



PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

[A 2008 edition of Chapter One (pp. 19-57) of the 1973 New York University Ph.D. Dissertation
“The Significance of the Religious Thought of Edmond La B. Cherbonnier
for a Basic Objective for Religious Education” by Richard T. Nolan]

The original text was double-spaced, except for certain quotations and footnotes. The sexist language of the early 1970s remains along with the styles of punctuation, footnotes, etc. Misspellings have been corrected, and bracketed 2008 comments have been added to some footnotes. Hyperlinks have been newly inserted here and there.

The pagination conforms to the original text; this results in some awkward appearing places in this version.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that when this dissertation was researched and written, the author had no access to computers for word processing or internet searches; even copy machines were not common. His typewriter make and model are pictured below.



THE RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS RELATED TO A BASIC OBJECTIVE OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Undefined Scope of Philosophy of Religious Education

In his discussion of the nature of philosophy of religious education, Cully remarked, “... to speak of ‘philosophy of religious education’ is no simple task. To refer to this field of study in any precise manner would imply at least a clarity as to the nature of its contributing fields: philosophy, religion, and education. Yet these very areas of knowledge, their contents and functions, are under scrutiny today, and scholars are not in any sense of one mind on any of them.² Thus, the very discussion of philosophy of religious education would appear at first glance hopeless.

Philosophy and Philosophers

Philosophers may be grouped into two broad categories, those who attempt to deal synthetically with the traditional

¹**Kendig B. Cully**, "Philosophy of Religious Education," in *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. by Kendig B. Cully (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 502. [Added in 2008: Sometime in the 1970s or 80s, Nolan, (the dissertation author) was invited by Dr. Cully to write a number of book reviews for the periodical *Review of Books and Religion*, which he founded and edited.]

²John Passmore, "Philosophy," in *The Encyclopedia of*

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problems of epistemology, metaphysics, axiology and logic, and those who look upon philosophy as an activity for analysis of concepts and language with a view toward clarification of meaning.³

It would be an oversimplification to imply that these two categories offer respectively clear-cut distinctions from each other and unanimous schools or thought. Quite the contrary: both orientations provide many variations. "Synthetic" or "speculative" philosophers have in common their traditionally based (*i.e.*, on metaphysics, epistemology and axiology) inquiry and systems, but they range in thought from types of mysticism to forms of naturalism. "Analytic" philosophers, likewise, agree that their task is analysis, rather than prescription or system-building, but vary from Ayer's logical positivism to the more tolerant directions of Austin's "performative utterances." As one scholar has noted, regarding analytic philosophy:

This philosophy cannot be identified in terms of any system, and its exponents are widely separated on many important conclusions. What makes it a school is its adherence to a method. It believes that the main purpose (and sometimes the sole purpose) of

Philosophy, ed. by Paul Edwards (New York: The Macmillan Company and the Free Press, 1967), Vol. 6, pp. 216-225.

³Steven M. Cahn, *A New Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971), pp. 7-12.

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philosophy is to analyze the way in which language operates.⁴

Philosophy's uncertainties are borne out further by some scholars who have written, "Philosophers are not in general agreement about the nature and methods of philosophy; what philosophy and its method is, or should be, is itself an important philosophical question."⁵

Religion and Theologians

Magee has noted:

Religions in their full historical concreteness confront the investigator with the profusion of a tropical jungle. It is therefore not surprising that definitions of religion show wide disagreement, even among competent scholars.⁶

He pointed out some representative and opposing definitions of religion, including “a sum of scruples which impedes the free exercise of our faculties,” “whatever introduces genuine perspective,” “the common element in all expressions of religion . . . is that we are conscious . . . of being in relation with God,” and “religion is the action of men who

⁴William Hordern, “Logical Analysis,” *Westminster Dictionary*, p. 396.

⁵Maurice Mandelbaum, *et al.* (eds.), *Philosophic Problems* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 3.

⁶John B. Magee, *Religion and Modern Man* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1967), p. 19.

have fallen out of their relationship with God ... Religion must die . . . In God we are rid of it.”⁷ Substantiating this point further, the same scholar referred to a study that “quoted 47 classic definitions of religion ... These reveal conflicts of the same order.”⁸

One might simply scan college and university course offerings to find studies of various scriptures, history of religions, religious thought, and similar topics, but these might fall either within a formal religion department or within English, history, philosophy and other departments. The first instance may be interpreted to imply that there is a body or kind of knowledge which can be called properly “religion”; the latter raises the question whether there is any uniquely “religious” subject matter.

Thus, philosophers and theologians share a lack of consensus about the very nature of their scholarly concerns.

Education and Educators

One may readily observe as well the variety of understandings of “education.” Kneller has noted three definitions of education that illustrate well this situation:

Education . . . is the external process of superior adjustment of the physically and mentally developed, free, conscious, human being to God, as

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

manifested in the intellectual, emotional, and volitional environment of man. (Herman Horne)

Education may be defined as a process of continuous reconstruction of experience with the purpose of widening and deepening its social content, while, at the same time, the individual gains control of the methods involved. (John Dewey)

Education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created . . . The subject of education is man whole and entire, soul united to body in unity of nature, with all his faculties natural and supernatural, such as right reason and revelation show him to be . . . (Pope Pius XI)⁹

The continuing debate over the scope of education as a discipline, not unlike religion, is evidenced by the uncertainty of whether to locate “history of education” within a history or education department, “educational psychology” within a psychology or education department, and “philosophy of education” within a philosophy or education department.

Thus, education joins philosophy and religion in the uncertainties of their respective natures and scopes.

The “Blik” and Philosophy of Religious Education

How then can one suggest the scope and nature of philosophy of religious education with any finality, when its ingredients apparently defy hopes for scholarly consensus? Another way of raising the question is -- What can be

⁹George F. Kneller, “Philosophy and Education,” in *Foundations of Education*, ed. by George F. Kneller (2nd ed.; New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1967), p. 64.

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said to be a philosophical, religious, or educational *fact*? Were one to answer satisfactorily the latter question, one could locate that which is specifically philosophical, religious, or educational, and thereby establish more tenable boundaries for each field.

