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Finding for a Psychology of Religion

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FINDINGS FOR A PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

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I. THE SITUATION

1. A recent analysis of the nine most recent textbooks on the Psychology of Religion revealed a dearth of the commonly accepted findings in the field of psychology. Early authors omit topics of *personality, mental health, personal religion,* and *religious expression. Childhood* and *adolescence* were discussed in a minor way. Much emphasis was given to mysticism, immortality, primitive religions, prayer and other topics of considerable interest to theologians. The needs and interests of children, adolescents, and adults are readily recognized as basic to any adapted psychology of religion. Likewise, ideals, character values, methods of influencing youth, etc., should be rated as very important by phychologists.

2. It was assumed that modern psychological findings have much to contribute to a valid psychology of religion.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.

To discover psychological research findings which have bearing upon a psychology of religion. Because of time limitation the findings are only reported on *ideals, character, children, adolescents,* and *adults.*

III. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

1. Phychological abstracts for the past eight years were investigated.
2. Psychological findings in recent textbooks of psychology of religion were surveyed.
3. A recent study of the nine commonly used textbooks in this field was evaluated.
4. Psychological and religious journals were surveyed for findings.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS.

I. IDEALS.

Religious institutions quite generally use the direct method of seeking to inculate the ideals they consider more important. The noted Character Inquiry, directed by Hartshorne and May, gives many findings to refute the adequacy of such a procedure. Like-

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wise, that the method and degree of enjoyment of the process is far more important than the objective desired.

A few of these major findings are:

1. Learning, to be effective, must be experienced. (Hartshorne, H. and May, Mark, 1929).

2. The desired experience must be represented in the normal situation to which individuals are exposed.

3. The situations made for the individual in learning must be opportunities to pursue interests which lead to the desired conduct to be learned.

4. The Conduct to be learned must be carried on in relation to the particular situations which develop the preferred mode of response.

5. The established practice and code of a group colors any situation and may either hinder or assist the acquisition of desirable individual and group responses. (Hartshorne, H. and May, Mark, 1929).

6. Standards and ideals "must be tools rather than objects of esthetic appreciation."

7. Specific standards, attitudes, and modes of conduct, achieved must be integrated and purposefully expressed in wholesome thought and action to be effective in conduct.

8. If ideals are to become permanent, their trait actions must be repeated until they have become habitual. (Charters, W. W., 1928).

9. The one hour-a-week contact of the Sunday School modifies only slightly standards of every day conduct. (Bro, Marqueritte H., 1935).

10. Interest or disinterest is not a wholly reliable sign of value. (Carmichael, P. A., 1938).

11. Values are determined by experience in the last analysis.

12. Prevailing ways of inculcating ideals do but little good and may do some harm. (Chane, Ernest J., 1938).

13. Controlling behavior by means of abstract ideals can only be achieved by aiding satisfactory adjustments to existing groups and the development of a related normal growth of personality resulting in constructive emotional expressions. (Karpman, B., 1941).

14. A functioning ideal of society must be derived from the nature of the social life and growth as experienced by the individual. (Royce, J., 1920).

Consequently it is quite apparent that the religious development of the individual would be furthered by: natural situations being used for specific teaching, incidental and indirect methods selected in preference to the commonly used direct method of teaching, preaching and other administrative procedures.

2. Character in Psychology of Religion.

Again, the significance of the individual's life situation is emphasized. The small community gives the ideal situation for character influence where the issues do not seem to be so complex. The findings are:

1. "No one is honest or dishonest by nature." (Hartshorne, H., and May, Mark, 1928).
2. There is "need for careful educational analysis of all situations being used for teaching purposes."
3. The organization of consistent character is hindered by the "contradictory demands made upon the child by the varied situations in which he is responsible to adults." (Hartshorne, H., and May, Mark, 1930).
4. A character education program must make preliminary diagnosis of the present tendencies and weaknesses of each individual, discover his sources, and cooperate with him where he is now in the development of increasingly better character traits.
5. "The ideals issuing from experience must become prepotent factors in the stimulation of further conduct", and must aid "in the achievement of satisfactory modes of adjustment to new aspects."
6. Groups small enough to provide for cooperative discussion and effort to give moral support, aid in the "adventurous discovery and effective use of ideals in the conduct of affairs."
7. The home is the most influential factor in the formation of character of children. (Dimack, Hedley S., 1938).
8. Character education must strive to develop the child's social sensitivity and give him a sense of worth through success in programs of action. (Dimack, Hedley S., 1938).
9. "There must be assumed a flexible functional attitude that recognizes degrees of right and wrong, and types of personalities that react differently to problems of right and wrong." (Jacobs, Jessie A., 1939).

