

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

THE GROWING concern and deepening interest of the American people and public school administrators and teachers in developing suitable programs for the teaching of moral and spiritual values to their pupils are indeed encouraging signs which truly reflect a dissatisfaction and distrust of those pragmatic and naturalistic ideals which for too long have been given such priority in educational literature and curriculum materials.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity of appearing before this distinguished group for the twofold purpose of alerting you to this important national trend and of presenting a case history of what is taking place in New York City in the matter of developing a program for teaching moral and spiritual values in the public schools. Since I feel similar projects in time will be introduced in many school districts throughout the United States, it is most necessary for educators and theologians to work closely together so that from their joint efforts suitable and effective programs may be developed. This need for a closer working relationship is further pointed up by the fact that while Catholic educators are thoroughly familiar with the problems involved in the public school setting where such programs are considered, they are not for the most part moral theologians. Therefore, this happy union is most desirable; the educator to present the facts, problems and local factors involved and the theologian to evaluate the proposed program in the light of these conditions.

With these observations as a preface, I shall now proceed with the presentation of my topic under the following six major divisions:

- I. Background of the Moral and Spiritual Values Program in New York City;
- II. The Religious Advisory Committee on Moral and Spiritual Values;
- III. "The Guiding Statement for the Teaching of Moral and Spiritual Values";

- IV. The Revision of the "Guiding Statement on Moral and Spiritual Values";
- V. Public Hearing on the Revised Program;
- VI. Proposals for Future Programs.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES PROGRAM IN NEW YORK CITY

Early in 1951 the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association published its now famous report entitled "Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public School."¹ In issuing the Report, the Commission expressed the hope that it would "encourage in homes, churches and schools a nationwide rebirth of interest in education for moral and spiritual values." The Report has been the source of much encouragement especially since it represents professional acknowledgment of the seriousness of the problem and recognition and determination as well that the public schools should be helped to give a better record of performance in this matter. But much of the thought contained in the Report is evidence of the damage done by secularism in American life. It defines moral and spiritual values as "those values which, when applied in human behavior, exalt and refine life and bring it into accord with the standards of conduct that are approved in our democratic culture." The definition begs many questions. A moral value should have reference to a human judgment regarding what is right and wrong in accordance with God's law, naturally or divinely revealed. A spiritual value should not be a matter of social expediency; it should be related to the supernatural. But because of the definition contained in the Report, and the consequences of it, the moral and spiritual values taught under such a system tend to become vague and pragmatic. The Report, because of this limitation, could not list the Ten Commandments as cardinal moral and spiritual values in our American tradition.

In Chapter III of the Commission's Report which deals with the critically important topic—reasons for accepting values, we have the case of Johnny to whom the clerk in the candy store mistakenly gave ten cents instead of a penny in the change the boy received. This is the problem involving proof or justification in respect to

the moral or spiritual values at issue. The Report proceeds to explain how seven different teachers might deal with the problem. One teacher explains Johnny's duty in terms of JUSTICE, another in terms of CIVIL LAW regarding stealing, the third by a clarification of PROPERTY RIGHTS, the fourth by discussing the feeling of PERSONAL INTEGRITY as opposed to a sense of wrong-doing, the fifth teacher appeals to GROUP APPROVAL, the sixth to her own AUTHORITY (and also threatens to keep the boy after school) and the seventh gives him advice properly described as GUIDANCE.

Many of us will agree that the teacher was compelled to take the long road. Even if the teacher wanted to, she was not supposed to quote a well-known Commandment of God as a starting point in advising Johnny. The Report tells us that "the powerful sanctions of religious creeds and doctrines have not been included in the above illustration" because "they may not be explicitly invoked in the public school classroom, but of course they may play a powerful role in the moral and spiritual instruction of home and church." This limitation is one of the problems to which we must provide a better solution. We do not deny that moral and spiritual values are taught in the public school, but we do insist that the teaching of moral and spiritual values *without sanctions and without God* is both inadequate and ineffective. In many public schools the destructive dogmatism of secularism, naturalism and atheism is given a forum which is denied to religion. God is mentioned twice in the Commission's Report and in both cases only incidentally.

In November, 1951, the New York State Board of Regents adopted a most significant resolution under the heading, "A Statement of Moral and Spiritual Training in the Schools."² While I cannot take the time here to quote in its entirety the declaration made on that occasion by this eminent body, truly representative of the citizenry of the state and its cross-section of political persuasion and religious belief, I offer the following excerpts as being especially worthy of note:

Belief in and dependence upon Almighty God was the very cornerstone upon which our Founding Fathers builded. Our State Constitution opens with these solemn words: "We, the People of the State of New York, grateful to Almighty God for

our Freedom, in order to secure these blessings, do establish this Constitution."

We are convinced that this fundamental belief and dependence of the American—always a religious—people is the best security against the dangers of these difficult days. In our opinion, the securing of the peace and safety of our country and our State against such dangers points to the essentiality of teaching our children, as set forth in the Declaration of Independence, that Almighty God is their Creator, and that by Him they have been endowed with their inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We believe that at the commencement of each school day the act of allegiance to the Flag might well be joined with this act of reverence to God: "Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers and our Country."

