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THE VALUE OF RELIGIOUS  
INSTRUCTION IN EDUCATION

By

E. W. CRABB, Dip.Litt., Dip.Th.

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THE VICTORIA INSTITUTE

22 DINGWALL ROAD, CROYDON, SURREY

# THE VALUE OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN EDUCATION

By E. W. CRABB, Dip.Litt., Dip.Th.

## SYNOPSIS

### 1. THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH EDUCATION

The importance of the religious influence in the development of our national educational system is recognized on all sides, and to this recognition may be attributed the present unique position in the schools, where the Act of 1944 requires that Religious Instruction shall be given and that the school day shall commence with a corporate act of worship.

### 2. VARIOUS CONCEPTIONS OF THE AIMS OF EDUCATION

The official view of the importance of religious instruction is illustrated by quotations from various reports. The value of the Agreed Syllabuses is discussed and the problem connected with the differing standpoints adopted in teaching different subjects of the curriculum is faced. Religious education is not a utilitarian subject designed to make individuals become better citizens or family men, but should present a cure for man's deepest ills.

### 3. THE DEEPER REQUIREMENTS OF A CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

An acknowledgment of the supremacy of God in all life is a basic requirement of Christian education. The Old and New Testament teaching should illustrate the possibility of a close relationship between God and man, and the obstacles to that communion. The redemptive purpose of God for fallen man must emerge from any true and adequate presentation of the Bible record. The knowledge that there is a worshipping community based on these beliefs should lead to an introduction of the child to that community.

### 4. THE PRACTICAL RESULTS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A sense of individual responsibility and worth, a knowledge of the Bible contents and an atmosphere of worship should spring from the religious instruction within the school curriculum.

#### 5. THE INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION ON THE CURRICULUM

The prevailing naturalism and materialism can be best offset by the integrating effect of Christian teaching over the whole curriculum, which should be taught from an acceptance of that Faith if there is to be a true philosophy of education and life, and not a series of disjointed or mutually opposed studies. Tension in the mind of scholars is set up by opposing viewpoints in the various branches of the curriculum.

#### 6. CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE HOME

Where there is no prospect of such instruction in the home, effective religious instruction in the schools can do something to counterbalance this lack, but the example and ideals of the home can do much in practical education as well as in direct teaching to provide an important part of the complete education of the individual, and can correct deficiencies in the normal curricular teaching of religion.

#### 7. RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE CHURCH

The importance of Sunday school teaching as an essential part of Christian education is stressed, but the responsibility of the churches in a teaching capacity to their people is urged, and the teaching ministry of the churches is needed to provide that distinctively Christian and church-linked teaching which may not be given in the day school. The ultimate value of religious instruction is that it should lead to the life more abundant promised by the Lord Jesus Christ as the result of belief in His person.

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*The History of Religious Instruction in English Education*

The place of Religious Instruction in British education is unique, for in no other country in the world can a similar state of affairs be paralleled. America and the countries of the British Commonwealth of nations all agree that religious education is not part of the duty of the state schools and these have remained completely secular throughout the years. To understand the unique position in Britain some knowledge of the history of our educational system is needed, for the present state of affairs can only be interpreted by a reference to the events of past development in education and its practice.

The Christian influence behind the spread of popular education has been acknowledged in every history of education, and the spread of what is usually known as Evangelical Christianity greatly speeded the demand for popular education. Whitefield and Wesley founded both day and boarding schools, Wesley in particular being impressed and influenced by schools he saw at Jena and Herrnhut. Wherever he went, the great preacher impressed on his followers the need for careful attention to the matter of popular education. The influence of Raikes and the Sunday School movement on the development of British education has been far reaching and cannot be overestimated, whilst the enthusiasm of Hannah More was also contagious. The monitorial schools founded by Joseph Lancaster in 1798 were founded on the Bible as a basis of the whole simple curriculum, although the schools were unsectarian in character.

The debt which the day schools owed to the Sunday school movements was freely acknowledged by Sir J. Kay Shuttleworth in 1867 when he wrote as Secretary to the Committee on Education—the forerunner of the later Board of Education—“The Sunday School was the root from which sprang our system of day schools. . . . When the Government first attempted to organize national education, it not only found this machinery ready to its hand, but it also found that the Churches and the congregations contained within themselves a zeal and purpose as to public education, which existed in no civic body, not even in the Parliament itself.”

