This article was downloaded by: [York University Libraries]

On: 23 November 2014, At: 23:07

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>

The Function of the Association in Relation to Religious Education in the Community

J. M. Artman M. A.

Published online: 10 Jul 2006.

To cite this article: J. M. Artman M. A. (1919) The Function of the Association in Relation to Religious Education in the Community, Religious Education: The official journal of the Religious Education Association, 14:5, 322-328, DOI: [10.1080/0034408190140506](https://doi.org/10.1080/0034408190140506)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0034408190140506>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

The Function of the Association in Relation to Religious Education in the Community

J. M. ARTMAN, M. A.*

Following the papers in which Professors Kilpatrick and Coe¹ have splendidly revealed the content and method of religious education as a function in the achieving of democracy we confine ourselves to the function of the Young Men's Christian Association in this process.

Two questions at once arise: First, what is the Young Men's Christian Association and why consider it as an agent in religious education in the community? Second, what is the situation in the community which calls for such an agent as the Association, or which gives opportunity for such an agency to effectively function.

The Association is a movement from within the ranks of the Protestant church. It has for its goal the relating of men to each other on a Christian basis. Its motive during the days of its early life was the associating of young men with and for each other in the Jesus way. This ideal, varying somewhat through the decades, has ever been the goal of the Association. As an ideal it includes the ever widening circles of relation until the Jesus way is reached in all the affairs of men in all the relations of the world.

As a movement within the Protestant church the Association shared some of the weaknesses inherited by the Protestant from the Catholic church; such, for example, as the bondage of abstract theology, the goal of individualistic salvation, legalism and the casuistry which always goes with it—all of which still bind and enthrall the brotherhood sadly. Along with the church leaders the leaders of the Association are gradually freeing themselves from these weaknesses and frankly adopting the socialization of man as the Christian goal.

However, the socialization that is sought by the Association is not a colorless crossing of group or race or creedal lines. The Association believes there is something more important than merely living across social barriers for the sake of living with and in common with everybody. There is a way to live—the Jesus way—and the chief motive of the Association is to cause all men everywhere to achieve in their living the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man as revealed in Jesus Christ. The true Association worker is, therefore, no spineless social creature; instead he is a flaming evangel of the good news of Jesus Christ,—of universal social concern in living; and is ever alert to bring such living to pass in all the relationships of men.

The Association is a lay movement; it is a movement of men for men; therefore, the outstanding lay church leaders of any community,

*Mr. Artman was Dean of the Y. M. C. A. College, at Chicago, at the time this paper was prepared. He has since become an associate professor of Religious Education at The University of Chicago.

¹These two papers and a report of the discussion published in RELIGIOUS EDUCATION for June, 1919.

no matter what the denomination, are sought for its boards and committees. These, too, are working committees, not paper padding. Thus, the business and engineering skill so highly developed in many men is put to the task of Christianizing the social relations of the men and boys in the various communities. A scanning of the lists of the boards and committees is sufficient here.

This choosing of the strong for the boards and committees of the Association has brought on the criticism of the autocracy of wealth or capitalistic catering by the Movement. There has been, and is, room for this criticism. The same criticism, however, applies equally to the parent—the church. Both are now, at least in part, finding their way into social justice.

The Association as a movement is interdenominational in character and, therefore, frankly refuses to be entangled in church doctrinal quarrels. Every now and then some church indoctrinated folk seek to convict the Association on the ground of not holding some so-called essential doctrine. The Association does not teach church doctrines but seeks to stimulate the full living of the life of Jesus Christ among all men, and is now more and more interpreting this Christ-like living in terms of the social good of all, that is, society building as over against individualistic salvation.

We may say, therefore, in summary, that the Association is a Protestant interdenominational lay movement, existing for the purpose of supplementing and aiding the church in community-wide effort to leaven the whole of society with the living described by the term, "the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man."

When we approach the second question, what is the situation in the community which calls for such an agent as the Association, or which gives opportunity for such an agency to effectively function?—we are forced to note actual situations. The average section of a city or county which folk usually designate as a community is a sort of nondescript proposition. It is a conglomeration of intertwining, opposing, contiguous, but far from being socially united, groups sometimes pulling together in related purpose, but, mostly, all unconscious of each other's existence. Usually the term community signifies a group of people, or an aggregate of families, living within a more or less prescribed area and having interests more or less in common, in occupation, language, commerce, politics, religion, social intercourse, education. A close analysis of any such section, however, will give a rude shock to any who assume the existence in practical living of this common concern in common interests.

Politically a so-called community is severed and divided into many self-centered and opposing groups. Some few of the section are concerned about making a community; others are frankly concerned in exploitation for self-gain; others live within the community but not of the community, with no concern whatsoever about grouping. Even a little study will reveal that any one community is cut in many crisscross directions by the political sections and castes that are found therein.