We believe that the school day thus started might well include specific programs stressing the moral and spiritual heritage which is America's, the trust which our pioneering ancestors placed in Almighty God, their gratitude to Him from Whom they freely and frequently acknowledged came their blessings and their freedom and their abiding belief in the free way of life and in the universal brotherhood of man based upon their acknowledgment of the fatherhood of their Creator, Almighty God, Whom they loved and revered in diverse ways.

In November, 1952, the New York City Board of Education held an open hearing on the Regents Recommendations and on January 15, 1953, endorsed the Regents proposals and directed "that at the commencement of each school day the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag be followed by the singing in unison of the fourth stanza of *America*.

"Our fathers" God, to Thee,
Author of liberty
To Thee we sing;
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God, Our King.

The recommendation of this hymn by the Board of Education was in effect a compromise due chiefly to the strong opposition of

Jewish groups to the Regents' Prayer. The Catholic position was that this prayer should be said.

The Board further requested the Superintendent "to review the curriculum of the schools in his charge with a view toward insuring that such curriculum includes appropriate programs of instruction emphasizing the spiritual interest and patriotic motivation of our pioneering ancestors, the devotion and self-sacrifice of the Founding Fathers and their abiding belief in the principles of democracy."

II. THE RELIGIOUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES

In April, 1953, Dr. Jansen, Superintendent of Schools, asked representatives of the three major faiths to form a committee for the purpose of advising the Board on the problem of reviewing the curriculum in order to emphasize moral and spiritual values. After eight meetings which took place over a fourteen month period it was impossible for the religious representatives to agree to any joint statement and as a result it was decided that each representative, Catholic, Protestant and Jew, should submit the statement of his own group to the Superintendent. The Jewish position was in brief that the public schools were already doing an excellent job in this matter—in other words, they were not at all interested in pursuing the matter any further. The Protestant group issued a statement which offered very little along positive lines and by so doing strengthened the Jewish opposition. In May, 1954, we presented our position to the Superintendent of Schools in a four-page memorandum³ in which we said in part the following:

Conscious of the grave needs for spiritual reinforcement in our times and sympathetic to the spirit which prompted these declarations, we feel compelled by our concern as citizens for the welfare of our city and our nation to urge the adoption of a program which will implement the Regents' proposal in our New York City schools. In doing so, we note that in April, 1954, the Regents, in the permanent record of their anniversary convocation, reiterated their beliefs that each school day should commence with the proposed Act of Reverence to God and be supplemented by programs stressing America's moral and spiritual heritage,

and added their further belief: "that these troubled times, perhaps more than ever before, call for the teaching of 'Piety and Virtue' in the schools and of that dependence upon Almighty God so clearly recognized in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of New York, and in the pronouncements of the great leaders of our Country . . . all of which are the very essence of our heritage and give fundamental significance to our educational efforts."

For the purpose of realizing the Regents' objectives in our New York City schools, we stated that as an initial step the New York City Board of Education should provide for curriculum specialists, teachers, supervisors and others a clear statement of what may and should be taught in the public schools concerning what the Regents have called the basic truth of our existence, namely, "belief in and dependence upon Almighty God." For too long in our public schools, we pointed out, the religious bedrock of our American culture and heritage has received pious lip service or at best a casual acknowledgment which in no way vitally influences the development of strong moral character. As the Supreme Court recently declared, "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being." We noted that the time had come for the enunciation of policy which would promote that recognition of God which is proper to our American educational institutions. Our statement continued:

It is indeed folly to attempt on the one hand a new emphasis on moral and spiritual values in public education while denying admission into the classroom of those religious principles upon which these moral values depend. As Washington counseled in his Farewell Address: "reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles." These religious principles moreover form the basis of our original state papers, the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence. The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence succinctly and pointedly enumerates these principles: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

We believe then that American children in the public schools of New York City should not only recite daily the Act of Reverence which the Regents recommended but should also learn the following basic and fundamental truths:

1. The existence of God;
2. Man's condition as creature dependent on his Creator;
3. God, the source of the inalienable rights of man;
4. The fundamental purpose of our laws—the protection of these God-given rights;
5. The basic equality of all men under God;
6. The dignity of man and sacredness of human life;
7. Man's responsibility to the moral law as formulated in the Ten Commandments.

These are the ideals on which our country was founded. They should, therefore, be accorded their rightful place in American schools. They are not denominational in any sense of the word. These religious principles serve as the framework of the Character Guidance Programs of the Army and Air Force and are taught to men of all creeds who serve in these branches of the Service. Is it in accordance with the ideals of American culture to present moral and spiritual values in this light to men and women preparing to defend their country against the enemy and not to do so to the boys and girls in our public schools, described so often as the lifeline of American democracy?

It is not our purpose to imply that these principles enumerated above should be presented in this precise form to children at all grade levels. Rather it is our conviction that such a statement of principles adopted by the Board of Education would serve to indicate the major objectives to be realized in this area and to provide a frame of reference for preparing suitable learning materials in keeping with the interests, needs and abilities of pupils at each stage of their development.