The story of public education is the story of the struggles of the various interested parties to maintain their position in a field, the importance of which was being gradually realized by all walks of life. The great Education Act of 1870 was a compromise, and a particularly English one at that, in which religion became a voluntary subject, from which a parent could withdraw his child on conscientious or religious grounds. The pattern of British education thereafter followed this pattern of compromise throughout the years until the passing of the Education Act of 1944 set the pattern which is followed in the schools of the country at the present time.

The earlier pattern followed this general scheme: where the school was maintained by the local council, the religious instruction was taken at

the commencement of the morning session in order to facilitate the withdrawal of any pupil whose parents did not wish him to take part in the religious instruction given. The school registers were not closed until after the conclusion of such religious instruction so that no child was penalized for non-attendance before that time. This arrangement necessarily meant that every teacher in council schools was forced to take religious instruction at the start of each day whether he was interested or qualified in the subject or not. The system was bound to present anomalies and meant that every teacher, of whatever religious persuasion or of none, was required to agree to take Scripture for half an hour per day. As this time coincided with the start of the classroom routine for the day, many uninterested teachers utilized the time to collect dinner money, milk money, to attend to class business and to discharge various tasks whilst the religious instruction period suffered. Other teachers, eager and willing to grasp the opportunities provided by such a period, taught the basic facts of the Bible clearly and well.

Between the two wars an increasing recognition of the value of religious education led a number of counties to produce an agreed syllabus for the guidance of their teachers. Cambridgeshire was a pioneer in this direction whilst other education authorities followed suit or directed the attention of their teachers to that produced by Cambridge. These were offered as guides and had no binding character on the religious instruction given in the classroom.

This period coincided with a marked decline in the influence of the churches on the life of the population, and it was natural that an increasing emphasis was placed on the schools as agencies to bring the claims of the religious interpretation of life before the nation's forthcoming citizens. Good was done when the teaching was in the hands of those who recognized the desirability of introducing the spiritual factor into education, but much harm came when the teaching was entrusted to those who were not so convinced, and in some cases positively opposed.

### *The Act of 1944*

In spite of the commencement of the War in 1939, much public interest was aroused when it became known that a revision of the Education Act was contemplated by the Government. All the interested bodies, county councils, churches, private organizations and non-maintained schools were invited to express their views and there was some fear that the earlier denominational controversies would be raised once again. A very large measure of agreement was reached and it is significant that all the administrators agreed that a religious foundation for the public education system was an essential stabilizing factor.

As the Act of 1944 stands it requires that every school shall open with a daily act of worship shared by all the pupils whose parents desire them so to do, and that the teaching of religion is compulsory in all schools. Every teacher and every child, however, is completely free to take no part in either the opening act of worship or the religious instruction, this being a fundamental principle of the act. Schools are divided into these different categories:—

(a) Schools entirely provided and maintained by the local education authority.

(b) Voluntary schools with buildings provided by religious bodies, but in which the educational costs, including the payment of teachers, are met by the local education authority. The appointment of teachers is within the power of the managers, of whom four out of six are appointed by the religious body.

(c) Controlled schools are those where the religious body cannot find half the cost of bringing the building to the standard required by the Ministry and which are therefore taken over by the local authority, who then appoint teachers and operate the "Agreed Syllabus" although the building outside school hours remains at the disposal of the religious body.

(d) "Direct Grant" schools are those schools which were independent in their foundation but have been granted financial aid from the Government but not from the local education authority. Such schools have to comply with the Act and observe the general requirements laid down for religious instruction.

(e) "Special Agreement" schools are usually denominational secondary schools which receive up to 75 per cent of the building cost from the Government.

The private schools which are run independently are outside this system, but are open to inspection by the Ministry of Education Inspectors and may be closed by law unless they operate efficiently according to the standards of the Act.