Facts and Interprefacts

The problem, however, is further complicated by an attempt to define “fact.” For example, a fact for an empiricist may not be a fact for a rationalist; that is, the former could assert as factual the sole reality of the sensible, physical world, whereas the latter might include in his book of facts the reality of only the rational.

This problem has been clarified by Dilley, who has written:

..... it must be pointed out that appeals to “fact” involve metaphysics, since “facts” are always facts-from-particular-perspectives. . . . It has even been suggested that the word “interprefact” is more proper than “fact.” Factuality is fact-for-some-particular person, factuality-from-some-particular-point-of-view, and as someone has said, “this being the case, there is no such thing as givenness which is its own untouched and unqualified and understood and uninterpreted self.” Views as to what the facts are vary widely, each metaphysic presenting its own version of the real facts.¹⁰

¹⁰Frank B. Dilley, *Metaphysics and Religious Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 57. [Added in 2008: Dr. Dilley was a student of Dr. Cherbonnier’s prior to Cherbonnier’s faculty (and Nolan’s student) years at Trinity College, CT. Dr. Dilley included Cherbonnier as one of his mentors to whom *Metaphysics and Religious Language* was dedicated.]

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Along the same line of thought, Holmer noted:

..... the meaning of “fact,” the very concept, is not single at all. It varies with the intellectual

context so that there is no one concept of fact at all. There are many of them, and they do not overlap very significantly.¹¹

“Facts are what are indisputable in this context and that.”¹²

An implication of this position which is compelling is that philosophical, religious, and educational “facts” are facts only for particular metaphysical contexts. For example, it is a religious fact for most Christian idealists that reality includes a non-physical (*i.e.*, spiritual or mental) dimension of which God is whole or part; for a religious naturalist such a conception of deity is certainly non-factual. Indeed, the whole conception of the nature of religion, spiritually oriented for the idealist, naturally oriented for the naturalist, would vary.

It seems, therefore, that one cannot point to an issue or problem as being a fact or factor of philosophy, religion, education, or philosophy of religious education. The issue of God, for example, is not a fact, factor or issue for most naturalistically based philosophies, though it would be for many others. One can only speak of any kind of fact as fact within a theory of reality, a particular metaphysic.

¹¹Paul L. Holmer, “Metaphysics and Theology: The Foundations of Theology,” *The Lutheran Quarterly*, XVII (November, 1965), p. 309. [Added in 2008: Dr. Holmer was Nolan’s professor in philosophical theology at Yale.]

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 315.

Metaphysical Adequacy

Does this mean then that each person may pronounce *ex cathedra* that which can be accepted as fact and justify his dogmatism by simply pointing to his metaphysic? In other words, is there any objective criterion for testing the adequacy of a metaphysical system? Again, one may turn to Dilley for assistance.

Utilizing Whitehead’s descriptions of metaphysics (“the science which seeks to discover the general ideas which are indispensably relevant to the analysis of everything that happens”; “the dispassionate consideration of the nature of things” and “the endeavor to frame a coherent, logical, necessary system of general ideas in terms of which every element of our experience can be interpreted”)¹³ Dilley posits that metaphysics “must take into account all facts or alleged ‘facts’ from all areas of human knowledge, and must attempt to work these into a world view which is adequate as a description of the nature of things. ... the final criterion for a metaphysical theory is its adequacy as a description.”¹⁴ However, in that “metaphysical descriptions are ‘confessions’ of the nature of things as seen from a particular perspective and are actually tested in terms of an

¹³Dilley, *Metaphysics and Religious Language*, p. 62.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 66f.

appeal to the nature of things as seen from that perspective,”¹⁵ one is faced with “a degree of circularity in metaphysical argumentation.”¹⁶ Thus, there is “no such thing as a neutral objective proof for

metaphysical hypotheses,”¹⁷ since the criterion for the truth is built into the perspective or metaphysic itself.

It is important to note that although, according to Dilley, metaphysics are “tested” on their own grounds and by their own respective built-in and implied rules, each must take into account all facets of human experience; this eliminates total subjectivity and requires the metaphysician to account for all experiences in one way or another. Beyond this ground rule, however, “raw” objectivity, as with the case of “pure” fact, is impossible. Man “confesses” on faith his orientation to reality upon which his metaphysic is built. In Dilley’s words:

A philosophical position is based upon a particular view of reality which cannot itself be justified except in terms of the adequacy of the system to which it gives rise, and which itself helps supply the view of the world used to test its own adequacy.

This is not to say that philosophical views are based wholly upon faiths, but merely that they reflect the faiths on the basis of which man structures his view of the world. There is a world of some sort to which man is related, and metaphysical

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*

theories arise out of man’s effort to understand the world; yet man does not see that world, think about that world, or know that world apart from the presuppositions which affect his view of it.

To articulate one’s metaphysical views is thus to confess one’s faith, and it is also to work out the consequences of that faith that it might be tested.¹⁸

But, again, the test is not for objective certainty, but for adequacy as a description, for interpretifactual tenability.

In essential agreement is Titus, who wrote: All proof must begin with certain assumptions. This is true in science, philosophy, or religion. Some ideas or facts must be accepted as postulates -- that is, must be taken for granted.”¹⁹ This is not to propose a relativism that all statements are equally true, but rather to imply two principles. First, in developing a world-view one makes certain initial assumptions believed to be factual. Second, because one’s subsequent statements are based upon belief in or trust of initial postulates, the “factuality” or the subsequent claims depends upon the actual truth of the postulates. That is, if the postulates happen to be false, the truth of statements dependent upon them is questionable.

A central problem becomes the truth of the assumptions or postulates. A mystic’s assumptions differ from a

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 141f.

¹⁹Harold H. Titus, *Living Issues in Philosophy* (5th ed.; New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1970), p. 86. [Added in 2008: At the time this dissertation was written, the author had no idea that he would be invited to coauthor the 7th, 8th, and 9th (and apparently final) editions of *Living Issues in Philosophy*.]

naturalist's; the contrasting systems resulting from the opposing postulates can account for all human experience in different ways, thereby meeting Dilley's test for adequacy. However, which system really describes reality, as it is in itself, is an insoluble problem. A certain degree of agnosticism or tentativeness seems inevitable concerning the actual truth of a particular philosophy.

