, be they Christian or Jewish, are given in the particular tradition and the process is to be so conducted as to lead to these given goals, or whether the particular religious heritage is to be utilized in determining the goals and the definitions of the goals to be a part of the process; but never disagreement as to the basic character of these goals. There has been agreement that these values are not created by man but are potentially present, in the structure of the universe, and that the goals of the educational process as worked out should be in line with these ultimate values; however, they are interpreted.

Since we are united around religious education it is not surprising that philosophical and theological issues should have been prominent in the movement. When I went to Union Seminary twenty-eight years ago I rather assumed that I could pass the issues in the Philosophy of Education to Professor Kilpatrick and the issues to Professor William Adams Brown and Professor Eugene Lyman. But I have found myself in the center of philosophical and theological discussions during my entire teaching career.

This illustrates that which has been basic in the religious education movement and I think does unite us; viz, that human knowledge and human processes have to be taken into account in developing one's basic religious beliefs (sic). If this is God's universe, whatever through reverent research or experimentation is discovered about the nature of the universe and about human beings and human relations is part of the revelation of God. The religious education's beliefs about man have been influenced both by the insights of his religious heritage and by the findings of psychology. His beliefs about the redemptive element in human life have also been influenced both by his religious heritage and by that which has become known through mental hygiene.

It is both thrilling and a baffling experience to be a religious educator. It is thrilling because there is not a field [of] knowledge which is irrelevant to his task and because the

insights and the skills of those engaged in other fields are pertinent to his work and resources for him. It is baffling because it seems impossible for one person to keep abreast of the pertinent knowledge from so many fields; and to master so wide a range of skills. The religious educator is always in danger of being a jack of all trades and a master of none. There is no easy way out of his dilemma.

### III

Up until now, I have been attempting to describe the genius of the movement known as religious education. Now I should like briefly to review its history. There have been since I have been related to this movement two main periods. We are either already embarked upon or at the eve of a third period. The first period, commencing with the turn of the century and continuing until the early 1930s, was characterized by contagious optimism and kindling enthusiasm, particularly in the first half of this period. Religious education was on the march. It was hailed as the new Messiah. Directors of religious education were added to churches. Departments or Chairs of Religious Education were added in colleges, schools of education, and theological institutions. The International Council of Religious Education was formed.

It was a notable period, also for Judaism. It opened during the time of the highest immigration of Jews in to the United States when the Jewish population grew rapidly from less than 250,000. Leaders in Judaism set themselves to the Herculean task of developing a system of Jewish education which would be rooted in Jewish community and home life and which would conserve the cultural-religious values of Judaism but at the same time foster the harmonious integration of the Jew into the social pattern and cultural life of American.<sup>1</sup> For the Roman Catholics, this period was characterized by a great expansion in parochial schools, which increased in number from 3,482 in 1892 with 44 percent of Roman Catholic churches having schools to 7,923 schools in 1930 with around 60 percent of the churches with schools and an enrollment of 2,222,598 pupils.<sup>2</sup>

The interest in this first period was not confined to those who were specializing in the field of religious education. The best evidence of this fact was the organization and development of the Religious Education Association. The facts succinctly set forth in the brief history of the Religious Education Association by Professor Orville I Davis.<sup>3</sup> Religious Education was to mean much more than "Sunday School reform." It was to involve the entire educational program of the Church and to stimulate a vast program under the direction of many other agencies. Among the 417 signers of the "call" for the organization convention were 45 college presidents and deans of colleges and theological seminaries, 48 professors, 65 ministers, and 66 Sunday schools, YMCA's and other organizations. Five hundred and twenty-four ministers were among the 1259 charter members from 42 states and 5 Canadian provinces. The

National Education Association indicated its approval and cooperation. The sixteen departments of the Association covered aspects of religious education and different agencies. Three thousand from 23 states, to provinces of Canada, and 4 foreign countries attended the first Convention. Unless one participated in the events of this time, it is difficult to realize the sense of mission and the feeling of confidence which characterized this period in religious education.



The second period opened with the worldwide depression which confirmed the disillusionment which had followed World War I. This period, in contrast with the first, was characterized by pessimism about people and disbelief in the possibilities of human effort. It was characterized by efforts to get back to essentials in education, by a new orthodoxy in religion, and by a trend toward totalitarianism in government. A basic distrust in democratic processes and democratic institutions developed and propaganda by which people's minds were made up for them became more the vogue. There seems to have been more of a reaction against religious education in Protestantism than in Judaism or Roman Catholicism. But certainly there were decided efforts in Protestantism. The optimism of the earlier period was characterized as sentimental illusion. Not only was the nerve of consecrated human effort cut but this effort itself was often characterized as sinful presumption. Many of the leaders of the social gospel, of liberal theology, and of progressive religious education moved to the opposite extreme in their beliefs and practices. The word liberal became a term of disapproval. The financial difficulties gave to the churches an excuse for discontinuing specialized help in the field of religious education; but more than this, the climate of the time gave those who had been opposed to religious education during the earlier period the courage to declare it a superficial fad which was now at an end or a menace which should be abolished. At the 1935 convention in Rochester, NY, those affiliated with the Religious Education Association considered the possibility of giving the organization an honorable or dishonorable, burial but there was still an aggressive remnant which would not allow it to be destroyed, and the members of that remnant banded themselves together to ride out the storm.

The reaction in the second period led religious educators to re-examine the work they were doing and to modify a too easy optimism which had often characterized them. Events also sobered them as to the seriousness of their task. But in spite of the reaction against religious education, the situation was not completely one of despair. Many large churches held steady and maintained their specialized leadership. Denominational boards and the International Council of Religious Education continued their work. The American Association for Jewish Education, which in Judaism somewhat parallels the function of the International Council of Religious Education in Protestantism, was formed in the second period under Dr. Israel Chipkin's leadership. More than this, Jewish educators found it increasingly possible, despite ideological differences, to work together democratically in the development of educational standards. Community agencies usually known as Bureaus of Jewish Education, were formed in forty communities. These included all groups and viewpoints in Jewish education and expressed the feeling of responsibility on the part of the Jewish community to provide for the education of all Jewish children without attempt on the part of these cooperative

agencies to impose any one Jewish viewpoint or interpretation on individual schools. Father Thomas J. Quigley, Superintendent of Catholic Schools, Pittsburgh, and a Vice-President of the R.E.A., has characterized this second period as the time when Catholic education began to emerge from its period of adolescence and at last to come of age. He adds that within the last twenty years the emphasis has completely shifted away from the feverish attempt to establish schools to a more scientific analysis and approach to the problems of school management and supervision.<sup>4</sup>

The net result of the developments of the second period has been to cause a serious division among those concerned about education and religion. In the first period, a process was going on which seemed to bid fair to unite the socializing and progressive forces of religion, education, and social work. The establishment of a new orthodoxy in religion, with its special doctrines of revelation and with its suspicion of human effort, was in direct conflict with the continued emphasis upon human effort and upon the social origin of ideologies in the general educational and social work groups. Efforts toward any dynamic synthesis or integration ceased. As a result, there have developed rival ideologies and because of these rivalries, there tends to be dogmatism about all groups. Those in religious education find themselves in a difficult position for they cannot join either of the rival camps because they share the concerns of both groups. Further in their own life and work, they have been basically influenced both by their religious heritage and by the insights which have come out of so-called secular knowledge and they cannot in justice repudiate either.

#### IV

On the face of the situation it does not seem that we are at the beginning of a third period and that the time is propitious for a forward movement in religious education. It looks as if any such movement would be crushed between these rival ideologies which grip our world, that it is bound to be labeled as secular and naturalistic by the religious groups, and otherworldly and unrealistic by the educational, social work leaders. But may it not be that the religious education movement, rooted as it is both in religion and education, has come to the Kingdom for such as time as this. International problems cannot be solved by the division of the world into two rival groupings. Nor can the problems of religious education be solved if we are divided into rival camps which must fight each other. Further, this is not necessary. Whatever may or may not be possible in relation to the international cold war, there is enough in common concern and purpose to make the transcending of these differences possible within religious education.

The first step, which is necessary, is respect for an understanding of the persons who with conviction differ from us. That respect and understanding will never come until chasms between these groupings are bridged and those

with conflicting convictions come into communication with each other. But they must come together under conditions where they are not compelled for the sake of a pseudo-harmony to set aside their convictions. The efforts to resolve these conflicts by trying to formulate a theology for religious education have not solved the problem. They have tended to cover over the real issues. On the other hand, dogmatic promulgation of rival ideologies only accentuate the differences. I believe the temper of those involved in these differences, both within Faith groupings and between them and general educators, has changed sufficiently so it would be possible to explore them frankly. This would not result in a syncretic philosophy or theology for religious education. But such a process would reveal how much those seemingly in complete opposition have in common, and would enable us to explore our differences in a spirit of mutual confidence and respect.

