

Wilson, C.P., *The Foundation of Justice* by Dr John Wu³ and the writings of Judge Brandeis and Dean Teresa Miriam Rooney on Law, head my own list.

The Working-out of Practical Suggestions for a Daily Way of Christian Life for Those in Management—particularly a little guide for our daily examination of conscience.

Plans for Discussions with Christians and Jews to Consider the Spiritual and Ethical Principles for Good Management. In London several groups of directors meet regularly for discussion and often for prayer together. Sooner or later they all discover that to understand man, we must try ever increasingly to know—God!

For years I have pleaded with leading chairmen and others, known to be Christians, to invite socially groups of their peers and wives to consider God and man. So far—no success. 'Meeting Point' and I.T.V. programmes would readily telecast these.

³ Seton Hall University, New Jersey, U.S.A.



THE LIVING OF RELIGION IN THE SECONDARY MODERN SCHOOL

DONALD YOUNG

RELIGION is caught not taught—an old tag—and with secondary education for all there is now more time for the catching. Secondary modern schools (or 'streams' in comprehensive schools) cater for seventy per cent or more of the population of the country, a large proportion of school-aged children not suited, in the judgment of the educationalist, to academic or intellectual study. For these the proven methods of the grammar school are not applicable, as anyone who has stood in front of forty such will acknowledge. 'Teach us if you can', they seem to say, as we hesitate, searching desperately for some grain of knowledge remaining from yesterday's lesson on which to build today's. It has taken, and indeed still takes, a long time for many people to realize that what served for secondary education for the educated and educable classes for the past

centuries will not serve for the secondary modern child. The problem for the teacher is a new and different one and requires a new and different solution. What serves for the few relatively gifted or intellectually able children will not do for all. It certainly won't do for the child growing up in the mass culture of today. Your 'grammar-school type' knows what is expected of him, lives in an atmosphere of intellectual achievement, is urged on by his parents who add their own learning to his. While he benefits from good teaching he often manages without, soaking up knowledge where he can find it. The secondary modern child lacks the definite goal of success in examinations, is often without parental support, sees little value placed on book learning, and requires skilled teaching. Both kinds of child must be civilized, must acquire moral training and sound social attitudes, and receive a spiritual formation.

Subjected, as they are, through television, cinema, press, and neighbours to the modern way of life, how dull they must find the five hours spent in the classroom! That's not living; living is being outside school. 'Don't you teachers ever have fun?' asks my companion at the dinner table. 'Religion? It's like being in prison. All don'ts!' says another; 'Roll on Christmas. I'm leaving.' Plainly in trying to help this kind of child there is no place for sentimentalizing. He is not impressed by 'pretty' representations of the saints, by naïve practices suited to a simpler and sturdier way of life. Wayside shrines, cloaked sodalities are unfortunately foreign to him. He often fails to penetrate beyond the fine linen and lace of the mass vestments to the reality of the re-presentation of Calvary. His response is to sterner stuff, his admiration for the strong. He must be brought to see the personality of Christ, the toughness, the resilience of this Man who would not give in. So the study of the gospels might be directed to the discovery of the personality of our Lord, always asking 'What kind of man was he?' And again, 'What does this mean to us now—as school-children—not tomorrow or when we are grown up, but now, today, in this environment?' The gospel enquiry method as practised in the Y.C.W. gives a splendid basis for this type of lesson to the upper classes of the secondary modern school. Dogma learnt by rote under threat of punishment may benefit some children, but not many of this type are to be found in the secondary modern school. Such methods aggravate the adoles-

cent rebellion against authority, and the rejection of the school and the faith that goes with it is all the more prompt and violent. Such knowledge is knowledge without understanding. For children who live not intellectually but emotionally the way to their souls is through the heart rather than the head.

Spiritual reading for this type of child is, thank God, becoming easier to obtain. Hagiography can be found which has taken a turn away from sentiment, presenting the lives of the saints in a harsher light of startling reality, presenting a new vision of life. The school library should be well-equipped with books of this type and opportunity afforded for them to be read. Consideration might be given to one of the Religious Knowledge lessons being spent in the library for just this purpose. Encouragement should be given, as reading does not come easily to the non-academic child.