The content suggested should be integrated with the curriculum as a whole. Obviously, it should be taught in connection with the study of the origins of American government and of the events and personalities in American history that reflect acceptance of the religious principles in question. Moreover, the desire to promote and reinforce these basic truths and their implications for moral living should be an important factor in all phases of curriculum planning and particularly in the selection of readings in literature and of examples in art appreciation. Materials designed to promote character development together

with courses in group guidance and in preparation for family life should include reference to these religious principles whenever pertinent.

Since it is a major responsibility of the Regents to determine and define a minimum program of education for all the children of the State, we sincerely trust that its most timely resolution of 1951 outlining its suggestions for the place of moral and spiritual values in the curriculum of the schools will neither be minimized by the Board of Education not watered down to a point where there is little or no resemblance to the Regents' proposals.

In our search for a solution to the problem of secularism in modern education we come, as in many other quests, to a commandment of Christ rephrasing the law of the Old Testament: "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength" (Mark 12, 30 and Deut. 6, 5). This commandment is the possession of Judaism and Christianity alike. It can be commended in all charity to those who plan and conduct the educational programs of our public schools in the City of New York.

III. THE GUIDING STATEMENT ON MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES AND THE SCHOOLS

In June, 1955, the Board of Superintendents (comprised of nine members — three Protestants, three Catholics and three Jews) unanimously adopted a "Guiding Statement on Moral and Spiritual Values and the Schools."⁴ This interesting document was based in large measure on the statement we had sent to the Superintendent the previous June. Among the many significant paragraphs in this nine-page syllabus I have singled out the following which I feel best summarize the spirit and content of the document.

Page 1.—"The American people are characteristically a religious people who derive their accepted moral and spiritual values from religion. These values are inherent in the Hebraic-Christian tradition. They presuppose the existence of a Supreme Being. Most Americans are aware of the influence of religion in the early development of our nation. . . ."

Page 2.—"The public school must use every means properly at its disposal to develop in its pupils the cultivation of those values accepted by American society for its welfare and for the

good of the individual. These are the moral and spiritual values. It implies further that the program of the public schools must reinforce the program of the home and church in strengthening belief in God. . . . Belief in God and the particular explanation or interpretation of God or explanation or interpretation of revelation are made vital by the guidance in the home and by the teaching of the Church or synagogue with which the family is associated."

Page 9.—"The public schools encourage the belief in God, recognizing the simple fact that ours is a religious nation, but they leave and even refer to the home and to the church the interpretation of God and of revelation. . . . The public schools teach the moral code and identify God as the ultimate source of the natural and moral law. . . . In their programs of moral and spiritual education the public schools maintain a climate favorable to religion without making value judgments about any particular religion. Thus, the public schools devote their primary efforts to the development of the values and objectives of our American democracy recognizing their spiritual and religious motivation."

The remainder of the "Guide" illustrates how these values can be introduced into the subject areas of the elementary and secondary school curricula.

While the Guiding Statement was unanimously approved by the Board of Superintendents in June, 1955, it was not publicly released until mid-October and then only on a very limited basis. The Board of Education up to this time had taken no formal action in either approving or rejecting it. In early November a vigorous attack which continued through December got under way, spearheaded principally by the New York Board of Rabbis and other Jewish organizations. Almost daily throughout this period the New York press carried statements or resolutions on the part of Jewish groups urging that the Guiding Statement be repudiated by the Board of Education. Among those voicing their opposition were the New York Board of Rabbis, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Congress, the Synagogue Council of America, the National Community Relations Advisory Council, the American Ethical Union, the United Parents Association, the New York Civil

Liberties Union, the New York Teachers Guild, the Teachers Union, and the Ethical Culture Society.

The arguments used by these groups in opposing adoption of the Guiding Statement by the Board of Education were for the most part repetitions of those originally advanced by the New York Board of Rabbis who in their statement of November 14, 1955, said that approval of the Guiding Statement would

- constitute a clear violation of the Constitution on separation of Church and State;
- undermine traditional religious liberties;
- threaten the stability and independence of our homes;
- introduce divisive religious controversy in the classrooms and involve the community in constant tension;
- imply that morality and religion are interrelated;
- offend millions of religiously unaffiliated Americans who lead wholesome and moral lives;
- set up religious tests for teachers;
- deny that religious education is the exclusive responsibility of the home, church and synagogue;
- introduce religious tests for teachers.

Although we had issued no public statement setting forth our official reaction to the Guiding Statement, it was generally known by both the Jewish and Protestant groups that we were favorably inclined toward its adoption by the Board. Because of the strong and vehement criticism that was now being leveled against it, we prepared a statement⁵ for the press which was carried in the papers on November 25, 1955. That morning we were agreeably surprised to learn in the same press release that the Protestant Council had also given its endorsement. A few days later, however, the spokesman for the Protestant Council, in a letter to the *New York Times* stated: "It was not my intention that my comments should infer any endorsement of the document. . . . I simply commended the Board for its concern on this important topic. . . . There are a number of statements in it with which I cannot agree. . . . We are now subjecting the entire statement to a searching scrutiny."

