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An eclectic approach to Christian education

Cynthia Barbara Bragg

Interdenominational Theological Center

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PROJECT ESSAY

AN ECLECTIC APPROACH TO
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Submitted in Partial Requirement
for the Master of Religious
Education (MRE) degree

By

Cynthia Barbara Bragg

April 16, 1975

Interdenominational Theological Center
Atlanta, Georgia
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To my parents

Reverend and Mrs. Robert L. Eragg
PREFACE

Whatever we would have in our material life, we should first put it into our program of education. This fundamental principle is universally accepted as applied to civic, moral and vocational life. We are now coming to recognize this application, and the result is widespread interest in the organization and administration of programs of religious education which will provide adequate religious instruction for American children, youth and adults.

A share of attention has been given to eclecticism and its approach to Christian Education, philosophies of education and theories of learning. The following are some assumptions which have been made:

(1) That religious instruction should be regarded as an integral part of the education of every child, youth and adult.

(2) That religious education can be carried on successfully under specified conditions as to aim, curriculum, method and supervision.

(3) Churches constitute the chief agencies for providing religious instruction.

(4) The advances in modern education and instruction of methods for teaching pupils provide reservoirs for utilization and experimentation.

No less marked has been the emphasis upon the importance of trained teacher to facilitate the highest possible degree of learning. Eclecticism denotes variety—- the spices of life;
it may prove experientially sound, functional, purposeful and developmental in the perpetual broadening of Christian Education.
AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acknowledgement is gratefully made to my advisor, Dr. Jonathan Jackson for his painstaking assistance and patience in final preparation of this essay. I should not complete this acknowledgement without adding my appreciation to Dr. Josephus R. Coan in helping me clarify my thoughts on pertinent issues. I am indebted to him for his helpful suggestions contributed to the preparation of the draft.

I am especially grateful to Bishop J. O. Patterson and the members of The Church of God in Christ for their loyal support to this institution. I wish to express appreciation to Dean Oliver Haney and Dr. Bennie Goodwin for their academic and spiritual guidance. To my sister, Bill, I wish to thank for her help, tolerance and encouragement while working on the final draft.
INTRODUCTION

Upon the Christian Church there rests the responsibility of nurturing the religious life of all humanity. Brought face to face with this responsibility the church is constantly challenged to keep abreast with changing trends of society and its people. Rapidly increasing numbers of citizens are forcing our leaders to supply answers to plaguing problems of mankind.

The need of religion in our national life is apparent. This need necessitates a constant flow of trained personnel in formulating clear conceptions of objectives, educational programs, and clearly defined Christian Education programs. In conjunction to this, religious educators must continue to explore new and different methods, techniques, skills, approaches, sources, theories and practices comprising the educative process.

In view of an eclectic approach, this paper addresses itself to selected and pertinent aspects of Christian Education, namely, foundations, administration and leadership, methods, materials and programs for Christian education.

It is hoped this research will reflect wisdom in selectivity thereby formulating a composite of issues accessible to being read and understood holistically.
CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

When one considers the varieties of religious experiences today, one realizes the difficulty of stating the modern purposes and aims of religious education. Involved in such a formulation there are many sensitive issues. Using an eclectic approach this paper will address itself to pertinent dimensions of Christian Education, namely, foundations, leadership and development, programs, methods and materials for Christian Education.

The Purpose. The purpose will be to stress educational aims and emphasis in view of the Christian experience deemed vital and precious to Christian Education. To gather necessary elements for such, the content of Christian Education should reflect total response to what is felt to be of supreme worth.

Limitations of the Study. This paper will focus on foundations, leadership and administration and methods, programs and materials for Christian Education.

Definition of Terms. I will deem it necessary to define pertinent terms. Worship will be defined as the experience involving the essence of renewal of Christian life. Eclecticism will be briefly defined as an approach selecting what appears to be best in doctrines methods or styles. For all practical purposes, this approach will be concerned with "selected" pertinent areas of Christian Education critically viewed by the writer. Curriculum. The educational process involves the social setting in which education takes place, the teacher, pupils, goals, methods used, time available and other factors. Curriculum will
refer to the sum total of all these factors. Philosophy will be defined as the pursuit of wisdom; that science which recognizes and explains the urge for ultimate truth.

**Methodology.** The methodology will be a descriptive survey research of related literature in Christian Education and eclectic strata of thought. Additional research focused attention on innovative programs in Christian Education.

**Evaluation.** The research suggested the weaknesses or deficiencies of an adequate philosophy of Christian Education. In order to keep abreast with changing trends, Religious Education must utilize the tools of all disciplines to more adequately build the major aspects of Christian Education pertinent to student and worker.
CHAPTER II
ECLECTICISM DEFINED

Eclecticism, in theoretical system building, is the selection and orderly combination of compatible features from diverse sources, sometimes from otherwise incompatible theories and systems. Eclecticism extracts parts from all kinds of schools, or to be more specific, schools of thought. Its effort is to find valid elements in all doctrines or theories and combine them into a harmonious whole. The resulting system is open to constant revision even in its major outlines.