Such an Act was hedged about necessarily with safeguards which affected the right of teacher and child to withdraw from this teaching, and the freeing of religious instruction from the first period of the day meant that the subject could from then be placed at any time of the day, and consequently handed to the care of specialists who were genuinely qualified and eager to teach religious instruction to their classes. A further result of the act was that this teaching was now open to inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors, an event which was impossible under the previous arrangement. The Act laid down at the same time that the clergy could no longer act as unofficial inspectors in state schools and that they could not hold employment as both teachers and clergy, although they may be

invited to conduct school assembly in a non-sectarian capacity. Certain safeguards also exist by which facilities can be claimed for denominational instruction which cannot be arranged outside school time, although the cost of providing such denominational instruction must be borne by the denomination concerned.

The requirements of the Education Act presents a very different picture from that which is experienced in any other state system of education, and although its provisions are largely taken for granted in this country, they are a cause of wondering amazement, and sometimes positive envy on the part of sympathetic observers from overseas. In American schools the teaching of religion is forbidden in all state schools and the Bible is regarded as a "sectarian book", the distribution of which has been attended by important lawsuits to test the legality of such action. As a consequence many private schools have sprung up in the United States in which more definite Christian instruction can be given in a curriculum which is integrated to Christian ideals. In practice, American educational theory has been hard put to provide a philosophy of education without the binding factor of the Christian faith. There have been many alternative integrating factors, but none has proved sufficiently strong to provide the necessary uniting ideal. Since 1886 in France no monk, nun or priest is allowed to teach in the State schools and religious instruction is not attempted, whilst in many parts of the British Commonwealth the religious instruction is entrusted to voluntary teachers provided by the various religious denominations, an arrangement which militates against the uniting of the school as a true community.

#### *Various Conceptions of the Aims of Education*

Various reports on the problems of national education helped the formation of the climate of opinion in which the 1944 Act could be launched, and quotations from some of these give an indication of the attitude to religious instruction on the part of the reporting committees. The Spens Report stated: "No boy can be counted as properly educated unless he has been made aware of the existence of a religious interpretation of life." The Norwood Report averred: "There is a general acceptance of the Christian ethical standard as the highest teaching known to man." The White Paper of 1943 stated: "There has been a very general wish that religious education should be given a more defined place in the schools, springing from a desire to revive the spiritual and personal values in our society and national traditions." Mr. Chuter Ede, on behalf of the Government, could say in parliamentary debate: "There is, I think, a general recognition that even if parents themselves have in the course of life encountered difficulties that have led them into doubts and hesitations, they do desire that their children shall have a grounding in the principles

of the Christian Faith as it ought to be practised in this country" (*Hansard*, 10th March, 1944). The 1944 Act was the interpretation of these views in the life of the schools, so that the Statute Book contained the instruction: "The School day . . . shall begin with collective worship . . . and religious instruction shall be given."

Once the Education Act had been placed on the Statute Book, the local education authorities began to assemble their committees which were to be entrusted with the task of drawing up the agreed syllabus for the local schools. Representatives of the various denominations, of the education authority, and of the teachers met together to formulate a syllabus which should be used in all the local schools. The results varied widely from authority to authority, but the framework which was agreed was sufficient to give a splendid basis for teaching which could be truly Christian, the aims of the syllabus being to provide a Bible-based instruction which should lead to faith in action, whilst at the same time leaving the churches free to continue to supply the worship and fellowship which was not part of the aim of the religious instruction in the day schools.

In the hands of convinced Christians the Agreed Syllabus can be a weapon of great value in providing an interpretation of life which is founded on spiritual needs rather than on materialistic and utilitarian considerations. The problem of tension in the minds of scholars has to be faced when the student is aware of a number of contradictory attitudes which reveal themselves in the differing approaches of teachers to their subjects. A truly Christian education is only possible when all subjects are taught from Christian standpoints, and where the whole curriculum is permeated by such an influence. Religious education to be truly valuable must have a higher objective than the formation and strengthening of character, for the basis of Christian education is found in the recognition that man is a fallen creature of God, rather than a being capable of struggling by his own unaided efforts to a higher level of existence.