In our statement of November 23, 1955, we commended the Board of Superintendents for attempting a practical formulation for the teaching of moral and spiritual values in the public schools of New York City and referred once again to the excellent recommendations on this subject made by the State Board of Regents in November, 1951,² and March, 1955.⁶ We also pointed out that

Recognizing the dominant role to be played by the home and the church in developing sound standards of living on the part of American youth, right thinking citizens of all faith are convinced nevertheless that our public schools cannot be indifferent in this matter. These people are not asking for the teaching of sectarian religious doctrines or a "least common denominator" religion in the schools. Rather, they ask that our schools reflect the spirit of America by recognizing God's existence—Father, Creator, Law-giver—as the only sound and generally recognized basis on which to build convictions and habits essential to moral living.

No one can logically deny that any school program designed to impart such values to children must be firmly rooted in basic and fundamental principles which give sanction and significance to the moral and spiritual values which the school attempts to teach. Here in America, our history, our traditions, our values, and our institutions together with our way of life and the philosophy it entails—all these have their roots and beginnings in our Hebraic-Christian heritage which above all teaches the existence of God and man's dependence upon Him.

The use of this guide in the classrooms of our schools will do much to provide an atmosphere and environment friendly and favorable to religion without in any way indoctrinating the pupils in the tenets of any particular religion. The guide further carefully distinguishes between the *recognition* and the specific detailed *teaching* of these basic principles upon which the program of moral and spiritual values is based. Rightfully does it state that such instruction falls properly within the scope and jurisdiction of the home, the church and the synagogue.

When acknowledgment of God and of our obligations to Him is made unmistakably clear in the public school curriculum, only then can the public school fulfill its obligation in teaching citizenship and in nurturing the faith of its students in a nation which even from the constitutional and legal point of view is a nation under God. Such acknowledgment along with encouragement of the work of the home, the church, and the synagogue in forming

character is needed to prevent the public school from becoming by indirection and silence an anti-religious element in the community.

A week after the publication of our statement a large number of rabbis devoted their Saturday sermon of December 2 to the denunciation of the Guiding Statement. They repeated for the most part the arguments previously stated by the Board of Rabbis but two interesting new ones emerged. "Let the spokesman of the major faith be honest," said Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, "they have not yet themselves developed the formula for teaching their own sectarian points of view without ever breeding some intolerance in their co-religionists. How can they then presume that they will know how to guide public school teachers to do what they themselves cannot do?" Said Rabbi Edward Klein, "Let us join hands in launching a great national program to enroll children in the religious schools of their faith. . . . Let us be Catholic, Protestant and Jew in churches, synagogues and homes but in the classrooms of America we must be Americans all."

Fearful lest the Board of Education approve the Guiding Statement, Dr. Joseph Blau of Columbia University said, "if the schools take over the role of the church and parents, there will be no non-believers in a generation. . . . Creeping clericalism would lead, as I see it, with an America about the year 2000 with an established Roman Catholic Church with possibly the Papacy in America and the absolute suppression of all religious liberty."

The only other religious pronouncements on this subject during this period came from Bishop Donegan, the Episcopal Bishop of New York, and a group of fourteen Unitarian ministers. The former in a sermon at St. John the Divine urged the wider use of Released Time as well as added support and encouragement to church boarding and day schools. "In a pluralistic society," he said, "public education cannot be used as a vehicle for the teaching of religion or of a religiously grounded ethic. Nor can even a theistic belief be promulgated without violating the rights of teachers, children and parents who have chosen an atheistic or secularistic way of life." The statement by the Unitarian ministers regretted the fact that

"free" religious bodies such as the Universalists, Ethical Culture, Unitarian, and Humanist were not consulted or represented in the preparation of the Guiding Statement which implies a "justification of indirect coercion toward religion both for pupils and teachers. . . . Moral and spiritual values do not necessarily derive only from belief in God."

Thus the matter rested until mid-January when at the invitation of the Superintendent of Schools representatives of the three major faiths met for the last time with him and the Board of Superintendents. It was hoped, no doubt, by the school officials to bring about a compromise which would resolve the conflicting views of the Jewish and Catholic representatives. The meeting, as was expected, failed to achieve this objective as the differences among the three groups appeared greater than ever before.

It was not until January 20, 1956, a week after the meeting referred to above that the Protestant Council of the City of New York announced its official stand on the Guiding Statement. In commending the Board of Education for coming to grips with a real and vital issue, it recommended the following principles be kept in mind in revising the document: that the Statement should take proper account of the rights of those teachers, parents and others in the community who take a non-theistic position with respect to moral and spiritual values and should provide adequate safeguards against the conscious propagation of sectarian doctrines; that the Council was not disposed to advocate measures which a minority of their fellow citizens regard as an infringement upon their freedom; that all the materials of the curriculum do not lend themselves for use as a vehicle for the teaching of moral and spiritual values; that this could best be done in areas pertaining to our Hebraic-Christian tradition, our political documents and our common convictions concerning human worth, individual dignity and the religious basis of our institutions. The statement of the Protestant Council concluded with the observation that teachers would have to be trained more thoroughly in religion to do this effectively. It urged continued study and stressed the fact that such teaching is the primary responsibility of the home and the church.

