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THE INTERNATIONAL NOTE IN THE CHURCH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

MARIE COLE HUNTER*

Out of this present cataclysm of war is springing a new world. From the battle fields of Europe and in countless homes touched by the tragedies on heroisms of those battle fields are emerging people with a distinctly new religious experience, with a new interpretation of God in relation to His world. This fact conveys a challenge to homes and communities everywhere to develop people of a new birth who shall fulfill in lives of new significance this newly apprehended vision of a world made new.

Perhaps, the most significant outcome of this new world is not so much any group of ideas as a certain attitude of mind which is at the basis of all progress. Established ways of looking at life and its problems have received a jolt. The most rigidly inflexible minds have suffered a conversion of mental attitude. Thinking is becoming fluid; minds are plastic; and in the realms of religion and education the "open mind" is manifestly asserting itself. Concretely, for those whose work lies pre-eminently within the sphere of this new world and with the creation of new people to live in it, this involves the utmost readiness to forsake preconceived ideas of education and to be led by the signs of the times and present world needs. It involves an ultimate committal to the spirit of adventure in the realm of religious education. In that spirit we set out upon our quest to discover how we may best introduce the note of internationalism into the church school curriculum.

Before agreeing upon a definition of internationalism, we should note that the present war is not the only cause of the new international feeling; but that feeling is also the result of a process of internationalizing which has been slowly but surely going on through the agencies of commerce, co-operative industrialism, modern inventive science, missionary enterprise; and the messages of individual prophets. Long before the remote rumblings of this present war had startled a peace-loving world, we had heard rumors of the coming international mind. One of the functions of the war has been to make us suddenly and vividly conscious through actual experience of what was hitherto only dimly apprehended as a possi-

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bility. Whatever may be our personal convictions about war in general, it is evident that those who are most intimately in touch with this world-conflict are splendidly conscious of a supreme call to sacrifice for an ideal of democracy, and that ideal of democracy is conceived of by them in no less than world terms.

It becomes evident that we may conceive of internationalism as a propaganda on paper, as a collection of economic, industrial and scientific forces, binding the nations of the world together, or as an attitude of the spirit. It is one thing to discuss internationalism, its causes and effects; it is quite another thing to have the international feeling. It is one thing to talk about it; it is another thing to "be" it. We are confronted on every page with the emphasis being placed upon this last definition. We are told that we must "christianize international relations." The following statements illustrate the prevalence of this point of view. "Force can never build the new world order; that must be built upon international unselfishness and good-will. The preparedness for which I plead is the preparedness of the American will. An internationalized world must first exist in the thought of the world's thinkers, and in the minds, hearts and consciences of the teachers and students in the schools and colleges and universities of the civilized world. No scheme of universal policy that statesmen can devise will work until the people are internationalists in their thoughts. To work this inward transfiguration of man's thinking, which alone can give effectiveness to the outward devices of our statesmen, is the task of religion."

The emphasis in all of the above is on a certain attitude of the will which issues in action. And this attitude is essentially the Christian attitude in the fullest conception of Jesus' interpretation of what the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God mean. Fosdick says, "A Christianity that is not international has never known its Master." In introducing the "International Note" into the curriculum, we are simply striking at what is the fundamental aim of all Christian education. To quote Dr. Coe, "the growth of the young toward and into mature and efficient devotion to the democracy of God, and a happy self-realization therein." "Since," as Dr. Coe says, the aim is "devotion to a cause" our education must consist in "the cultivation of intelligent will." Only this will "increase the amount of effective, not merely sentimental brotherhood in the world."

When we once grasp the idea that only when a child has learned to christianize all the social contacts of life, (and by this we mean

living out the Christian attitudes of sympathy, helpfulness, loyalty, friendship, and justice in his immediate social environment) and when he has extended these ideas to a world-society, so that he has a world-consciousness, controlled by a sense of justice, that only then, is religious education achieving its aim, we immediately recognize that this may entail a new attitude toward the content and method of religious education. Or at least it must entail a willingness to see what such a new attitude might accomplish as well as a willingness to investigate, in a spirit of high adventure, the present curriculum of our church schools.

If, then, internationalism consists, not in discussing certain qualities, but in individuals and nations so governing their relations to each other that they are actuated by the Christian feelings of justice and good will, we are almost driven to a certain point of view about our task of education. For, we can only achieve this aim of education when we perceive that education is not a preparation for life, but that it is or should be life itself. Children are living; they are not getting ready to live, except in so far as living well and completely in the present social experience is the only satisfactory preparation for living in a larger society. All this is by way of defining what we mean by curriculum.