Newman faced the problem squarely as he wrote in his jewelled prose: "Quarry the granite rock with razors or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against these giants, the passion and pride of man." Pascal similarly realized the tremendous need of man when he wrote, "It is in the nature of man to believe and love; if he has not the right objects, he will attach himself to the wrong ones;" whilst the phrase, "There is a need to build a solid core of spiritual life which is able to resist the attrition of everyday life," is equally discerning in its insistence on the need for spiritual foundations.

Religious education will have only a limited value if it is based on what may be termed utilitarian considerations, such as the production of better citizens and more orderly family units. The traditional Classical view of religion as an aid to "decency", part of the normal equipment of

a gentleman, is sadly lacking in the true spirit of Christian teaching which is worthy of the name of "Religious Instruction".

### *The Deeper Requirements of a Christian Education*

All religious instruction must start from the cardinal fact that God is the source of all life and that He is supreme in the universe He has created. This is universally maintained by the Agreed Syllabuses of Religious Instruction, but it is by no means a fact which is recognized in the rest of the time-table, and there is a real need for teaching which can help older scholars to achieve an harmony between the various parts of their knowledge to allow for the sovereignty of God.

The Bible is recommended as the major source of all religious instruction, and the Old Testament record should build up the knowledge that the history of the Jewish nation is the record of man's relationship with God, and of God's dealings with men and nations in that relationship. The teaching of the great facts of the Old Testament record will provide an interpretation of history which can be applied to the study of human relations in every age, and which is an essential part of an educated man's equipment in the modern world. A deepening sense of the close relationship possible between God and man will be a direct result of the faithful teaching of the Old Testament syllabus.

The teaching of both Old and New Testaments will force home the lesson in vivid object teaching that man cannot know God by his own unaided efforts. The pride so often engendered by modern achievement and knowledge here receives a useful corrective which is an essential antidote for the exalting ambition of modern man. Bible-inspired teaching will bring home the salutary lesson that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God", and each section of the teaching will proclaim this truth to the developing mind of the child.

Wisely taught, the Old Testament will show much of the unfolding of God's redemptive plan for the world. The great sweep of the narrative can be rightly understood only by those who have grasped the underlying harmony of its purpose. The New Testament will then be seen as the completion of the revelation of God's redemptive purpose in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Frustration and a false picture of the Christian Gospel will follow attempts to uphold Jesus Christ as a great example to be followed: the prior need will be to present His work as the completion of God's redemptive purpose, the culmination of the Old Testament revelation.

The study of the worship of the Old Testament, the growth of the Christian Church in the Acts of the Apostles, and the teaching concerning Christian fellowship and worship in the Epistles is bound to lead to some

discussion on the possibility of entry into the fellowship of a living worshipping community or church. Pupils can be led thus far in the teaching of the Agreed Syllabus, but it is no part of the work of the teacher to take the place of the church in the individual experience, although many syllabuses allow a place for the discussion of differences in Christian practice and worship. As the Bible is taught, the child is presented with the material on which to form a decision concerning joining of such a community.

### *The Practical Results of Christian Education*

Religious Instruction should never be allowed to become just another subject which can be studied in a vacuum unrelated to life and practice, for the practical results of such teaching should result in personalities which have become transformed by the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart, producing Christian love and ideals impinging on the whole of the child's society. This high ideal is one which is seldom experienced in the classroom, where the fundamental fact of conversion can be taught as a great experience of the Christian life, but can be seldom applied in individual fashion. This individual application is conceived of as the task and responsibility of the church and not of the class teacher, who would indeed be stepping beyond his province in the state schools. Whilst it must be admitted that Christian virtues can be displayed only when there is the prior working of the new life in the individual nature, the wholesome effect of Bible teaching is seen over the whole of the school society. A right sense of values is imparted to each child, and a standard of right and wrong provided which is otherwise often sadly lacking in contemporary life.

The tremendous value which the Bible places on the individual is another direct contribution made by religious instruction to the well-being of the national society. So many things tend to break down the sense of individual responsibility and worth that the Bible emphasis on man's importance in the sight of God is a tremendously potent corrective to the tendency of much present-day thought. People who have never accepted the Christian faith but have been influenced by the doctrine of individual importance and responsibility are more likely to be better citizens than those who have absorbed the idea of man's insignificance in face of the complex world in which he is placed.

