The Relationship between Religion and Individuals’ Character

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ABSTRACT: Religion is often defined as a set of beliefs that explain the world and the universe. Religion is generally born out of culture where members of the culture create a system of beliefs and values. They also establish symbols that represent the belief structure and hold special meaning for believers. Religions can be divided geographically. Every religion, depending on which part of the world it is in, has its own traditions, customs, beliefs, symbols and history. Religion can be categorized as world religions, indigenous religions and new religious movements. Today, the largest religions include Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. Some religions are considered to be universal because the laws and values can be adopted by anyone. Other religions are unique to a specific group. Religion can be belief-based or it can be based on practice. Many of the large religions have organized behavior. There is often a clerical hierarchy, congregation, meetings and services for prayer. Almost every religion has designated holy landmarks or architectural sites. Many religions are based on and incorporate the use of text or scriptures. The fundamental understanding of religion is that it provides a way of life for believers. However, for individuals, religion and spirituality are more than just a way of understanding the world. We hope to not only provide practical, and historical information about religions of the world, but to also examine what each religion means to its followers.

Keywords: Religion and Individuals’ Character

INTRODUCTION

Religion is defined as beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, especially when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs. In sociology the word ‘religion’ is used in a wider sense, than that is used in religious books. Thus some sociologists define religion as those institutionalized system of beliefs, symbols, value that provide groups of men with solution to the question of ultimate meaning. Though the religion is a highly personal thing, yet it has a social aspect and social role to play. It has been a powerful agency in society and performs many important social functions. According to A. Green, religion has three universal functions. Most programs of moral education in the public schools, and virtually all character education programs, ignore religion. Religion can be and actually is regarded as a strong and preferred factor contributing to good character development if religion is taught and accepted in a certain ways almost in all countries throughout the world. No claim is made that this positive relationship between religion and good character development always takes place only that it often does.

This chapter is devoted to only certain aspects of religion in relation to character development. It is impossible here to give adequate attention to many religions and religious education issues which could be sources of inspiration and empowerment to lead a good moral life. Hence, the meaning of grace, the meaning of the magisterial, the place of authority in one’s life, religious scriptures, prayer, liturgy, the importance of the study of the life and teachings of Christ and other religious leaders, and related important issues cannot be considered in this brief chapter. Readers who seek a recent overview on the content of religious education and related issues are referred to the “Apostolic Exhortation on Catechetics” by Pope John Paul II. In addition to the meaning of religion as used in this paper, our use of the terms “humanism” and “character” deserve some explication. Humanism, a dedication to human values, interests and dignity, is generally recognized and urged by two different groups, the secular and religious humanists. Of course, religious humanists accept religion as an important factor in the human dimension; secular humanists either neglect or play down or deny the importance of religion in the human make-up. In this paper when we refer to humanism we are writing about secular humanism, not religious humanism.
The term "character" also needs explanation, but as it is treated at length elsewhere in this book we only summarize our understanding of the term. "Character" is the sum of a person's consistent ways of moral being and acting; "being" includes one's values and methods of making moral decisions.

The paper contains five divisions:

1. How religion adds a deeper dimension to moral education even though at times different religions may offer differing moral solutions.
2. We face a special problem: if there is this deeper dimension, why do religious people behave no better than other people? All port's research-based solution on "interiorization" is seen as the answer.
3. Major findings of four current investigations of the moral behaviors of religious people as judged from students' non-academic behaviors? One special finding: the advantage of more recent kerygmatic methods for interiorizing religion.
4. Modern religious education aims at interiorizing religion through use of varied modern teaching methods. We use as an example the justice theme in modern religious education.

According to A. Green, religion has three universal functions. These are:

1. Religion explains individual suffering
   Man does not live by knowledge alone. He is an emotional creature. Religion serves to the emotions of man in times of his sufferings and disappointment. On God religion puts faith and entertains the belief that some unseen power moves in mysterious ways to make even his loss meaningful. In this way religion gives release from sorrow and release from fear. It helps man to bear his frustration and integrate his personality.

2. Religion enhances self-importance
   Religion expands one's self to infinite proportions. Man unites himself with the Infinite and feels ennobled. Society also gains from the self-flattery provided by religious belief. Religion assures a greater reward in the afterlife to worldly failures than to successful life. Such kind of assurance encourages members to continue to play their part in society.

3. Religion comes as a source of social cohesion
   Religion is the ultimate source of social cohesion. The primary requirement of society is the possession of social values by which individuals control the action of self and others and through which society is perpetuated. Science and technology cannot create this value. Religion is the foundation upon which these values rest. Children should obey their parents, should not tell lie, women should be faithful to men, people should be honest and Virtuous, are some of the social values which maintain social cohesion.