A hopeful sign in the present situation is the growing recognition that religious education was thrown out in too cavalier a fashion and perhaps it has a contribution to make in these difficult times. Whatever the theology of the particular church, it still is an institution which has to be managed and it must have a program. However, much in theory some of the churches may have thought themselves in opposition, when facing the practical problems they turn to those who have insight and skill in the area of religious education for help in knowing how to meet the conditions for an effective program. An evidence of this is the number of churches which are now clamoring for individuals with educational training. In my judgment, the main hindrance to our influence in the days ahead will not be ideological, but will be the limitations in our own skill and insight and resourcefulness. Despite the progress which has been made during this past half century in general and religious education, with their allied fields of group work and counseling, we still are farther ahead in theory than in practice; we know more about what ought to be done than we know how to do it. We can get help on the problems of religious education by experimentation in general education. But we must not depend solely upon the developments in general education. We desperately need some way of rallying those with training and resourcefulness in experimentation which will point the way for the improvement of the program of religious education.

While we are further along in theory than we are in practice, there are still basic conflicts in the area of theory which need to be explored in the spirit of the religious education movement and by the processes in which it believes. One of the most critical problems of our day is that of religion in general education. At present there are basic differences of convictions as to the solution of this problem. Those with these various convictions are pressing for the adoption of their own points of view. In the interests both of religion and education, not to speak of the children and youth who

are involved, we must find a way of attacking this basic problem cooperatively.

The curriculum problem in religious education is by no means solved. There have appeared within the last few years carefully worked out curricula, in the development of which there has been invested not only skilled and consecrated devotion but large amounts of money. While each of these curricula is a contribution, it is doubtful whether any one contains the final answer to the curriculum problem, and certainly there are still basic unresolved conflicts in this area. On the college level also, there is a varying need for some agency which will give constructive attention to the curriculum of religion and indeed to the entire college curriculum.

In the use of the Bible, we have not adequately taken advantage of the results of a critical and historical approach or of the best educational theory and practice. Our time has been characterized by a renewed realization of the importance of the family in religious education, and there are many unsolved problems in this area. The seriousness of the economic, racial, political, and other social problems and the stake of religion in these areas has led to large attention to these questions in religious education. But there is not agreement as to the function of religious education nor as to how study should be related to action.

It must be evident that any freelance, front-line organization like the Religious Education Association will not be lacking in problems it might explore. Many others could be listed. It may sound completely presumptuous to list all these possibilities in relation to an organization with the limited financial support and the small membership of the R.E.A. But here (sic) was a time when it was a strong organization, with a sizable membership and numerous sub-groups working on problems of this sort. Perhaps the critical character of the situation and the importance of these problems will enable us, working together, to recapture some at least of its former strength. The need for it is as great as it was at the opening of the century. Even though our membership has not been large, during this period out of which we are passing the Religious Education Association has furnished a fellowship for those who still believed in religious education and a rallying center for those who were attempting to practice it. It has today as it had at the beginning the function of keeping alive in our minds as well as in the public mind "the ideal of moral and religious education and the sense of its need and value."

<sup>1</sup>Israel Chipkin, *Twenty-Five Years of Jewish Education in the United States*, Jewish Education Association of New York City, 1937.

<sup>2</sup>J.A. Burns and Bernard J. Kohlbrenner, *A History of Catholic Education in the United States*, Benziger Brothers, New York, 1937, pp. 144-45.

<sup>3</sup>*Religious Education*, Vol. XLIV, January-February, 1949, pp. 41-54.

<sup>4</sup>*Religious Education*, Vol. XXXIX, September-October 1944, pp. 273-281.

**1973– Crisis, Hope, and God**

**By Ann Ida Gannon**

The article appears in *Religious Education, LXVII(2), March-April 1973:170-173.*

*“This is an abbreviated form of the Presidential address which was given at the luncheon and business meeting at the Convention, and it captures the basic theme of the Convention with simplicity and grace.”*

The Editor

These remarks are reflections on the discussions of the past few days rather than a formal “talk.” After having listened to several of the lectures and seminars and then sharing some exchanges with many of you I have tried to capture something of the spirit of the theme as it has developed during the meeting. In this short time I can only suggest a few of the ideas that impressed me most.

**CRISIS**

“Crisis” in the context of our topic has many differing interpretations. As opposed to “hope” – which looks to the future – crisis tends to lock us into the present. First of all, some crises are overpowering, arousing a sense of too much to be done too soon. The burden of the present makes it difficult to look to the future much as a hand before the eye blocks our vision. Some crises are sources of a sense of futility, of vagueness about goals. In a culture that puts such a high premium on success, it is harder to face situations where solutions are uncertain or impossible to determine. Again, crises may fill us with a sense of impotence in the face of odds. When the demand is greater than our ability to respond, there is a genuine crisis. Looking at alternatives and being convinced that solutions should be found *now*, we find our immersion in the present blurring our memory of past experience and our efforts to plan for the future.

A few examples may illustrate some of the influences which tend to lock us into the present. The crises caused by the rapid changes made possible through technology lock us into both time and space. The very excellence of mass communications which makes instantaneous sharing of experiences possible leaves little time for us to reflect on those experiences: instant success and/or instant failure. Time freezes in a ever-changing present of the twenty-four hour news broadcast that is always “today;” these and other experiences make maintaining a leisurely perspective or the planning of a future difficult. Like a long distance runner, we must concentrate on the next step and cannot tolerate the possibility of a constantly changing goal. So, the very power that seems to free us to know and do so many things is also a source of bondage.

Technology seems to have helped us to conquer space but it is also responsible for locking us into it more securely than ever. Having reached the moon, we are more aware than before that earth is only a tiny space ship in the universe. Our success has made us more aware of the impossibility of

achieving a successful exploration of the whole universe. Compare the sense of accomplishment (for the individual) in first reaching the moon, and in first circling the globe. When man first circled the earth he had completed something which he could measure; when man reached the moon with the help of thousands of people and machines, he sensed not completion but incompleteness – there was so much more to be done. In our technological age, the greater the new achievement the greater is the sense of personal insufficiency and of dependence on computers and other machines. Speed is so great that it (sic) defies comprehension; the inventions of technology enable man to achieve greater successes only to the extent that he has become more and more dependent on them – even to the point of having computers influence the future: food production, population growth; destructive armaments.

Crises rooted in technological achievements are paralleled by those arising from the explosion of knowledge in other areas. We have doubled our knowledge in the past ten years and in so doing have to some degree “destroyed” our past. We have become aware of the prejudice of past generations and of their ignorance of elemental facts; we are not so sure as we were of what “religious” education should be in this rapidly changing culture. The knowledge explosion has not only made it possible for the young to know more than adults, it has thrust them into a culture in which new values are emerging and old values are often misunderstood, totally discarded, or ignored as irrelevant. Many of the seminars touched on this aspect of today’s crisis.

**HOPE**

These crises – and others of similar nature – that absorb our attention in the present – could be the grounds for a kind of hopelessness. But a realistic hope, which acknowledges areas of helplessness but refuses to be locked into them has been expressed in many of your discussions. Genuine hope comes from an acceptance of the limits of our abilities and a knowledge of what we can and cannot do. One of the speakers highlighted this yesterday in his discussion of the way adults must help the young to experience both their limitations, and the possibility for maximum achievements within those limits – the possibility of successful choice within known limits. Realistic hope grows out of an ability to grasp the present and its limitations and yet to refuse to be overcome by them. It is built upon inner resources – humble enough to acknowledge the need for help and courageous enough to set experience in a context wider than the immediate present. Technology is willing to forecast a future based on computer-estimates and scientific invention (witness, *Future Shock*); the man of hope accepts the tools but does not let the means dictate the ends. His vision of the future includes further certainties.

I feel that the religious educator is in a position to lay foundations for this kind of hope. The image of society as a machine, complex, moving to greater complexity,

dehumanized by man's capacity to destroy himself, must be countered by the image of a society in which each man is a person before and in the world. The rhythms of life have been disrupted by the accelerated speed of travel and of sound and the incredible machines of destruction; the religious educator in exploring the dignity of the person before God can also restore the person-sized challenges which restore something of our natural rhythms of growth and response to reality. In our society we see efforts to re-establish such person-sized challenges; the growing popularity of hiking, fishing, cycling, camping is one example – man enters areas of challenge that call upon his personal competence. In so doing he comes to terms with his own limits and tests the extent of his power to overcome them. Some such experience with a reality that can be grasped (at least figuratively) is being sought by the young people who have been dominated by a "machine" culture that while seeming to expand man's power has at the same time threatened to dominate it.

#### GOD

An important aspect of the experience of reality is man's experience of the reality of God. Human experience is more than intellectual – we have been through a period of extreme stress on the rational – and includes not only affective experience but the experience of faith which defies conceptualization but is not less real because of that.

The reality of faith is a necessary element in a genuine hope. Man's experience of God goes beyond the present to the certainty of a future in which he can become what he is not; the experience of hope leads man to see beyond the limits of himself and his world because beyond these limits there is God. The risk of hope involves the paradox of certainty and uncertainty; I am certain that there is a future beyond that planned by a purely material culture, and I am certain that I have the power to determine my course in seeking it, but the realm of this certainty is not solely my intellect or my will.