The Apostle Paul set high value on a knowledge of the Holy Scriptures from an early age, and the imparting of this knowledge must be the primary value of Religious Instruction in the schools. Where such knowledge has been imparted, the task of the churches is appreciably lightened, for a major obstacle to Christian progress is the present ignorance of the facts of the Christian Faith, which in turn leads to popular misconceptions and oppositions. This foundation of knowledge must introduce the pupil to

the existence of the worshipping community of Christians in local churches and should thereby seek to bridge the gulf which separates the church from the masses of the nation. The corporate act of worship, in which all the school shares, aids in the building up of this conception and, wisely conducted, can act as a valuable adjunct to the fuller worship of the whole community.

This atmosphere of worship should not be restricted to the time of school assembly, but should be allowed to pervade all the teaching of the Bible. One of the major drawbacks attending the teaching of religious instruction in schools is the danger that children will conceive of Scripture as just another subject which can be studied in the same spirit as any other title in the curriculum. The value of such study is probably negative and constitutes a positive hindrance to the growth of the spiritual life. Where the teaching of the Bible is reverently and clearly given, such knowledge will broaden and deepen the mind as well as open the eyes of the spiritual nature of the child.

### *The Influence of Christian Education on the General Curriculum*

An education which is truly Christian as opposed to an education which carefully segregates religious education to one unimportant corner of the timetable will acknowledge the tremendous effect of the Christian philosophy on the whole of the curriculum. A truly Christian education will demand teachers who are convinced Christians as well as competent historians or scientists. An education which is given by a historian who is a dialectical Marxist, a materialist science teacher, a Christian English master and a literary-minded Religious Instruction teacher is likely to set up a state of tension in the mind of the subject of such instruction so that little positive good will result. The need is not only for more teachers of Religious Instruction, but for more Christian teachers in all subjects.

The many philosophies which are adopted by writers on education are an indication of the need for an integrating factor in educational practice which has not been found in any alternative to the Christian Faith. A demand has been made that education should seek to "teach them how to admire", to use Jowett's phrase when writing to Arnold. Education for leisure has been given as a watchword which will recognize the increasing mechanization of much of our working day, and Christian education will endorse the need for training in the purposeful use of leisure when it considers the mass entertainment which provides for the free time of the citizens of the nation. A Christian view of the liberal arts is needed in the teaching so that a standard of values can be constructed which will guide the individual in his choice of reading, in his assessment of merit and achievement in these fields. A. N. Whitehead's statement that "moral

education is impossible apart from the habitual vision of greatness" (*Aims of Education*) agrees with Matthew Arnold's ideal of setting before youth "the best that has been thought and said in the world". Christian education will not only place before the child the vision of greatness which constitutes the best strivings of Greece and Rome, of ancient and modern civilizations, but it will provide a yard-stick by which the child may measure this achievement in the light of what Paul termed the "foolishness of preaching", as the contrast is drawn between the wisdom of the world and the foolishness of the Cross.

Because the Bible is the book with the broadest appeal and the readiest approachability of any great body of literature, its message and its subjects are more easily teachable than the more remote great literature which is secular in origin. This gives an initial advantage to the teacher of religion in the school and provides a standard by which all literature can be judged. An habitual vision of greatness is permanently valuable when it is compared with the sight of true greatness revealed in the record of the New Testament. The records of the Old Testament never seek to ennoble the characters but present them as failing men and women in dire need of the grace and power of God. A typical Classical education, with its frequent reference to the nobleness of the characters encountered, needs to be given the corrective of the Christian assessment of Greek and Roman life as revealed in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of Paul.

The greatest alternative to the Christian philosophy of education is the prevailing naturalism on which Walter Lippmann commented in 1941: "Day after day young people are subjected to the bombardment of naturalism with all its animosity to Christianity. In the formative years of their lives, or at least during the period of their education when their ideas are crystallizing, they must listen and absorb these ideas of man, the world and religion. With these facts before them, why do Protestants wonder that Christianity has so little influence over young people?" (*The American Scholar*—"Education versus Western Civilization"). This comment was prompted by the American educational scene but it has a relevance beyond its national boundaries.