4. Religion encourages social welfare
   Religion has also performed some other services to humanity like the provision of work, the priesthood often dedicated to art and culture. The priesthood lays the foundation of medicine. It also fulfills the functions of scholars and scientists. Religion has served humanity through spreading of education and also creating the habit of charity among the people who open many charitable institutions like hospitals, rest houses, temples and to help the poor.

5. Religion is the agency of social control
   Religion provides a model for living. It upholds certain ideals and values. The believer imbibes these ideals and values in his life. Religion can help youth generation to become moral, disciplined and socialized citizens of society.

Moral Education

Only a handful of educational theorists hold the view that if only the adult world would get out of the way, children would ripen into fully realized people. Most thinkers, educational practitioners, and parents acknowledge that children are born helpless and need the care and guidance of adults into their teens and often beyond. More specifically, children need to learn how to live harmoniously in society. Historically, the mission of schools has been to develop in the young both the intellectual and the moral virtues. Concern for the moral virtues, such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others, is the domain of moral education. Moral education, then, refers to helping children acquire those virtues or moral habits that will help them individually live good lives and at the same time become productive, contributing members of their communities. In this view, moral education should contribute not only to the students as individuals, but also to the social cohesion of a community. The word moral comes from a Latin root (mos, moris) and means the code or customs of a people, the social glue that defines how individuals should live together.

Most of the moral education programs currently in place employ as their basis for human development various perspectives that flow from philosophical and non-religious humanistic education. Thus, the application of the
concepts of justice, civic education, reciprocal understanding of the rights of others, logical reasoning, and the like, play important parts in major moral education programs. All these approaches can and do offer considerable insights to the young people who participate in the programs. Yet religious perspectives on human behavior offer a much deeper foundation than the above approaches because they deal with the deeper aspects of our nature, our quest for the transcendental, for the will of God, for salvation, and for a future life. Furthermore, religious perspectives provide a deeper view of the person since the person is viewed in relationship to God, and human behavior is seen as being judged ultimately not just by humans but by the Maker of all. A few examples of the religious viewpoint in relationship to human rights, the basis for justice, and forgiveness for personal misdeeds should illustrate the deeper religious dimension; they are offered below.

Respect for each individual's rights is a frequent theme, even a given, in moral education discussions. When such discussion probes into the basis for respect for the individual's rights, recourse is had to a philosophical review of human achievements and abilities, such as abstraction, reflective thinking, and human creativity in works of art and music. These points are well taken, but the religious perspective, in my judgment, is deeper and more integrated. In the religious approach one can see a pattern behind the special human potential to achieve as a gift of the creator of all, and can link it with an overall goal, life now and in a future life. Hence, the rights of the individual are seen as flowing from the universal Creator, not only from a human law or from even an outstanding human document such as the U.S. Constitution.

A second example of the way the religious goes beyond a humanistic perspective concerns the general norms of morality and justice which one uses as a basis for justifying or condemning actions. In practice many of these programs use Rawls' Principle of Justice, the Golden Rule, positive law, or the moral and other effects of one's actions as a basis for decision making. All of these are good sources for determining one's actions or for evaluating them after they have been completed, but they are all based upon human resources, though many see them as reflecting elements of "natural law." For those who can turn to a religious background, however, there is an additional source for decision making and evaluation: declarations of the will of God as revealed in a general code for human behavior in the Bible (e.g., the Decalogue) and in other sources such as in tradition. Various religious groups offer differing views of the ways of interpreting the Scriptures and give different degrees of value to religious tradition. Thus, the religious person in using the Golden Rule and other sources for conscience formation has also the sense of security derived from a further religious source of guidance, with which God's blessing is associated and which can provide a whole integrated context of reinforcement. Adherence to the religious perspective does not make life easier--usually the situation is just the opposite--but those who follow it are deeply convinced that they are doing the correct thing and carrying out in daily life their religious commitment. Their conviction based on faith is not just an additional factor in their lives; there is a qualitative difference which aids also in resisting group or peer pressure and social patterns.