3. Childhood in Relation to Psychology of Religion

The interests and capacities of children condition religious processes, for they are little different than when these same children are in day school. A few of the major findings are:

1. Religion must recognize extreme intellectual, emotional, and social differences between children.

    (1) The superior student is above average not only intellectually but also in achievement, in play interests, social traits, emotional and moral development, and health and physical measurements. (Darley, John G., and Paterson, Donald G., 1934).

(2) The retarded student is below average not only intellectually but also physically, socially, and morally. (Newland, T. S., 1939).

Educators must find and concentrate on the development of a specific skill in a field for which the retarded student shows some interest and ability. (Mueller, J. A., 1939).

2. The child needs a reliable and stable environment which will enable him to anticipate what is coming next in a world where sudden and unexpected changes are continually taking place. (Peller, L. E., 1939).

3. Affective behavior of the child is structured according to the dynamic relationships which exist between the situation and the needs of the individual. Earlier experience is very determinative of the direction emotion may take. (Emme, E. E., 1940).

4. The child should be taught emotional expression rather than inhibition, to live his emotions rather than talk about them. (Morgan, J. B., 1934).

5. The credulity of little children makes the trust of parenthood and teachers sacred. (Emme, E. E., 1940).

6. Leaders of children must cultivate a spirit of helpfulness, kindness, cheerfulness, obedience, and loyalty in children by example and by making possible for them opportunities of growth in Christian (sharing with others) living.

7. Personal security and a feeling of belonging give a child motivation toward more wholesome and objective expression of his personality.

8. Childhood leadership experience under Church Auspices rather than emphasis upon childhood beliefs.

(1) Adult religious experience was vitally developed by childhood leadership experience in connection with the Church. (Barker, L. V., 1934).

(2) Success and ability to get along with others is best developed by leadership development among and with others. (Darley, John G., and Paterson, Donald G., 1934).

(3) Lack of social understanding is one of the primary causes for the unsuccessfulness of workers. (Crane, G. W., 1938).

4. ADOLESCENCE IN RELATION TO A PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION.

The interests and capacities of adolescence condition appropriate religious processes for them. A few of the findings are:

1. Shifts of ideas are more likely to come about at high school age than at college age. (Van Toyle, M. C., 1938).

2. Youth from homes of different religious backgrounds tend to accept the religion of their parents. (Bell, H. M., 1938).

3. Church membership of youth is closely related to the popula-
   tion density of various areas. (Bell, H. M., 1938).

4. Some very important research substantiates present-day re-
   ligious education hopes for the gradual development of the
   children and youth into mature religious persons. (Dimack,
   Hedley S., 1937).

5. Adolescents express a personal interest in Religion.

6. A program of controlled and properly supervised self-govern-
   ment in the adolescent's social functions aids his development
   of the interest, self and social responsibility, and directed ef-
   fort. (Mowrer, C. H., 1939) (Landis, P. H., 1940).

7. Social conditions influence moral and religious thinking to a
   much greater extent than biological conditions, thus adoles-
   cents are amenable to educational control and direction.
   (Dimack, Hedley S., 1936).

5. ADULTS IN RELATION TO A PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION.

The life issues of adults vary considerably. Their needs and in-
terests can not be assumed as generally understood everywhere. A
few of the basic findings are:

1. While most abilities reach their peak between the ages of 15
   and 30, the best contributions to the functioning of society are
   made by men from the age of 30 to 80. (Guilford, Jr., P.,
   1939).

2. Vocational responsibility specifically relates to the quality of
   life; socio-economic status is very determinative of human ad-
   justment and success. (Emme, E. E., 1932).

3. "When two religions of radically different types are brought
   together in the marriage relationship usually the elimination of
   one, or an attempt to merge both, has not resulted very satis-
   factorily." (Emme, E. E., 1940).

4. The Church aids adults to get away from selfish, introverted
   tendencies and leads them to launch out in the larger issues of
   life where others live. (Link, Henry, 1936).

5. Adults need to decide on some course of life worthy of their
   greatest loyalty and effort.

6. Adult emotional security depends upon one's being recognized
   as a person of value to others and a conviction that one can
   do something really well. (Pratt, G. K., 1933).

7. Activities should never be abruptly stopped, but changed in
   accordance with altered capacities. (Emme, E. E., 1940).

CONCLUSION

Valid data concerning ideals, character, children, adolescents,
and adult were presented. It is quite clear that ideals could be
fostered in a more effective way by use of the incidental method

especially when natural teaching situations are utilized. Children, adolescents, and adults have interests and capacities peculiar to their age and condition; that these must be utilized if a psychology of religion is to be well founded. A psychology of religion need not fear valid psychological findings if they are related to *a vital understanding* of human nature.

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