IV. REVISION OF THE GUIDING STATEMENT ON MORAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES

By late January of 1956 the statements of the three major faiths on the Guiding Statement were now before the Board of Education. Because of the irreconcilable viewpoints as expressed in the Catholic and Jewish positions and the Protestant recommendation that the document be revised, the Board of Education referred the Guiding Statement back to the Board of Superintendents for revision. On July 27, 1956, the revision was completed and again unanimously approved by the Board of Superintendents. In the process a new title, "The Development of Moral and Spiritual Ideals in the Public Schools," was given to the document. A public hearing was approved by the Board for August 30 in order to permit all interested parties to appear to voice their opinions on the new program. Because of protests received from some groups who charged that the August 30 date occurred during the summer when many people would be away from the city, the Board postponed the hearing to September 17.

The revised draft of the Guiding Statement is a twenty-page syllabus which spells out in greater detail than the original the implications for the teaching of moral and spiritual values in the various subject areas. While it is not as clear or explicit on certain major points as was the first draft, it does, however, contain a number of important and significant statements which merited our approval of the program as a whole. To illustrate this, referral is made to the following sections:

Page 1.—"The Board of Education states that it 'desires to fulfill the objectives of the Regents in seeking to nurture the moral and spiritual fiber of our children, stimulating thereby that love of God and country which springs from a wholesome home environment.'"

Page 2.—"For Western civilization moral and spiritual ideals stem in the main from the Judeo-Christian ethic. They find their expression in the Ten Commandments, which are succinctly summarized: 'Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might . . . , and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.'"

Page 3.—"From this fundamental moral and spiritual ideal

of love of God and love of neighbor, there inevitably flow a number of moral and spiritual ideals which have become embedded in legal and political traditions as well as in the conscience of men. They have been concisely stated in America's historic documents, and beautifully phrased in the utterances of our statesmen, poets and writers."

Page 4.—"It is neither a function nor a prerogative of the public schools to teach religion or to indoctrinate pupils with the tenets, doctrines or dogmas of any religion, of any sect, or of secularism. . . . At the same time, however, it should be clear that any statement on the teaching of moral and spiritual values would be inadequate and incomplete unless it gave due emphasis to the role of religious ideals in influencing moral concepts and behavior. In all ages and places religion has been an important determinant in shaping the culture, the customs and the moral and spiritual ideals of people. . . . Although religious pluralism characterizes American life, the great majority of Americans believe that God is the Author of the moral code to Whom each individual is ultimately responsible. Most people find in religion the basic and fundamental sanction for right conduct. . . ."

Page 5.—"The home and the church have the primary responsibility for molding the character and ideals of children and of emphasizing the relationship or lack of relationship between morality and religion. It is, however, the function of the schools to be conscious of the various motivations that influence human behavior and to utilize those means and devices suitable at various age levels to support the efforts of the home and church in building good character in our children."

Page 6.—"This statement of policy recognizes that most children come to school with a belief in God, and that the schools must not teach for or against the religious beliefs or disbeliefs of any group. Many of the things that the schools have been doing for a long time—the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, the singing of the fourth stanza of America, the reading of the Bible, and the practice of beginning formal functions with an invocation and closing them with a benediction, are meaningless unless pupils are deeply conscious of the religious underpinning of our moral and spiritual ideals, our Western culture, and our American democracy."

Page 7.—"The teacher is in a position to exemplify such qualities as justice, love, kindness, idealism, humility, reverence, and a sincere respect for the religious and moral beliefs and practices of all pupils."

Page 11.—"Pupils also study the great documents of our history and become familiar with the basic principles and central ideas upon which our government is founded. The Declaration of Independence states: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.'"

Page 12.—"The underlying philosophy of American Democracy is based upon the premise that the individual possesses God-given rights which the state can neither give nor take away. . . . Even those who may question the validity of the concept that God is the source of the unalienable rights of the individual admit that this ideal was basic in the thinking of our forebears."

Page 13.—"Pupils learn that the philosophy expressed in the dictum of Marx—'Religion is the opium of the people'—is the fundamental source of the great ideological conflict of our age. They understand the reasons for totalitarian hostility to religion, and for the totalitarian doctrine of the exaltation, almost deification, of the state contained in the slogan, 'Nothing above the state, nothing outside the state, nothing against the state.'"

Page 14.—"The vastness and the splendor of the heavens, the order and precision of the sun, planets, stars and comets, the marvels of the human body and mind, the beauty of nature, the mystery of photosynthesis, the mathematical structure of the universe, the concept of infinity cannot do other than lead to humbleness before God's handiwork."