A third special element that religion can provide to the moral approach is the sense of true forgiveness for moral lapses. This is done during liturgies of atonement and reconciliation for those truly sorry for misdeeds and truly determined to reform. Those especially who have offended others gravely by injustice or offended the commands of God have a means of being reconciled. An awareness of this instrumentality as a part of God's ecclesial and social providence consoles and reinforces the sinner's sense of forgiveness. Thus an evil or immoral action does not necessarily condemn one forever to alienation with no hope for reconciliation through remorse and penance. Mary Magdalen and the Good Thief had a direct message of forgiveness. A sacramental faith offers the same sense of relief from sin and the restoration of friendship, once one has truly turned from grave misconduct. Various religions have their own means for ensuring those truly repentant of God's forgiveness. But even the best of the moral education programs in themselves have no adequate resource for the need for forgiveness other than that of self-forgiveness and forgiveness from the person or persons offended—which are also important aspects of the problem of one's reconciliation.

Variance in moral and religious stances

A few cases where religious positions may differ among varied denominations and differ from positions taken by those relying on philosophical and other sources can be briefly reviewed. The recent series of Baby Doe case is an example. A child is born with numerous defects which may be temporarily repaired through delicate operations but which will guarantee only a difficult and relatively short life for the child. Some legal authorities believe that there is an obligation to operate and do all that can be done for the child. Yet many theologians have regularly held that there is no obligation to take extraordinary measures such as a medical operation to prolong life though they would insist on "ordinary care" and would not accept the deliberate neglect of the child that would lead to death by starvation. Another example is that of recent "right to die" and "death with dignity" issues. These have arisen as reactions to excessive prolongation of a terminally ill patient's life through use of highly sophisticated machines, perhaps largely out of concern about medical malpractice suits. Again, religious traditions tend to see such artificial, extraordinary means as not obligatory. In cases such as those cited above,
the religiously oriented person accepts the theologian's tradition over approaches that rely upon legal and other sources.

There are special cases where there seems to be conflict within the religious tradition regarding its authentic teaching. The present confusion concerning contraception is such an example, and it is too complicated to consider here. Suffice it to say that in such types of genuine uncertainty, one should follow the dictates of one's own, well-informed conscience.

The position that has been developed in the preceding paragraphs is that for the reasons proposed, religious education should be, for religious people, the preferred basis for character development over the various nonreligious philosophical and humanistic-based programs. Of course, the religious-based program can be used in conjunction with other programs as there is nothing inherently contradictory and much that is mutually complementary in the several approaches. Now a legitimate question arises: If the position stated above is correct in theory, how does it work out in practice? This challenge is examined in the following section.

A PROBLEM

Critics of religion often point to certain behaviors of religious adherents as a means of condemning religion. For instance, in the past, Christians mistreated Jews; Moslems and Christians assaulted each other; various Moslem sects warred against each other; and Protestants and Catholics persecuted each other. Today, the picture is no different as one looks to conflicts in Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Israel, and Iran-Iraq. Likewise, there have been all too numerous cases of the regular church-going religious adherent who is revealed to be a corrupting force in politics or whose decisions were influenced by bribery. Furthermore, general studies of those who demonstrate racial or other prejudice, obtain a divorce and remarry, seek abortions, or cheat in schoolwork, usually conclude that there is no pattern marking one of the different groups as significantly superior to the other groups. Religionists' behaviors do not vary differently from those of the non-religionists. Hence the natural question arises: How can one maintain that religion and "religious education can be a superior basis for character development?"

THE ROOTS OF A SOLUTION

Some thirty years ago, Gordon Allport, in his classic work, *The Nature of Prejudice*, was concerned about the same issue. His summary statement of the problem is that religion makes prejudice and it unmakes prejudice. While the creeds of the great religions are universalistic, all stressing brotherhood, the practice of these creeds is frequently divisive and brutal. The sublimity of religious ideals is offset by the horrors of persecution in the name of these same ideals. . . . Churchgoers are more prejudiced than the average; they also are less prejudiced than the average.

For a solution to the problem of the apparent discrepancy in research concerning the amount of prejudice in church-goers, Allport referred his readers to some unpublished research conducted in a university seminar. The research was done by a Catholic priest and a Protestant clergyman who probed the prejudices of small samples of their own flocks. In each church those tests were divided into two groups, the more versus the less devout or religious. The summary of the studies, which admittedly lacked the sophistication of most of the research with which Allport dealt, is as follows:

In both studies, the same result occurred: those who were considered the most devout, more personally absorbed in their religion, were far less prejudiced than the others. The institutional type of attachment, external and political in nature, turns out to be associated with prejudice. Allport concluded that it is important in dealing with religion to distinguish between two types of religious adherents. One type belongs to a church "because its basic creed of brotherhood expresses the ideals one sincerely believes in" (the "interiorized" or "internalized" religious adherents). The second type belongs to a church "because it is a safe, powerful, superior in-group" (the "institutionalized" adherents). He reported the former group to be associated with tolerant, non-prejudiced attitudes; the latter group was characterized by an authoritarian character and "linked with prejudice." Whether this distinction is true of all religions is another issue, but it is this writer's contention that the distinction provides a key to an understanding of failures of some to act consistently with beliefs, and contains a key that can open the door to religious educators for assistance in development of adherents from belief to behavior to character.