What many seem to have said is that we religious educators cannot teach religion; we cannot teach faith, we cannot teach hope. The most important element in religious education today is the living witness of the person who lives his faith and his hope. We must use the insights which serious study permits in order to convey the solid bases of religious convictions; we must utilize the tools which our culture permits in order to reach the minds and hearts of those whom we teach. But the success of religious education cannot depend on these alone; they create the context in which the message of faith and of hope is communicated through the living witness of the believer who is in touch with our times as well as with eternity and who can somehow communicate the difference between knowing about God and knowing God, knowing about reasons for hoping and hoping.

### **1976– 70 Years of the Journal, *Religious Education*, 1906 – 1976**

**By Boardman W Kathan**

(From a mimeographed document provided by Ann Ida Gannon.)

The founding convention of the Religious Education Association was one of the outstanding events of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. 3,000 people from the U.S., Canada and four other countries assembled for the opening convocation in The Auditorium in Chicago on Tuesday evening, February 10, 1903. The sessions continued for three days, and among the speakers were Dr. George A Coe, Northwestern University, Dr. John Dewey, University of Chicago, and Dr. William Harper, first President of the University of Chicago.

The list of participants in that first convention reads like a Who's Who of the religious and educational leaders of North America.

It was Dr. Harper who has always been regarded as the "founder" of the Association. He had promoted the study of Hebrew in seminaries, developed correspondence courses, and organized the Institute of Sacred Literature, all before the turn of the Century. Directing the Institute was the Council of Seventy, a group of the most notable Bible scholars and teachers in the country. This Council of Seventy in 1902 issued a Call for a Convention – "to effect a national organization for the improvement of religious and moral education through the Sunday school and other agencies."

417 leaders signed "the Call," including 45 college and seminary presidents and deans, 48 professors, 65 pastors, and 66 from Sunday schools, YMCAs and other organizations.

Dr. Frank K. Sanders, Dean of Yale University Divinity School, served as President of the Convention and was elected the first President of the newly-formed Association. Dr. Harper became Chairman of the Executive Board, and Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, the Vice President.

The Association was incorporated later that Spring under the laws of the State of Illinois for the purpose, "to promote religious and moral education."

Subsequent conventions were held in Philadelphia (1904), Boston (1905), Rochester, N.Y. (1907), and Washington, D.C. (1908), in addition to a smaller conference in Cleveland in 1906 to consider the future of the R.E.A. Bound proceedings were published of each major convention, and they were widely distributed.

It was at the Boston Convention that the famous threefold purpose was adopted: "to inspire the educational forces of our country with the religious ideal; to inspire the religious forces of our country with the educational ideal; and to keep



before the public mind the ideal of Religious Education, and the sense of its need and value.”

After several short terms with Dr. Ira Landrith and Dr. Clifford Barnes as General Secretary, Dr. Henry F. Cope was elected the Assistant in 1906 and the General Secretary in 1907. An ordained minister who was serving as secretary to the President of the Chicago Telephone Company, Dr. Cope edited the first issue of the journal, *Religious Education*, in April 1906, and continued as editor until his death in 1923.

The organization grew under his outstanding administrative and editorial ability. The work of the 17 departments of the Association was reflected in the journal articles: universities and colleges; seminaries; churches and Sunday schools; private and public schools; teacher training; YMCA and YWCA; homes; libraries; etc.

Considerable space was given to resources, bibliographies, book reviews, curriculum, and news of developments. Minutes of R.E.A. meetings, along with budgets, reports, officers, by laws, programs, were regularly published.

During the first several decades, the Association made a great impact upon the religious education movement. Textbooks were written by R.E.A. members; graded materials for the Sunday school were published; the profession of Director of Religious Education was developed and an Association of Church DREs created; departments of religious education were organized in seminaries and denominations; vacation and weekday Church schools were promoted.

With the death of Dr. Cope in 1923 came the “end of an era,” and a critical turning point in the life of the R.E.A. There was some feeling that the Association had accomplished its purpose, especially with the organization of the International Council of Religious Education by Protestant denominations in 1922. A study by the Institute of Social and Religious Research pointed to the need for an agency that would pioneer in new areas in a rapidly changing society. The institute found the R.E.A. “A professional organization of high value, a forum of free discussion, a meeting place for education of all faiths, a common ground for character education, and an opportunity for pioneer inquiry and experimentation.”

In the 1920s Dr. George Albert Coe, Professor at Union Theological Seminary, served as consulting editor for the journal and a member of the Board. The leading spokesman for the Religious Education Movement in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, he was elected Honorary President of the R.E.A. in 1938, the only person to hold that title.

The years 1923-34 were expansive years for the Association. Grants from the Rockefeller and Carnegie funds helped to double the income and the secretariat was increased. The journal became a monthly; a series of monographs was published; annual research conferences

were held; and the R.E.A. helped to sponsor the classic Character Education Inquiry project by Dr. Hugh Hartshorne and Dr. Mark May.

Dr. Laird T. Hites edited the journal and directed research. Dr. Joseph M. Artman, Professor of Religious Education at the University of Chicago, became General Secretary in 1926, and he was assisted by a staff that included Dr. Ruth Shonie Cavan, who also wrote one of the monographs. The major interest in college and university teaching continued, and the second most frequent topic was psychological development.

Although predominantly Protestant in the beginning, the Association had invited Catholic and Jewish leaders to participate in Conventions and other meetings from the early years. Some became members, and several Vice Presidents were prominent Rabbis. The editor of the Catholic magazine, *Commonweal*, was elected one of the Vice Presidents in 1933.

1934-1935 was another year of crisis for the R.E.A. Under the leadership of Dr. Artman, a new bi-monthly magazine, *Character*, was launched in October 1934. In the depths of the Depression the resources of the Association could not maintain two publications, and no issues of the journal were published between June 1934 and July 1935.

With the resignation of Dr. Artman in 1935, all rights to *Character* were transferred to him, and the journal was resumed as a quarterly. The extensive library of the R.E.A., numbering thousands of volumes, was sold to the Central YMCA College in Chicago in order to pay off \$24,000 in debts.

From 1935 until 1950 the Association carried on without a General Secretary, but under the volunteer leadership of people like Dr. Coe, Dr. Hartshorne, Dr. Harrison S. Elliott, and Dr. Ernest Chave. Dr. Hites, then a Professor at Central YMCA College in Chicago, returned as editor and served until early in 1948, when he became the R.E.A. business manager. During these years regular features were added to the journal, such as “Significance Evidence” by Dr. Ernest Ligon, and the abstracts of doctoral dissertations in the field of religious education.

Annual meetings of the Association continued until 1942, and then on a biennial basis until 1950. The addresses and papers were published in the journal.

Dr. Leonard A. Stidley, chairman of the editorial committee and Dean of the Oberlin School of Theology, served as editor from 1948 to 1958. Under his direction a number of outstanding symposia were published, dealing with such subjects as “Trends in Religious Education,” “Religion and Public Education,” “The Use of the Bible,” “Curriculum,” “The Family,” “Character Education,” and “Group Dynamics.”

In the meantime, a movement to revive the Association was initiated by such leaders as Dr. Samuel Franklin, Dr. Lawrence Little and Dr. F. Ernest Johnson. Dr. Harrison S. Elliott, recently retired Professor at Union Theological Seminary, agreed to serve as General Secretary, and a Mid-Century Expansion Fund was launched to secure money for a full-time secretariat. Dr. Elliott's sudden death in 1951 and the death of Dr. Coe later in the same year meant the passing of two "giants" of the Religious Education Movement.

The election of Dr. Herman E. Wornom in 1952 heralded the beginning of a new era in the life and work of the Association. The office was moved from Chicago to New York City; the organization built up a stronger financial base; and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated in 1953 in Pittsburgh. Subsequent conventions were held in Chicago in 1957, 1962, 1966 and 1969 on such timely subjects as "The Images of Man," "Contemporary Morality," "The Ecumenical Revolution," and "Our Divided Society." A major concern during the 1950s was Religion in Higher Education, and a series of roundtables was held in different university centers.

In 1958 Dr. Randolph C. Miller was appointed editor of the journal, following the death of Dr. Stidley. As a Professor at Yale University Divinity School, he was a major speaker at the 1957 Convention and was chairman of the R.E.A. Board of Directors. Dr. Paul H. Vieth, his colleague at Yale, served as acting editor of the journal during three different periods since 1958. Under their leadership the journal explored theological and philosophical trends as well as practical developments in curriculum and teaching. The most popular single piece was published in 1962: a symposium on "Shared Time."

The outstanding achievement of Dr. Wornom's administration was a carefully developed long-range, five-stage program of research, funded by the Lilly Endowment. It included a review of research in religious and moral education and a publication of a survey of major unsolved problems. Both were published in the journal in 1959. Three conferences of social science consultants were held the following year, and then a 12-day workshop at Cornell University in 1961. This led to the widely-used research supplement to the journal in July-August 1962, "Review of Recent Research Bearing on Religious and Character Formation," edited by Dr. Stuart W. Cook.