Eclecticism is to be distinguished from unsystematic and uncritical combination for which the name is syncretism. The eclectic seeks as much consistency and order as is possible, but he is unwilling to sacrifice conceptualizations that put meaning into a wide range of facts for the sake of what he is inclined to think of as a premature and unworkable "over-all" systematization.

Fundamentally, if one chooses to be exclusively eclectic, he may never commit himself to any one particular philosophy. Eclectics have been dubbed as being "lazy theorists" who borrow from various systems of thought and never really create one of their own. Another weakness, as I viewed this approach, is the borrowing from incompatible systems or schools of thought thereby formulating too loose and uncritical line of thought. On the

\[\text{1} \text{Horace B. English, Ava C. English, } "\text{Eclecticism}, \text{ A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological And Psychoanalytical Terms, 11th ed., IV, 168.}\]
other hand, it allows a broad spectrum of freedom, thereby permitting one to select strengths from schools of thought or theory thus, creating a unified whole.

I chose the eclectic approach to extract, as I deemed necessary, the strengths and pertinent dimensions of Christian Education. This approach extended freedom is viewing and selectivity of theories from specialists in the field to those of mediocre works. It is hoped my discrimination in choosing will be noteworthy.

I have at points borrowed, adopted, weighed arguments and compared; all in an attempt to synthesize a comprehensive whole. In its finality, this work will represent my proposal and derivative conclusions.

PHILOSOPHY AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

In some fields case studies form the backbone of instruction. In philosophy, this is not the situation. Rather, selected writings from those who are shaping educational destinies is the nearest possible approach. Such writings bring the reader into direct contact of the thought of the author. Where there is controversy, the reader is put on his own to weigh the issues, become decisive and perhaps draw his own conclusions. Not only is this healthy for the reader but proves challenging for the writer. A rewarding and satisfying method of instruction is one that stimulates "thinking."

Strictly speaking, there is only one true philosophy since there is one origin of all wisdom-God. This Eternal Wisdom reveals
itself to mankind (1) in works of visible creation and (2) through supernatural revelation, especially the incarnate Son of God. These manifestations of Divine Wisdom are theology or supernatural philosophy and philosophy or natural philosophy.

In seeking wisdom, the methods of science are utilized, but philosophy is in quest for things beyond objective methodology. Where science seeks explanation of facts, philosophy is concerned with the ultimate meaning of reality. There is a force in man's nature urging him toward truth and happiness which is satisfied only when truth is recognized in its basic form and when happiness becomes a reality. The science that recognizes and explains this urge for ultimate truth and happiness is philosophy. Thus, every system of education is based on a philosophy of life. All education properly so-called is based on a complete philosophy of life. All true education is based on the true philosophy of life.²

Philosophy and Religion share common ground. Both examine the basis of man's religious belief, man's experience and human thought. A close look at the history of philosophy and education demonstrates the concern of philosophy in the teaching-learning process and educational aims. Actually, philosophy and Christian education is so entwined that it utilizes philosophic tools in achieving meaningful communication.

In addition to this, the church has basically been a "utilizer" rather than a "creator" in the nature and practice of American education. Reconstruction in education is evident in churches as they attempt to make theological perspectives normative through swiftly changing denominational literature. However, Lewis J. Sherrill stated that the church has a responsibility—that of being more creative. In view of a philosophy of Christian education he states:

The new philosophy of Christian education must come to the subject of education from within the Jewish-Christian tradition, not from outside it. More specifically, it must draw its inspiration from the peculiar genius of the Christian community and of Christian faith rather than from any form of secular society or secular education. The unique nature of Christian education derives from the unique nature of the Christian community and Christian faith. The Christian community as a whole is meant to be the scene of a redemptive ministry to the human self as a whole.

There remains the need for a clearly articulated and systematic philosophy of Christian education that will take into account theological perspectives and educational foundations. Opposing philosophies of education should serve as stepping stones for reconstruction of problems of knowledge, ethical theories and problems of language and meaning.

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CHAPTER III
OBJECTIVES AND FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Because eclecticism denotes selectivity and variation it should not appear bizarre or extreme in its method or approach because one of the most significant characteristics of the contemporary Christian Education movement is change. Very little is static and beyond question. Curriculum theory and materials, age group ministries, religion and the public schools, and even the whole matter of Protestant strategies for Christian education are undergoing searching analysis and evaluation.  

This section is devoted to exploring the foundations of Christian education and its present objective. In 1930, Paul H. Vieth reflected both the theological and educational insights of the period and proposed seven objectives in religious education, to which an eighth was added later. The International Council of Religious Education adopted them "as a basic document for curriculum work, subject to revision from time to time as further experience may make desirable."  

Briefly stated the objectives were:

(1) Christian religious education seeks to foster in growing persons a consciousness of God as a reality in human experience.

(2) Seeks to develop an understanding and appreciation of the personality, life and teachings of Jesus.

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4Ibid., p. 5.
5Ibid., p. 95.
(3) Seeks to foster a progressive development of a Christ-like character.