The Significance of "Blik"

An argument similar to Dilley's and Titus' has been offered by Hare, who has introduced the idea of a "blik."²⁰ Though his concern was with religious beliefs, the idea is as widely applicable as Dilley's. A blik is an unverifiable and unfalsifiable interpretation of one's experience. As Hare wrote, ". . . it is by our blik that we decide what is and what is not an explanation."²¹

We have found it helpful to understand Hare's blik as the assumed epistemological-metaphysical-emotional set, acquired by learning, and by which one interprets existence. The inclusion of "emotional" is significant, in that the organic unity of the person, the inseparability of mental and

²⁰R. M. Hare in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, ed. by Anthony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1955), pp. 99ff. [Added in 2008: In later years Nolan author had the pleasure of meeting Professor Hare at a lecture in Connecticut, and Dr. Hare kindly autographed his "blik" section of the book.]

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 101.

emotional functions, is carefully recognized. "Blik" is not simply one's objectively abstracted world-view, one's apparently intellectualized philosophy divorced from emotion, but the *felt* (conscious and subconscious) rational interpretation of one's experience. By coining the word, Hare has avoided the assumption that our philosophical positions are simply the result of calculated thought alone; he contributes to Dilley's position an acknowledgement of the *feeling* dimension of man's cognitive processes.

Utilizing the Dilley, Titus, and Hare positions, our investigation concludes that one's understanding of any sort of facts depends upon one's blik, which one confesses existentially, but which cannot claim certain, objective finality. As Hare has written, "Certainly it is salutary to recognize that *even* our belief in so-called hard facts rest in the end on a faith, a commitment, which is not in or to facts, but in that without which there would not be any facts."²²

The significance of blik to the problem of determining the scope and nature of philosophy, religion, education, or philosophy of religious education becomes apparent. There are no objective facts or factors of these areas that are indispensable to all interpretations, to all blik that give

²² R. M. Hare in *Faith and Logic*, ed. by Basil Mitchell (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1957), p. 192.

rise to and set the context for interpretations. For example, "God" need not be a necessary consideration for all philosophies; rather, according to one's blik, one attempts to abstract factors logically that must be considered for the development of one's interpretation of an area of existence. This is to argue that one

cannot with finality assert that a particular motif *must* be interpreted and considered for all philosophies of religious education; a secular existentialist looking upon his world-view as a religion need not, if he is indeed an atheist, utilize a doctrine of God in his philosophy of religious education. Furthermore, his use of “philosophy,” “religion,” and “education” would acquire meanings according to his blik. To say that his use is false would be to judge his language from a different perspective, and he could retort on the same grounds. Instead, it would be more accurate to note that his use is “different from this one or that” and in keeping with his blik.

On a broader scale, this is to imply that language acquires its meaning not through unalterable definitions, but by the use of words within particular perspectives. To the Hindu, “God” may mean one thing and have one referent; to the Jew the same word may mean something quite different. For one scholar, “philosophy of religious education” may refer to one set of concepts; to another, a different group of issues. Thus, it is our conclusion that one may develop a philosophy

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of religious education in harmony with one’s blik, appealing to those ideas, concepts or issues logically necessary within one’s blik.

The Contribution of S. Donald Butler

Granting the assumption of the consistent interrelatedness of aspects of reality, the investigator has found Butler’s orientation to philosophical issues, scope, and content (though not necessarily his particular interpretation of them), most useful. Butler has been recognized as an authoritative source; as one scholar has written, “The most thorough survey of philosophy as it relates to religion and education has been written by J. Donald Butler.”²³ In her New York University Ph.D. thesis, Thompson utilizes Butler’s insights as a model for establishing the issues of philosophy of religious education.²⁴

Recognizing the traditional philosophical divisions of epistemology, metaphysics, axiology, and logic as a method for testing the validity of reasoning, Butler has offered as a

²³Marcus J. Priester, “Philosophical Foundations for Christian Education,” in *An Introduction to Christian Education*, ed. by Marvin J. Taylor (New York and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966). p. 62.

²⁴Norma Thompson, “Contemporary Trends in the Philosophy of Protestant Christian Education” (unpublished Ph. D. thesis, New York University, 1961). [Added in 2008: [Dr. Thompson](#) was Nolan’s professor in the study of philosophy of religious education and a member of his N.Y.U. dissertation committee.]

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structure of philosophy the following factors :²⁵

1. *Metaphysics* (theories of the nature of reality) with its issues: cosmology (theories of the nature of the cosmos and explanations of its origin and development, including the nature of cause and effect relations, the nature of time, and the nature of space); the nature of man as one important aspect of reality (the problem of the essential nature of the self, the problem of the relation of body and mind, and the problem of freedom); conceptions of any kind about God; teleology (considerations as to whether or not there is purpose in the universe); considerations relating to constancy or lack of it in reality; problems of quantity (consideration of the number of ultimate realities); ontology (the meaning of existence us such).

2. *Epistemology* (theories of the nature of knowledge) with its issues: the possibility of knowledge, the kinds of knowledge, and the instrument of knowledge.

3. *Axiology* (the general theory of value). The nature or values, the different kinds of value, specific values worthy of possession.

Butler is by no means alone in this orientation. substantially the same model is offered by Kneller²⁶ and

²⁵J. Donald Butler, *Four Philosophies and their Practice in Education and Religion* (3rd ed.; New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968), pp. 41ff. [The dissertation author stated the “structure of philosophy” somewhat [differently years later](#) in *Living Issues in Philosophy*.]

²⁶George F. Kneller, *Introduction to Philosophy of Education* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964).

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Morris.²⁷ An earlier (1957) edition of Butler’s book is listed in bibliographical sections of both of these studies.

The Centrality of Objectives

Butler has proposed that a central issue for education is “aims,” or as we will use interchangeably with “aims”: “objectives,” “goals,” and “purposes.” He has written:

Education must have objectives if it is to be effective; otherwise it descends to the level of aimless activity which is the antithesis of educative experience.²⁸

In line with Butler’s comment, another scholar has noted, “The first step in the development of an educational program, it will be generally admitted, is the determination of the aims and objectives.”²⁹ It is with the issue of objectives that Butler has noted the starting point of philosophy of education:

It may be well to begin in philosophy of education as people commonly do with questions concerning educational objectives such as “What are we about in Education?” Or to focus on the function of the educational institution in society, the question is commonly stated as “Why does the school exist?”³⁰

²⁷Cleve Morris, *Philosophy and the American School* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961).