The tension aroused in the minds of scholars is most obvious in the field of science and it is here that most controversy is aroused. This obscures the importance of the tension created in other subjects which can prove as damaging as the more spectacular and publicized debates concerning science and religion. The ultimate attitude is summarized by Dr. Julian Huxley in these words: "The advance of natural science, logic and psychology has brought us to a stage at which God is no longer a useful hypothesis . . . a faint trace of God still broods over the world like the smile of a cosmic Cheshire cat. But the growth of psychological knowledge will rub even that from the universe" (quoted from H. Lowry, *The Mind's Adventure*, 1950). The same approach is revealed in the quotations from

a recent discussion on the meaning of evolution: "Man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned. . . . The discovery that the universe apart from man lacks any purpose has the inevitable corollary that the universe cannot provide any universal, eternal or absolute ethical criteria of right and wrong" (Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution*, O.U.P., 1950).

The impact of such a philosophy is bound to create tension in the mind of the scholar which cannot be ignored by responsible educators, although the final onus for a resolution of such tension will rest with the child being called upon to make a decision during the formative years. It is the duty of religious education to provide the materials for the formation of such a decision based on adequate materials of knowledge. Religious Instruction is bound to face the problem presented by the overlapping boundaries of religion and science, and to give some guidance to the older scholar in these matters. The opposition is not between religion and science but between religion and the complete materialism represented by the quotations cited.

The complex nature of modern society necessitates an attention on the part of teachers, so that the curriculum will prepare the pupil for his status as a citizen and worker in this society. Social studies are replacing in some schools the traditional divisions into history, geography and civics, and a truly Christian education would ensure that these are not conducted as matters which do not allow of a spiritual interpretations. The message of the Christian Gospel that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" is an essential corrective in this branch of learning, and one which is being increasingly recognized wherever a completely materialistic philosophy does not hold sway. The Christian interpretation of history has received notable reinforcements in recent years by the writings of Professor Butterfield, but many schools are still pervaded in their history teaching by the mechanistic theories and rigid utilitarianism of earlier thought.

### *Christian Education in the Home*

Whilst this examination of the place of religious instruction in education has been concerned largely with the organized education of the school, it must be remembered that the most influential educational factor can be the home. The influence of the home has waned considerably in recent years, but the worst of homes can often counterbalance the best of educations in institution and school. In the best conditions, the home can often provide the answer to the sense of tension which is created by the lack of a unifying life-principle in the child's school. Effective learning arises out of a genuine need or desire, and the love and security found in a good home provide an excellent foundation on which to build the religious in-

struction and the spiritual life of the individual. Whilst the child is bound to pass through a stage of revolt as he struggles towards independence of the early home boundaries, he can also turn to the ideals and the aims of the home in spiritual life as a check against the varying standards presented by the school community in which he works.

In a Christian home the basic values of religious education are seen in action and the child can assess in an immature fashion, but quite clearly, the importance of such values in the conduct of everyday life. It has often been said that "religion is caught, and not taught"; but whilst this statement needs careful modification, it is true that the fundamentals of the spiritual life are more likely to be caught in the home than in the many-standard life of the school community, with its presentation of mutually contradictory life philosophies. "The religion of a child depends on what its father and mother are and not on what they say. . . . The child sees what we are behind what we wish to be," wrote Amiel in the *Journal Intime*.

Whilst religious instruction in the schools can help to offset the lack of stability in some homes and the absence of worthy ideals for life, the Christian home can do much to illustrate and empower the teaching of the schools where this is in accord with the Christian philosophy of life; whilst, where the school teaching provides materialistic standards only, the home can apply the necessary antidote. Many well-meaning parents tend to excuse their neglect of home religious instruction by saying that the personality of the child must be respected and that he must choose for himself when he reaches years of discretion. The religion of the "open mind" is largely applied in the fields of education, and is often used in relation to the home training in spiritual realities. There is no doubt that the child will "choose for himself;" in fact it is one of the laws of the spiritual life that the choice rests with the individual; but if the parents refuse to give him the facts for making such a choice in the matter of religion, they are in effect deciding him in favour of a materialistic conception, for the law of the spiritual world states: "The natural man does not understand the spiritual." The following words are worthy of consideration: "The parent whose attitude is 'let him decide for himself' will find that when the child has grown up no decision remains to be made, for the reason that it has already been made. This is only logical. Most influences outside the home are secular. Therefore the boy or girl who is given nothing religious in home, church or school is under a constant exposure to irreligion. For the world is not neutral. It takes a stand, and its stand is against Christianity" (F. E. Gaebelien, *Christian Education in a Democracy*, O.U.P.). This quotation envisages the American educational scene where the state school has no concern with religious instruction, but its insistence on religious training in the home is relevant to Britain to-day.