(4) Seeks to develop the ability and disposition to participate in and contribute to the building of a social order throughout the world, embodying the ideal of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.

(5) Seeks to develop the ability to participate in the church.

(6) Seeks to lead persons into a Christian interpretation of life and the universe thereby building a philosophy on this interpretation.

(7) Seeks to effect the assimilation of the best religious experience, pre-eminently that recorded in the Bible, as effective guidance to present experience.

To understand the central thrust of Christian education one must understand the educational ministry of the church and realize Christianity is the faith of a community living in history. It is the life of a community of people responding to God in love. Hence, Christian education may be described as the effort to introduce persons into the life and mission of the community of Christian faith. This conception of Christian education is consistent with the biblical understanding of the church and with findings of recent educational psychology about the learning process.

The nature of Christian education is determined by the fact of a community of people who continually respond to God's activity

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6 Ibid., p. 12.
in the world. Such education historically borrowed ideas from pagan and secular sources; today it may learn from new developments in psychology and public education.

Surveying Christian education through history provides insight for the church today as it strives to carry out its teaching function. From the biblical period into the twentieth century, Christian educators are searching history to understand effective forms of education in other periods when somewhat similar conditions existed, and to gain a deeper grasp of how and by what forces the present forms emerged. Rapidly changing society necessitates change in Christian education. Faced by this challenge, churches are forced to search for patterns which will be effective in the years ahead.

The Christian faith does not exist apart from interpretation or theology. Thus, when we speak of the Christian faith or the gospel as one of the givens of Christian teaching, this is the theological foundation of the teaching-learning transaction. Christian educators are therefore dependent upon professional and systematic theologians to explicate the Christian faith. There are three major points at which theology is related to teaching. The church has a faith to communicate and this faith must be stated theologically. Teaching as witness to one's faith (trust, conviction, relationship) moves toward knowledge too. The teacher can talk about God and witness to his or her own relation to God. Both types of knowledge are parts of the theological content of teaching.
Secondly, theology effects our understanding of the process of teaching. If we understand the Christian faith in terms of ethical values or as a relationship with God we will seek for a process of education for transmission of given concepts.

Thirdly, method and process are closely related. Method grows out of process and both grow out of theology. Generally, Christian educators will borrow their methods from general education and cognate disciplines.

Revelation and the biblical witness play important roles in contemporary theoretical formulations of Christian education. The centrality of the Bible is obvious. It is the beginning point. It is the channel through which God may come to confront men. It has intrinsic, commanding authority. Its relevance is evidenced as it takes hold of the very being of a person, transforms him, and guides him toward living a Christian life. The Bible becomes relevant as it answers questions and revelatory as the dynamic activity of God is perceived through historical events and ongoing activities.

**Psychological foundations**

A Christian view of man cannot ignore the findings of empirical psychology. Christian education will use the findings of empirical psychology to explain the gospel, but never to replace the gospel. The psychologies of learning, namely, conditioning, perceptual, developmental and existential are four theories which will be briefly discussed.
**Conditioning theory** - is one of the most accepted scientific explanations of learning. Conditioned learning occurs whenever an original stimulus is accompanied by a second stimulus so that after repetition the response to the second stimulus will be elicited by the original stimulus.\(^7\) Any teacher can follow the principles of learning according to conditioning theory. This approach requires one to know exactly what it is he intends to teach and consider carefully the steps by which it may be learned.

**Perceptual theories** - portray learning as a change in a person's perception of himself and the world. They are sometimes called Gestalt or field theories. A person's perceptual pattern includes the way he sees the physical and social world, including facts, concepts, beliefs, and expectations.

**The developmental theory of personality** - is psychoanalytic. Learning occurs according to the psychoanalyst within a developing life history that is shaped by an attempt to handle basic and conflicting needs. Psychoanalytic theory points out that learning always involves conflicts and crisis with authority figures. Interpersonal encounters are decisive for what is learned. They shape the emotional life of the child in a way that becomes the generalized pattern for responding to persons thereafter. Teaching is always an interpersonal encounter in which deep feelings are involved, whether or not they are openly recognized and expressed. Learning is a process by which a person "identifies with", or models his behavior after.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 51.
Existential theories of learning - focus upon being and nonbeing, meaning and meaninglessness, authenticity and inauthenticity. The emphasis is upon openness in the interrelationships between person and person, person and social situation, person and meaning. To be closed is to be cut off from relationships with other persons, to destroy social situations, and to be closed to new meaning. Teaching and learning are ways of standing before meanings and events so that new significance and new relationships may arise.

Each of the four major psychological schools treats significant dimensions of learning. The strength and weakness of conditioning theory is that it focuses on the biological side of man. Field theories are quite strong in their portrayal of the way a person perceives himself and his relationship to a group. They correctly point to the importance of both the group life of the class and the congregational life of the church. They also emphasize the importance of the pattern of the curriculum.

Psychoanalytic theory is superior in its description of the relationship between pupil and teacher, of the developmental history of the student, and of the place of crisis and anxiety in learning.