²⁸Butler, *Four Philosophies*, p. 12.

²⁹Velorus Martz, “Philosophy of Education,” *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, ed. by Walter S. Monroe (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 798.

³⁰J. Donald Butler, *Religious Education* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 126.

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He is again supported by the same scholar, who has written, “The philosophy of education concerns itself with the aims and outcomes that the educative process should strive to realize.”³¹

Objectives and Philosophy

It is a failure to acknowledge the dependence of educational objectives upon prior considerations, when and if an educator posits an objective(s) without prior analysis of the blik that gives rise to the aim(s). The neglect of such a conscious effort runs the risk of developing shallow, haphazard goals or even ones incompatible with their own actual perspective.

The basic question of objectives, however, gives rise to questions of value, the philosophical issue *axiology*. As Kneller has remarked, “We cannot criticize existing educational ideals and policies or suggest new ones without considering such general philosophical problems as the nature of the good life, to which education should lead.”³² Also, the same scholar has written, “... in selecting educational goals and policies, we have to make value judgments; we have to decide which of a number of possible ends and means we

³¹Martz, “Philosophy of Education,” p. 798.

³²Kneller, *Introduction*, p. 22.

ought to adopt.”³³ In agreement with Kneller, Butler has posited, “My argument is that responsible thinking about the aims of education necessarily involves much more than casual consideration of the value aspect of life and existence.”³⁴

However, Butler insists that to deal adequately with the issue of aims, and the whole of philosophy of education, one must not only consider axiology, but also the epistemological and metaphysical implications or bases of axiology. He suggests, “. . . in order to blossom into a philosophy of education, this pursuit needs to follow these questions (such as aims, ‘why does the school exist?’ etc.) to their roots in the whole range of value theory of reality, and theory of knowledge.”³⁵ In greater detail, elsewhere, he has illustrated the influence of a given axiological orientation for objectives; a spiritually directed value system would include in its objective the goal and value source of “Ultimate Existence.” He has commented:

.... if some values exist independently of man and if they have their existence as qualities of One who alone has Being, then the source of value for man is quite different. The importance of human society is not made less, but it is no longer the exclusive source of value; it is rather a source derived from the Ultimate. Individual man is still a unit of mankind, still a *socius*, an individuation of society. But

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Butler, *Four Philosophies*, p. 488.

³⁵Butler, *Religious Education*, p. 126. (The parenthetical insertion is our own.)

Ultimate Existence is the source of value both for individual and social man. And, accordingly, some kind of effectual relation to Ultimate Being becomes the gateway to value and value experience -- at least to ultimate value. Education in such a value context should be no less social, but it will face the difficult fact that man's value experience is contingent upon theological concerns as well as social concerns. It will recognize that the full impact of man's value experience is not understood unless it is viewed as having a horizon beyond which there is an abiding value experience with which it has some connection.³⁶

In keeping with his understanding of the structure of philosophy, Butler builds his case further with the point that axiological considerations are linked with epistemology and metaphysics.³⁷ His own summation on his position is now noted:

... it is impossible . . . to deal responsibly with the aims of education and the function of the school unless theory of value is taken very seriously as the necessary rootage of educational aims and functions. In dealing with value theory, I have made the observation that value thinking involves conceptions of reality . . . In addition to this succession of steps, I have proposed that an added and final step must be taken by anyone who will be responsible in building a philosophy of education. This added step is to address oneself to a theory of knowledge and thereby determine how a world view is known to be true, and also what world view can have a value theory solidly based on it and educational aims or functions soundly formulated within its context.³⁸

Thus, objectives of education are dependent in their formulations upon interpretations of axiological, metaphysical and epistemological issues, upon the logical interconnectedness

³⁶Butler, *Four Philosophies*, p. 490.
³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 494ff.

and consistency of the interpretations -- in other words, upon one's blik. It becomes apparent that one cannot develop THE philosophy of education with THE objective(s) any more than one can point to a blik as THE blik. Rather, one might establish an objective(s) which is consistent with one's perspective; perhaps this dilemma accounts at least in part for the numerous, competing philosophies of education and their consequent aims, and further, that attempts at "intellectual objectivity" are unable to deliver a final and certain philosophy of education. At most, a given community might "confess" its blik and consequent implications, but hardly claim "raw objectivity" for its systematized claims.

Philosophy of Religious Education

Likewise, a philosophy of religious education is confessional, the acknowledged educational philosophy of a particular blik; but, it, too, if Butler's analysis is assumed, cannot claim exemption from careful interpretation of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology. Here, as well, objectives are dependent upon these prior considerations, and with regard to the "basic objective," there is an equal dependence.

There is a distinct lack in the field of religious education of such an approach. As Butler commented, "This is one place at which educators and religious educators do not

go deeply enough . . ."³⁹ Consequently, Priester has observed, "There remains the need for a clearly articulated and more systematic philosophy of Christian education ..."⁴⁰

The centrality of objectives for such a philosophy is as true as with philosophy of education. As noted earlier in this study (p. 4), however, the role of a basic objective is gaining importance. Though he did not use “basic objective,” Miller utilized the same reasoning and understanding as Wyckoff when he wrote:

An objective is the point toward which an army is advancing. It is synonymous with goal or end. A general objective⁴¹ may provide directives for a total plan of action

An objective exists to guide the educational life of a community. It provides the reason for existence, and understanding of the basis for motivation, and the end toward which the process moves. It is sufficiently broad in its coverage to be relevant to all of the activities of the community, and yet it is specific enough to be a basis for unity. It operates in many ways when it is broken down into particular goals, but it serves in at least three capacities when it remains generalized.

First, it is a guide to all writers and editors of curriculum materials, for it provides an overarching goal

Second, as a teacher works out the specific goal of a unit, the aim for a particular lesson, or the long range plan for the year, the objective provides the orientation needed so that the myriad of particular educational activities may point toward adequate outcomes

Third, an objective provides a basis for evaluation. Because it is general, it is helpful as a

³⁹Butler, *Religious Education*, pp. 126f.