Industrially a section known as a community is made up of capitalists, laborers, men of much means, men of lesser means, men of poverty, men who are skilled and men who are unskilled. Some there are who live on inherited wealth, some who earn what they have, some who get by keen tricks of the trade. These groups may have a few things in common but mostly float apart and away from common concern for the common good. These groups are really caste systems of selfish interests within the social body—each suspicious of the other; and despite all that has been done to develop understanding between these classes, the average community is still cut this way and that by such social castes. There are professors in our great universities who have never had a working-man sit down at their table, or who have never sat with such men in conversational friendship, or visited the working-man's home, nor do they know anything about the problems and issues that crowd the working-man's life. The understanding and fellow-feeling between castes is feeble indeed. Necessarily they float on different levels and common concern for the common good under such conditions is a far cry.

Educationally the average community is severed by the intellectuals of varying degrees floating together into mutually agreeable groups. The highly intellectual seek companionship on their level; those of lesser degree, on theirs; those of low degree spend most of their energy in procuring food and drink; and these associate on the plane of the physical senses. Barriers exist between these castes.

In a certain community there is a Shakespearean club, with the highly privileged in the way of school and college as members. Only those who respond to the literary interest are welcome. There are others in the community who have attained their intellectual standard through the give and take of business and professional life. These do not float naturally with the above, nor with those of lower rank. There are still others, in varying degrees of intellectual grouping, floaters on life's sea, searching for association, but who do not themselves recognize its meaning. Intellectually there is no such thing as a community of understanding and social interrelationships between the groups found in the so-called community.

The churches of the average community, even where the federated church exists in its best form, are still individual social units, with consciousness denominational and local and, therefore, practicing separateness and selfishness, with all the barriers this entails between. We call ourselves Christian, but we have not yet learned as churches to pool our interests in great fellowships of purpose for the common good. Several years ago an election against the saloon was lost in a neighborhood where the male church membership of the Protestant churches alone was sufficient to carry the election: the suspicion existing between these bodies lost the election. The war and concomitant social upheaval are awakening great purposes and bringing church bodies into alignment of purpose. Still, to work together for the common good of all

is far from being the motive of church life. Moreover, the vast number of folk that are now within no church pale are outside of the church grouping entirely and are very often frankly suspicious of the purposes of the church itself.

Even an individual church in a community is split into groups: there are the rich and the poor; the social "four hundred" versus the social "leftovers." Examples are legion of individual churches struggling to beget peace and harmony between their factions.

This maelstrom of conflicting groups and interests should not, however, bind us in pessimism. Rather should we recognize this practical situation of broken and failing relationships as the only soil out of which to grow and cultivate democracy. It should cause us to recognize our one supreme task, that of bridging relationships in the social order.

The Association being what it is, and the practical situation of a community being what it is, what is the function of such an organization in such situations? First, the Association, being interdenominational in character and community-wide in interest, has for its task the stimulating of the resident forces in discovering the actual conditions existing as far as groupings are concerned. This task is most often called a survey; but much more than the ordinary survey reveals should be discovered by the resident forces of the community. The facts regarding water, milk, play, special education and reading are of great importance and reveal many facts concerning the groupings of any section. However, for the purpose of developing Christian democracy the attitudes between groups which lay behind all these are far the more important. The dispositions and prejudices that are at play in the interrelations; the feelings of groups versus groups; the barriers which separate folk—make it absolutely essential that these be discovered if these groups are to be lead to fellowship together in fundamental purposes.

It needs to be said, also, that the survey should be made by resident folk who will function in reshaping broken relations. Many surveys have been made by experts, resulting in books setting forth the facts and conditions discovered. These have done much good, but mere revelations of conditions, while good, are not so good as discovery on the part of the resident forces themselves—they who are affected and therefore concerned. The discovery of broken and inadequate relations by those who are themselves parties to these relations is the greatest incentive known to stimulate them to change the conditions. It is the task of the Association, as said above, because of its community-wide, interdenominational character, to lead the church forces in the knowing of their own community and the relation or part that this community plays in the larger whole of human society.

A second function of the Association is that of leadership in the meeting of community-wide needs and programs of activities. The local church is not capable at present of furnishing community-wide recreation and play. The Association here has the task of uniting church forces in this community-wide effort. Play as the fundamental

basis for education makes this task of supreme importance to both the church and the Association.