The implication of the Allport report as summarized above is that those who are charged with the teaching of religion should give special importance to efforts to interiorize religious beliefs. If that is done, there should be obvious results in students' moral thinking and behaviors. Hence, we look next at important research which, focusing on Catholic schools, has included sections that pertain to religious education and correlates of religious education.
**RELATED RESEARCH FINDINGS**

This section is devoted to a summary of several research studies that included segments on character development and religion. The research material is contained in reports about the general state of Catholic education in both nationwide and inner-city samples; prior media attention to these reports has focused on academic achievements and has neglected references to character and internal religious development. The brief review below looks to appropriate sections of the classic studies by the Greeley-Rossi study, the Notre Dame Study, National Catholic Education Association reports, and the Inner City Schools study and the analysis made by the Guerra group. As with all research, there are certain limitations regarding methodology in each of the studies. Our conclusions are based upon the cumulative pattern of the research findings, and the limitations in the individual studies are not here a major concern.

The Greeley-Rossi study, released in 1966, was based upon 2,753 interviews taken in 1963-64, and supplemented by two thousand questionnaires. Their findings include the conclusion that, in the moral and religious area, Catholic education is most effective among those who have had a complete Catholic education, from elementary school to college, especially if they have come from homes that are strongly religious. Furthermore, they found that "Those . . . who attended Catholic colleges have significantly lower scores . . . for anti-Semitism, anti-civil-liberties attitudes . . . and religious extremism." This writer interprets the Greeley-Rossi findings as emphasizing the importance for character development of consistent, relatively school-intensive learning (the "full treatment" of elementary-school-to-college Catholic schooling is best) that is complemented by related practices and teachings in the home environment (especially "from homes that are strongly religious"). When parents make a partial attempt toward Catholic education (i.e., their children attend Catholic schools for only a part of their education), the effects not as obvious as in the other cases. The challenge to parents who seek religious education for children but who, for one reason or another, cannot do so, is to attempt to match in some way the learning conditions which the Greeley-Rossi report found favorable for moral and religious growth; these conditions for learning are reviewed below in the section on Modern Religions Education.

The Notre Dame Study of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the United States, entitled Catholic Schools in Action, and edited by Reginald A. Neuwien, was also published in 1966. The study was based on responses to a special questionnaire administered to 14,519 male and female students in Catholic schools. One of the many pertinent findings of this study was that the students who had the deepest awareness of the implications of religious doctrine were those who were instructed in the new catechesis or Kerygmatic method. The researchers were convinced that "54% of . . . elementary school students and 59% of . . . secondary school students reflected" their receiving the new catechesis or Kerygmatic emphasis in their questionnaire responses.

Considerable emphasis in the Notre Dame Study was placed on the new catechesis or Kerygmatic approach to religious instruction, and so a brief explanation of that approach seems appropriate. It is described in the report: "It is a combination of the intellectual and practical emphases and at the same time is quite distinct from both. It is intellectual in that it leads the student to probe deeply into the origins and meanings of . . . religion; it is practical in that it aims explicitly at helping the students to live fully the Christian message. However, it differs from them and transcends them in that it emphasizes the beauty and the joy of Christian faith at the very moment it seeks its truth. It emphasizes that the Christian religion is not something simply to be known or even merely to be practiced; it is rather a total spirit, or better, an inspiration or a life process. It is a view of the [fully developed, integrated] Christian person, as it were, from within. . . . By recognizing and responding to the "good tidings" of the Gospel . . . the Christian [can] enter into a living awareness of the mysteries of his faith." Thoough the report showed the pupils' inadequate grasp of religious or dogmatic technical terms, Kelly confirmed the Notre Dame prediction in stating that the students:

have caught quite well the essential kerygmatic message of Christianity: God's unconditional love for all persons and his personal care of each individual, as well as . . . the redemption and salvation brought by Jesus, God's Son. Catechetical materials affected by the renewal have emphasized these points over the past 15 years and the results are a cause of encouragement. The data indicate that the young people's basic perception of the Christian Message is positive and hopeful.