Existential theory points to the way in which God's truth and God's revelation occurs in the relationships between persons, groups, methods, and events to bring new meanings in its own way and time. God comes to those who are open to the new humanity outside the traditional ways of teaching as well as in them.
The remaining foundations of Christian education are philosophical, sociocultural and dialogical. The major philosophies discussed by Taylor for comparative study were naturalism, idealism, realism, and pragmatism. From the sociocultural dimension, three organizational phenomena, all of which have been subjected to analyses, were viewed. They were the American family, public education and religion. They were discussed in terms of their social and cultural transactions with American society at large.

Basic to the dialogical foundation was communication. Education depends on communication. The purpose of communication is to bring about a meeting of meaning between two or more persons which requires dialogue and not monologue. When this meeting of meaning occurs, it is because the meanings of each side have been opened to each other; there has been dialogue. Since education depends on communication, and dialogue is essential to communication, dialogue is equally essential to education. The meanings of the teacher and pupil must meet to the edification of both.
CHAPTER IV

THE ADMINISTRATION OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The organizational structures of the church are the channels of communication by which those who are the church make visible the image of the church. The church is the body of Christ and its ministries are proclamation, teaching, worship, fellowship, witness and service.

The teaching ministry of the church assists persons in deciding to become a part of the church in training for discipleship and participating in the mission of the church.

Organic View Of Structure

The church when called the body of Christ is being viewed organically. The church is viewed as the family of God with Jesus as the head. Under this structure, emphasis is placed on unity and the efficiency of chosen leaders. This view of structure also assists in developing specialized leaders.

The main purpose of the church, however, must not be forgotten; it is to help persons become aware of God's activity through Jesus Christ. The structure of a local church should help individuals perceive God's work and provide form for individual and corporate response. If this response is in faith and love, the forms of the church's program will enable individuals to grow in depth of response.

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Purposeful church administration is the involvement of the church in the discovery of her nature and mission and in moving in a coherent and comprehensive manner toward providing such experiences as will enable the church to utilize all her resources and personnel in the fulfillment of her mission of making known God's Love for all men.

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Leadership Theory

The need for leadership development is apparent. However, one of the most difficult tasks in leadership education is to help every leader recognize his need for training, and for keeping his training up to date.

Leadership may be defined as:

the performance of a service by a person with a group of persons in such a way as to help them to further the purpose of their group.¹⁰

Several conclusions may be drawn from this definition. First, leadership does not operate in isolation. The decisive factor of a good leader is determined by the degree to which he is able to stimulate and motivate the group to action. Second, leadership is effective only to the extent of which the group accomplishes its purpose. Third, the leader's relationship to the group is somewhat of a "passive" nature. He does not symbolize a status leader who is interested in manipulating persons but rather a master of leadership skills who aids the group in achieving its purpose. Fourth, leadership is not synomous with holding an office. Thus, there is the designated leader who has an official responsibility and the undesignated leader, who unofficially helps the group achieve its objective.

Marvin Taylor's leadership theory singles out "any" Christian postulating that at any time and in any situation, Christians will be called upon to fill leadership roles. This theory of

leadership is not so much listing of skills as it is knowing how a leader will operate.

One of the changing concepts within the leadership theory involves language. Emphasis is being placed more on non-theological language and quoting of Scripture to proclamation of the essential Christian message. The underlying assumption here is that of doing away with biblical terminology.

Pushing this theory further, it is concluded that every lay member is called to fulfill a leadership role, regardless of the particular task. This expresses the "priesthood concept" of the Reformation.

A review of literature designated four types of leaders: 1) the autocrat  2) the benevolent autocrat  3) the laissez-faire type of leadership and 4) the democratic leader. The autocrat takes everything upon himself-responsibilities and decision making. The benevolent autocrat utilizes the technique of evoking loyalty to him as a person—he praises as much as he criticizes. The laissez-faire leader advocates "hands off." He leaves everything up to the group while he occupies himself with something else. The democratic leader is the prescribed Christian model. He sees his task as sharing many of the activities of decision-making, scheduling, etc. By sharing with group members, he is an "assister", not a ruler.

The democratically led group gives its attention to developing among members the awareness that they are free to take on leadership roles. They develop skill and insight in
participation in leadership as the group draws closer together. Their focus is fulfillment of its task.

Christian democratic leadership assists and helps bring into being something new. The implications following are that the Christian leader is not only one who knows how to lead but is also one who is engaged in the process of personal and Christian growth. The Christian leader in his ministry is both guide and enabler; he can instruct others in the faith and help them realize talents and potentials in their being. So led, they are able to show the power of faith in their lives by the way they live and function as well as by the way they understand the world.
CHAPTER V

PROGRAMS, METHODS, AND MATERIALS FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Curriculum of Christian Education

This section focuses on the curriculum of Christian Education, worship of children, youth, and adults in Christian Education and Christian Education as expressed through the arts. Methods and approaches will be discussed from the viewpoint of several authors.

Every church desires competent instructional materials, the basic reason for publishing curriculum. Producing instructional material means the church has to arrive at an agreement about its theology and attitude toward the social sciences and psychology.