Page 20 (Summary).—"To the extent that the teachers utilize these opportunities and resources for stressing moral and spiritual values, to that extent will the schools, in the language of the New York Board of Regents in 1951, 'fulfill its high function of supplementing the training of the home, ever intensifying in the child that love of God, for parents and for home, which is the mark of true character training and the sure guarantee of a country's welfare.'"

In considering what action we should take on the revised draft we sought the advice of a number of theologians with whom we had been in contact at the time when the original document was being studied. One replied that he found the new statement harmless and unobjectionable although a somewhat watered down version of the original in which God and our duties toward Him were more strongly affirmed. He went on to say that he could not see how any group could object to the present version since it expressly recognizes

that the public schools may not teach for or against the religious beliefs or disbeliefs of anyone. At the same time, the schools are to exhibit a friendly attitude toward religion and religious ideals since their influence is so great in Western civilization and in our country in particular. Since the statement upholds the religious ideal in the schools, God and religion furnish the motives for character building and good citizenship. In addition to a few other minor criticisms he concludes by stating: "This statement certainly says the minimum that could be said about God and be acceptable to a theist. If we cannot get any more, we can accept the little it gives us, without too much hope of its being very effective."

Another theologian also felt that the revised version was weaker than the original. He objected particularly to the sentence, "Even those who reject the idea of obligation to God and love of God, accept as a prime moral and spiritual ideal the love of neighbor, and they seek to find a philosophic base for their acceptance of this ideal apart from God." The Board of Education, he said, would consider it satisfactory if a teacher proposes mere humanitarianism as the basis of moral goodness. This would give some teachers the opportunity of telling their pupils that God is not needed for a good life. He urged that strong protest be made against this form of the plan and concluded his remarks on this point by saying: "Unless the existence of a personal God is proposed as a positive fact, I think the whole thing should be scrapped."

Another grave error in this revision noted by the same theologian is the statement that "religious education and training are not functions of state-supported schools." His observation on this point is as follows: "Of course, the primary right of educating children belongs to the parents, and the state may take over this function, in order to see that children become good citizens, only when the parents will not or cannot do their task (either by themselves or by non-public schools of their choice) or when the parents commit their children to public schools. But when this takes place, the State has *per se* the right and the duty to make religious instruction and training a part of the course since this is necessary for good citizenship. In our own country, because of the plurality of religions, the religious doctrines of any particular church could not be taught, but at least

the general doctrines of natural law and natural reason about God should be regarded as an essential part of the curriculum."

A third theologian confined his reactions to the document as a whole by pointing out that we must ever keep in mind it is not a Catholic statement on moral and spiritual values. Indeed, if it were, it would be written much differently and contain many ideas which do not appear in the statement. He felt the practical implementation of the program's recommendations would not disturb the conscience of Catholic students. He judged the revision a far better and safer document than the original principally from the viewpoint of its legal and constitutional implications.

Two other priests thoroughly familiar with public school organization and with similar attempts made in various parts of the country to set up programs for the teaching of moral and spiritual values advised that the revised statement was quite beyond their finest expectations and for this reason rated it as the best they had seen to date.

Thus confronted with these conflicting evaluations and the need for acquainting the Board with our views on the new syllabus, we decided to refrain from issuing any official statement preferring to leave this to the representatives of our Catholic lay organizations who planned to attend the public hearing scheduled for September 17.

After a careful and thorough analysis of developments up to this time, we concluded it would be both imprudent and unwise to suggest changes of any kind in the document even though it contained a number of statements that could be readily and validly challenged. The chief reason behind this decision was the strong and vehement opposition on the part of certain groups in the community to any mention of God or to any reference pertaining to the religious undergirding of our American way of life and of the ideals which derive from our Judeo-Christian heritage. Any suggestions on our part to amend sections of the document would certainly have been welcomed by both the secularist and the materialist and even by certain religious groups who want no part of God or any religiously grounded motivation in the public school program. Such in addition to those predominantly interested in the rights of non-believers and atheists would certainly demand that their recommendations for changes in

the document be heard and eventually incorporated in the revised edition. We would thus wind up with a syllabus that in its final analysis wouldn't be worth the paper it was written on. Even though the program as now formulated was by no means perfect, it was definitely a step in the right direction. Moreover, its objective to provide in public school classrooms an environment friendly and favorable to the cause of religion, its desire to fulfill the excellent objectives of the Regents, its recognition of the fact that for Western civilization moral and spiritual ideals stem from the Judeo-Christian tradition, its referral to the Ten Commandments with particular emphasis upon love of God and love of neighbor, its acknowledgment that the great majority of Americans believe that God is the Author of the moral code to whom each individual is ultimately responsible and its hope that the schools will "ever intensify in the child that love of God, for parents and for the home, which is the mark of true character training and the sure guarantee of a country's welfare"—all these were positive and constructive statements which if approved by the Board and practiced in the schools, could not but improve a situation wherein God and religion were either too often completely disregarded or on occasion ridiculed or attacked.