The teaching of prayer is not easy. The compulsory school assembly is not perhaps the most fruitful ground in which to nurture the growth and habit of prayer. Do the well-intentioned prayers at the start and finish of lessons 'raise the mind and heart to God'? We can but do our best and leave the rest to Almighty God. Much will depend upon our own personal integrity. The world in which these children live gives a very good impression of managing without prayer, and not many of their fictional heroes or heroines admit to owing anything to Almighty God. How then can this difficult subject be tackled? Young children certainly understand the prayer of asking and in the post-primary stage they begin to understand the prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of life, for health and for material prosperity. Prayer also comes easily at moments of crisis that beset the adolescent so frequently, and if we can encourage this we achieve much. Recent history provides many examples of men and women who turned to God in prayer in the midst of appalling sufferings.

At this rather hard-boiled age children do not gain very much from accounts of miraculous answers to prayer. It is very important that the child's mind should distinguish between prayer and magic. How does one cope with the boy who wears medals and carries a knife—both for protection? Point out that prayer is all-powerful but its effects are in God's hands—not ours; that by prayer we keep in touch with God; and this realization can go far to dispel the awful loneliness in which so many adolescents

find themselves enshrouded. How desperately they need Someone to talk to! This is the cue for introducing the child to the prayer of praise. The average prayer book, so full of 'Thou's' and 'Thee's', of 'wouldst' and 'couldst', and words of many syllables hallowed by years of usage and pregnant with theological meaning, has to be translated into secondary modern English. Children should be encouraged to write their own prayers and suitable ones might well be used from time to time in the school assembly. I myself return constantly to the 'Our Father', trying to rescue each petition from the meaningless jumble into which constant unthinking repetition throws it.

Paradoxically it may be by our competence in secular education that we succeed in making the faith stick. Children who owe their success in school work to us will not so readily neglect what we say of the faith. Piety is not a substitute for efficiency. Children are embarrassingly alert to humbug. Chinks in integrity are quickly found and 'do as I do' is more compelling than 'do as I say'. It does not require intelligence to recognize kindness, honesty, or strength of character. Children are quick to acknowledge and give credit for skill in football or painting or pottery or acting. The star performer will get his hero-worship, and his influence may be greater than that of his colleague who 'teaches' religion. It is always the personality of the teacher that carries weight rather than the extent of his knowledge. Children tend to become good at subjects taught by a popular teacher, and *vice versa*.

Above all, the secondary modern child must have fun, if only to enable him to realize that religion and joy are not sworn enemies. A piece of stagework, a well-organized social party, a disciplined dance, all these help to strip the false glamour from the vicarious enjoyment of other people's gaities so well and fulsomely reported in press and television. Even in what might be thought to be such trivial things children should be given standards, so that they can tell genuine pleasures from false ones. All the arts are therefore of paramount importance. The arts appeal to the emotions and for the secondary modern school-child it is through the emotions that we make contact, that we as adults obtain our influence over him. An intellectual child may suffer, but will suffer less, from an education ignoring the emotions. He lives 'in his head' anyway. But for the majority of children the growth of the whole personality is co-extensive with

emotional control and stability and we starve them of this at our peril. For them it may be 'I feel, therefore I am'. Uneducated, uncontrolled emotions may rightly be suspect; but to deny the existence of emotional faculties, to pretend that 'life in the head' is everything and 'life in the heart' not quite nice, is to leave all that side of education to the film producer, the song-writer and the love-magazine proprietor.

I cannot refrain from quoting here from the introduction to Miss Ruth Lewis' C.T.S. pamphlet *Art and the Teaching of Religion*, where this theme is so splendidly developed. Mr A. Barclay Russell says,

The ease with which the school-master still so often unthinkingly contrives the destruction of these emotional and imaginative faculties does nothing but provide all too easily a convenient room meticulously swept and educationally garnished, where many debased Freudianly conceived imaginings may troop in, as come now they will. It would seem extraordinary, in view of the well-recognized increase in emotional instability in western civilization, that there is little sustained attempt being made to employ the emotions in education in their proper constructive formative role as an integral part of the development of character, helping the child to reach out towards an objective insight of the underlying qualities of life, and to find the wisdom and understanding of an established adult manhood that is both emotionally calm yet actively creative.