The educational process involves the social setting in which education takes place, the teacher, the pupils, the goals, methods used, time available, and many other factors. Curriculum is sometimes thought of as the sum of all the factors that make for education.

The following are major elements in curriculum. By examination of the major elements one can understand the structure of a particular curriculum and make comparisons between them.

Objective. Since curriculum is an effort to arrange educational experience, all curricula will have an objective stated in general terms (see CCP). The objective provides a way of focusing the various elements of the Christian religion so that they can be articulated in a program.

Design. Curriculum is educational architecture, and must have a design. The design is an arrangement of materials and ex-
periences—Bible, songs, stories, activities—in order to accomplish the purpose.

Organizing Principle. The organizing principle is the formula by which the design is carried out. It suggests a starting place for educational effort. In some instances the organizing principle is the individuals age level and needs in relation to the Christian faith.

Comprehensiveness. Since curriculum is the operating theology of the denomination, it is important that the materials be comprehensive. All areas of thought and action must be included in the final curriculum.

Balance. The amount of time allocated to each topic or unit of the curriculum defines its balance. Therefore, one would expect a curriculum to extend more time to the life of Jesus than to the Asap Psalms.

Sequence. Since curriculum is designed for the whole age span, the problem of relating the materials to each succeeding age level is called sequence.

Interpretation. Curriculum is an interpretation of the Bible and contemporary life. Since all of the Bible cannot be used, the process of selecting passages for use is itself an interpretation of Scripture. Some curriculum includes the use of historical-critical method; and from the earliest age level it interprets myth, song, parable, poem and narrative material from the Bible in its literary form and its developing relationship of God to man.
Christian Education—Today And Tomorrow

Looking at Protestant curricula now in publication what are the general trends for present and future?

Biblical and theological experts are now an integral part of the curriculum process with the educators. The idea of the "Sunday School" is gone.

Second, field testing of new material prior to publication is almost universal, and most boards of education now have a permanent staff for research to maintain a constant evaluation of materials and methods in Christian Education.

The learner is considered to be the clue to teaching. Newly formed material is designed with the learner as priority. Interests, language and mode of thought are emphasized.

Materials are attractively printed with the finest art work. The old quarterly has largely disappeared being replaced by magazines and books planned for use throughout the years.

More leadership helps are being built into the curriculum. Audio-visual materials are often prepared with lesson materials, sometimes accompanied with records, filmstrips. Team teaching is highly recommended.

All new curricula provide material for all agencies of the church holistically, so the idea of the Sunday School as a semi-independent agency has been completely abandoned.

Scope and General Description of Curriculum Areas

Through the cooperative efforts of denominations working through the Cooperative Curriculum Project (CCP) a book has been developed to provide a resource of sound educational and
theological value, and of practical usefulness to curriculum developers in the church.

The function of Scope in the Design of the curriculum is to provide a standard of comprehensiveness for the curriculum. It fulfills the function both at the stage of describing any subdivision of the content. Content is used in the Design to include both information and experience.

The term "scope of curriculum" is used to describe what is appropriate to be dealt with in the curriculum; it includes more than can possibly be used in the curriculum.11

The scope of the curriculum is the coextensive with what God has revealed through His redemptive action and the implications of this redemptive action for man in the whole field of relationships-God, man, nature, and history. Thus, it is identical with the scope of the church's educational concerns.

In order for the Scope to be dealt with in further stages of the curriculum plan it is organized into "areas of curriculum." Their function is (1) to serve as a test for comprehensiveness of the curriculum and (2) to form the basis for the selection of themes appropriate in every span of life.

The following principles were used in arriving at the areas of curriculum: (1) all areas comprehend the scope (2) each area reflects all elements of the scope and (3) each area envisions something to learn about and something to participate in.

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There are several ways of devising curriculum areas using these guiding principles along with the Objective of Christian Education which offered clues for selection and formulation of the areas. The Objective of Christian Education follows:

The objective for Christian education is that all persons be aware of God through His self-disclosure, especially His redeeming love as revealed in Jesus Christ, and that they respond in faith and love - to the end that they may know who they are and what their human situation means, grow as sons of God rooted in the Christian community, live in the Spirit of God in every relationship, fulfill their common discipleship in the world, and abide in the Christian hope.  

Rooted in the Objective of Christian Education, five areas of curriculum can be designated as follows:

<table>
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<th>Area</th>
<th>Meaning and Experience</th>
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<td>Life and its Setting</td>
<td>the Meaning and Experience of Existence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>the Meaning and Experience of God's Self-Disclosure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonship</td>
<td>the Meaning and Experience of Redemption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocation</td>
<td>the Meaning and Experience of Discipleship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church</td>
<td>the Meaning and Experience of Christian Community.</td>
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</tbody>
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The five curriculum areas are not five separate entities of the total scope, but rather five vantage points, each of which deals with all elements of the scope of the curriculum. Thus, each area is holistic in its nature which means that in the curriculum the learner is always seen as a whole person in his

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12 Ibid., p. 8.
13 Ibid., p. 17.
total field of relationships, and as experiencing the divine, human, and natural—in light of the gospel.