The Lilly Research Training Fellowships were set up in 1963, and Dr. Merton P. Strommen was called a research director to administer the program. In addition, a research process was set in motion that culminated in the publication in 1971 of the encyclopedic volume, *Research on Religious Development*, edited by Dr. Strommen. Dr. A. Wilson Cheek assisted Dr. Wornom on the R.E.A. staff for two years, with a special responsibility for the development of chapters around the country.

At the 1969 Convention in Chicago, Dr. Wornom was presented a scroll as a testimony to the General Secretary, "whose dedication to the Association entitles him to be called its second founder."

In 1970 the R.E.A. called the Rev. Boardman W. Kathan as General Secretary. Under his leadership, Conventions were held in Chicago (1972), and a biennial pattern started in Toronto (1973) and Philadelphia (1975). With grants from the Stone and Dodge Foundations, the National Council on Religion and Public Education was formed in 1971. Special "bonus" issues of the journal were published for three years: "Religion and Public School Curriculum" (Richard U. Smith, editor), "Religious Education in a Pluralistic Society" (H.L. Puxley), and "Functions of Faith in Academic Life" (Myron B. Bloy). A newsletter was started in January 1971 to report on the projects, personalities and programs of the R.E.A., as well as to serve as a modest clearinghouse for other organizations and activities in the field.

Evaluation and review of the work of the Association was a concern of the 1970s. A committee on the Nature and Future Functions of the R.E.A. met several times in 1970 and recommended priorities for the future: research and curriculum development; support of professional religious educators; religion and public education.

A survey of the membership in 1972 confirmed that these were indeed the three top priorities. In terms of future services, the top two cited were "continuing education" and "curriculum evaluation." The evaluation of the journal by the membership indicated its helpfulness to a large percentage. Members reported that the subject of most interest was "methods and models of religious education," followed closely by "adult religious education," and "moral education – values education."

The office of the Association was moved in 1973 from New York City to the campus of Yale University Divinity School in New Haven, Conn.

