

PRELIMINARY 2007 NOTE FROM NOLAN

In 1970 I was invited to present an informal paper about community college teaching (as I was then experiencing it for the first time) to a gathering of professors of religious education and researchers held at Princeton Theological Seminary. About 2 dozen were on hand, including one member of my NYU doctoral committee. (The degree was conferred in 1973.)

I was grateful to my community college president for his impartial proofreading of the paper, despite my critical comments.

During the discussion phase of my presentation, one professor (a colleague at the Hartford Seminary caught up in the Seminary's radical reorganization - a well qualified individual who eventually found himself without a faculty position) was especially hostile; one or two others were irritated. On our way to lunch immediately afterwards I asked my NYU advisor what had precipitated the hostility (which had caught me off guard); she replied, "They were very threatened by some of the things you said." Unfortunately the conversation was cut short, and my life went forward with other matters. However, the 2007 Addendum at the end of this online copy might shed some light on some of the negativity.

A biographical note: in transition at the time, I held two full-time positions (with both presidents' approval): one daytime administrative/faculty appointment at Hartford Seminary, and the other - evenings - on the faculty of a new Connecticut community college located about 35 miles away from Hartford.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES: SUNDAY SCHOOL OR THIRD-RATE ACADEMICS?

Richard T. Nolan

It is unlikely that a responsible educator today would question the legality of including "religious studies" within the curriculum of publicly supported colleges. Well established departments or schools of religion at undergraduate and graduate levels are thriving on many public campuses throughout the United States.

In Connecticut the state university has high on its priority list a Department of Religious Studies (to function at the graduate level initially) to begin in the fall of 1971. (2007 note: This federation with the Hartford Seminary never materialized.) The state colleges, as well as the University of Connecticut, offer presently a number of courses in biblical studies, world religions, and religious thought within English, philosophy, and social studies departments. Although the establishment of a formal department of religious studies runs into certain obstacles rooted in financial and curricular priorities, legal objections are rarely raised. The Connecticut community colleges are no different from their sister schools; religious studies organized as an autonomous department is a problem of priorities, not of legality.

It is our purpose here to explore some problems related to religious studies in public community colleges by referring to issues being raised in Connecticut's community colleges. These concerns are "philosophical" and practical rather than legal, in that a primary problem is with the "philosophy" of the community college - its purpose, its basic objective, in contrast to its actual practices.

At this writing there are in Connecticut eight state-supported community colleges. The first of these was established in 1965. Two additional ones are scheduled to open in the fall of this year. Their expansion has been rapid, but in line with the prediction of Sidney Tickton of the Ford Foundation; he estimates that by 1985 there will be more than 1,000 public junior colleges in the United States with an enrollment of four to five million students.

However, even with this expansion and attention in the public media, many citizens have failed to grasp the stated purposes of this enterprise. Many look upon the community colleges solely as a place for those (faculty and students) who "can't make it" academically at senior institutions, but who may settle

for two years of a watered-down liberal arts curriculum or a trade school experience. This interpretation applied to religious studies would seem to indicate that there is a choice between the offerings being regarded as a “Sunday School” or as third-rate academics. The former option is clearly out, since it is in no way the function of the college to indoctrinate (in the best sense of the word) or nurture a person or group of persons toward or within a theological commitment. Thus, religious studies as a part of a half-baked liberal arts program seems to be the “bright” possibility!

The “Purposes and Goals” stated in the 1969-1970 Catalogue of one of the Connecticut community colleges can certainly clear up the intent of the state:

“The College is a two-year, comprehensive community college which provides a number of diverse academic and occupational curricula. It offers terminal and transfer programs in the arts and sciences, programs which parallel those in a four-year college. It makes available career programs which prepare for commercial, industrial, and para-professional occupations.

The college has the following specific aims and objectives:

1. To provide students with a quality education leading to the Associate in Arts or the Associate in Science degree.
2. To provide career programs of two years of less leading to employment.
3. To offer transfer programs which will enable students to transfer to four-year state colleges or private institutions.
4. To cooperate with the professions, business and industry in establishing internship programs.
5. To offer courses in fields such as English, mathematics and reading to help students remove deficiencies before beginning college-level work.
6. To provide part-time continuing education for adults either toward academic degrees or for their personal enrichment.
7. To offer cultural programs to the community at large in fields such as drama, music, art, politics, and current affairs.
8. To help each student, through the college’s courses and counseling services, develop his individual capabilities and skills.
9. To enable each student to participate in intramural and intercollegiate athletics and other programs in accordance with interests and abilities.”