*Religious Instruction in the Church*

In the historical section of our survey we have noted the great interest which the Christian church has always taken in the education of the people. There is a tendency in some quarters to minimize the present importance of the place of the churches in the religious training of the people. When all education tends to become more completely secularized than ever before, there is a great place for the educative work of the churches, for a teaching ministry is essential if the masses are to understand the basic facts of the Christian faith. The Sunday School movement still gains constant support from most branches of the Protestant church, and the importance of this side of its work increases as control over the daily educational practices and provisions is lessened. The Roman church is alone in this country in its single-minded insistence on the essentially religious character of all education and its desire to provide Roman Catholic day schools, for the Church of England finds sufficient difficulty in maintaining the day schools already in its control, whilst the Non-conformist bodies have abandoned any widespread attempt to provide a national system of education for their members.

This situation increases the importance of Sunday School teaching, where more distinctive instruction linked with the worship of the community can be given in premises linked in the child mind with the church-going of adults. The Sunday School curriculum, whilst essentially Bible-based, should not be a pale reflection of day school teaching, often given in less cramped surroundings, but should seek to bring an essentially Christian note into the teaching, whilst linking the great truths of the Christian Faith with the distinctive practices of the church life. Sunday School instruction to-day too often errs in confining itself to simple Bible stories and neglecting to teach the great truths which are less likely to be studied in the day school curriculum. The Roman church introduces children to the great themes of its worship at an early age, and Protestants would make a distinctive contribution to religious instruction if there was a greater emphasis in their teaching on the distinctive doctrines of the Reformed Faith.

The difficulty of staffing voluntary works such as Sunday Schools brings into relief the great responsibility of ministers of religion in this connection. Men and women who are trained in the great truths of religion should not delegate the whole of this most important part of their work to those who are, through no fault of their own, not thoroughly equipped to undertake the task. There is a responsibility on the part of church leaders to ensure that children are receiving in their formative years an adequate presentation of the Christian Faith from those competent to undertake the task. The State Schools cannot be blamed for not doing what is not within their province, whilst sometimes the churches are content to limit their field of operations to one brief hour in an overcrowded Sunday

School where instruction is given by those who are often inadequately prepared for such responsible work. The value of such religious instruction would be widespread in every part of the educational field, for young men and women would go to their work, or to their further educational studies, with a solid foundational grip of Bible doctrine and Christian truths. When the churches picture themselves as part of the complex organism which caters for the education of the whole man in the twentieth century, and make arrangements to implement this conception, a great and positive move will have been made towards the arrest of the secularization which is such a menace in present day society.

### *Conclusion*

It will be seen from the foregoing argument that the place of religious instruction in education is vital in any truly comprehensible scheme, whilst it affords a basis on which the development of the spiritual life can take place. The scope of the work possible in the schools is wide, but is necessarily limited by the intentions of the Act of 1944, so that the work must be continued in the home, by illustration and example as well as by direct teaching, and in the church, where the instruction can be linked to the great and distinctive doctrines of the Christian Faith in the setting of the worshipping community represented by the local church. The secularization of present-day knowledge can be arrested only by a sufficient emphasis on the spiritual factors of man's existence, the Christian Faith providing the only true alternative to a complete materialism or naturalism which can give no constructive philosophy of life, and which must perforce neglect whole tracts of experience and responsibility in its approach to the problems which will beset the developing personality. The statement of the Lord Jesus Christ that "I am come that they might have life in more abundant measure", is the ideal of an education which is truly Christian and which gives full weight to the teaching of that Faith in its educational scheme.