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Christian Education and Social Control

MELVIN A. BRANNON, PH. D.*

In discussing religious education and social control it would seem to one trained in business and science correct and desirable to place the subject in the relationship of cause and effect,—religious education the cause, and social control the effect.

If there is one factor which distinguishes our society and our civilization from the society and civilization preceding, it is the factor which perhaps gives the twentieth century society its great problem. The factor is the development of superfluous energy turned to mechanical activities rather than to those activities called spiritual. I believe that these superfluous energies used for material ends have acted as a poison in society, that we have utilized them as one discriminating writer expresses it, as armor such as that of the lobster or the rhinoceros. These armor-plated materialists have attacked one another and thus have in many respects greatly disturbed, and at times almost destroyed, the social organism. The commercializing of these energies in the uncensored movies, the careless and uncontrolled automobile driving, jazz music and jazz dancing, are illustrations of what excessive mechanical contrivances, utilizing superfluous energies, have done in the way of disturbing social control.

There is much discussion in these days relative to the church and other agencies, through which religious education may express itself, giving guidance to our economics and our political and social expressions. While this might seem encouraging, we would do well to remind ourselves that a strange paradox is possible. The paradox consists in this, that if people definitely insist upon disregarding consequences and serve God and fellowmen for the love of religious and social service, they always secure remarkable and delightful results. They reach the goal of happiness. But if the motives of happiness and "honesty-is-the-best-policy" are the chief stimulations of men, their efforts surely fail. This means then that we must have correct motives if we expect to secure amelioration and wise adjustments in the social organism through utilization of the principles laid down in religion. In other words, we must choose goodness for goodness' sake.

There are two direct scientific reasons for regarding religious education as a cause and social control as a result. Religious education is causal, first in that it enables the individual to focus his attention upon constructive fundamentals which lie back of social control. Second, it is causal because the energy released from emotions is the source from which we draw possibly ninety *per cent.* of the power expressed in social activities. It is quite well recognized in psychology that the energy released from emotions is the source of about 75 per cent of our working power in all human relations. If this is true, the emotions comprised within the field of religious education, the emotions associated with good-will, friendly endeavor, and sympathetic service, may furnish the necessary motive power for the good which we desire in society, and for the good which we may hope individually to achieve in our individual social control. Illustrations in connection with this point are multiple. Outstanding would be the illustration associated with the vicarious life of our mothers and the vicarious life of Jesus Christ. They

*A paper read at the R. E. A. Conference at the University of Wisconsin, November 22nd, 1921, by the president of Beloit College.

are superlative exhibits of the declaration that "he who would lose his life shall find it," whereas he that would "save his life shall lose it."

Someone has said that "Christianity has meant something different to every age and every generation. It has changed and grown, altered in form and expression, yet remains always itself." This is another way of saying what we have briefly alluded to this morning as religious education operating as a cause and expressing itself in social control as a result.

The cause, religious education, has been essentially the same throughout the story of civilization. There has been, it is true, slight variation, modification and change in the result, social control. And this is in harmony with the unalterable law of conservation that you must concentrate and conserve energy if you are to achieve maximum results; you must utilize dynamic sources of emotion if you are to release maximum energy for human endeavors. Thus, too, we may understand the paradox respecting the question of ultimate good, and God. If ultimate good and God are sought and served for their own sakes, unquestionable success will be achieved. If these salient and obvious truths are kept in mind and utilized we may be able to meet the emergency load which society experiences today because our present superfluous energies are turned to mechanical activities rather than to spiritual needs.

Progress of Religious Education at the University of Illinois

JOHN MITCHELL PAGE*

Religion must have a house to dwell in and men and methods to speak for her and make her message clear, hence the need of Schools of Religion as well as Churches for Worship. So we find at many places throughout the country, Schools of Religion *at*, but not *of*, our State Universities. One of these institutions has its seat close by the University of Illinois, and is fulfilling its mission there with reality and power. The Wesley Foundation is not an experiment nor a makeshift but an achievement, the result of a quarter of a century of intelligent purpose—an achievement which is realizing the true American ideal of the co-operation of the Church and State so well expressed by the late Mayor of New York at the laying of the cornerstone of a new part of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, when he said, "Our City is proud to dedicate this great monument to our ideal and hope, that the Church and State may always walk side by side but never hand in hand."

To give an intelligent understanding of the Wesley Foundation as it is, one must go back into certain antecedent conditions which had much to do in making it possible. In the first place, the success of these educational ventures in religion greatly depends upon the willingness of the University to give credits for their courses, that is to acknowledge the work done in them as part of the student's total work toward his degree. The University expects a pretty heavy amount of work from its students. Their time is well filled and most of them cannot add two or three hours a week to their schedules. If these hours are to be given to the study of Religion; (or the

*The Rev. John Mitchell Page, Episcopal University Pastor at Urbana, Illinois, read this report on progress at Illinois at the R. E. A. Conference at The University of Wisconsin, Nov. 22nd, 1921.