In a memorandum to sonic faculty members at Mattatuck Community College (Waterbury, Connecticut) President Charles B. Kinney suggests the following guidelines for proposing courses:

- “a. Is this a course which is likely to be offered in the first two years of a college program?
- b. Is this a course which most colleges prefer to offer in their professional programs, preferably in the third, fourth, or fifth year? If so, Mattatuck probably should not include in curriculum.
- c. Is this course of such overriding importance to the community that it should be available as a general education offering for adults?
- d. Will it likely get a substantial number of takers (if course is to be a general elective)?
- e. If there are many proposals from an individual or department, all of which may have merit, which one or two seem to be most important for inclusion for the next year or the next biennium?

The above are some questions which the committee must ask. It may have others.

The Curriculum Committee should not put itself in the position of approving every course which comes along, even though an individual or a whole department recommends. There must be an acute awareness of the need of the college for the next year for a balanced increase of a few courses and a recognition of what is likely to be possible within existing budgets.”

Courses in religious studies can certainly be justified within such a statement of purpose proposed according to the President’s guidelines. Furthermore, such courses can benefit the student intending to transfer to a four-year institution, terminate his studies with an Associate’s degree, or the student extending his horizons through continuing education.

BEYOND THE RHETORIC: PRACTICE VS. THEORY

The admissions policy of the community college provides an exciting opportunity for millions of persons. A high school diploma or a state equivalency diploma plus demonstrated capacity to do college level work are the primary qualifications for admission. One would think that a cross-section of students would flock to the colleges for their higher education, but this is not the case (The tuition in Connecticut for a full-time student is \$50 per semester; \$17.50 per semester hour for part-time study, with tuition not to exceed \$50 per semester.)

At one Connecticut community college the statistics show clearly that only a segment of the community is taking advantage of the offerings. During the 1969-70 academic year the following approximate figures indicate a profile of the student body:

Age range: 17-53 *Median* 20

Rank in High School: 70% in lower half of high school class

Sex: Male 75% Female 25%

S.A.T.: less than 450: verbal 70%, Math 60%

IQ range: 81 - 144 *Median* 110

Though most of us do not want to make statistics an end in themselves or use them impersonally, etc., they are helpful to arrive at a general picture of the student body in terms of “capacity to do college work” in one community college; I have a hunch this picture is representative. Some conclusions I should like to draw are these: (1) The community college is not yet attracting enough “older” (over 30) adults for continuing education purposes; (2) more females would be a balancing feature in the student body; and (3) the college is failing to attract the “more able” persons in the community, thus is not representing and serving the whole community.

Considering the readiness of the students for the various curricula, as measured by the scores (I.Q., etc.), we are surprised to find the grade distribution of the enrolled student body somewhat normal and even leaning toward the “B” category. If we agree that a “C” means “average” or “satisfactory” and that a “B” means “above average” or “honors” (as indicated by the college catalogues), how can it be that the “less able” students now attending are achieving so well?

Lest I be accused of putting too much emphasis on various scores, let me report that in my experience with some community college teaching over the last three semesters I have had students with an over-all “B” average, in their second year of study, unable to write an essay in clear, simple English with usual marks of punctuation. I have had many students maintaining satisfactory (“C”) records in worse shape in terms of basic skills. I am not in any sense talking about basic ability here; I am reporting on performance, regardless of ability.

Private conversations with a number of professors are leading me to a disturbing conclusion. Many feel that if they graded in terms of the criteria listed in the catalogue that students would not register for their courses, and their positions on the faculty would be jeopardized. Too, the budget provided through legislative action depends to a great extent upon the number of bodies registered. These fears and realities are not in any sense confined to community colleges. However, for other schools with even mediocre entrance standards and which endorse their students with “satisfactory” ratings, the problem may not be so acute as with the community colleges. To offer a course credit, which represents at least passable quality of achievement, or worse yet, a certificate of accomplishment to one who has not yet achieved, is morally questionable and unfair to the student’s picture of his own accomplishments. It is deceiving the community.

The more able persons in the community naturally shy away from what becomes known as “third rate academics” or a diploma mill supported by the citizen’s taxes. The student body itself is aware of the situation. The student editor of a Connecticut community college newspaper has recently called attention to the actual practice.