The concepts that are emphasized in the kerygmatic catechesis approach to religious instruction are reviewed later in this chapter as we summarize what research has taught us regarding religious education. The Notre Dame study was generally corroborative of the Greeley-Rossi report with regard to the relationship of the family to religious education. They found that "supportive" families "take considerable interest in religion, and they make prayer and discussion of religious topics a regular part of the home life." An interesting related finding concerning the social class of the parents was that:

upper class status is associated with less prejudice toward minority groups and more frequent mass attendance, whereas middle and lower class status reflects stronger support of religious vocations and of Catholic family values as measured by attitudes.
The third pertinent research report is *Inner-City Private Elementary Schools: A Study* by J. Cibulka, T. O'Brien, and D. Zewe. Reported in 1982, the study used data from 54 inner-city, predominantly Catholic schools in eight U.S. cities. The schools were E.S.E.A. Title I schools whose students were at least 70 percent minority. One of the areas upon which the report focused was that of social behavior, especially behavior toward adults in school, peers, and behavior at home. Teachers, principals, and parents were surveyed for information about social behavior. In general, the schools reported relatively few discipline problems, although some school officials reported that some individuals displayed disruptive patterns regarding "cooperativeness with school authorities and respect toward their peers." This finding suggests that the students in the school were typical children who displayed the usual range of problem behaviors, and so cannot be termed "elitist" in the usual sense of that term.

The *Inner-City Private Elementary Schools* study contains a pertinent report from parents who had a child in one of the targeted inner-city schools. Parents were asked to respond regarding their child's behavior since enrollment in the school. Thirty-five percent (1,412 parents) stated that the behavior was greatly improved; 32 percent (1,287 parents) said somewhat improved; 28 percent (1,112 parents) said the behavior was not changed; 4 percent (139 parents) said the behavior became worse.

The four pertinent school factors viewed as the basis of the success of these schools were: "strong instructional leadership, a concept of shared work, a safe school climate, and clarity of mission and shared purpose." Many good public schools share these characteristics but the details of the fourth factor, clarity of mission and shared purpose, was distinctive of most of these predominantly religious schools. That factor was explained as involving combined efforts by administration and faculty for quality education, a supportive learning environment, shared "religious values and, more broadly, a moral concern for one's fellow human beings."

The importance of shared religious values in the *Inner-City* schools was confirmed in "repeated emphasis" in interviews with administrators, principals, and teachers. Furthermore, 94 percent of the parents of the pupils in the schools asserted that "learning moral values is essential" for their children. Our final research study pertains to two publications from the National Catholic Educational Association: *The Catholic High School: A National Portrait,* published in 1985, and the study by Guerra, Donahue and Benson published in 1980. The first book reports results of in-depth surveys of 910 principals of Catholic high schools. The section in the report that refers most directly to the users concerns is in Chapter 5, Religious Education. That chapter reflects the principals' strong emphasis in their schools on the three dimensions cited as central in the important document, *To Teach as Jesus Did,* namely: message (the teaching-learning of Christian doctrine); community (fellowship in the life of the Holy Spirit); and service to the Christian and to the entire human community. The principals ranked among their educational goals "building community" first and "spiritual development" (in accord with Jesus' message) second; they reported that nearly half (46 percent) of their senior students were engaged in some kind of volunteer service programs.

The message of the Guerra group is closely associated with the above report. It depicts the effects of Catholic High Schools on student values, beliefs and behaviors. Noting that numerous reports such as those fathered by Coleman attest to the general academic success of Catholic schools when compared with public schools, the Guerra group points to the need for research in both systems regarding non-academic areas. Fortunately, considerable data were available from the annual studies made by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Those studies provide reports of surveys administered each year during the period of 1975-1985 to about 16,000 seniors at public and Catholic high schools from 125 schools. As background for the analysis of drug use, the researchers gathered information about high school seniors' values, pro-and anti-social behaviors, religious attachments and church involvement. The Guerra group was able to subject the 1983-1985 data to special analysis (including controls for parental education, employment, etc.) regarding Catholic students in the public and Catholic schools.

Due to space limitations we can summarize here only some of the findings of the Guerra group. They learned that, when compared with their counterparts in the public schools, Catholics in Catholic high schools:

1. were pro-church; they recognized the importance of religion and of making contributions to church. They reported more frequent church attendance than their counterparts.
2. showed pro-social values in their concern for others, for contributing money for social causes, in their relatively low pro-militarism attitude and in their belief that they can "make a difference."
3. demonstrated behaviors that were judged healthy for dropout prevention, college attendance and completion, academic achievement and in general less "at risk" behavior.

Their findings of outstanding difference between the groups favored the conclusion that the Catholic schools were achieving their goals in the areas for which data were available. Of course, the data pertain only to Catholic high schools, but some observers think that conclusions named above apply a fortiori to parochial elementary schools.