Since, then, the only adequate preparation for life is life; since the process of character building is a present, not a future issue; since the development of an international mind has its basis in the international feeling or will, which rests fundamentally upon the Christian attitude expanded to adequately meet the child's expanding social opportunity, we must think of the curriculum, not merely as a mass of instructional material, the study of which shall prepare one for life, but as a "course of living itself." (I quote Dr. Coe's "Social Theory of Religious Education.") For the purposes of this paper curriculum shall be understood to mean not only instructional material, but, to quote Dr. Coe again, "a graded series of experiments in social living." Undoubtedly the discussion following this paper will reveal how many are ready to adopt this last definition of a curriculum without reservations. Certainly all of us will agree that in order to make active Christians trained in the technique of Christian living, we must place more emphasis upon it than we have in the past. Only so can we create a Christian democracy and a world brotherhood.

This discussion does not altogether assume that the international note has not been introduced into our church-school curricula hitherto. Many churches have been introducing it. Within the

last few years the effort to use efficient programs of missionary education in the church schools of America has been a noteworthy one, and productive of good results. We should fittingly pay a tribute to the fine, undaunted, progressive work of the Missionary Educational Movement, which has supplied educational ideals for the teacher of missions, which has produced almost the only available extra-Biblical material for creating the international feeling, and whose leaders in numerous summer conferences have gathered together men and women of all races, for the mutual achievement of a world outlook. In these conferences the social imagination has been cultivated. Through intensive study classes, people of many races have come to be understood and respected; the group life of young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty has been democratized; and the Christian law of love and service has come to be understood, and, what is far greater, appropriated by many a young life. We can be grateful for all this education for internationalism and for its steady penetration into the local church schools, and, at the same time, we can and must consider how programs similar to this can be better worked out in the church schools of our country and also how the program can be expanded to meet enlarging needs.

In listing the following suggestions as to ways in which the international note may be introduced into the church school curriculum no attempt has been made to do so according to the gradually unfolding interests of childhood, but simply to suggest possibilities and to indicate lines along which discussion may be profitable.

1. *Any curriculum so planned as to assist the child in Christianizing his relations to the home group, the playground, the school-room, is sounding surely and clearly an international note.* The child who learns to live his life in the community in a spirit of helpfulness, good will, fair play, friendliness, has laid the surest foundations for the extension of those feelings to his relations with a world group. Any Sunday-school class of adolescent girls, showing a tendency to social exclusiveness, provides an opportunity for introducing into the curriculum a series of co-operative projects that shall create a community interest between members of the group, reveal the true basis of friendship in the intrinsic worth of personalities, through a common cause for service, eliminate differences and draw the members of the group together by their loyalty to this common cause, and make it possible for the members of the group to share their best with each other. Such a series of

class projects is the best, and in many cases, the only kind of a vital curriculum that will actually create justice and good will for all in the group. The teacher can well afford to lay aside the text book that does not minister to the needs of such a concrete situation and substitute material that will meet this particular need.

2. But, in addition to taking note of the unexpected group situations that arise, a well planned curriculum must enlarge the child's social experience by creating for him a variety of *social situations* in which he must act as a social being. Such a curriculum will enlist his services in community betterment, in keeping streets clean and yards tidy, in the elimination of tussock moths, in the protection of birds and all animals, in the right selection of moving pictures and in countless other opportunities. Such a curriculum will help him to participate intelligently in national service, in the economizing of food, the selling and buying of thrift stamps, and child-labor legislation. And as any American child today is a citizen of a world whose farthest limits are daily brought near to him through the newspaper and other modern inventions, he may at an early age participate in the understanding of and the alleviation of living conditions surrounding child life in other countries than his own.

3. This leads us to consider that phase of the curriculum commonly known as *graded social service*. This has, too often, been tacked on to the course of study for each age. It has been regarded as an outlet for certain feelings and motives, roused in the class study which has been the curriculum proper. Here, is where our social theory of education will act as a corrective, and teach us to see in it the real educative process itself, while the instructional material becomes simply the hand-maid of the actual service. It is through the group service that the Christian attitudes of good will and friendliness may find expression and thus become the permanent possessions of personality. One of the crying defects of this part of our curriculum so far has been a certain artificiality; it has often been super-imposed upon groups; it has not always been a normal functioning. And the task of determining just how a child or a group of children functions normally at a given period and in widely differing community situations is not an easy one. The present writer knows something of the difficulty of creating experiments in social living for groups of suburban children, quite far removed from city life, that shall contain enough variety to make social experience what it ought to be and at the same time maintain natural situations.