An acute problem arises for the student intending to transfer to a four-year college. In Connecticut, only courses with a (satisfactory) “C” grade or above is transferable; the two years as a package are not automatically transferred. Will the community college “C” student continue to perform “satisfactorily” in his junior and senior years elsewhere? Is the quality of the community college “C” comparable to that of the sister state colleges and university? Will that Dean’s list student, unable to write the language, make it through the four-year school?

I realize that many responsible educators would find the categories I am using (grades, academic achievement, scores, credits) not only distasteful, but representing a shallow idea of what education should be. I hope that as we proceed I can improve upon the taste and deepen what could be considered an administrator’s delight with numbers or a third-rate teacher’s poor concept of education.

Many college catalogues express a current theme present in some educational philosophies, namely, that education should deal directly with the whole person. I now disagree with this interpretation. I am more and more convinced that the institutional school (at least most of them) cannot deal directly with the *whole* person and that most colleges are able only partially to education (sic) the person. The school is not equipped, and perhaps it should not try to be, for the full nurture of the person, as a parent would care for the growth and development of a child. It seems to me that the school is unable to take the place of the ideal parent and family and to assume responsibilities for that aspect of one’s nurture toward a more complete education.

Nor must we retreat to the horrors of the data-centered past. Can the school not be a *student-centered* (as distinct from *person-centered*) and develop curricula concerned with exciting concepts, issues, and data in terms of the persons coming to us in their functions as students? I am not convinced that the faculty-student relationship, as contrasted to a person-to-person relationship, is undesirable. If the teacher (and the school) assumes only partial responsibility for a person’s education, namely, formal curricula, imaginatively developed, creatively-taught, this is perhaps the most the school can do *well*.

An implication of this orientation is that certificates, degrees, course credits, etc. are granted upon the basis of “academic achievement,” and not personal growth. The standards for achievement and the methods for measuring achievement certainly need further thought, but the task is clearer for the teacher when he realizes his limited function.

Within the context of my obviously “over 30” conservatism, it is quite clear that religious studies within a community college curriculum do not have the primary function of spiritual growth or theological commitment, hence not “Sunday School” (even in the best sense). I see the religious community as having the task of “Indoctrinating” and “nurturing” the person through family-church guidance and relationships.

I submit that religious studies have as the field’s basic objective the guidance of the student into an understanding of those concepts, issues and data related to a field called, for the sake of communication and not isolation, “religion.” I am sure that this purpose could be worded differently; it is clear that my intent is to make a distinction between religious education (a nurturing function of the religious community) and the religious studies (an academic function) of a school.

The curriculum of a Religious Studies Department or offerings in religious studies is, I believe, a matter of opinion, guided by the college’s basic objective and goals. The areas of biblical studies, history of religions, and religious thought could be used, but again, there are innumerable structures and classifications by which instruction can be arranged.

At Mattatuck Community College the following courses have been approved by the faculty: The Bible as Literature, History of Religions - Eastern, and Philosophy of Religion. This is a beginning. Note: Ultimately the President of MC. C. decides *when* a course will be offered, in that he must approve the funding of all instruction.) The first course is within the English Department, and the latter within the philosophy offerings.

Since about 60% of the M.C.C. students indicate that they are not interested in religious activities (80% of the student body being Roman Catholic, many of whom have strong anti-institutional-religion feelings), I am convinced that a formal department of religious studies is not the place to begin, and perhaps not desirable for the future. Even when the courses (hopefully) become popular, given the two-year residence of most students, the constant problem of their feelings toward religious institutions might scare away some of them. However, listed within other departments, the students would be less suspicious of the intent and content of the courses.

The “relevance” of the offerings does not depend upon wild experimentation, current teen-age jargon, the presence of guitars, or being seated on the floor. Rather, it depends upon the instructor’s awareness of those concepts, issues and data in religious studies and his sensitivity to his student’s interests in the field. A student electing “The Bible as Literature” is probably not interested in memorizing a College Outline Series type summary of dates and authors, but rather in the major themes of biblical thought. My point here is that even traditionally titled courses, utilizing scholarly insights, are not intrinsically irrelevant; the foci within the course and the style presented are keys to their “relevance.”

Within the community college such studies may take two tracks: (1) courses designed as geared to the liberal arts transfer student and (2) courses legitimately post-secondary school, but not concerned with being “transferable.” Both types offer room for exciting and legitimate religious studies of various kinds, but the academic integrity of a college level course is maintained particularly by the former.