Eclectic Approach To Curriculum

William Clayton Bower in his studies on the nature, content and form of curriculum, discussed changing concepts of the curriculum. Whether one approaches the educational process from the point of view of a philosophy of education, of organization, of method, of supervision, or programs, or of measurement, he will sooner or later be concerned with the content of the learning process. This is curriculum.  

Close to curriculum and inseparably bound up with the curriculum is the problem of method as the manner in which the curriculum should be dealt with in guiding the experiences of growing persons.

In order to understand the current changes in the conception of the curriculum it is necessary to understand they are related to and are an outgrowth of changing concepts of the nature of the educative process. These changes in concepts of education are, in turn, deeply rooted in the changing conditions of modern life.

Under the impact of such changes, education is ceasing to be an accumulation of knowledge but is coming to be a guided experience in exploring experiences of personal and group life and of securing intelligent control over them. Its interest is

becoming less in the reproduction of the past and more in fore-telling the future in terms of the unrealized possibilities of human life. It is less an authoritative imposition of adult-predetermined ideas, habits, and ideals, and more a sharing of adult and youth viewpoints. Education is coming less and less to be thought of in terms of assigned formal tasks and more and more in terms of a creative experience set in the midst of a stimulating opportunity.

The new curriculum of religious education rests on assumptions arising directly out of these changing concepts of education. These assumptions determine curriculum content, organization, and administration. The religious educator must, therefore, clearly determine the validity of these assumptions before he can work curriculum which he may set up.

One of the assumptions has to do with the objectives of religious education. What are the ends the curriculum is designed to achieve? In view of significant trends in modern education, the primary objective may be stated in terms of assisting growing persons to achieve through a creative experience a religious personality functioning in and through social groups. This means that religious education is primarily concerned with "persons" as "persons" and with their continuous growth toward the spiritual qualities of life. From this viewpoint, religion is functioning with reference to personal and social living. This is what the Great Teacher seems to have had in mind when he said that he came to those into whose experience he entered might have life and have it more abundantly.
The fruitage of religion was a continuous rebirth into a more spiritual life—an expansion of life in the direction of its highest personal and social values.

Connected with the personal objective is progressive spiritual reconstruction of society at points where religious persons are involved in its relations and functions. Religion is more than a passive appreciation of religious values of experience; it is dynamic, active, reconstructive, creative. It subjects social institutions and social processes to the criticism and evaluation of the highest spiritual values. Religious education should not only create in religious persons this evaluating and reconstructive attitude toward society, but should enable them to develop effective techniques for social reconstruction at points of contact where they are involved in the life of society.

The next assumption has to do with the nature of personality. It is the stable organization of physical elements, impulses, habits, ideas, attitudes and purposes, undergoing continuous change. Personality is therefore something static but rather a process of becoming.

The nature of experience is best understood when it is seen to be the outgrowth of the adjustment process by which persons adapt their world to themselves and vica versa. When this adjustment process is analyzed it is seen to consist of specific responses which persons make to specific situations. Experience may thus range from more or less unconscious responses to situations, to vividly felt and intelligently selective
responses accompanied by rich and significant meaning.

Since the religious educator is concerned with assisting persons to discover the religious significance of their experience and bring it under control of religious ideas and purposes, it becomes essential to understand the nature of religion.

Religion is seen to be not an isolated experience in and of itself, but a potential quality that inheres in any and every experience of living—in family, vocation, recreation, and intellectual life. Any experience becomes religious when perceived in its relation to God, judged in the light of that relationship, and when it is brought under the spiritualizing control of that relationship. Thus, religion is a quality that permeates the entire range of personal and social experience.

On the basis of these assumptions religious education starts with people "where they are" in their world. It means helping them to discover the situations which they are facing and the issues these situations involve. It means helping them understand these situations, analyzing them, subjecting them to criticism and evaluation in light of spiritual values, choosing the best outcome and establishing these chosen outcomes as permanent behavior patterns.

But religious education doesn't end there. The task of religious education is to extend these experiences into a wider range of experiences and to enrich them by knowledge derived from accumulated religious experience, by appreciation expressed through meaningful worship, and by stimulating fellowship within the religious community.
Curriculum

It is through these considerations the modern view of curriculum has been formulated. Approached in this way the curriculum of religious education becomes the experience of the learner as that experience undergoes interpretation, enrichment, and control in terms of religious ideas, ideals, and purposes.\(^{15}\)

This means that the experiences dealt with in the experience-centered curriculum are the actual experiences which the learner or learning group is having in meeting and responding to the situations which life presents. These specific experiences are lifted out of that large real experience for interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and control rather than authoritatively selected by adults and imposed upon or given to the learner.