⁴⁰Priester “Philosophical Foundations,” p. 69.

⁴¹“General objective” is here synonymous with “basic objective.”

basis for establishing specific goals that are open to some degree of measurement, observation, or estimates of achievement.⁴²

Philosophy and Theology

The lack of a systematic philosophy of religious education is the result, at least in part, of the myriad interpretations of the relationships between philosophy and religion or theology. It would be possible to understand this relationship in as many ways as one might relate the many different definitions of “philosophy,” “religion,” or “theology.” This possibility has been reflected with two extremes, as one book on the philosophy of religion has indicated:

In the history of the reciprocal influence of theology and philosophy in the Western tradition, a number of views of the relationships between these two areas have been expressed. Some philosophers and theologians have tended to deny that any connection is possible, each claiming that the other’s discipline is either *irrelevant* to his own or without any validity whatsoever

At the other extreme there have been attempts to fuse the two disciplines completely. Here the view is that no disparity exists between reason and revelation, for they are two sides of the same coin: reasons seek and can find what revelation would make evident. Proponents of this position feel that the best rational structuring of the universe is the best theology, for revelation is reason exercising its inherent power.⁴³

⁴²[Randolph Crump Miller](#), “The Objective of Christian Education,” in *An Introduction to Christian Education*, p. 94. This essay traces prominent religious educational objectives since 1930 in accurate but brief detail. [Added in 2008: Dr. Miller was one of Nolan’s professors at Yale.]

⁴³George L. Abernathy and Thomas A. Langford, eds.,

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Continuing to use Butler’s insights, we find it valid to look upon theology as a kind of response to the issues raised by, and sometimes interpreted by, philosophy. In Butler’s own words:

..... theology begins with revelation, not with revelation as an idea, but with empirical historical events of revelation Philosophy, on the other hand, begins with questions of the human mind and because it begins here, it also has a certain characteristic structure. Now both deal very much with the same subject matter, but they deal with it in different ways -- not from different points of view so much as from different points of departure. The concern of theology with the doctrine of God or with the doctrine at the Trinity and the concern of philosophy with metaphysics, for example, are concerns which necessarily converge.⁴⁴

This is not to say that philosophy must exclude revelation, but that its starting point is not there. Thus, philosophy, as here understood, raises and often interprets issues, whereas theology is a response to revelation, and this response often includes interpretations of the same issues raised by the philosopher.

The convergence of philosophy and theology at many points is further attested to by Dilley, who wrote:

Christian theism, then, is not unlike other metaphysical views, It appeals basically to certain facts or “interprefacts” as being fundamental

Philosophy of Religion: A Book of Readings (2nd ed.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), p. 95.

⁴⁴Butler, *Religious Education*, p. 127.

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for understanding the nature of things Thus there is no escape from the claim that Christian theism is a metaphysical view beside other metaphysical views appealing to facts-as-seen-in-a-particular perspective just as do other views, and subjecting its fundamental doctrines to the same internal and external scrutiny.⁴⁵

For Dilley, not only is theology metaphysical in that it offers descriptions of reality, but also as a kind of metaphysic it is a confessional articulation of one’s blik, a blik that includes *theos*. Further, just as there are many philosophies, depending upon one’s perspective, in the same manner, there can be various theologies, commonly confessing *theos* and revelation, but interpreting their confessions in varied ways; hence the numerous Christian theologies.

Theological Bases of Religious Educational Philosophy

If the foregoing analysis is valid. it would seem that the development of a philosophy of religious education, especially a basic objective, involves the assumption or conscious interpretation of theories of value, knowledge, and reality. However, the investigator submits that such interpretations need not use

the language of philosophy, but that the language of theology, offering interpretations of reality, knowledge, and value, is able to provide the foundations for a basic

⁴⁵Dilley, *Metaphysics and Religious Language*, p. 54.

objective. Miller's statement, "The clue to Christian education is the rediscovery of a relevant theology"⁴⁶ supports the claim that theology colors the objective, curricula and methods of Christian education.

The lack of a systematic theological approach to the development of a basic objective, as well as whatever else might constitute one's educational philosophy, is the result of two primary factors. First, any religious concept or theological doctrine would have some implication(s) for a basic objective; hence, most scholars pick somewhat at random a particular motif and illustrate its relevance to Christian education. The result has been a lack of consensus as to the *necessary* theological bases. Second, the type of *philosophical* analysis offered by Butler as to what issues must be considered in developing educational aims has seemed irrelevant to the discovery of a relevant *theology* for Christian education.

However, assuming that the problem is one of language (philosophical versus theological), Butler's philosophical model may be used with the translation of terminology, where necessary, from philosophical to theological vocabulary. For example, "cosmology" as used by Butler is, theologically speaking, the doctrine of creation. The investigator submits

⁴⁶Miller, *Clue*, p. 15.

the following basic model as theologically equivalent to Butler's:

I. Reality (with its issues): creation or the world, human nature, and a doctrine of God, or the Real. II. Revelation or Religious Knowledge. III. Value or Consequences for Living.

The issues have been unchanged basically in the above model, but the language permits a theological focus necessary for a theologically based philosophy of religious education. Thus, in whatever way one's blik influences one's theology, if one utilizes Butler's model, it becomes clear that in order to establish a theologically oriented religious educational philosophy, one must articulate one's interpretations of reality (including creation, man, God), religious knowledge or revelation, and consequences for living or value. This is not to imply that one must begin with any particular one of these concepts; it is simply to note that a systematic philosophy of religious education, including the basic objective, must include prior interpretations of these religious concepts, but even here only when Butler's model is found useful within one's perspective.

At this point it could be argued that a philosophy of religious education would cease to be philosophical and become a "theology of religious education," or a "Christian philosophy of education." Whatever label is attached, the

“basic objective” and its prior considerations remain the same. However, in that philosophy and philosophical reasoning provides the initial structure or model, we will continue to use “philosophy of religious education.”