Staffing the courses need not be a major problem. Similar criteria for religious studies teachers in the community college are applied as for other positions. In Connecticut an instructor must have a master’s degree; an assistant professor, a master’s or sixth year certificate; an associate professor or professor, a doctorate. The salary schedule is noted in Appendix A. It is clear that on the basis of the current scale, salaries are adequate.

The academic training of a teacher should include an exposure to religious studies on a broad basis, since he may be called upon to teach courses in various areas of the field. But, as important, the teacher must be committed to a style of teaching and a level of teaching that is suitable for the two-year college. He will obviously not be called upon to give senior seminars or other upper-level courses; he will be far removed from the intellectual climate of the residential graduate school. At this time he will not have the status in the profession that his colleagues in four-year colleges and universities enjoy. Publishing a paper in his field might be interesting (and even threatening) to his dean or chairman, but far more important in their eyes is his involvement in the college as teacher, committeeman and counselor. Until recently not many holders of a doctorate, often research-oriented, have applied for positions in community colleges. (This year the reverse is true, since jobs are scarce.; but will they be happy there, except on payday?)

With regard to religious studies teachers, the same criteria apply. Hauling in local clerics to give the courses might be the kiss of death because of the student's image of the clergy, their own type of preparation, or their style of presentation. (In a recent instance, a community college administrator called a local denominational headquarters to obtain a part-time religion teacher. A well-meaning, unprepared cleric was hired to teach "philosophy of religion" as a two-semester course. His only preparation had been in scholastic philosophy, and he is struggling to present a suitable course. It is interesting that the administrator sought a teacher from a church rather than a graduate school or neighboring institution on a part-time basis. I wonder if he has made any distinction between religious education and religious studies.)

THE LOCAL CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

I have made it quite clear that I believe the function of religious studies within the community college is not to replace religious education in the churches. However, there are areas in which religious studies, as well as sociology, psychology, etc. could be of service to the churches. First, most of the students electing the college courses in religion are concerned about issues commonly called religious. They are often seeking inspiration, answers, or confirmation about their own life-styles and beliefs. The college classroom can help illuminate and clarify their present positions and see alternatives; the implications of their present positions can be traced. But, the teacher cannot, in my opinion, seek to guide them within a "Christian" theological (or any other) context as THE solution for them.

The local clergy can be extremely helpful as resource persons, as potential pastors, and as counselors for the students. If the teacher can be aware of the talents available among the clergy, the pastoral tasks can be referred to them.

A helpful device for exposing the students to the local clergy is through various colloquia in which one or more clerics are invited. On a first hand basis, students attending can "size up" these persons. The impression made by many will be favorable. There are a few who tend to speak condescendingly, judgmentally, and quite timidly. Those who are able to relate more openly, admitting doubts, sharing uncertainties, but in knowing *who* they are and basically *where* they are and where they are going, are well received and occasionally sought after as pastors.

The college can further serve the churches. The instruction in religious studies and other fields can serve as one facet of informing people about aspects of religion. I am convinced that in our haste to be relevant and sensitive, we have overlooked the fact that, in addition to improving human relationships, the people in the congregations want to know, to understand. And, when a question of doctrine is raised by them, it is insensitive to insist that the answer be given non-verbally. (When not used as barriers, words can be great vehicles for communicating concepts, dealing with issues, and sharing relevant data that lead to greater clarity and understanding. To assume that the understanding is cerebral *because*

words are involved is to miss the power of words.) An academic course in Bible might contain answers or lead to understandings for someone who is experiencing considerable personal difficulty at that level.

The church school teacher as well may find that a part of his training can be met via courses in religious studies (psychology, etc.) in the community college. Persons are asking questions that cannot always be answered with balloons, posters and a loving gesture.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

To be sure, the objectives of the community college as listed in Mattatuck's catalogue are representative and helpful in determining the curriculum; a "basic objective" of the community college would also be helpful as a guiding principle for these goals. However, further clarification regarding the scope of institutionally based education is needed. Such would come to grips with the nature of "education" and what I believe to be the school's limited sharing in that process.