This approach to religious education through the experience by which the learner realizes himself also means that, while the curriculum starts with the learner in terms of his interests, needs, and problems just where he is, it will first or last include the entire range of significant situations which he faces in every area of his experience— in the family, in the school, on the playground, in industrial and vocational life, in his far-reaching social contacts, in civic life, in his intellectual pursuits, and in his aesthetic appreciations. The curriculum must afford him an opportunity to face all the fundamental

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 182.
issues of his life in his social group and to come to some intelligent and effective attitude toward them.

Worship In Christian Education

Dr. G. Walter Fiske, head of the Department of Religious Education, Graduate School of Theology, Oberlin College used the eclectic approach in determining modern aims of religious education. He developed the thesis: "Training in Worship a Unique Educational Function."

The question was raised, How shall Christian education perform the difficult function namely, the motivation of ideals? The answer, by giving our children and youth training in the art of worship. In attempting to state in functional terms what religion contributes to education, Professor Adelaide Case of Columbia says: "Religion weights the personal factors in education, provides a religious fellowship, an intimacy in a group, and furnishes a rationale for an emotional reconstruction."\(^ {16}\)

It is through acquainting growing children and youth with the meanings and values of worship, that we open the channel to the divine sources of personal power, and enrich their personalities by creative experiences in worship, and strengthen their ideals, attitudes, and motives for living in loyalty to Jesus Christ. Here lies the most distinctive aim of Christian education—to reveal the reality of God.

To realize this aim is the most important dimension of religious education. As Professor Myers of Hartfort puts it:

\(^ {16}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 87.}\)
"The church holds that there is a Power in the universe whose desire is the highest of human welfare, and without conscious fellowship with whom neither the individual nor society can ever attain its best self. It believes that the human-heart by its nature has ever been seeking, often blindly, that infinite God, and this because He, the Father, first loved His children. The church holds that unless man lays hold on that Source of Power and identifies himself with his purposes, all schemes of character education, while welcome as far as they go and often of great value, must fall short of producing that fullest, purposeful, creative, dynamic personality of which mankind is capable."  

Within recent years, changing concepts have emerged and new emphasis has been stressed in the fields of worship and Christian education. Grant S. Shockley, a contributor to Marvin Taylor's book, An Introduction to Christian Education concluded in his chapter on "Worship In Christian Education" that currently, the worship experience is being thought of as the essence of the renewal of Christian life. Other developments show that worship is being regarded as "celebration." It is the celebration of life and the acclaim and thanksgiving to God for the victory of Christ.

Shockley sets forth proposals for education for worship for children, youth, and adults. Having recognized the centrality

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of Christ's lordship in worship, the aims are as follows:

to develop in individuals the realization of their capacities to adore and serve God in Christ whose lordship they acknowledge.

to assist individuals in initiating, cultivating, and sustaining a personal relationship to Christ that will allow the offering and receiving of His love and fellowship.

to celebrate continuously to "worth-ship" of God through reverence, mission, and vocation.

to make individuals aware of the availability of God's every resource in meeting their continuing needs.

to guide individuals in their personal responses of obedience with regard for their maturity, experience, and opportunities to act as Christians.18

Shockley further discussed worship in the family, the church school and worship, children's worship, youth and adult worship and family corporate worship. He set forth proposals for each age group, educationally based. Such suggestions consisted of spontaneous moments of awe (children) which could be utilized to share moments of the beauty of nature, wonder or compassion. Christian education teachers could also use stories, songs, litanies, sentence prayers, dialogue, art, meditation moments, group worship and play-acting a parable.

The principle end of worship is communication with God.

One principle task of Christian education is to work with each

age group in evolving worship settings and bring life into Christian focus and initiate a continuous dialogue between God and man.

Teaching Resources For Christian Learning

In view of the nature and purpose of the church, teaching must be seen in terms of the witness of a community (church) to what has been given to it (a faith to be taught or communicated). The necessary conclusion is that teaching is more than the guidance of learning. A number of fundamental questions however, arise concerning teaching in relation to the message and guidance of learning. How can a church introduce persons into the mission of the community of faith? How may a church hold out to persons God's offer of grace, salvation and disclosure of Himself bringing good news to the world?

The teaching-learning experience or situation may occur without any organization. It may be unplanned, even accidental. The primary task, however, in the teaching-learning situation is to introduce persons to God, as revealed through the Bible and motivate them to expose themselves to the truth and the life of Christian discipleship.

The Holy Spirit As Teacher

In light of my Pentecostal experience, the Holy Spirit is inseparable from both teaching and learning. Fundamental to our belief is that God encounters and interacts with man on the spiritual plane. The Holy Spirit becomes Prime Mover, leading, guiding and directing all of man's activities. The Holy Spirit
can be seen as the stimulus—consequently, the physical being responds in love.

Our founder, Bishop Charles Harrison Mason, left an indelible print in the history making of The Church of God in Christ. Using the Day of Pentecost as his basis for confirming glossolalia and prophecy as gifts of the church, he viewed the Holy Ghost as a God given power, empowering man for service and witness. This power undergirds motivation, stimulation, teaching and learning—directing man's total being.

Thus:

"But the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in Him." I John 2:27 RSV.

The bestowing of the Holy Spirit to the believer equips him for service. Hence,

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8 RSV.