Religious Educators and the “Basic Objective”

In her thesis, Thompson traced objectives of religious education in recent times,⁴⁷ but none of the works mentioned developed a systematic understanding of the philosophical-theological bases of a basic objective. Studies concerned, in whole or part, with philosophy or theology of religious education and statements about a basic objective’s presuppositions deal randomly rather than systematically with the issues.

Reality: God

Thompson observed, “In Christian education the nature of reality is usually discussed in terms of the Ultimate Reality, and this, in turn, is identified with God.”⁴⁸ Such is in keeping with the proposal made above that theological language is not inappropriate as one explores philosophical-theological bases of religious education. Few scholars,

⁴⁷Thompson, “Contemporary Trends,” pp. 205ff.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p. 390.

however, have linked the doctrine of God with the basic objective, and none examined in this investigation have proceeded along the systematic lines of Butler’s model.

However, Schreyer sees the relatedness of “God” to the basic objective quite concretely. In a section, “How is the Central objective Determined?”, he wrote:

The central objective of Christian education has been determined by insights of Christians, past and present, who have become possessed with the belief that the supreme purpose of Christian education is theological in nature. This decision has come through the inspiration or at least five basic concepts . . .⁴⁹

Schreyer goes on to name the Hebraic-Christian concept of God as a prime factor. The concept is important in that “the true objective in Christian education can be determined only as man sees his life and redemption real in God, his Father, and in Christ, his Savior.”⁵⁰

In another study, Miller similarly appeals to theology, including the doctrine of God, as “the determining factor in the development of a philosophy of education, of techniques to be used, of goals to be attained . . .”⁵¹

⁴⁹George M. Schreyer, *Christian Education in Theological Focus* (Philadelphia: The Christian Education Press, 1962), p. 127.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹Miller, *Education for Christian Living*, p. 5.

Cully noted, “The purpose of Christian nurture is to help people through their growing relationship to God in Christ so to live that they may glorify him and effectively serve others”⁵² This statement does link God with purpose, but as with Miller and other similar statements, the logical relationship (*i.e.*, basic objective requires prior theory of value, which in turn requires prior epistemological and metaphysical theories, the latter involving “God”) is not explicitly stated.

Similarly, Little has included “God” as one of the basic concepts in the formulation of a religious educational philosophy. Though he did not utilize the “basic objective,” Little links “God” with “objectives” in these words:

Are they consistent with the tenets of the Christian faith, with the basic doctrines and convictions, which have formed the main body of Christian tradition? Do they take into account the biblical view of God . . . ?⁵³

Nels F. Ferré, also, appeals to a doctrine of God, but only hints of its precise relationship with a basic objective: “Education in the light of God consequently makes central to its aim . . . the fostering of the kind of community of open, inclusive, and creative concern . . .”⁵⁴ In a more recent

⁵²[Iris V. Cully](#), *The Dynamics of Christian Education* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), pp. 29f. [Added in 2008: Dr. Iris Cully is the wife of Kendig Cully; she was one of Nolan’s professors at both Yale and N.Y.U.]

⁵³Lawrence C. Little, *Foundations for a Philosophy of Christian Education* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), p. 197.

⁵⁴Nels F. Ferré, “God,” in *Westminster Dictionary*, p. 262.

study Ferré links the aim of Christian education with God much in the same way as did Cully.⁵⁵

Thus, even though there are prominent scholars who have noted the relevance of “God” to a basic objective, none has systematically utilized a model similar to Butler’s.

Reality: The World or Creation

Thompson wrote, “Only a few educators discuss reality apart from the nature of God and the nature of man.”⁵⁶ This was the case at the time of her investigation, and the situation remains the same today. Apart from the personal versus the non-personal interpretations of reality reported by Thompson,⁵⁷ no systematic approach such as Butler’s has been used by religious educators.

The most concrete type of reference in this matter is exemplified by Little in the following paragraph:

One of the terms commonly used to indicate the Christian conception of God is that of Creator, “the maker of heaven and earth.” God is believed to be self-sufficient and eternal, the sole source of all existence: the physical universe, life, and man. Conceptions of that process have varied, but about the fact it was God who created there has been general agreement. As

distinguished from their

⁵⁵Nels F. Ferré, *A Theology for Christian Education* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1957), p. 183.

⁵⁶Thompson, "Contemporary Trends," p. 70.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 70ff.

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Creator, all creatures, including man, are finite, mortal, contingent, and dependent upon the sustaining power of God. And, in the universe which he has created, God is sovereign.⁵⁸

Little's comments are, as Thompson indicates, offered in a section headed "God."⁵⁹

Later in his study Little does link "creation" or "the world" as central issues in determining objectives, though not specifically a "basic objective." He wrote:

Are the objectives *Christian*? Are they consistent with the tenets of the Christian faith, with the basic doctrines and convictions which have formed the main body of Christian tradition? Do they take into account the biblical view of God, of man, and of nature?⁶⁰

Specifically how one takes into account the doctrines mentioned, Little does not elaborate. However, it may be assumed that he and other scholars approaching the issue of objectives mean the implications of these doctrines.

Reality: Human Nature

Often throughout the history of thought the "nature of man" has been regarded primarily as a philosophical or theological issue, and only that. It is not our purpose here to affirm or deny these or other alternatives. Rather, the

⁵⁸Little, *Foundations*, p. 146.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 145f.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 197.

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investigator submits that there is a philosophical, a metaphysical, dimension to the "nature of man." Butler has developed his understanding of the problems of this issue as follows:

Among the many questions man can ask himself, one which is most significant in metaphysics is this: What am I? Just a body, a physical organism, a machine? Or am I a soul, a spirit, a mind? Or perchance, am I both soul and body? Now the answers given to this question, or cluster of related questions, will determine rather completely one's entire metaphysics

There is at least one other consideration concerning man which has a metaphysical connection, the question of his freedom or lack of it.⁶¹

In other words, Butler is asking about man: “What is true always about man? In what sense is man real?” At this point, at this level, the issue can be classified as metaphysical, though this says nothing about the method by which the questions are answered!