The development of a three-track system might be helpful as the college seeks to serve the whole community at a college level. A remedial or "basic studies" program would be of value to persons in the community who have been "passed on" by the secondary schools but who are seriously deficient in basic skills, or who have not yet "demonstrated their capacities for college level work." (See Appendix B. – no longer available in 2007.) It must be recognized, though, that some persons are unable to do college level work; other educational opportunities in the community are, or should be, open to them. In other words, some should not be admitted to college courses.

A second track is the vocationally oriented, terminal program for those who meet the admission requirements. Liberal arts courses, including religious studies, can be offered and designed particularly for these students. The faculty does not have to be concerned with the transferability of such courses and may offer, to the student's benefit, courses of a broader nature than the usual introductory studies in the liberal arts curriculum; for example, "Introduction to Religious Studies."

The third track is the two-year base of the four-year college curriculum. Courses are more standard, as they must be, in order to be transferred.

A word about transferability: the state colleges will transfer "C" or higher courses, providing that they are the 'usual' freshman-sophomore types. A "sophomore seminar" is not acceptable by all four-year colleges. Beyond the quantitative transfer, however, a given department has a voice in deciding whether the course will count as satisfying a requirement in the total curriculum or whether it may be included toward major concentration. Thus, the community college faculty cannot act as "free agents." They might offer some exciting innovations, educationally speaking, but deprive the student of entering the junior year at the end of two years of community college study. A course in "Religion and Social Change," for example, would most likely not be transferable at this time in Connecticut.

In the present phase of community college development, the charge of "third-rate academics" in religious studies and other fields cannot be dismissed lightly. As these exciting and significant colleges grow out of their messianic attitudes toward the community and see themselves as partners with other persons and social institutions, and not as parental-like gods, the charge may be disproved. In the meantime, religious studies will be included as defendants while the community college is on trial; perhaps this field, drawing strength from committed teachers, can share in leading the way towards greater clarity and integrity, so that catalogue rhetoric becomes concrete reality.

Appendix A

TRUSTEES ADOPT NEW COMPENSATION PLAN

At its September 15, 1969, meeting in Hartford, the Board of Trustees for Regional Community Colleges voted formal approval of the new compensation plan enacted for state employees by the 1969 Legislature. The Board's resolution reads: "That the Board adopts the compensation plan issued by the State Personnel Policies Board, under Item No. 6000-E, incorporating the three per cent salary increase authorized under Public Act 641, 1969, effective October 3, 1969, for determining compensation of its faculty and other personnel, and that all contracts with such personnel in effect on October 3, 1969 be modified accordingly." The Board also noted that "at a later date the State Personnel Policies Board will issue a revised compensation plan to implement the additional six per cent salary increase which will become effective on October 2, 1970."

The new State of Connecticut Salary Schedule effective October 3, 1969, provides the following annual amounts for the salary groups approved for community college faculty members (annual salary rates listed are for 10-month instructional personnel, payable bi-weekly over a 12-month period):

<u>STEPS</u>	<u>PROFESSOR</u> (Salary Group 26)	<u>ASSOCIATE</u> <u>PROFESSOR</u> (S.G. 23)	<u>ASSISTANT</u> <u>PROFESSOR</u> (S.G. 19)	<u>INSTRUCTOR</u> (S.C. 17)
1	\$15,186	\$13,020	\$10,694	\$ 9,601
2	15,763	13,535	11,085	9,972
3	16,340	14,050	11,476	10,343
4	16,917	14,565	11,867	10,714
5	17,494	15,080	12,258	11,085
6	18,071	15,595	12,649	11,456
7	18,648	16,110	13,040	11,827
(Annual Increment)	(\$577)	(\$515)	(\$391)	(\$371)

1970-1971 COMMUNITY COLLEGE SALARY SCHEDULES

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1	\$16,098	\$13,802	\$11,336	\$10,179
2	16,710	14,348	11,751	10,572
3	17,322	14,894	12,166	10,965
4	17,934	15,444	12,581	11,358
5	18,546	15,986	12,996	11,751
6	19,158	16,532	13,411	12,144
7	19,770	17,078	13,826	12,537

2007 ADDENDUM

excerpt from “ASSOCIATION of PROFESSORS and RESEARCHERS in RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (APRRE)” Charles F. Melchert and Randy G. Litchfield (not dated, but post-2001 in keeping with the endnotes).

at http://www.religiouseducation.net/OldWebsite/org/aprre/aprre_history_future.htm

