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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK

Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/urea20>

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Published online: 10 Jul 2006.

To cite this article: Henry Martyn Hart D. D. (1906) Educating the Conscience of the Nation, Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association, 1:5, 163-167, DOI: [10.1080/0034408060010502](https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408060010502)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0034408060010502>

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Educating the Conscience of the Nation

HENRY MARTYN HART, D. D.

Dean of St. John's Cathedral, Denver, Colorado

The serious question before us is: How can the conscience of the nation be aroused and educated? The primary answer is: "*Train up the children in the way they should go.*"

Monsieur De Fallon, a late Minister of Education in France, has supplied us with a very sufficient definition of education. He says:

"The purport of education is to aspire to train a child to the yoke of discipline and obedience; to create in him a principle of energy, which shall enable him to resist his passions; accept, of his own free will, the law of labor and duty, and contract habits of order and regularity. To do this, unless the force be derived from religion, is to attempt an impossible task."

There are four places where the education of children is undertaken—the Home, the School of Life, the Public School and the Sunday School.

There are 27,000,000 children in this country between the ages of five and twenty-one. Of these only one-half are in regular attendance at the Public or Sunday schools. All of them, perforce, attend the schools of *Home and Social Life*. Now, what is the best curriculum for the moral training of children? Of course, the patent answer is, the example of their parents and their daily direction. Every parent is anxious that the child shall be "Good," and when the life of either parent is objectionable, the better of the two makes some excuse, or some apology, to the child, and strives to hide the fault, palliates the bad temper, or calls the drunkenness sickness, irregular hours, business—and when the child reaches years of discretion and the real truth cannot be evaded, then refuge is taken in that common confession of human weakness and the acknowledgment of sin: "Do as I say; not as I do."

The earliest positive training of the child is chiefly influenced by the natural desire of the mother not to be impeded in her household duties, or annoyed. Attempts are made which are seldom persistent, to make the child sleep at certain times, and

otherwise "behave"; and as it grows up a prime motive of sending it to school is to be relieved of its presence at certain definite periods. But how many parents actually take time and trouble to inculcate into their children the principles of righteousness? How many follow the advice of my text, and "catechise (for that is a better rendering than 'train') a child in the way it should go"?

The most obvious remedy for the desperate condition of our social immorality is to stir up parents to the necessity of definitely instructing their children in righteousness. Children do not come into the world equipped with moral instincts. They have to be taught, and if they are not taught righteousness and morality they will be unrighteous and immoral. Let every parent see that the child knows by heart the most perfect rules of righteousness we possess, the Ten Commandments.

No better moral training can be recommended than that each Sunday, at least, the children should be "catechised" at home in the Ten Commandments.

The next school in which the morals of the child receive a training is the *School of Social Life*: the examples of its playmates and the conversation it hears. One fly will spoil the apothecary's ointment and one bad girl or bad boy will inoculate a dozen. Every child is open to the contagion of a bad companion, and therefore all parents ought to warn their children to tell them when words and deeds are secretly communicated and when fear of detection is an evidence that wrong is being said or done. As long as a parent can maintain frankness and openness with the child there can be nothing very harmful coming to the child from its Social School.

But most parents shun talking on such subjects especially to their girls, lest they should put into their minds prurient ideas which they think never otherwise might have been conceived. But with our social atmosphere loaded with vice and immorality as it is, such a precaution is futile. A school teacher told me the other day that she watched her children at play, and all she could say was "they were little beasts." See the first editorial in the *Ladies' Home Journal* for October, which asserts even more!

Now, what training in morality do they receive from the conversation they hear? The newspapers are the chief medium of supply of material for ordinary conversation. They are a reflection of what people talk about. Indeed, their reporters pick

up any bit of stray gossip and repeat it to the public as ascertained fact; and if that gossip contains a touch of immorality it is all the more valuable and the more relished. Murders, suicides, divorce proceedings are invariably exploited and daily form a considerable portion of the supply of "news." Fraud is openly charged to our prominent citizens, and no child, with yet unbalanced judgment and with the fond disposition to believe that what is printed must be true, can escape the belief that nobody, but its father, is true or decent or honest. So that unless a parent takes pains to help the child to a right judgment and strives to prevent it from hearing the dreadful things of which the newspapers are full, and does what is possible to prevent the newspapers being read—indeed, it would be well if no newspapers were admitted into the home of a young family—unless parents will exert themselves to see that the children are not injured by what they learn in the School of their Social life, the mischief must go on.