The relevance of the nature of man to education has been summed up well by Millard and Bertocci:

.... every educational system or body of educational practices involves at least some metaphysical presuppositions, that is some conception of the nature of man and his place in the universe in light of one’s conception of the kind of universe this is. . . . Somewhere this issue of what men in fact are needs to be faced. Such assumptions as the following lead to quite different educational practices and conceptions of the nature of education itself: All men are selfish; all men are

⁶¹Butler, *Religious Education*, p. 20.

altruistic; all men are economically determined; all men are only physiological organisms determined by stimulus-response patterns and conditioning; all men are children of God.⁶²

Sidney Hook has related the issue “nature of man” directly to educational objectives:

There are two generic ways of reaching what are sometimes called the “ultimate” ends of education. One relies on an immediate, self-certifying *intuition* of the nature of man; the other on the observation of the consequences of different proposals of treating man. The first is essentially theological and metaphysical; the second is experimental and scientific.

When they are intelligently formulated both approaches recognize that the ends of education are relevant to the nature of man.⁶³

Thus, man being an integral part of reality, the reality which provides the perspective for education, plus the fact that it is man who is to be educated, an implication is that the issue of “the nature of man” is related to the determination of a basic objective for education as well as “immediate” objectives and goals.

The relationship of an interpretation of human nature to a basic objective for Christian education is, by and large, the same relationship suggested between “man” and a basic objective of general education. However, when man is seen

⁶²R. M. Millard and P. A. Bertocci, “Philosophy and Philosophy of Education,” *Journal of Education* (October, 1958), p. 8.

⁶³As quoted in John S. Brubacher, *Eclectic Philosophy of Education* (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1951), p. 167.

within a Christian perspective as basically a “child of God” the objective adds the dimension of man’s relationship with God.

A real problem lies in the predominance of a number of interpretations of the Christian view of man, with consequent colorations for the determination of a basic objective.

However, it can be concluded safely that the very basic understanding of man as a “child of God” (an answer to “what is always true about man?”) channels the basic objective from the possibility of man-centeredness to the metaphysical reality of a relationship, to be further interpreted, between the Divine and the human. Thus, even at this fundamental level of anthropological understanding a unique perspective envelopes Christian educational objectives. The fullest consequences for a basic objective would depend upon the fuller interpretation of man’s nature as part of a “Christian metaphysic.”

Religious educators have concerned themselves with the problem of interpreting human nature.⁶⁴ The relationship between interpretations of man and objectives are often implied or stated. The most succinct account we have studied is Schreyer’s observation, in a section entitled, “How is the

⁶⁴Thompson, “Contemporary Trends,” pp. 117ff. (Dr. Thompson traces religious educators’ interpretations of human nature in this section of her study.)

Central Objective Determined?”⁶⁵ The five basic concepts necessary for such clarity are the following: 1. The Hebraic-Christian Concepts of God, Man, and Redemption. 2. The Insight of the Way in Which Persons Become Christian. 3. The Insight of the Graded Development of Persons. 4. The Insight of the Compulsion of the Christian Faith. 5. The Insight of the Purpose and Mission of the Christian Church.

“Man and Redemption” are clearly related to human nature, as are items two and three. It could be argued that items four and five are also related to the nature of man. In any case, it is clear that Schreyer regards this issue as pivotal to determining the central objective.

Henderlite, who, like Schreyer, links “man” to the “basic educational goal,”⁶⁶ also points out that certain interpretations of man color the basic objective.

Revelation or Religious Knowledge

It has been shown elsewhere that a philosophy of religious education must include epistemological considerations.⁶⁷ But as the same scholar pointed out: “Most religious

⁶⁵Schreyer, *Christian Education*, pp. 127ff.

⁶⁶Rachel Henderlite, *Forgiveness and Hope* (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1961), pp. 20f.

⁶⁷Thompson, “Contemporary Trends,” pp. 147ff.

educators do not struggle with this problem philosophically; rather, the nature of the Christian religion, as interpreted by each educator, involves an answer to the epistemological problem of the possibility of knowledge. In each instance, there is little doubt that man can have some knowledge of God, either through the initiative of God or through the struggle or man himself to discover God.⁶⁸ That Protestant religious educators regard some form of revelation as the unique instrument of knowledge of God⁶⁹ is clear.

The relationship of revelation or religious knowledge to the basic objective is stated most succinctly by a contemporary theologian:

The Christian understanding of God, whether of his nature, or of his work, is thus to be grasped through the central reality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ as holy love. All other aspects of his nature and all God's work in creation and redemption are to be understood in terms of God as the personal Spirit who is holy love. Education in the light of God consequently makes central to its *aim*, communication, and concrete methods, the fostering of the kind of community of open, inclusive, and creative concern that receives its pattern of orientation, its power for motivation, and its measure of fulfillment in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.⁷⁰

Cully implies the same centrality of revelation for the basic objective in the following statement: "The purposes

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰Nels F. S. Ferré, "God, Understanding Of," *Westminster Dictionary*, p. 282. (Our italics.)

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of Christian Education grow out of affirmations about God made known through Christ in the Bible."⁷¹

Miller wrote something similar: "Theology, which is the 'truth about God in relation to man,' is the determining factor in the development of a philosophy of education, of techniques to be used, of goals to be attained"⁷²

Other than assertions concerning the centrality of revelation for development of the basic objective or goals, and traditional proclamations of God's revelation in Christ, even these scholars, typical of those investigated by Thompson, do not deal with the problem philosophically in the studies cited.

However, in more recent studies two religious educators have given some attention to a problem of revelation, the nature of religious language.⁷³ However, in these studies the specific relationship of the problem to the basic objective is not discussed. Though this has not yet been done, it is clear from all of these studies that revelation or religious knowledge is a basic concept affecting the development of a basic objective.

⁷¹Cully, *Dynamics*, p. 29.

⁷²Miller, *Clue to Christian Education*, p. 5.

⁷³Randolph C. Miller, *The Language Gap and God* (Philadelphia and Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1970), and William B. Williamson, *Language and Concepts in Christian Education* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1970).

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The final area suggested by this investigation as necessary for the basic objective is theory of value, or in other words, consequences for living. The significance of axiology for philosophy of education has been discussed earlier in this chapter (see pp. 35ff.). Thompson shows the necessity for such considerations for a philosophy or religious education as well, but notes that “few writers in religious education deal with value theory in a systematic way.”⁷⁴ However, she presents in great detail an analysis of relationships of value theories to basic objectives found in a number of scholarly works.⁷⁵ An emphasis upon one’s relationship to God or Christ as the highest good was found to affect directly the goals of religious education as formulated by various scholars.