V. PUBLIC HEARING ON THE REVISED PROGRAM

On September 17, 1956, a five-hour public hearing on the revised draft, entitled "The Development of Moral and Spiritual Ideals in the Public Schools," was held at the Board of Education. Groups speaking in favor of the statement included: The Catholic Teachers Associations of New York and Brooklyn (teachers in the public schools of the city); The Teachers Alliance; Kindergarten-6B Teachers Association; the American Education Association; Brooklyn Catholic Interracial Council; New York State Federation of Labor; Co-ordinating Committee of Catholic Lay Organizations of the Archdiocese of New York; Community Councils of New York; Public Education Association; Citizens Committee for Spiritual Values in Education; representatives from various Parent-Teacher Associations; Methodist Board of Social and Economic Relations; Queens County American Legion; New York Principals Association;

Americanism Committee; Kings County American Legion; Queens Catholic War Veterans; Protestant Council of New York; Queens Federation of Protestant Churches; Rabbi Joshua Goldberg; Head Navy Chaplain of the New York area; Brooklyn Diocesan Union of the Holy Name Societies; The Guild of Catholic Lawyers of New York and Brooklyn; The Brooklyn and Queensborough Federation of Mothers Clubs; and the Federation of Parents and Teachers of Staten Island.

Groups opposed to the approval of the program included the following: The Teachers Guild; the Teachers Union; Association of Teachers of Social Studies; United Parents Association; Society for Ethical Culture; National Liberal League; Freethinkers of America; American Association for the Advancement of Atheism; American Jewish Congress; Emergency Civil Liberties Committee; Jewish Labor Committee; Citizens Committee for Children.

While the New York Board of Rabbis and the New York Chapter of the American Jewish Committee commended the Board for improving upon the original statement, they both suggested changes which they felt should be made in the document. The following were some of the major suggestions offered:

- omit any reference to the Board of Regents' statement of 1951, which asserts that the public schools have the responsibility to assist the home and the church in stimulating love of God and religious commitment;

- omit the sentence "The concept of infinity cannot do other than lead to humbleness before God's handiwork." The Board should not commit itself on so complicated a religious concept;

 - change "God-given rights" to "inalienable rights";

- revise the statement regarding the ideological conflict of our age (p. 13) which makes it appear that only anti-religious totalitarianism is to be opposed. Some totalitarian regimes have been and still appear friendly to religion but are yet fundamentally opposed to democratic ideals;

- strongly recommend deletion of the sentence (p. 6): "Many of the things that the schools have been doing for a long time—the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, the singing of the fourth stanza of 'America,' the reading of the Bible, and the practice of beginning formal functions with an invocation and closing them with a benediction, are meaningless unless pupils are deeply

conscious of the religious underpinning of our moral and spiritual ideals, our Western culture, and our American democracy."

omit sentence (p. 20) containing "ever intensifying in the child that love of God. . . ."

At its regular meeting on October 4, 1956, the Board of Education, by the unanimous vote of its nine members approved the revised statement on "The Development of Moral and Spiritual Ideals in the Public Schools." The Chairman of the Board prefaced his vote in favor of the document by saying that he and his fellow members felt it "meets with the general approval of the community and is endorsed in principle by the religious groups in our city, as well as important civic organizations." One member said that it was impossible to achieve unanimous agreement in a matter such as this. While he preferred the original statement he was voting for this and thanked God He had given him the light to approve it. "Our public schools," said another Board member, "must join with the home and the church in assuming responsibility for educating our youth to know the basis of their freedom and their moral actions and to have respect and reverence for God and for the beliefs of their fellow pupils." Only one Commissioner while endorsing the statement requested that the opinions expressed by the United Parents Association, the Citizens Committee for Children and the New York Board of Rabbis be studied for a further revision of the document.

Recently the Board of Rabbis in a letter to the Board of Education's President urged that vigilance be exercised in the application of the newly adopted code on teaching moral and spiritual values. "Vigilance is necessary lest the sensitivities of children of differing faiths be violated and lest there be breaches in the traditional separation of Church and State which has through the years enriched our democracy and enabled religion in America to grow strong and free."

It is now the responsibility of the school officials to develop supplementary classroom materials for the purpose of integrating the regular program of studies with moral and spiritual values in keeping with the purpose and spirit of the new syllabus. It will be interesting to see how this will be done and to study new developments which will no doubt occur in the process.

VI. PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS

In presenting this case history of our experiences gained through our attempts in New York to work out a practical and effective program for the teaching of moral and spiritual values in public schools, I wish in no way to imply or insinuate that we have found *the* satisfactory solution to this trying and complicated problem. We have tried, however, to do something constructive and helpful. We are convinced that we have a serious responsibility to assist public education whenever it sincerely and honestly tries to provide, within the framework of its organization and the consequent limitations involved, a program which will bring God and His moral law into the various subjects of the school curriculum. Since so many of our own children attend public schools and since it is impossible to accommodate them in our Catholic schools, we cannot completely disregard their problems for in so doing we leave the field solely to the secularist and the materialist to say nothing of those religious groups who want a complete and unreasonable separation in all things educational between Church and State.