The Public School. In Germany a child spends 1,580 hours a year in school, in America, 1,000 hours, and only 12,000,000 out of 27,000,000 children avail themselves regularly of even this modicum of instruction. Therefore, too much ought not to be expected from the system of public instruction. Nevertheless, the Public School education is a potent factor in forming the character of the rising generation. For if half the children were well trained they would affect the other half. But the fatal flaw in its efficiency is the deliberate omission of direct religious instruction. As the French minister well said, to build up a character, "unless the force be derived from religion is to attempt an impossible task." The French tried it and crime increased by leaps and bounds. The colony of Victoria tried it, and the increase of crime is so appalling that they are going to "reconsider." This country has tried it, and in the fifty years of the experiment crime has steadily increased from there being one criminal in each 3,000 of the population to one in 300!

Children can only be taught by definite instruction. Moral principles, whether inculcated by an "atmosphere" or by stating principles, as by the syllabus set forth by the New York educational authority for the guidance of their teachers, will never affect the life of a child, nor "create in it a principle of energy to resist its passions."

To give what is called Bible teaching is not only illegal, but

wholly impracticable. Few of the 450,000 teachers are fitted, either by training or by personal faith, to "teach the Bible." But as the Authorized Version is the acknowledged standard of the language, and as no one can pretend to be educated who is not, in some sense, acquainted with The Greatest Book in the world, there ought to be provided a Bible Reader, which shall contain those passages to which neither Jew nor Roman Catholic could object, and this reader should be in daily use.

But for instruction in righteousness *make the Ten Commandments a part of the regular curriculum of every grade.* "There must be some higher authority for right doing," said M. Thiers, when President of the Republic of France, "than the Minister of State, the Mayor or the Schoolmaster. I defy anybody to produce anything better than the Ten Commandments, with their august authority and majestic history." They are not only the most perfect rules of morality the world has ever possessed, but they are the only code of righteousness in existence. They are profound in their completeness, reaching unto "the thoughts and intents of the heart"; terse in their statement: carrying with them an authority which is impressive by its unique history and fearful in its prospect of the coming Judgment; and they contain no ecclesiasticism, they concern themselves only with that common morality which all Christian bodies enjoin.

The man whose writings are today more read than the writings of all other men put together said of the Ten Commandments: "They were added because of transgression." Let them have the place for which our Creator intended them. "Our transgressions have become more in number than the hairs of our head," and in face of the appalling increase of lawlessness, "our heart has failed us." Let us use the remedy the Divine Mind prescribes, let us agitate that the Ten Commandments shall be set in the forefront of every stage of education—in the Home School, in the Public School, in the Sunday School. Let parents "catechise" in them, teachers teach them, preachers preach them. By them let our children be educated,

1. To worship the one true God.
2. To worship Him in the right way.
3. To practice what they profess.
4. To give a seventh of their time to the interests of their souls.

5. To live humbly and obediently,
6. To control their tempers.
7. To be modest, curb their appetites and learn to bear.
8. To conscientiously respect the rights of others.
9. To speak with accuracy and truth.
10. To be content.

With such a syllabus of education in daily use, fully explained, aptly illustrated and strictly enforced, a generation will arise who at least will know what righteousness is; and it is not too much to expect that, knowing the good and right way, the great majority of them will walk therein.

"When Thou shalt enlarge my heart, then shall I run the way of Thy Commandments."

A Directory of Workers in Religious Education

There was published in the volumes, "The Improvement of Religious Education" and "The Bible in Practical Life," being the proceedings of the Chicago and Philadelphia conventions, a complete list of members, giving with each name the address, the degrees and official position of the member. For reasons of economy this was omitted from "The Aims of Religious Education." But so great is the value of this list and so general the demand for it that it will certainly be included in the next volume, which it is expected the Association will issue following the Rochester convention.

This new directory will contain the names of all those members whose dues are paid to the time of the convention.

It is desirable that those who wish any changes made from the manner in which their names appeared in the former directories, and also those who have joined since these were published, should send to the office complete data for publication.