One other defect in our system of graded philanthropies has been that holier-than-thou attitude on the part of the bestowers toward those served. This is a subtle tendency and one difficult to eradicate but to meet and overcome it is of great significance in the cultivation of the international feeling. The group performing the service must be led to do so not from any sense of superiority but because they recognize in those they are helping personalities of such infinite possibilities that it becomes a privilege to help them expand. If the service can be reciprocal and the good will shared, then we have the basis for true democracy. A group of primary children who had sent gifts to the children in a similar group in a Mission Sunday school, received from these children in return some very simple Easter cards which they had made themselves. A class of adolescent girls sent scrap books and kindergarten material, as well as some personal gifts, to a Chinese kindergartner. In a short time they received from her hand painted book marks of exquisite workmanship; which she had made for each of her American friends. An exchange of letters followed. A bond of international feeling was established by this sharing of their best. Fosdick says that the missionary enterprise at its very heart is the impulse to share our finest. If the finest in each race were thoroughly known to every other race this would clear the way for true international feeling.

The fundamental spirit of any democracy, world or otherwise, lies not only in the provision for private initiative but the ability to co-operate for the common good. So, all graded social service should make it possible for groups with differing opportunities not only to serve each other, but to co-operate in some task which makes for human welfare. One summer a high-school group in a church school raised the money to equip a playground for the boys and girls in a community surrounding a mission church. During the summer the high-school boys helped organize the play for the younger boys. They, together with some of the young men from the mission church, laid out the tennis courts and set up a part of the playground equipment. The high-school girls told stories to the littlest children and they, together with the girls of their own age, supervised the play of the younger girls. This was a truly co-operative project and although problems arose, among them the race problem, settlements were made in accordance with the principles of justice for all. This was an achievement in the realm of international spirit.

4. Under experiments in social living mention should be made

of *democratizing the groups* in the church school. It is difficult to introduce this principle of democracy into the church school where all the traditions have entrenched an organization superimposed by adult officers upon the youthful members, but it is worth all our most strenuous endeavor. For a group to participate in the making of laws governing its administration and then to co-operate in seeing that they are carried out so that justice is maintained, for each individual, and for each group within the larger group, what better preparation for an effective internationalism could there be? Needless to say such a democratizing process requires an adult leader who knows when to speak and when to be silent, who can lead, not push, who is thoroughly committed to the idea of democracy and who has the utmost faith in the possibilities of youth.

5. The necessity for cultivating the *social imagination* as a basis for internationalism. A young life may be thoroughly social in response to the immediate community needs and yet fail to comprehend its relation to a larger world. Sometimes the very intensity of devotion to a local cause excludes a vision of its world affiliations. This means that the world must be brought near to the child, through his heaven sent gift of imagination, at an early age. He must share, as far as he is able, that adult social experience which is to be his. Here is where the great contribution of our instructional material may be made—in this cultivation of the social imagination. A very little child can comprehend that there is a world outside the four walls of home or the winding streets of his own village. Indeed, today, at an early age, this thought of a larger world than his community is forced upon him through the conversation of adults, the greater facilities for travel, the printed page, the picture book, the picture postal card and the moving picture, and since in every child there are all the elements of the universal man he can first feel and later understand that all this teeming life is one. Through the dolls of all nations is conveyed a suggestion of this universal world-family and the imagination can be harnessed to ideas of the common interracial experience of parenthood and family life. What a pity if all the stories told to primary children should convey the idea that the Christian attitudes of helpfulness, sympathy, right doing of God's will, can only be illustrated by experiences from American child life! Has America the monopoly of all the finer virtues? What a bond of international feeling is established, (and the result in the American child's life is just as beneficent), by telling the story of the

pride of two little African twins whose father proved himself the bravest father.