Within these parameters, the process of teaching and learning necessarily confronts persons through proclamation of the Word. It is the Holy Spirit that works in and through His people, giving inspiration and revelation, making known the blessedness of the Christ event and confronting the deepest needs of persons in their human situation.

The Arts and Christian Education

No matter how mediocre the setting, music has become an inherent part of church worship. Stated by some writers as being
the universal language, the art of music opens a channel of response from creature to Creator. Almost mystically and mysteriously it sensitizes, awakens, rejuvenates. Through the senses of seeing, understanding, feeling and hearing we venture into the universe around us.

Authentic arts bring people together. Take music, for example, songs of worship, praise or thanksgiving unite humanity without "teaching" a single lesson in brotherhood. The unveiling of kinship is shared by God's created ones.

The arts such as drama, music, and art can be expressed in worship. An abstract piece of work, a play or a church hymn can creatively echo God's re-creating, redemption and calling unto Him. The arts can also be revelatory-illuminating as a personal encounter with the Almighty.

Arts, in Christian Education means more than choosing a picture, preparing an Easter play, or preparing for a song festival. Arts are integral, organic in Christian Education; they seek to make persons become aware of God, His redeeming love and to respond in faith.

By way of suggestion listed below are values which music, art, and drama are capable of giving to us:

- A heightened sensitiveness
- Quickening of the imagination
- Liberation of the mind
- Creative expression of that which is best within ourselves
- Entering into a cooperative experience to which we bring our highest powers
- Unceasing quest of goodness, truth and beauty
- Intimacy with God who reveals deep insights
The Carrie Steele Pitts Home

I firmly believe music to be one of the arts which bring all humanity together. Theologically grounded, our biblical record makes several references to stringed instruments, tambourines, harps, cymbals, trumpets, organs and the like. Consequently, music belongs to the church and is an integral part of it.

By basic conviction is that through the arts people can have a genuine religious experience. Working at the Carrie Steele Pitts Home, one of my goals was to creatively express the Christian message through songs. Below is a brief outline of my proposal:

(1) Weekly singing with the girls teaching songs relative to the group as a whole. I plan to interject Christian songs when apropos. Since there are males living in the various cottages, my long range goal would consist of a combined singing group (male and female) if the administration would give me permission for this undertaking. Thus, it is hoped this activity would add stimulation and motivation to these teenagers.

(2) Presentation to the cottage administrators or an outgoing engagement (church).

**My Short Range Goals Will Be**

(1) To understand the basic elements of music.
(2) To appreciate music as an art (or universal language).
(3) To help students employ this appreciation in terms of creativity.
(4) To develop a sincere appreciation of Christian discipleship and conduct.
Working as an administrator at the Carrie Steele Pitts Home proved both challenging and rewarding. The underlying theory utilized was "learning by doing."

I worked with a group of girls approximately twenty in number. Some of the girls were orphans, came from broken homes, or other situations necessitating parental care and guidance. Ranging in ages from thirteen to seventeen, I formulated a singing group—a unique activity for the home's weekly schedule.

Initially, I had a planned approach for the girls, but was a bit apprehensive because of the lack of experience in working with such a group. Nevertheless, throughout my ten week stay my method, approach and programmed planning never changed.

Presenting gospel songs was no problem of which I had initially anticipated. I provided freedom for selection of songs and selected some myself. Interestingly enough, they raved over songs with a "peppy" beat of which I was accustomed to playing (piano). In retrospect, during the initial encounter with the girls, they literally flooded me with gospel songs.

Never once did I write down words to a song to be passed out and read. I simply sang the song myself so they could get a general idea of the melody. The next step, the group rehearsed the words stanza by stanza with my assistance. Then we put the two together. To mention a few, some of the songs learned were: Oh Happy Day, Wings Of A Dove, Life Can Be Beautiful, This Little Light Of Mine, The Negro National Anthem, We've Come This Far By Faith, Sound of Pentecost, All of my Life, Shanendoah, Amen and a host of others.
I introduced a percussion instrument, a tambourine, which was beat rhythmically during all sessions. Their talents, abilities and enthusiasm were incredible! They could with a degree of mastery breath correctly, learned specific cues, detected crescendo, tempos and the like.

Their performance was so impressive I scheduled an appointment for them to sing at St. Peter's AME Church April, 1975 on a Young People's Program. Reverend Mency is pastor. They were the guest choir and rendered all music.

This informal atmosphere, provided freedom of choice, a development of practices, skills and discipline. A design to sequential steps and accomplishment followed which concluded an experience I shall never forget.
CONCLUSION

I have attempted to use an eclectic approach to Christian Education thereby focusing on its pertinent dimensions.

Thus, I have tried to explain and elaborate eclecticism together with the foundations, leadership and administration, curriculum, methods, materials and programs. This approach, tried at the Carrie Steele Pitts Home, proved workable and valuable. The results experienced in this teaching-learning setting were both challenging and rewarding.

It is hoped this approach will prove to be advantageous for future research in Christian Education.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