There are many children who can sort out their own problems, who can communicate with other people, only through dancing or drama or painting. To deprive them of this is like blinding a sighted child. Opportunity must be given for all these arts, irrespective of skills attained. I don't teach painting, modelling, singing or the making of pots because children need to know these techniques. These activities are the means of education. They enable me to live with the child while the educational process takes place. They enable the child to experience the well-making of what needs to be made, to acquire standards of the beauty which points to God. Satisfactory growth to maturity depends so much upon establishing successful communication with the other-than-self. Very young children paint, dance, sing and talk for themselves. As they grow they must adjust their

values to those of the outside world, and the arts and crafts are the chief means of doing this. I used to be surprised at the ability of a child to name and describe in detail every picture he had painted during his four years at the secondary school. Compare that with the thousand unremembered facts of other subjects. Set a class to illustrate a passage from the new testament, and see them searching for the details. Stand ready for the unending questions. 'What did they wear? How did they look? How many?' etc. The printed page springs to life. The child is engaged on the age-old, most human of all activities—making something for God. His picture is a prayer in colour and the sensitive observer is impressed by its sincerity and reverence. A weekly religious lesson with paints, brushes and paper is a 'must' in the secondary modern school.

Sex-instruction is a matter for parents and it is not found in the time-table of the Catholic secondary modern school. Indeed it sometimes seems that the school is the *only* place in which this aspect of life is not fully discussed. The modern trend of frankness in sex matters means that information on and attitudes towards all aspects of sex are freely discussed in articles in weekly and monthly magazines, books are available on the open shelves of the public libraries, pamphlets are sold by chemists, television wireless and the press discuss such things as A.I.D., prostitution, homosexuality. Films and plays centre their plots round sex-relationships. All these are within the grasp of our children, who seem by the grace of God to be less harmed by their influence than we sometimes imagine. Furthermore, in many instances the information given is sound, sincere, is not provocative and the attitudes adopted are, save on the question of birth-control, sound and traditional. Those who seek advice from the back pages of the women's magazine seem to get, in the main, good moral answers; Secondary modern children seem unable to resist comics, 'love' magazines and lurid paper-backed books of lust and violence. Their collection of pictures of film stars is greater than their collection of holy pictures. To ignore this problem or condemn without reason this type of reading, creates more problems than it solves. Something *must* be done about it.

A further complication is the popularization of comparative anthropology. In books, on films and on television the habits and customs of man, as found in the remotest parts of the world,

are presented without comment; presented often with such charm that the life of the 'noble savage' seems much more attractive in its simplicity than the complications of European culture. The white man goes to Africa or South America not as a missionary but as a camera-man: his aim is not to convert the heathen but preserve him in all his finery and with all his curious habits, film him and display him together with the other wonders of nature to a T.V. audience. Paganism is made to seem normal, rather jolly and well able to do without Christianity.

Here it might be as well to say something of the limited form of co-education found in our mixed secondary modern schools. A great problem of today is the relations between the two sexes. This relationship is under constant assault from all sides. Distorted views are presented in every periodical, every film plot and television programme. Marriages based upon false ideals of love, upon romantic or purely selfish ends, bring unhappiness to so many. Most of the children in the secondary modern schools will find their vocation in marriage. Working together, seeing each other's failings, recognizing each other as persons rather than glamorous lodestars, these children can be taught a mutual respect and understanding. A 'member of the opposite sex' becomes a person with a common interest or ability, and such meeting on the common ground of school activities somewhat qualifies the equation $boy + girl = sex$ proclaimed by the world. A high standard of personal relationships between growing boys and girls can be attained where the staff appreciate the extra challenge of the mixed school. It becomes chivalry in action—not 'This is how you *will* have to behave towards boys—or girls', but 'Do this now'. Here is no suggestion that boys and girls should receive identical treatment, but that their differences should be apparent to each other, and each perhaps gain a little of the other's virtues. It does no harm for boys of the secondary school age to learn that a man can be gentle without being weak, or for a girl to realize that a pleasant disposition is sometimes a greater social asset than a pretty face. To help our children form right estimates of character is surely an important part of our work.