In April 1976 the R.E.A. has completed 70 years of publishing the journal, an outstanding record in an area where many journals and magazines have flourished and vanished. It is appropriate that we should recognize the distinguished company of editors and administrators who have made the journal the oldest and most prestigious publication of its kind.

~~~~~

## IN PROSPECT

### 2003 – Religious Education: Contemporary Challenges

#### **Factors Fueling Religious Education Then and Now: Similarities at the Beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

**By Theodore Brelsford**

Candler School of Theology

#### Introduction

The modern religious education movement<sup>1</sup> as marked (which is not to say “caused”) by the birth of the REA 100 years ago was fueled primarily by three major factors: (1) concerns for the loss of religious education in schools; (2) growing cultural pluralism in the U.S. society and the need for awareness and appreciation of a spectrum of religious traditions in addition to and in relation to their own; and (3) new insights from the social sciences (especially developmental psychology) with implications for epistemology and education. Other notable, but I think not primary factors lending some energy and impetus to the religious education movement at the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century include the desire to make insights from the new biblical criticism available to lay persons, and the desire to shore up the Protestant establishment in face of eroding social influence. This paper provides a brief examination of the meanings and character of these three primary challenges and insights at the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and then turns to the contemporary character of these challenges and insights fueling religious education at the beginnings of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The sources of challenges and insights energizing religious education 100 years ago are remarkably similar to those of today, even while the contents and contexts are somewhat different. My intention here is to point to continuities with our past and possibilities for our future as we take stock at this present juncture in our lives as a field, a discipline, and a profession.

#### Originating factors fueling the modern religious education movement

##### *Concerns for the loss of religious education in schools*

In his address to the first meeting of the REA at Chicago in 1903, George Albert Coe began with the following statement:

The modern conception of religious education takes the form of an argument. True education, It says, must develop all the normal capacities of the mind; religion is one of these normal capacities of the mind; therefore true education includes education in religion. If, for any reason, the state does not impart religious training, then the home and the church must assume the whole task (1906, 44).

Prior to modernity all education had always been fundamentally religious. That is to say, having the goal of preparing selected persons to carry forth the wisdom, knowledge values and commitments of a given community as embodied in its specific (religiously defined) teachings, stories and practices. It is only the advent of the modern nation state, together with the American commitment to separation of church and state, and the notion of education as a right for all persons that led to the extraction of religion from general education. As Coe and others argued at the founding of the REA, religion is “no mere appendix to general education, but an essential part thereof” (ibid). General education was seen to have wandered away from its originating center. Religious education was not an extra or add-on (that might be easily carried out, for example, via a “release time” program), but rather the central “aim” of education itself.

This central aim was disappearing from the public school curriculum at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> The REA sought to coordinate and support efforts to fill this deficit. Burgeoning Sunday schools, young people’s societies, and associations such as the YMCA and YWCA characterized these efforts. Religious education in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century United States was something distinctive from general education, with its very reason for being growing out of the popularization and secularization of education in the public sphere. By the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the absence of religion from the schools was even greater than at the beginning; yet the strength of many religious education institutions (such as those named above) had faded. This reveals an important challenge for religious education today, which I will address later in this paper.

##### *Religious Pluralism*

Another factor shaping the field of religious education at its modern American beginning was the growing awareness of religious pluralism. The beginnings of the REA followed ten years after the first World Parliament of Religions, held in 1893, also in Chicago. New waves of immigration through the 19<sup>th</sup> century had created a richly diverse U.S. American society with significant representation from religions from around the world. A plurality of religions has always been a part of the human experience. What was new near the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was an intensification of the mixing of cultures and traditions caused by relative and increasing ease of travel, and the possibility (facilitated by a secularized society) of learning about multiple religions for the purpose of understanding rather than conversion or conquest. The Parliament of Religions aimed precisely at such understanding and was felt to be an overwhelming success. Excitement from this 1893 gathering was in the air at the turn of the century, especially in Chicago. William Rainey Harper, then president of the University of Chicago, called the first meeting of the REA. Harper and others present at the founding of the REA had the World Parliament experience

in mind as they sought to create an association to support and promote religious education in wide-ranging traditions and contexts in an increasingly pluralistic society. While the early (and persisting) membership in the REA was overwhelmingly Christian (and white, and male), the hope was to nurture a “universal spirit” as Harper put it (1906, 239) that would prohibit emphasis on any one Christian denomination and nurture appreciation for diverse religious traditions. The growing awareness of diverse religious traditions provided a prominent challenge as well as a sense of excitement that helped define religious education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Inter-religious education remained a named intention of the REA throughout the century, and remains an urgent need today.

#### *New insights from social science*

In his address to the first convention of the REA in Chicago, John Dewey articulated a prominent agenda for the field. Dewey’s focus in his address was on “the stress laid in modern psychological theory upon the principle of growth and of consequent successive expansions of experience on different levels” (1906, 60). He goes on to clarify that the child is not an “abbreviated adult” (60) so that the task of religious education is not one of imposing abbreviated adult beliefs on the child, but of “bringing the child to appreciate the truly religious aspects of his own growing life”(61).

The overall effect of Dewey’s address is the revelation that significant developments in psychology were shaping current educational philosophy and pedagogy, and held important implications for religious education. Psychology was to be seen as a neutral tool—having “no peculiar gospel or revelation of its own” (60)—for understanding and illuminating the nature and development of the human mind, as well as particular religious educational challenges and goals related to this. A distinctive character of the religious education movement is its prominent use of psychological theory, especially developmental psychology. William James (1890) represents the theoretical beginnings of this approach to psychology. Erik Erikson (e.g., 1959), and Jean Piaget (e.g., 1970) gave it fuller expression. Thus, emerging insights from developmental psychology were fodder for significant work in religious education throughout the century, reaching a peak in the 1970s and 1980s (see especially Fowler 1981).

Not everyone shared this enthusiasm for developmental psychology, and the enthusiasm of some waned over time. Evangelical Christians were never really comfortable with this central feature of the religious education movement. The development of the Christian Education movement in mainline Protestantism at mid-century, which was connected to the rise of neo-orthodox theology, is best seen as a reaction against a perceived over-dependence in religious education on a secular psychological theory of the person (cf. Boys 1989, 111). And there is some evidence that Dewey, Coe and other early religious education

enthusiasts of developmentalism became much more circumscribed about the relevance of psychology as the century progressed. But these aversions and reservations, together with the undeniable prominence of developmental thought in religious education in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only highlight the real importance of developmental psychological theory for the religious education movement in the last 100 years.

#### Contemporary challenges and insights for religious education

The challenges and insights that shaped the early religious education movement are remarkably relevant to prominent challenges and insights for the field today. There remains a failure of general education to adequately attend to the religious dimensions of individual and corporate human existence. Religious pluralism and diversity clearly present prominent and pressing challenges that only grew over the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continue to grow in importance. And new insights in psychology are once again exciting advances in the social sciences with relevance for religious education. I will comment briefly on the current character of each of these as a way of naming emergent directions for the field.

#### *The lack of religious education in the schools*

The absence of religion from the public schools in the U.S. is probably now past its greatest level of intensity. The removal of religion from public education, and the public arena more generally, was a sensible strategy for accommodating religious diversity and protecting minority religions from an assumed (Protestant) Christian norm. But this has left a notable void in our educational system. Secularization has not meant the elimination of religion. There has been notable and growing interest in spirituality in the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is a concomitant sense that education clearly needs to be about more than technical preparation for production in a capitalist society. There is a yearning for deep meaning in our lives, and for the development of moral character in our society. There is also renewed awareness of a need to understand each other’s religious traditions. Over the past couple of decades many states have passed legislation requiring attention to “religious literacy” in secondary education. Very few states have actually attempted to implement strategies to fulfill this requirement, and most of those attempts have failed dramatically.

There is a profound need in contemporary western society for the reintegration of religion into general education. This must of course not be the kind of doctrinal religious education that might be appropriate within a cohesive religious community. Diverse religious traditions must be respected and fairly represented. How to do this remains quite unclear. Educators and administrators, boards of education, legislators, communities and persons of faith must all work to discern how best to address the need for religious literacy and the need for development of moral



character in our schools (probably best thought of as two distinct, even if related concerns). This represents a prominent religious education challenge and opportunity for the immediate future. I hope that persons in the field of religious education will take up the challenge of helping to shape this conversation.

### *Religious Pluralism*

Interest in religious pluralism has been growing in western society, and has dramatically accelerated since September 11, 2001. Recently I asked a class of twenty-five theology students, working in five groups of five to brainstorm a list of what they perceived as missing from their seminary curriculum. Only one thing was common to all five groups' lists: courses in world religions. There are reports from religion departments around the country that enrollments are up in their courses in comparative religion, especially courses involving Islam. There has of course also been an increase in short courses or lectures on Islam in Christian congregations. While the September 11 attacks and the ensuing war on terrorism has intensified interest in Islam, I do not think interest in comparative religion is due only to this. The experience of pluralism motivating interest in other religions at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has only grown over the past 100 years. Whereas 100 years ago the study of (an experimentation with) religions other than Christian or Jewish was mostly an experience of the exotic for most Americans, most Americans today have colleagues, friends and neighbors, if not also relatives whose religious traditions are very different from their own. And whereas the experience of religious pluralism a century ago was facilitated by secularization and developments in travel technologies, the experience of religious pluralism today is fueled by dramatic developments in communications technologies, as well as further advances in travel technology, and (some would say) a spiritual resurgence in a secular society.

As we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the need is imperative to understand and appreciate something of the diversity of religious traditions in our society and around our world. Even those of us concerned for religious education within specific and well-defined communities of faith must increasingly be concerned for helping persons gain deepened commitment to and understanding of their faith tradition in conscious relationship to a plurality of religious traditions. Those concerned for religious education in our schools or in the public more generally must clearly take understanding and appreciation of religious pluralism as a primary goal. It is difficult to imagine any form of responsible religious education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that does not attend carefully to religious pluralism.