In sum, a common theme of the Greeley-Rossi, the Notre Dame, the Inner-City, and the National Catholic Educational studies is that religious education in the Catholic schools is successful. Religious knowledge was the main variable of the Notre Dame study; attitudes and the behaviors of pupils were main variables of the
ON INTERNALIZATION/INTERIORIZATION OF RELIGION

Before describing teaching methods, it seems appropriate to discuss the goals of catechetical methods. The research reports summarized above and reflection on learning problems of the young, together with the material presented from Allport, suggest a need for an analysis of the problem of "interiorization" and possible means toward achieving it. That problem is an aspect of the more general concern about how we adopt our values in life. Throughout this volume and the companion volumes the issue of the imparting, teaching, or transferring of values from one person to another is often implied and sometimes addressed. Unfortunately, there are no necessarily effective formulas for value transfer or for the interiorization of religion. Nevertheless, there are some observations that can be made concerning the facilitation of the process of interiorization. The observations center upon the awareness of this factor and upon the use of the best possible instructional methods or strategies as described in the next section, Modern Religious Education.

Effective teachers or parents are aware of the distinction between those who have internalized their religion, as opposed to those who have not. Hence, such teachers and parents bring to their work an intensity and care that betfits the importance of religious education. Their empathy with the young is transparent and their affection genuine, even if at times they show "tough love." They work hard to develop healthy self-images among the young, and they uphold high, though realistic, goals for them.

MODERN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

An older generation recalls religious education as consisting of dull lectures, the memorization of formulas, and the questions and answers of the catechism. Because of the importance placed by many generations on memorization, another generation tried to do away with that part of religious learning. Both extremes are clearly erroneous. Memorization of truly important materials has its place in religious education, as it does in history or in chemistry, but neither should it take first place in the learning hierarchy.

In the earlier approach to religious education when pupils were not engaged in memorization, they received a great many lectures or sermons on the topics that were regarded as important. Of course, the use of the lecture or verbal explanation of an issue continues to play an important part in all learning. However, contemporary religious education attempts to appeal to all human ways of learning, not only directly to one's memory and cognitive abilities. Some of these newer ways of teaching are described briefly below. These methods or strategies of teaching are well known to modern professional teachers, but even they may take the occasion to reflect on their use of these various methods, particularly in relation to religious and value concepts.

Furthermore, the methods or strategies described briefly here may be a source of information to parents who are not receiving regular religious education in school or in successful religious education centers should seek the loan of such materials for use at home.
Lectures in an original and/or personal vein are important in religious education. Every effort is made to dramatize the message, so as to avoid boredom. The teacher investigates all possibilities of visual materials as a means of increasing attention to the content of the lecture. Without getting into "ego trips" or centering the lecture on one's own history, it is appropriate that the teacher explain what the doctrine, sacrament, or unit being explained means in his or her life, or in the lives of others. Thus, the teacher is a "witness" to faith. Perhaps in the past lecturing and teaching have been too impersonal and thus the application of the doctrine was too difficult for students. For very specialized material, a guest lecturer may be invited. These days it is more and more likely that a full, appropriate lecture may be available on videotape, and the presenter may be a national figure with outstanding charismatic appeal. Alert religious education teachers are aware of these possibilities. Parents who are directing the religious education of their children can also be informed of these possibilities by ongoing contact with a religious education center and can be assisted in obtaining a loan of them.

In the attempt to dramatize lectures in religious instruction, a veritable gold mine is available in material culled from church history. This writer can recall still, some fifty years later, the sense of inspiration felt in a high school senior religion class which contained numerous instances from church history. This was intimately linked with explanation of the various church doctrines which had been challenged in the course of the centuries. Of course, inspiring and dramatic incidents in the lives of saints and other exemplary figures in the history of the church fitted well into this course, and sparked the imagination of many students. There are as many heroic religious figures in the church today and in the recent past as there ever were, and their stories can be incorporated in the religious education program. The lives of such people as Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II, Gandhi, Albert Schweitzer and countless missionaries (some of whom may be available for personal appearances as they make visits back to their "native air") are as appropriate as the stories of figures in the Scriptures. In using such history and such lives of exemplary people, care must be exercised to present well-established dimensions of their lives and to choose illustrations and conditions with which the young can identify.