We know, of course, the argument that the geographical interest does not develop until a later age and that until then the child has no foundation for a world knowledge. But knowledge of mind and attitude of spirit are to be differentiated. We will all probably admit that in early childhood the emphasis must be upon training in the altruistic feelings and largely through enabling the child to express those feelings in his immediate home and community life. But with the great world at his very doors today demanding entrance into his social consciousness must we not see to it that those carefully cultivated feelings are extended to a larger social experience? I know of a certain American kindergarten on whose walls from time to time appear pictures of a kindergarten in China where the church missionary works. The children of that missionary, when home on a furlough, were members of this American kindergarten. The American children have a doll whose twin sister they have sent to the Chinese kindergarten. A lovely picture of the child Samuel on their walls reminds them that the counterpart of that picture, their gift, hangs on those walls in China. By a fortuitous circumstance the teacher of the American kindergarten is a sister of the missionary to China. Last year she made a trip to that Oriental kindergarten so that she knows whereof she speaks and through her the children know too.

As the social imagination is largely stimulated by the stories or the reading material which is given to the child, the time has come to speak of what to many may seem the legitimate theme of this paper, the instructional material. What material is available for the purpose of cultivating the international mind? May I simply indicate different types of material, available and offer suggestions as to the crying need of more material of a certain kind?

1. We have first of all that material which enables a child to *consciously enter into the experience of a child in a totally different social group*. Of this type of book the story of Giovanni, a boy of Italy, by Miss Anita Faris, is an example. I have seen a group of thirty Junior children among whom were the "live wires" of the Junior department sit spellbound as they listened to the story of Giovanni in his Italian home and later in his experience of entering into an understanding of American citizenship. He is a natural boy; his experiences even when colored by the different customs of Naples are normal boyhood experiences; his intrinsic

worth and a perfectly natural chain of events make him the friend of Ralph the American boy. It is through such concrete stories as these that our boys and girls may establish a fellowship of feeling with the ends of the earth. I am reminded too of the story of "Goodbird the Indian." The story of his life is told by Goodbird himself, so that the American child can understandingly enter into the spiritual heritage of and the expanding individual experience of a boy of a different race.

2. There is another type of book the best illustration of which comes from the pen of Miss Jean McKenzie whose articles in the *Atlantic Monthly* have arrested the attention of even so-called non-religious thinkers upon Christianity's reaction on the primitive mind. In books like "The African Trail" for adults and "African Adventurers" for children, Miss McKenzie has made a unique contribution to international material, for she rivets the attention of the reader upon dramas of the human soul, so that one forgets utterly that one is reading about people of another race. The reader is concerned with soul experiences that are essentially human and universal. Although one is introduced, through the magic of her pen, to all the subtle differences between a primitive mind and that of civilization, one is seldom conscious of putting oneself in another's place. We come as near to "thinking black" as perhaps it is possible for us to do. It is apparent that we have all too little material of this sort. Here is an opportunity for one who is gifted along this line.

3. Another type of material which is available is the lives of our great missionaries, (and may we expand the meaning of the word "missionary," to include all whose lives express the spirit of our Father in His outreaching purpose for the good of all). All have been "living epistles" of the international feeling. It is they who have grasped the full significance of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Someone has said recently: "Personal religious experience cannot be manufactured, but it can be inspired. Great personalities flash inspiration." Material of this sort is increasingly available in all graded Sunday-school courses, in the excellent publications of the Missionary Education Movement and in the press at large. Who has not observed the effect upon an adolescent group of that charming story of the Moffats, published last year? Other books of this character are "Ann of Ava," and Livingstones, "The Pathfinder."

4. A type of material similar to this consists of books containing a series of studies of lives that have been lived in this essen-

tial spirit of Christianity, such as "Servants of the King," by Robert E. Speer, and "Comrades in Service" by Margaret Burton. The cumulative effect of the study of these lives upon adolescent groups is often tremendous. Miss Burton's book has the advantage of representing lives selected from different races, so that a bond of fellowship is established, as the title indicates.

5. So far we have said nothing about the Bible as a part of the curriculum for creating international feeling. No material better suited to our purpose exists. It contains a marvelous picture of a widening socially religious horizon, a story of the emergence of a nation from an experience of isolation into a world outlook and a social consciousness which led them to share their finest spiritual heritage with the nations of the world. Yet, may we not ask ourselves how many boys and girls in our church schools ever graduate with this conception of the story of the Hebrew people? How many of them see it as a progressive whole, rather than broken up into many unrelated parts? How many church-school teachers have this view? How can this result be achieved. Must our Junior children continue to get it broken up, into parts, as in most cases they do, waiting till later adolescence for an adequate conception of the social significance of the Bible? Do we need some revisions of our Biblical material to meet this need? Will one great step toward the solution be the Teachers' Study Class, where the teachers themselves may see the Bible as the outgrowth of a people progressing from individualistic religion to a conception of the "democracy of God"? Do our teachers, in addition, need the background afforded by the study of that excellent book "Missionary Education in Home and School" by Ralph E. Diffendorfer?