### *Insights from social science*

At the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, new developments in psychology were energizing the work of educational philosophers and opening new possibilities for ways of

approaching religious education. Developmental psychology (especially insights concerning cognitive development and moral development) continued to stimulate the work of religious educators throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Other sources of inspiration and theoretical grounding have come from anthropology, linguistics, and critical theory. As we move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are again new developments in psychology that portend significant implications for ways we think about education in general and religious education in particular.

Progress in recent decades in cognitive psychology, evolutionary biology, and neuroscience has led to the emergence of evolutionary psychology. Psychology seeks to understand the workings of the human mind – how our minds process information and how our minds as information processing programs generate behavior (cf., Cosmides and Tooby 1997, 3). Evolutionary psychology seeks to connect psychological findings with their evolutionary background (Boyer 2001, 118). In other words, the ways our minds work can help explain the evolution of the human brain, and vice versa. One impact of this work is to thoroughly refute the “blank slate” concept prominent in modern western thought (cf., Pinker 2002). Evolutionary psychologists argue that there really is something that may be termed human nature. It is not the immutable nature of the pre-modern intuitions (called “inference systems.” See Boyer 2001, 101ff) that constitute a “nature” that cannot easily be violated and that is common to virtually all human beings. These inference systems have evolved via natural selection over many 1000s of years, so that it is only in small part that our ways of thinking in the present are shaped by our environment, or nurture, or personal experience. In larger part, our ways of thinking are shaped by the environmental pressures and long ago experiences of our ancient ancestors, which shaped the “hard wiring” of our contemporary brains. This way of understanding the human mind is “still very much in its infancy” (Boyer 2001, 118) but is dramatically impacting fields across the social and behavioral sciences, including education and religion. Work is being done in evolutionary morality and evolution of religious thought (cf., Boyer 2001, and Wilson 2002) that has direct relevance for how we understand the acquisition of religious beliefs and behavior in individuals, communities, and the human species.

Insights from developmental psychology have been a rich resource (and source of debate) for religious education for over a century. Evolutionary psychology seems an idea of similar magnitude. I suspect that its impact will be felt in religious education for decades to come.

### Conclusion

Major factors setting an agenda for our work today are similar to, or even continuous with those at the beginnings of the religious education movement a century ago. Concerns for the lack of religious education in schools has only grown in intensity. Religious pluralism in U.S. society has increased dramatically, so that the need is even clearer for inter-religious education in some form, in schools or faith communities or elsewhere. And new developments in psychology, this time evolutionary psychology, is reverberating across the social sciences and promises to significantly influence work in religious education. While the concerns of religious education into the future are certainly not exhausted by these three factors, I do think that these three factors name large and lasting concerns for the field that surely must be part of our agenda as we move forward.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>By modern religious education movement I refer to the emergence of organized structures and supporting modern theories concerned with education in relation to religion in schools, faith communities and the society at large.

<sup>2</sup>It is worth noting that Christian prayers and Bible reading in the public schools would persist at least another 50 years beyond the beginnings of the REA. Yet it was evident to these founders already that in a deeper way education was no longer religious.

### Resources

- Boyer, P. 2001. *Religion explained: The evolutionary origins of religious thought*. New York: Basic Books.
- Boys, M.C. 1989. "Religious education: A map of the field," Mary C. Boys, ed., *Education for citizenship and discipleship*. New York: Pilgrim Press.
- Coe, G.A. 1906. "Religious education as a part of general education," *The Religious Education Association: Proceedings of the first convention, Chicago 1903*. (44-52).
- Cosmides, L. & Tooby, J. 1997. "Evolutionary psychology: A primer." Santa Barbara, CA [cited 28 June 2003]. Available from Center for Evolutionary Psychology: [www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html](http://www.psych.ucsb.edu/research/cep/primer.html).
- Dewey, J. 1906. "Religious education as conditioned by modern psychology and pedagogy." *The Religious Education Association: Proceedings of the first convention, Chicago 1903*. (60-66).
- Erikson, E.H. 1959. *Identity and the life cycle*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Fowler, J. 198. *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. San Francisco: Harper and Row.
- Harper, W.R. 1906. "The scope and purpose of the new organization," *The Religious Education Association: Proceedings of the first convention, Chicago 1903*. (230-240).
- James, W. 1890. *The principles of psychology*. New York: H. Holt.
- Piaget, J. 1970. *Genetic Epistemology*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Pinker, S. 2002. *The blank slate: The modern denial of human nature*. New York: Viking Press.
- Wilson, D.S. 2002. *Darwin's cathedral: Evolution, religion, and the nature of society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## **Not Just Sunday School! Religious Education in the New Millennium: New Visions for Partnership in Ministry and Theological Education**

By Yolanda Y. Smith, Yale Divinity School

Religious education in the new millennium challenges the church and the academy to consider new possibilities for partnership in ministry and theological education. As we envision the future of religious education we must consider four important tasks: providing a holistic understanding of the discipline, empowering the church and the academy, engaging interdisciplinary dialogue, and affirming diversity.

### Understanding the Discipline

Part of our task as religious educators and practitioners is to provide a holistic understanding of the discipline. I am often amazed that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many in the field still encounter a number of people who incorrectly understand religious education primarily as Sunday school and children's ministry. Although this description seems to be the dominant understanding of religious education, this narrow view of the discipline is limited in that it does not incorporate a broader and more dynamic understanding of the field. In truth, religious education encompasses a wide-range of issues and concerns that affect the life of the church, the spiritual growth and development of individuals within faith communities, teaching practices through educational ministries, and efforts to promote liberation for the transformation of the church, of individuals, and of society.

This expansive sense of religious education is embodied in Maria Harris' discussion of curriculum in the church. She effectively argues that curriculum is the entire course of the church's life.<sup>1</sup> She has broadened the traditional understanding of curriculum by suggesting that curriculum includes not only teaching, schooling, and printed resources, but also various forms of church life such as worship, preaching, teaching, fellowship, and service. She goes on to suggest that this comprehensive curriculum is intergenerational and creative, embracing multiple forms of education.<sup>2</sup> Harris' discussion of curriculum is instructive in that it suggests a holistic view of religious education that encompasses not only every aspect of the life of the church, but also the role of the church as it functions in the world, locally and globally, and in its relationship to the academy.

Religious education can help us to explore this holistic view of the discipline by introducing us to a number of major paradigms. While this is not an attempt to provide a rigid definition of religious education, it is an opportunity for us to examine some of the common paradigms of religious education that have helped to shape our understanding of the field. Although religious education can be described in a number of ways, Karen Tye provides a helpful summary of four basic perspectives of religious education that emerge most often in the church and the academy.

The first perspective emphasizes *religious instruction* as a key component of religious education. The primary focus of this view is to pass on pertinent information, religious

practices, and foundational elements of the faith tradition. A major characteristic of this definition is that it promotes a “more formal and structured” approach to teaching.<sup>3</sup>

The second perspective emphasizes a *socialization process*. It is commonly referred to as the faith community, church-centered, or enculturation approach to religious education. This form of education stresses communal engagement and encourages parishioners to participate fully in the life of the church. Hence, education happens when the faith community gathers for worship, fellowship, prayer, and various rituals. Through their involvement in the church, parishioners clarify their identity, beliefs, and practices in relationship to others within the faith community.<sup>4</sup>

The third perspective focuses on *personal development*. Developmental theory has deeply informed this understanding of religious education, emphasizing a progression toward growth and development. Religious education plays a significant role in facilitating this development by guiding individuals throughout their spiritual journey and process of development. In this perspective, education is emphasized as “an individual rather than a communal activity.”<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the fourth perspective emphasizes *liberation*. The primary aim of this perspective is transformation of the church, of individuals, and of the broader society. Religious education that stresses liberation tends to be mission-oriented and encourages the church to move beyond its institutional walls and to become actively involved in transforming the community and the world. This approach to religious education incorporates a liberative praxis, which centers on action, critical reflection, and revised action.<sup>6</sup> Through this model of religious education, the church can better address community issues and concerns by involving itself in the real life situations of oppressed people. Religious education can, therefore, be a viable source for social action and transformation.

Religious education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century compels us to broaden our understanding of the discipline far beyond Sunday school and children’s ministry. It also empowers us to challenge limited assumptions and to explore a variety of perspectives that help to deepen and expand our knowledge of religious education. The future vision of religious education must, therefore, be interdisciplinary and bring a multifaceted global agenda that challenges the church and the academy to engage in a broader and more complex pluralistic world community.

#### Empowering the Church and the Academy

Another important task facing religious educators and practitioners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is empowering the church and the academy. In 1990 a National study conducted by the Search Institute on the effectiveness of educational ministries revealed a number of challenges that are facing

many Protestant churches such as outdated or irrelevant teaching resources, methods, and techniques; poor attendance by adults; lack of youth involvement; minimal or no clergy involvement; problems securing volunteers; and stunted spiritual growth and development.<sup>7</sup> Although the results of the study seemed bleak, an unexpected finding surprised the researchers. They discovered that among the churches studied, religious education was critical to the life and ministry of the church. Religious education was also instrumental in nurturing faith development in individuals as they became actively involved in the faith community. In their report, the researchers concluded:

In summary, Christian education matters. We see its power in the area of both life biographies and current congregational life. And we see it in both faith maturity and loyalty. The practical implication is clear: If a congregation seeks to strengthen its impact on faith and loyalty, involving members of all ages in quality Christian education is essential.<sup>8</sup>

Stressing the importance of a supportive and stimulating church environment, exceptional educational programs, and church involvement, researchers further suggested that “Effective Christian education has the potential, as much or more than any other congregational influence, to deepen faith, commitment, and loyalty. Its revitalization must therefore move to center stage.”<sup>9</sup>