Discussions have come to play an important part in modern education. Unfortunately, some of those who use discussion in religious education do not realize the importance of preparation for profitable discussion sessions, for instance, by selection of challenging "stimulus" questions or even mini-dramatizations. The discussions in large or small groups may follow an instructional session, and they may be directed toward personalizing the main thrust of the instruction. Successful discussions are not used as an excuse for the teacher's lack of proper class preparation. A skilled discussion leader knows when to redirect the flow of the participants from detours and tangents. Discussions may be enlivened by use of specially prepared panel groups and by role playing, techniques which are developed at length in books on group guidance. Many group discussion leaders find it helpful to conclude the session with a summary of the varied viewpoints, the range of feelings expressed by the participants, the new knowledge or appreciation achieved, and such conclusions as the need for further information on specific topics.

Evaluation of success regarding the various teaching methods described above and of genuine interiorization is extremely difficult and in the long run can be adequately tested only when one is faced with difficult choices later on in one's life. Yet, for practical purposes of evaluation we must be satisfied with the intermediate indicators of success that can be derived from external behaviors and well-tested knowledge as in the research reported in the earlier section on related research.

Now let us turn to two topics that are often elements of programs in moral education and character development to see how syllabi in religious education often deal with them. Thereby we can illustrate the special dimension that religious approaches offer as compared with humanistic approaches. We look to religious treatment of the themes of justice and of volunteer service to others.

**JUSTICE AS A THEME IN RELIGIOUS/CHARACTER EDUCATION**

Due perhaps to its emphasis in the Kohlberg paradigm of moral education, justice is a theme or important element in most programs of character education. The purpose of discussing justice in this section is to illustrate its relationship to various other important themes in a religious education and to illustrate the potential for integrated, religiously oriented character development through concern for justice and its correlates.

The justice movement among religious people has received special emphasis in recent years from publicity about injustices accorded minority groups (Japanese-Americans in World War II, American Indians, Blacks, Hispanics, working people, Jews, women, religious groups) and from reflection upon a series of important religious documents. For instance, Pope Leo XIII, as far back as 1891, wrote an encyclical, "Rerum Novarum," concerning injustices incurred by many workers in industry. In spite of numerous other important religiously oriented documents protesting injustice, there are some who see the concept of justice as a secular notion and thus a governmental concern and as opposed to that of charity (in the sense of love, not in the sense of alms giving) as a religious concept and so a concern of the churches. To correct this view, the U.S. bishops recently
asserted that justice and charity "are part of Christian social responsibility and are complementary... Justice is the foundation of charity... It is impossible to give of oneself in love without first sharing with others what is due them in justice."  

Many classical religious treatises on justice are found under the heading of duties of which the main categories are duties to God, to self, and to the neighbor. The focus of this section is upon the last category, duty to the neighbor, seen in the same perspective as one views oneself as made in the image of God, redeemed by Christ, and called to an eternal destiny. Hence, even in one's thoughts as well as one's words, all human beings are worthy of the respect we give ourselves. Their spiritual and moral health, their intellectual and cultural status, their material and physical necessities (food, health, housing, employment, health facilities, schooling, etc.) are the concerns of all truly religious minded people.  

A development in recent years of the religious approach to justice on the part of religious persons is the more universal application of the principles of justice. "All people" and "neighbors" are really seen as embracing those who live anywhere and everywhere in the world, not just those who live next door. More and more, we are recognizing that we cannot just say to the ill housed and hungry at home or abroad, "Be warmed and be filled, and go in peace" (James 2:16). Does justice mean something different to the person with a religious rather than a humanistic philosophy? Externally, their behaviors should be equally just regarding individuals and social structures. But the religiously oriented person has the conviction that his or her norms are given by a higher absolutely loving, absolutely just Authority, and so has an additional source for confidence and motivation concerning the meaning and importance of justice in his or her life.

**VOLUNTEER SERVICE AND RELIGIOUS/ CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT**

A well-developed character is one that has been thoroughly characterized, with many traits shown in the narrative. The better the audience knows the character, the better the character development. Thorough characterization makes characters well-rounded and complex. This allows for a sense of realism. As an example, according to F.R. Leavis, Leo Tolstoy was the creator of some of the most complex and psychologically believable characters in fiction. In contrast, an underdeveloped character is considered flat or stereotypical.

Character development is very important in character-driven literature, where stories focus not on events, but on individual personalities. Classic examples include War and Peace or David Copperfield. In a tragedy, the central character generally remains fixed with whatever character flaw (hamartia) seals his fate; in a comedy the central characters typically undergo some kind of epiphany (sudden realization) whereupon they adjust their erratic beliefs and practices, and avert a tragic fate. Historically, stories and plays focusing on characters became common as part of the 19th century Romantic movement, and character-driven literature rapidly supplanted more plot-driven literature that typically utilizes easily identifiable archetypes rather than proper character development.