Summary

It is difficult to arrive at a precise definition of “philosophy of religious education,” because philosophers disagree about the nature of philosophy and students of religion and theologians disagree about the nature of religion

⁷⁴Thompson, “Contemporary Trends,” p. 194.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 209ff.

and theology; also, educators vary in their opinions about the nature of education. Because one’s blik or philosophy, one’s confession of faith, determines what is and what is not, one may conclude that a model for philosophy of religious education can be whatever is consistent with one’s blik.

The model suggested by Butler, as he described the ingredients of a philosophy of education, has been used by responsible scholars as appropriate for religious education as well. The basic concepts used by Butler are useful in this investigation, including his insistence on the centrality of aims. Particularly appropriate is Wyckoff’s use of “basic objective,” compatible with Butler’s model.

To develop a “basic objective,” it is necessary to deal with concepts of reality (including creation or the world, human nature, and God), revelation or religious knowledge, and value or consequences for living. Although most religious educators have not dealt with these issues systematically, we have found that these concepts are related to a basic objective of religious education.

ADDED IN 2008:

“PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION”

by **Kendig Brubaker Cully**

in

The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Education

ed. by **Kendig B. Cully** (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), pp. 501-503.

It is customary to find listed among the course offerings in theological schools one that usually hears the label “The Philosophy of Religious Education.” It is usually assumed or required that such a subject will have been studied by all candidates for degrees in the field of religious education or by majors in that field who take the B.D. degree. Normally, such courses probe into the underlying ideological bases for the educational task, with special reference to the presuppositions that issue in educational

institutions and procedures.

In a sense the usage here is parallel to what one might find in similar terminology in other fields, e.g., “the philosophy of science” or “the philosophy of law.” Pure philosophy probably would prefer to avoid such “professionalized” employment of the term. In a technical sense there is only philosophy - the examination of the nature of reality on the basis of man's use of his intellective apprehensions. As soon as one says “philosophy of” one is getting into a far different area of investigation. The “of” implies use, practical ends and means, etc., that instead of being “pure” analysis, turn out to be colored by the particularized vocational interests of the “philosopher.” At the same time, it must be recognized that the pragmatic philosophy - which claims a secure place in the philosophical universe - recognizes these practical considerations as themselves essential to the understanding of reality itself. In the case of religious education philosophy the question becomes even more complicated by 2 factors: (1) “Religious” education is an aspect of the broad field of education as a whole, so that one has to ask, “What can we say about the philosophy of education?” and then, as a further refinement or dissection of the question, “What can we say about the philosophy of religious education?” (2) The inclusion within the area of investigation of “religious” introduces the large question as to the theological understandings that religion inevitably involves, so that theology, itself a “science” with its own presuppositions and methods of procedure, must be taken into consideration along with the theoretical matters pertaining to “philosophy” proper and “education” proper.

It is then obvious that to speak of “philosophy of religious education” is no simple task. This is also to suggest that it is altogether proper that those who desire to become professionally competent in religious education should struggle with the whole complex represented by this field of inquiry. It is good that some persons deliberately essay the interrelations of philosophical, theological, and educational thought.

This serves to keep the intellectual quality of religious education on a high level, and assists the total process of interpenetration of fields of inquiry, which is itself a philosophical interest of greatest importance.

Perhaps a simpler way to state a definition of “philosophy of religious education” would be to say that it is “the analysis of the underlying principles or presuppositions implied in the religious community's effort to teach its faith.”

At various times in history the educational activities of the church have reflected prevailing philosophical interests and views; sometimes theological considerations have taken definitely 2d place to philosophical ones. As many observers have pointed out, this tended to be characteristic of the “religious education movement” of the early decades of the 20th century. When some leaders in the so-called liberal period urged that religious educators ought to be involved in remaking the theology of the church, what they really were saying, often, was that as philosophers they considered it their task to bring the church's education into line with the prevalent interests of humanistic, pragmatic views. Similarly, it could be demonstrated that rationalism in various forms, which came to dominate educational thought in the late 19th century, tended to supplant the traditional Biblical bases of Christian nurture, e.g., the view of evolutionary progress, which well nigh eliminated eschatological considerations from Christian education thinking in the earlier decades of this century.

Another way to regard “philosophy of religious education” is to view it in terms of the thoughtful setting forth of the various foundations for Christian education: theological, philosophical, psychological. Such a view would make no claim for technical philosophical systematization as the goal of the discipline. Rather, questions of the relation of the “what” and the “how” are grouped together in such a manner as to portray the total educational task of the church in any given period. This assumes that the task is never completed, and that restatement is legitimate and proper as understandings change and as new

factors arise which must enter the thoughtful consideration of religious education theorists. For example, the renaissance in Biblical theology, the rise of the ecumenical movement, the impact of existentialist philosophies - characteristic phenomena of mid-20th-century life and thought - need to be taken into consideration as the church examines its tasks of nurture.

The literature of recent decades that has had principal influence in what might be called, broadly, the ecumenical theological climate of our time seems to proceed along the lines last indicated above. The seminary courses in "philosophy of religious education" do not content themselves, usually, with purely philosophical analyses of the educational implications of the traditional "schools" of philosophy so much as they take into their purview all such ideas and experiences and phenomena of the total culture as will shed light on the fundamental task of the church.

One further matter may be indicated, also: there is arising a more clearly discernible trend for religious education theorists to take the historical dimension more seriously. Whereas some years ago some writers may have been inclined to proceed as if it had been possible to create a "philosophy of religious education" *de novo*, increasing evidence gathers that there is an intellectual honesty compelling writers to see themselves as creatures in a time-bound situation. In this they are at one with many philosophers, who, seeking to view things *sub specie aeternitatis*, realize that they are called to a task in the present situation that their predecessors also had to face. In this respect, belatedly, religious education is catching up in its area of concern with the historical views that have come to play such an important role in Biblical studies, technical theology, and pastoral theology in general in recent decades.