In 1933 Benjamin Mays and Joseph Nicholson conducted a similar study on “The Sunday Church School” in the African American Church.<sup>10</sup> Their findings were published in their book, *The Negro Church*. Based on data from 609 urban churches representing 12 cities throughout the north and south, and 185 rural churches located in 4 southern counties,<sup>11</sup> Mays and Nicholson identified several challenges within the Sunday school. The results of that study were strikingly similar to the 1990 study with the added challenges of poor or no facilities for education, lack of funding, adult dominated youth programs, poor attendance, declining enrollment of children and youth, lack of pastoral interest and participation, poorly trained leaders, uniform curriculums, traditional Sunday schools based on conservative Protestant church models, and a minimal reflection on the African American heritage.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1980s, Grant Shockley referred to the Mays and Nicholson study by stating that, although the Sunday school is still the dominant mode of education in the black church, it continues to be largely ineffective, exhibiting many of the same weaknesses that were revealed in 1933.<sup>13</sup> Sadly, from my own observations, I would concur that in 2003, not much has changed in the educational ministries of many black churches. However, as revealed in the 1990 study, education does matter in the African American church, although many churches are struggling against formidable odds to provide some form of educational ministry.

As we consider the results of these studies, what insights come which may enlighten our understanding of religious education as a vehicle for empowering the church and the academy? First, we must explore new and creative ways to rethink and reshape educational ministries. Second, we must strategically consider the implications of past and present studies pertaining to religious education. Ad finally, we must be intentional about making religious education a top priority in the church and the academy. Both the church and the academy must be involved in equipping educators, pastors, and church leaders to critically analyze, evaluate, and develop educational ministries that will revitalize and strengthen religious education in our faith communities. Religious educators and practitioners must initiate this process by engaging in a number of activities including talking with pastors, church leaders, and seminary students to determine their needs; envisioning new ways that the church and the academy can be in partnership in ministry and theological education; training quality leaders; incorporating new and creative approaches to ministry and education; developing and implementing creative programming; providing adequate resources; making educational ministries relevant; providing a good foundation in the basic elements of religious education; addressing the needs of the faith community both locally and globally; and clarifying the meaning and scope of religious education. Current studies in religious education can, therefore, challenge us to be diligent in our efforts to provide quality educational programs that incorporate in depth analysis, preparation, and development.

Religious education in the new millennium can further help to bridge the gap between the church and the academy and empower both institutions to address these findings and implement effective educational ministries. Indeed, theological schools and churches can be allies in this endeavor. As they engage in a mutual partnership in ministry and theological education, theological schools can empower churches. Church can, in turn, empower theological schools. Barbara Brown Zikmund, former president of Hartford Seminary and the American Theological Schools (ATS) captures the essence of this partnership in her concluding comments regarding the 1990 study on effective Christian education. She states:

Theological seminaries live in a creative tension between giving churches what they want and challenging churches to rise to the radical demands of the gospel. By reminding seminaries that churches provide the context that nurtures mature faith, the study helps the churches keep seminaries accountable. By reshaping questions and questioning the assumptions of the study, seminaries call churches to go more deeply into the nature of their faith.<sup>14</sup>

Although the studies cited above focused primarily on Protestant churches, similar results have also been observed

in the educational ministries of other faith traditions. Nevertheless, our responsibility as educators is to respond effectively to the needs of our various faith communities.

#### Engaging Interdisciplinary Dialogue

The third task confronting religious educators and practitioners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is engaging interdisciplinary dialogue. Religious education can make an important contribution to the church and the academy by engaging people across disciplines and religious traditions in a dynamic dialogue around pedagogical issues. Such issues might include, classroom dynamics, teaching methods and techniques, lecturing, leading discussion groups, resolving conflict grading, the use of technology in the church and the academy, group dynamics creativity in the classroom, field based learning, appropriating disciplines for various age levels and specialized ministries, the use of the arts, and a myriad of other concerns.

Since religious education is the place where theory and practice come together, we can engage in both activities through interdisciplinary dialogue. However, we must ensure that one discipline does not dominate over others. Instead, they engage in a mutual dialogue informing one another, drawing from each other, and flowing out of each other. Theology and religious education can engage in this same dynamic dialogue. Although there is an intimate relationship between theology and religious education, this relationship may be approached from different perspectives. Thus to engage in religious education is to engage in theological reflection and vice versa. Our task the, as educators and practitioners is to equip pastors, church leaders, faculty and students to participate in this dialogue by helping them to integrate and reflect on the practice of ministry as it is informed by theory and also to shape theory as they carry out their ministries in the life of the church and in the academy.

Interdisciplinary dialogue can be conducted through a variety of activities and programs such a faculty forums and workshops, junior faculty consultations, junior/senior faculty exchange programs and mentoring, contextualized education, collaborative teaching, field experiences, travel seminars, dialogue across cultures and traditions, cultural exchanges, resource centers, youth programs, lab schools, and centers for educational ministries. While these events can enhance educational ministries, it is important to keep in mind that religious education does not have all of the answers nor should religious educators in the church or the academy be expected to be the expert in all of these areas. Rather, they can facilitate and stimulate this dynamic exchange.

Interdisciplinary dialogue can benefit the church and the academy by encouraging dialogue across disciplines and faith traditions. This dialogue may promote greater respect and understanding of other disciplines and traditions as they mutually reflect on how to live faithfully in the world.



Churches may also work in partnership with theological schools to provide workshops, seminars, and ongoing educational opportunities within the church and the community. Additionally, interdisciplinary dialogue may promote collaboration between the church, theological schools, and secular institutions. As they engage pedagogical issues, this important dialogue may help to strengthen the relationship between the church, the academy, and the broader society. Religious education in the new millennium must be instrumental in guiding the church and the academy in building a partnership in ministry and theological education that is empowering, transformative, and life giving.

### Affirming Diversity

Affirming diversity is the final task that we will consider with respect to envisioning the future of religious education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The challenge of diversity and the need for multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious paradigms and resources in religious education is one of the most important issues facing the church and the academy today. Many educators and practitioners have begun to address this concern by incorporating contextualized approaches to religious education. Contextualized approaches can help us shape educational programs that are culturally sensitive, critically engaged, and constructively oriented. If religious education is to be effective in the future, it must be sensitive to the uniqueness of everyone involved in the educational process and it must endeavor to explore a wide-range of experiences, emerging from a variety of faith traditions, cultures, orientations, and religious practices. Affirming diversity means that religious education is not limited to the local church or community, but it seeks to incorporate a global dialogue and praxis. Global dialogue provides opportunities for individuals to appreciate other peoples and cultures. It also encourages them to learn about other traditions and to stand in solidarity with people all over the world in affirmation of their faith and in the struggle for justice, liberation, and human dignity. One way to facilitate global dialogue among various people is through music, dance, art, poetry, and storytelling. These modes of artistic expression can help to build bridges that connect a wide range of people and societies. They may also create a broader and more empowered sense of community. Moreover, artistic expression, as exemplified in various freedom movements, can be a creative source of social critique, inspiration, and motivation in the struggle toward liberation. This invaluable method of religious education can offer both critical and creative approaches to social analysis and critical reflection. Thus, affirming diversity through artistic expressions challenges the church and the academy to embrace a global vision that is both multicultural and ecumenical.

Affirming diversity further challenges individuals to be rooted first and foremost in their own religious and cultural context. The rootedness is essential to fully appreciate and value the religious and cultural contexts of others. Multicultural religious education can help to facilitate this process. For example, in her article, "Goals of Multicultural Religious Education," Barbara Wilkerson identifies four goals of multicultural education that can help us as religious educators and practitioners to develop well-rounded programs that are affirming of diverse populations and educational approaches. These goals include:

- (1) An understanding of the church on earth as a multiethnic, multilingual body;
- (2) Positive attitudes toward diversity as enriching and enabling of Christian unity rather than threatening;
- (3) The ability to value and affirm one's own culture while functioning effectively in another one;
- (4) An appreciation of the many ways faith is experienced and expressed in the religious education practice of Christians from various cultures.

She goes on to suggest that these goals can be implemented as churches incorporate the following:

- (1) Curricula and programs that reflect the diversity of the local Christian community;
- (2) Practice that stresses participatory modes of learning and promotes leadership development within the parish;
- (3) Close communication among ethnic and mainstream groups to affirm each others' gifts and celebrate a common faith heritage;
- (4) Social responsibility through dialogue and action to reduce inequalities and promote justice for all people.<sup>15</sup>

It is apparent that religious education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must, therefore, be multicultural and yet firmly rooted in a particular faith tradition and heritage.

In her definition of a "womanist," (a term embraced by many African American clergy-women and religious scholars), Alice Walker, a noted poet and scholar, beautifully illustrates the rich diversity embodied in the African American community and speaks to the kind of diversity that we can also affirm in the church and the academy. In her definition a child asks, "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" And the mother responds, "Well you know, the colored race is like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." This for me is a vision of the kind of diversity for which we must strive as religious educators and practitioners working to transform the church and the academy.

As we journey through the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must affirm and demonstrate that religious education is not just Sunday school, but that it encompasses a wide-range of perspectives, issues, challenges, and possibilities for

partnership in ministry and theological education. As religious educators and practitioners, we can facilitate this partnership by providing a holistic understanding of the discipline, empowering the church and the academy, engaging interdisciplinary dialogue, and affirming diversity. This partnership is critical if we are to train effective leaders and scholars for meaningful religious education in the new millennium.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 17.

<sup>2</sup>Harris, 17-18.

<sup>3</sup>Karen B. Tye, *Basics of Christian Education* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 10-11).

<sup>4</sup>Tye, 11.

<sup>5</sup>Tye, 11-12.

<sup>6</sup>Tye, 12.

<sup>7</sup>See Peter L. Benson and Carolyn H. Eklun, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations – A Summary Report on Faith, Loyalty, and Congregational Life* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1990); David S. Schuller, ed., *Rethinking Christian Education: Explorations in Theory and Practice* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993); and Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *The Teaching Church: Moving Christian Education to Center Stage* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup>Benson and Eklun, 42.

<sup>9</sup>Benson and Eklun, 58.

<sup>10</sup>See Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson, *The Negro's Church* (1933; reprint, New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969).

<sup>11</sup>Mays and Nicholson, 295-97.

<sup>12</sup>Mays and Nicholson, 123-37; 254-58.

<sup>13</sup>Grant S. Shockley, "Christian Education and the Black Church," in *Christian Education Journey of Black Americans: Past, Present, Future* by Charles R. Foster, Ethel R. Johnson, and Grant S. Shockley (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1985), 13-14; Grant Shockley, "From Emancipation to Transformation, to Consummation: A Black Perspective," in *Does the Church Really Want Religious Education?* ed. Marlene Mayr (Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1988), 241-42.