There are other questions fraught with significance for all our future policy with respect to a curriculum for the church school which center in the idea of the Bible as covering such a large quantity of our religious-educational material. Are many of our courses more academic than they need to be? Should they be abbreviated and less essential material eliminated? I know of certain teachers who are driven to despair in the effort to cover all the material, outlined in certain of our courses, on the Life of Jesus and, at the end of the year fear that their pupils have no adequate idea of that life. And that is principally because the time which is required to reveal the spirit of that life must be devoted to minutiae of detail. The same is true often of the study of Paul's life. The public schools seldom devote a whole year to

the study of one life. Does not our present curricula often repeat material unnecessarily?

In the present amount of time allotted to us for religious education how can we satisfactorily develop the international mind? How can we have sufficient time for adequate experiments in social living and time for the consideration of their significance; how are we to do all this, to meet the needs of our ever-expanding world, and still devote as large a proportion of our curriculum to the repeated study of certain sections of the Bible? If we believe that religion made the Bible and not the Bible religion, must we not perceive then that religion is still writing great books in the Bible? And do we dare to withhold the Bible of our day from our boys and girls? Is this the point where we need that spirit of adventure, that willingness to open our minds to new truth in order that we may be true to our trust? Or is the solution in keeping the same material, but in some way getting more time so we can add to it?

6. It is possible only to mention the power of *educational dramatics* to cultivate the social imagination. No other method is surer, provided the drama is *real* drama, according to the criteria of dramatic art, and not elocutionary drivel. Mention should be made also of the use of pageantry which under skilled management is capable of great possibilities.

7. Of course the very best method of creating real internationalism is the possibility of *personal friendships* between young people of different races. There is no substitute for this. If the choice of friendship can be based on intrinsic worth, not on racial similarity or social proximity, the international mind can become a reality, not a dream. The American schoolroom today is the working opportunity of many teachers. Happy is the church school that has this same opportunity, and knows how to use it. Happier still is the child who can have such friendships even before school age, when racial dissimilarity means nothing at all and the universal bond of childhood everything.

8. Material is fast becoming available for discussion among older adolescents and adults on the whole question of internationalism. This is where talking about it avails much. In thoroughly democratic discussions misunderstandings will be cleared up, ideas of democracy inculcated, the relationship between religion and diplomacy can be defined and the way paved for the application of Christianity to the solution of international problems. This method should not be confined to older groups; such discussions

can be the food, in various kinds, for all youth as soon as the reasoning powers develop.

9. The service of worship in many a church school affords the opportunity for introducing the international note. Through group worship incentives and motives can be awakened, desires kindled, that will lead the will to action. Feelings of international significance can not only be engendered but may find expression in worship. That group which can, on the wings of its worship, carry not only individual and local needs to God, but the needs of a world of His children, is entering into the large social purposes of a social God. The observations of these writers has been that those services of worship which are of social significance hold the interest of young people best. With adolescents there is also the opportunity to socialize the worship periods by placing it in the hands of the boys and girls, themselves, to plan and to lead.

One other difficulty which ought to be stressed is an outstanding one which every Director of Religious Education must be meeting in the present crisis. So few of our volunteer teachers in the church school are as yet prepared to teach the present courses of study with an international emphasis, much less to teach, in addition to that, the extra-Biblical material that is primarily designed to create the international feeling. Our teachers, for the most part, are not yet trained to lead and supervise their classes in projects of social experimentation. This requires an expert hand. It becomes apparent that in the immediate world crisis the director, himself, must definitely choose as his greatest obligation and privilege this task of introducing the international note. Since, so much of the best material for international education is not yet in form to place in unskilled hands, the presentation of this material must very largely be given by the director, who understands how to take miscellaneous material from current periodicals or other sources or long biographies that need to be shortened, and adopt all of this for the immediate purpose of striking an international note. Many a director, realizing this, is utilizing the service of worship period to educate the young people for internationalism.

Finally, let us remind ourselves that it is the Director of Religious Education who in the local church does the work. He makes, or may make, internationalists. Every child in his parish may become a self-centered individualist or an Abraham Lincoln, a Jacob Riis, a David Livingstone.