Mention was made above of the fact that many religious education programs now incorporate a segment of fieldwork in their syllabi. Let us examine that aspect of religious education as an element of character development and see how it compares with similar fieldwork that is primarily humanistic.

Together with teaching doctrine and building faith commitment, the ideal of serving others is emphasized as goal in current religious education literature. The basic note is that, since Jesus Christ came to serve, not to be served (Matt. 20:28), His followers are called upon to show love for Him through service of others. Thus, from their earliest years, children can be prompted to "perform acts of kindness and compassion in the home and neighborhood."

It is increasingly becoming the practice of religiously oriented schools to induct pupils gradually into the concepts of service of others. The concepts that are involved are based upon the earliest Christian traditions, such as the instructions to new converts given by Sts. Peter and Paul that they take care of the poor (Galatians 2:10) and the very existence of deacons whose work was to "serve" the community (Acts 6:2). The tradition of hospitality was important in the various monastic institutions of Europe, and the nursing care of the sick and infirm was fostered not only by the humanistically motivated Florence Nightingale in Switzerland but by numerous religious women such as, in the United States, Mother Alphonse Hawthorne (Servants of Relief for Incurable Cancer), St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (Sisters of Charity), and Mother Angeline McCrory (Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm), who founded congregations whose work included service for the sick, the poor, the aged. Hence, Catholic Christians are not newcomers to the concept of service of others.

Concepts of service are based not only upon example and tradition, but upon Church teachings related to the development of a social conscience. Concern for others, based upon an awareness of human dignity, is the theme of numerous papal and bishops' documents which assert that religious people cannot turn their backs upon those who need special help. Instead, as individuals, they are asked to recall that the spirit of Christian faith is love of God as demonstrated to neighbor, that love is demonstrated more by deeds than by words, and that some practical actions of service should characterize the lives of all committed Christians.
Whatever the type of volunteer service in which young people are engaged, and whatever the school they attend, it is important that their service activities be supervised and coordinated by someone who has and shares a mature view of service. Just doing the volunteer service isn’t enough. The supervisor of volunteers, as a mature person (whose age is not important), can help others share a sense of respect for different ways of living, different ways of practicing belief in God, and different ways of expressing one’s thoughts and feelings.

Weekly group meetings of those doing service work can help all involved increase their sense of the wide range of local living conditions and human problems. Through insights achieved in the meetings, the volunteer service and its meaning can become personalized and interiorized. Discussions of volunteer work and sharing experiences may help to inspire some with goals of a lifetime service to others. Others may gain from the approach to justice differ

the Lord in those in need, and that there is an increasing awareness among religious persons?

In summary, this chapter has attempted to answer several important questions regarding the position that religious education is the preferred way to character development. The questions and summary answers follow.

(1) In theory, why is religious education the preferred method? The religious perspective, including the nature of the person and the ultimate basis for responsibilities, extends to and moves the total human person more deeply than do other approaches.

(2) Can one account for the differences in the behaviors of religious persons? We used Allport’s report of the positive effects of those who interiorized religion, in contrast to those in whom religion was less interiorized.

(3) Are there research studies which confirm the main positions taken in this chapter? We reviewed several research projects of the predominantly Catholic schools which attested to the successful moral development of pupils in the schools.

(4) What is meant by the kerygmatic, or catechesis, approach to religious education, as used in some of the research, and how is it achieved? The term was explained, and recent teaching methods for personalizing and interiorizing religious teachings were reviewed.

(5) Since many moral education programs emphasize justice, how does the religious approach to justice differ from others? The special emphasis upon the dignity of the person provided by a religious vision.

(6) How does the religious basis for volunteer service differ from that of other approaches? There is a long religious tradition of seeing the Lord in those in need, and that there is an increasing awareness among religious people that the neighbors they should love as themselves are not only those who live nearby but all fellow inhabitants of this globe.

REFERENCES

To Teach as Jesus Did (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1973, p. 9 (No. 30) and passim.
Readers may be interested in Harold A. Buetow’s The Catholic School: Its Roots, Identity, and Future (New York: Crossroad, 1988).
In this way, the relationship between religion and politics in Europe and Christianity was severed, and a demarcation line was drawn between the two so that personal matters were placed at one side and social affairs at another. Furthermore, it was claimed that in essence, religion is something which has to do with one’s personal taste, and it corresponds to such subjects like literature and poetry. A study of the Qur’an will reveal that just as Islam takes care of such issues like individual devotion and morals, it also deals with the affairs of family, living and family relationship, marriage, divorce, trading and transactions, rearing of children, obedience to those who are vested with authority [ulu'Amr], debt, mortgage, war and peace, civil law, penal.