<sup>14</sup>Barbara Brown Zikmund, "Theological Seminaries and Effective Christian Education," in *Rethinking Christian Education: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, ed. David S. Schuller (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993), 123.

<sup>15</sup>Barbara Wilkerson, "Goals of Multicultural Religious Education," in *Multicultural Religious Education*, ed. Barbara Wilkerson (Birmingham, Ala.: Religious Education Press, 1997), 26-27.

## Celebrating and Looking Ahead

### By Walter Jacob

President, Abraham Geiger College, President of the Freehof Institute of Jewish Law and Ethic, & Senior Scholar, Rodef Shalom Congregation, Pittsburgh, PA

The two elements of our names, "religion," and "education," have changed drastically during the twenty years since my presidency in the early nineteen-eighties. Let me begin with our view of American religion. In the nineteen-eighties one could still speak confidently in terms of Protestant, Catholic, and Jew. It is true that there were major divisions within those bodies which made it difficult to speak of simply three groups, but for many purposes, particularly those of ecumenism, this remained useful. The divisions within those groupings have now widened, but far more important is the growth of non-western religions and our willingness to recognize their existence among us and to

understand the significant role which they play on the broader American religious scene. Anyone who has spent time in Asia or Africa, as I have as a military chaplain, has long been aware of those religions; now we need to recognize that there are millions of adherents in our midst.

It has always been easy to discover some kind of common basis with Islam due to the similarities of portions of the Koran and our Bible; this is true despite the political issues which separate us. It is much more difficult to find such common ground with Buddhism, Hinduism, Shinto, as well as the minority religions of Africa and Asia. Many among us know little about them and they perhaps less about us. Nevertheless, dialogue should be possible on social issues and communal planning. If we wish to go beyond that and begin conversations grounded in philosophy, theology, and religious ideals, we need to begin by educating our member groups about these faiths. This will not be easy as many of these groups are physically far removed from our own membership. There may be four or five million Muslims, Buddhists, or Hindus in the United States, but few of us have met individuals from these groups. Still fewer have attended their religious services. If we have personal contacts, they are accidental and rare. Education for tolerance is difficult to achieve in the abstract. It is not that the majority is unfriendly or unwilling to learn, but without persons whom we can engage in dialogue, it remains theoretical and abstract.

I can attest to this problem as I grew up in what was then a small Midwestern town with a Jewish population of about three hundred among a total area population of two hundred thousand. Many people had never met a Jew; there were only four Jews in my high school of more than two thousand. We were an abstraction for most people despite their openness and willingness to engage in dialogue and to involve the lone rabbi in many aspects of communal life.

This presents a major task for the Religious Education Association, as we are among the few groups dedicated to educating for a broad interreligious understanding. We will undoubtedly engage in this through the traditional forums of our respective Religious School programs, but as they are already squeezed for time, it is doubtful that much can be achieved there. It is, therefore, important that we utilize other means such as specialized television and the web which is so attractive to the younger generations. It contains a great deal of misinformation about minority groups, but can be used for broad scale education. Beyond that we should be able to personalize other religions through popular sports and music personalities; many newer ideas are necessary. A good deal of imagination on the part of the Religious Education Association will be needed to move in such directions.

The other segment of our name, "education," has also changed. Actually, education is in flux among us. This has always been so in North America. Each generation among

us has witnessed several transformations of educational philosophies and practices; no country has placed so much faith in education as the United States. Education at all levels has been gradually opened to all. We have been experimental as we attempt to educate everyone and to make learning not only accessible but pleasurable. We wish to educate people to think critically, not simply to amass information. Every decade or so we continue to revamp our systems as well as their governance.

Our educational system has been driven not only by grand theories and idealistic plans but by the simply facts of changing family life and economic pressures. Single parent families, working spouses, children without functioning parents have placed enormous burdens on our educational system. It is now expected to deal with the basics of life, cleanliness, ordinary habits, and decent behavior, not just reading, writing, and arithmetic—never mind technology. All this is to be accomplished with minimal support from parents.

As we turn to religious education, the same issues plague us. Those fundamentals upon which we formerly built no longer exist, and the entire task of moral education has been thrown to us. The task is to be accomplished in a few hours with minimal funding, and little real support from home. Children are dropped of with the expectation that at the conclusion of the religious education cycle, decent, moral individuals with a firm set of beliefs will emerge.

These high hopes are, of course, a prescription for failure and we understand that. Just as the general educational standards cannot be raised by Congressional fiat, so we need more than resolutions. We understand the seriousness of the problem for each of our religious

groups. What can be done? Much of what needs to be done cannot be accomplished through the traditional religious school as we must involve the parents as much as the children. The older methods of informal family projects, long weekends, or summer retreat sessions need to be revamped and much added to them.

The Religious Education Association has played an important role as an interfaith and intergroup catalyst and a place where information can be exchanged. Successes and failures are openly discussed, and a level of understanding among our professionals, which helps us all has always been reached.

I have grown to appreciate these efforts even more during the last decade in which I have been heavily involved in the somewhat simpler religious environment of Germany and central Europe. Although minority religions exist there too, they play a much less significant role than among us. As

president and professor of the Abraham Geiger College, the first rabbinic seminary since the Holocaust, I have been in touch with religious educators and have seen how they are facing issues which, however, are more reminiscent of an earlier period in our history than the present. Viewed from a broader international perspective we in North America are at the cutting edge and able to provide some leadership which may well extend far beyond our borders.

As we celebrate this anniversary we should be proud of what has been accomplished and use our strengths to face the current set of issues and to remain at the cutting edge of religious education.

## Leaders Across the Years

### 1903 - 1978

#### Editors:

1906-1923

*Henry F. Cope (Also General Secretary)*

1923-1924

*Frank G. Ward*

1924-1926

*George Albert Coe (Consulting Editor)*

1926-1929 &

1935-1948

*Laird T. Hites*

1929-1934

*Joseph M. Artman & staff*

1948-1958

*Leonard A. Stidley*

1959-1960 &

1966-1967, 1970

*Paul H. Vieth., Acting Editor*

1958-1978

*Randolph C. Miller (Also Acting Editor, 1956-1957)*

#### General Secretaries:

1903-1904

*Ira Lanrich*

1904-1906

*Clifford W. Barnes*

1907-1923

*Henry F. Cope*

1923-1925

*Theodore G. Soares (Acting General Secretary)*

1926-1934

*Joseph M. Artman*

1950-1951

*Harrison S. Elliott*

1952-1970

*Herman E. Wornom*

1970-

*Boardman W. Kathan (Currently Archivist)*

#### Presidents of the REA

1903-1904

*Frank Knight Sanders (Yale Divinity School)*

1904-1905

*Charles Cuthbert Hall (Union Theological Seminary)*

1905-1906

*William Fraser McDowell (Meth-Episcopal Bishop)*

1906-1907

*William Hubert P. Faunce (Brown University)*

1907-1908

*Henry Churchill King (Oberlin College)*

1908-1909

*Francis Greenwood Peabody (Harvard University)*

1909-1910

*George Albert Coe (Union Theological Seminary)*

1910-1911

*William Lawrence (Bishop of Massachusetts)*

1911-1912

*James Hampton Kirkland (Vanderbilt University)*

1912-1913

*Harry Pratt Judson (University of Chicago)*

1913-1914

*Charles Franklin Thwing (Western Reserve University)*

1914-1915

*Charles David Williams (Episcopal Bishop-Michigan)*

1915-1916

*George Black Stewart (Auburn Theological Seminary)*

1916-1917

*Francis J. McConnell (Meth-Epis. Bishop of Denver)*

1917-1918

*Washington Gladden (Columbus, Ohio)*

1918-1919

*Samuel A. Elliott (Boston, Massachusetts)*

1919-1921

*Arthur C. McGiffert (Union Theological Seminary)*

1921-1924

*Theodore G. Soares (University of Chicago)*

1924-1926

*Donald J. Cowling (Carleton College)*

1926-1928

*Robert A. Falconer (University of Toronto)*

1928-1931

*William Adams Brown (Union Theological Seminary)*

1931-1933

*John H. Finley (New York Times)*

1933-1935

*Herbert N. Shenton (Syracuse University)*

|           |                                                                   |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1935-1939 | <i>Hugh Hartshorne (Yale Divinity School)</i>                     |
| 1942-1944 | <i>Ernest J. Chave (University of Chicago)</i>                    |
| 1944-1946 | <i>F. Ernest Johnson (Teachers College, Columbia University)</i>  |
| 1946-1948 | <i>Ernest W. Kuebler (American Unitarian Association)</i>         |
| 1948-1955 | <i>Samuel P. Franklin (University of Pittsburgh)</i>              |
| 1955-1957 | <i>George N. Shuster (Hunter College)</i>                         |
| 1957-1962 | <i>Jerome Kerwin (University of Chicago)</i>                      |
| 1962-1967 | <i>Philip Scharper (Sheed and Ward)</i>                           |
| 1967-1969 | <i>David R. Hunter (National Council of Churches)</i>             |
| 1969-1972 | <i>Oswald P. Bronson (Interdenominational Theological Center)</i> |
| 1972-1975 | <i>Sr. Ann Ida Gannon, BVM, (Mundelein College)</i>               |
| 1975-1977 | <i>Rabbi David Wolf Silverman (Jewish Theological Seminary)</i>   |
| 1977- ?   | <i>Emily V. Gibbes (National Council of Churches)</i>             |

**1979 - 2003****Editors:**

|           |                                                                 |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1979-1987 | <i>John H. Westerhoff III (Duke University Divinity School)</i> |
| 1988-1992 | <i>Jack D. Spiro (Virginia Commonwealth University)</i>         |
| 1993-2000 | <i>Hanan A. Alexander (University of Judaism)</i>               |
| 2001 -    | <i>Theodore Brelsford (Emory University)</i>                    |

**Presidents:**

|           |                                                                                            |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1977-1979 | <i>Emily V. Gibbes (National Council of Churches)</i>                                      |
| 1979-1981 | <i>Henry C. Simmons, C.P. (University of St. Michael's College, University of Toronto)</i> |
| 1981-1985 | <i>Rabbi Walter Jacob (Rodef Shalom Synagogue, Pittsburgh)</i>                             |
| 1985-1989 | <i>Joanne Chafe (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops)</i>                              |
| 1989-1993 | <i>Mary Elizabeth Moore (Claremont School of Theology)</i>                                 |
| 1993-1997 | <i>Stephen B. Scharper (St. Michael's College, University of Toronto)</i>                  |
| 1997-1999 | <i>Noel B. Shuell (Memorial University of Newfoundland)</i>                                |
| 1999-2000 | <i>Sherry Blumberg (Temple Shalom, Milwaukee)</i>                                          |
| 2000-2002 | <i>Ronald H. Cram (Columbia Theological Seminary)</i>                                      |
| 2002-     | <i>Anne E. Streaty Wimberly (Interdenominational Theological Center)</i>                   |

**General Secretaries**

|             |                                                                                                         |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1970-1982   | <i>Boardman W. Kathan</i>                                                                               |
| 1982-1985   | <i>Randolph C. Miller</i>                                                                               |
| 1985-1987   | <i>Dorothy Savage</i>                                                                                   |
| 1987-1992   | <i>Donald T. Russo</i>                                                                                  |
| 1992-1997   | <i>Barbara B. Ryan</i>                                                                                  |
| 1997-(2002) | <i>Ronald H. Cram</i><br><i>Robin Ficklin-Alred</i><br><i>Kim Buchanan</i><br><i>Eugenia Freiburger</i> |

*June Meredith Costin, Secretary*  
*Boardman W. Kathan, Archivist*  
*Peter Gilmour, Director*  
*James Michael Lee, Director*  
*Rodger Nishioka, Director*  
*Elizabeth Box Price, Director*  
*Anton C. Vrame, Director*

**REA MISSION****ONE:**

*Learning to honor our own and others' religious traditions*

**TWO:**

*Facilitating opportunities for ecumenical, inter-religious, and interfaith encounters*

**THREE:**

*Providing a forum for conversation, reflection, and common action*

**FOUR:**

*Disseminating resources for religious education that foster respect and understanding*

**FIVE:**

*Sponsoring innovative research on interfaith cooperation*

**SIX:**

*Providing solidarity and support among educators of faith, nationally and internationally*

**SEVEN:**

*Being recognized by the media and society as an authoritative voice on religious education*

**2003 REA Board Members**

*Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, President*  
*Ronald Hecker Cram, Immediate Past President*  
*Lorna M. Bowman, Voce-President*  
*Barbara Ann Keely, Treasurer*  
*Theodore Brelsford, Journal Editor*