I have deliberately outlined the facts in considerable detail to illustrate the many and highly complex factors involved in this attempt to work with groups whose philosophy and outlook on life is so varied and diverse. In doing so I am aware that no all these factors or complications exist equally in all localities and for this reason ways of attacking this problem will vary considerably from school board to school board. I must admit, however, I am somewhat surprised that so few Christian communities have made any significant attempts to work out programs in this area. Perhaps they will in greater numbers than at present begin to move shortly in this direction. I feel certain they will. And because of this conviction I know that Catholic educators—Superintendents and Confraternity directors, particularly—will gladly welcome your wise guidance and valued counsel.

RT. REV. JOHN J. VOIGHT
Secretary for Education
New York, N. Y.

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COOPERATION WITH NON-CATHOLICS IN ETHICO-RELIGIOUS
SCHOOL PROGRAMS**Digest of the Discussion:**

To open the discussion, the chairman recognized *Father Edgar McCarren*, who announced that he was from Brooklyn. Even in this august assembly, the announcement was greeted with laughter. Father McCarren thought it important to keep in mind the fact that historically the Church in the United States has been opposed to these cooperative programs. He cited the opposition of Bishop Hughes to Bible reading, hymn singing,

and prayers in the public schools as an example. Father insisted pleasantly enough that he had no quarrel with what New York was doing, but that he would like the reaction of other theologians to the problems involved. He instanced the concern of the Jews over the program outlined by Msgr. Voight and suggested that their opposition might well stem from a fear of the Christian teachers who would be called upon to implement it. Would there not, he asked, be cause for us, too, to be concerned about the non-Catholics who would teach in the program? Further, would not an attitude of religious indifference result from such activities as neutral prayers said in common?

Father Francis Connell, C.S.S.R., thought that the difficulties here might be separated into two questions: the first, a question of principle, can we in conscience accept such a program, is it morally permissible? the second, a question of expediency, would it be profitable for us to do so? To the first difficulty, the question of whether we may do this, that is, encourage the teaching of only those religious truths that we can know by reason, *Father Connell* said that he personally could see no principle of faith that would be opposed to it. He insisted, however, that we would have to make clear to our own children—and this would be our task—that this naturally knowable religious truth is not the sum and substance of religion. As to the question of expediency, *Father* said that he would hesitate personally to judge on the matter. He pointed, however, to the real danger that some teacher, e. g. a Pantheist, could distort even the most fundamental religious truths. On the other hand, the recitation of acceptable prayers in common—such as the Our Father—has been allowed recently by the Holy See. At any rate, *Father* thought that the problem of expediency for us was the real question, unless someone wanted to disagree with him concerning the principle involved.

At this point, *Father John Ford, S.J.*, remarked that he had been present during the previous week at a conference of ministers of various faiths. They had been addressed by *Father John O'Connor* of Philadelphia, who is involved in developing character training programs for the Navy. *Father O'Connor's* talk, which had been well received by the ministers at the conference, stressed the fact that in the armed services the practical problems involved in these cooperative efforts had been largely avoided. In the service programs there is such great control over the teaching materials, lectures, etc. that no one could possibly object. *Father Ford* said, therefore, that he would agree with *Father Connell* on the question of principle, that he could see no difficulty there. As to the question of expediency, he thought that depended on how the program would be worked out in detail, what teaching materials would be used, what controls exercised, etc. The armed services programs would be examples of an acceptable solution. Granted that New York might have its special problems, *Father* thought that it would be a shame to forego

the good that would come for our own children and for others from a well controlled program of religious teaching in the public schools.

Father Matthew Herron, T.O.R., of Steubenville, then related an experience he had had with a local inter-faith educational meeting. While some of the other speakers tended to avoid strictly religious topics, he devoted most of his own talk to an explanation of why public school teachers are justified in teaching the ten commandments as the divinely revealed expression of the natural law. He said that the reaction was most favorable and that many of the public school teachers present went out of their way to tell him that this was the first time they had realized that they could teach the ten commandments without prejudice to any faith.

Monsignor George Shea, of Darlington, proposed the next difficulty, that, namely, of ways and means of overcoming the opposition of the secularists, granted the expediency of cooperating in these programs. It seemed to him that there is needed more discussion on the nature and the function of the public school. He pointed out that the public school is not an instrument of the state or the municipality, but of the parents; the Board of Education on the various levels represents the parents, therefore, and not the civil authority. If, then, religion can be taught in the home, why can it not be taught in the school which is an extension of the home? The so-called "wall of separation" between Church and State is irrelevant to this discussion, since the public school is not in actual fact an instrument of the state, but of the parents.

Monsignor Voight thought that this suggestion was a very good one and expressed the hope that the theologians would undertake to work in this area. Before concluding, he pointed out for the record the difference between the present problems and those faced by Bishop Hughes a century ago. At that time there was a strong religious feeling among people generally and our Catholic children in the public schools were being proselytized. Since then a wave of secularism has spread over the country and this has brought a new set of problems with it. It was with obvious regret that the chairman closed this discussion and the number who came forward afterwards to speak privately to Monsignor Voight was proof enough that he had stimulated a genuine interest in this question.

Recorded by: BROTHER C. LUKE SALM, F.S.C.
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