It is a fact that up to the present no nation-wide scheme for the religious education of boys and young men has been developed by either the church or the Association. It is the task of the Association to foment, on the part of the church, such a unified scheme which breaks over all denominational lines, both in the community and in the nation. Such a scheme has been developed in the Dominion of Canada in the Canadian Standard Efficiency Training program, and is increasingly growing toward perfection as an ideal for the developing of Canadian young manhood. There can be no excuse for the church folk of the United States not developing such a plan. The war has revealed our greatest weakness—the lack of an American ideal of citizenship. From many sources we are now having the goal of this citizenship defined as Christian democracy. Just as Germany for forty years inculcated her autocratic ideals into her people for the purpose of world domination, just so the church forces of America must set as their goal the Christian democratizing of the American people. The Association, being a child of the church, can take large leadership in the developing of such a program. The jealousies that now exist between denominations and between organizations sink into insignificance in the face of this task. Whether the Association is to become lost in a great service, even to the extent of losing its identity, is of little moment. The thing that is necessary is the Christian democratizing of the boys and young men of this and each succeeding generation. The Association, functioning through the church, must either meet this challenge by serving, and thus uniting, the churches in this great task or else both the Association and the church will prove themselves inefficient in perhaps the most crucial period the world has ever known.

We are conscious, as we speak of this program, of the wide development of the Scout movement and the fact that the Scout movement is utilizable by all agencies and all denominations, such as the Catholic, the Jew, the Protestant. We are just as conscious, however, that the program of the future that is to achieve a Christian democracy must have a definite kind of social concern as its motive. The Association is, therefore, glad to be a part of the Protestant church in these days, and is exceedingly thankful to actively stand for the universal mode of concern as revealed to men in Jesus Christ. It is the task, therefore, of the Association to make the Protestant church the most strategic power for universal community building that exists in the world. This does not put the Protestant church over against other agencies but makes it a real factor able to join with them in universal living. It is, therefore, the chief task of the Associations—(and the Associations are those elements of a community associating with one another on the Christian basis, for the purpose of extending this same association to all men everywhere)—to strengthen and develop the Protestant church.

This support of the Protestant church is not to be understood as a

support of one local church over against other local churches in the same section, as many congregations and pastors now desire: the task of the Association is to foment a community-wide interest—for the Jesus way transcends all sectarian barriers. When a local church asks an Association to allow its boys to have the use of the gymnasium floor separate from all other groups—as though contact with other groups would somehow poison them,—that church is to be severely rebuked. The Association must refuse to work for one church alone. To be sure, this often looks to pastors like a refusal to work with and for the church. It is far from it. The aiding of work that is community-wide in importance is the highest service that the Association can give to the local church.

The Associations have, again, a chief function in discovering and training leaders for churches and for extra-church activities. There are few movements that have developed the executive qualities and qualities of leadership as has the Association. Many other organizations have borrowed these leaders in the developing of their own work. We are glad to have it so. We are not only glad to lend our leaders to these other movements, but we must go on to discover and train the enormous latent leadership in every community as active agents in the local organizations in the stimulating and fomenting of work for the common good of all.

Leadership must be discovered by the Association for groups not now touched by the church. For example, the church has as yet failed to discover that there is an employed boy or an employed-boy problem. The Association must help the churches to discover the fact that the majority of boys are working boys, and that their problems as working boys are very keen and very different from those of the academically minded school boy. Many Associations claim that the work with the employed boy is the peculiar problem of the Association. This is true in part only. The Association should serve the working boy direct only when it is impossible to stimulate the church to do it on its own account. The Association is ever a stimulating agency and should serve as an organization only at those times when the parent organization, the church, is unable to function in a community-wide form.

The Association has a major task in discovering to the church the high school boy and developing leadership for the same. Here, again, the Association has tackled the task as an organization rather than approaching it through the Christian church. There have been reasons for this, and good reasons. It must not so continue, however, if the best work is to be done. Unless the church comes to a consciousness of the problems of the High school boy, and unless the church in a community-wide way discovers a mode of meeting these problems, the real community building that is the goal of all religious educational efforts fails. The Association will find itself far more in the causing of the church to discover itself in this task than by doing the task as an Association organization alone.

The Association must ever recognize itself as supplementary: the church is primary. The church is the unit of local organization. Therefore, the Association stands ready to help any organization that has any contribution to make to community building. It is ready to assist and use the Scout movement: it is certainly ready to throw its whole force in the great Sunday-school organization and development: the latter should be ready, in conjunction with the Association, to tackle the young peoples' problem and discover a vital approach to the same.

There are some leaders in the present religious educational development who, in public speech and printed page, have referred to the Association, in regard to its relations to the religious education of the community, in a more or less flippant way. They pass it by as having no effect in community building. If these folks mean by religious education mere instruction through organized class work and organized Bible classes, then their criticism is correct. However, if religious education consists in the process of stimulating all persons to share in the society-building effort, then the Association must be looked upon as a primary agency of religious education. The County-Work movement of the Association is entirely a movement in community building. In our large cities the magnitude of the building and building operations has often turned the energy of the Association secretaries into purely mechanical processes. The Association has sensed this and is now turning the whole of its energy to community building. This is the meaning of city community work on the part of the Association. The church should take a like step, change its emphasis from the local church to the community, accept the Association as its supplement and utilize the great forces of executive leadership and thinking therein in the great task of community building.