ISSUES RELATED TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND THEOLOGY

Religious education as a scholarly field began in its early years with a profound interest in the intersection of religion and public education as well as teaching and learning in the religious community. More than eighty articles were published in the journal *Religious Education* about religion and moral values in public education from 1903 to 1920.^{1[1]} The public dimension of religious education has eroded. In light of “separation of church and state” issues and protests from both right and left whenever religion is mentioned in school, the public schools’ preference for a strategy of avoidance rather than investment in “teaching about religion” is quite understandable. In addition, with increased suburbanization, a decrease in a “public space,” an increased privatization of religion, media stereotyping of religion and depictions of it as a source of social conflict, the early insistence of educators like Coe and Alfred North Whitehead that education was intrinsically religious has gradually diminished. Despite the efforts of contemporary leaders such as Gabriel Moran to widen awareness, and interest in the “education of the public,²” religious education typically is focused on church and synagogue setting, which further isolates religion from the public sphere. The attention of most of APRRE’s members tends to focus upon religious education as it takes form in these settings.

This narrowing of focus for religious education, together with the facts noted above about the “social location” of APRRE members, are related to one of the ongoing discussions in APRRE meetings over the years, as well as in publications by members. How best do our academic and scholarly interests fit together with our professional and religious interests?—an issue addressed in the *CSSR Bulletin* as well. There is an ongoing discussion of the relationship of academic approaches to religious matters, characteristic of universities and scholarship, and what has been called “committed” or “professing” approaches more characteristic of religious bodies.³ Or to pose the question in its most familiar pedagogical form, “Are we to teach religion or teach about religion?” Not surprisingly, APRRE members experience many of the tensions familiar to academic scholars in religiously affiliated colleges, situated as they are in institutions that most often have denominational affiliations, constituencies and stakeholders.⁴ APRRE members generally do not see these approaches as mutually exclusive but their interactions are complex and often give rise to conflict. In APRRE conversations, these concerns are often addressed in forms inescapably intrinsic to our field, “What is the nature and import of the educational dimension of our activity as it relates to the religious dimension?” In fact, often such discussions have entailed debates about what to call what we do. Are we doing “religious education” or “Christian education” or “catechetics” or “educational ministry” or “education in religion” or “education in a particular religion” or “education about religion” or “practical theology”? The list of possible names go on and on.⁵ Each has its own implications and nuances. More recently it is “practical theology” that has claimed attention and some institutions have even substituted “practical

theology” in place of a direct identification of what is being done as “education” in order to highlight the normative influence of theology on the practice. Sometimes the practical effect of this is to diminish attention to actual educational procedures. While this is a long-standing concern among religious educators, it also reflects a long-standing and unresolved issue in theological seminary circles as well - what is the relation of the academic study of religious subjects, which often goes under the title “religious studies,” to the academic study of religious subjects which explicitly serves a religious community. Which takes precedence—the religious values or the academic values? Oft times there is no conflict, or none is perceived. Usually this issue is debated in terms of content—what are acceptable or unacceptable views on certain topics? But there are more subtle and less readily recognized versions of tensions seldom discussed. For example, some Christian theological seminaries insist that religious or theological values take clear precedent over academic values. These schools might well hold up the Sermon on the Mount as a repository of values to be emulated, including the admonition, “Judge not, lest you be judged...”, or Paul’s theme that the free gift of God’s grace suffices and cannot be earned. Do such theological and ethical values have anything to do with grading or disciplinary practices in theological schools? Should they? Are these practices a product of the Christian community or of academic values? Do such practices communicate values to those who give and those who receive them? If so, are those values congruent with the institution’s explicit theological professions?

In other words, among religious education scholars, discussions about the relation of Athens and Jerusalem, or the academy and the church or synagogue may focus less on taking positions of “neutrality” or “commitment” or “professing” in relation to some issue, and rather asking pedagogical questions such as: Do our educational procedures (in a classroom or in a congregation or synagogue, or even in the shapes and forms of a professional meeting) constitute an “implicit profession” whether or not we make explicit professions? If so, what do they profess? Are the professions embedded in our procedures congruent with or contradictory to the content of what we are teaching?

APRRE, in its annual meeting, has often discussed such issues when planning the format for presentations and collegial papers, and newcomers repeatedly comment upon the hospitality, the openness of discussion, the lack of a competitive “attack and defend” manner in responses to scholarly presentations, and the cooperative and constructive contributions from participants. Some have suggested that such interests are to be expected in a group of scholars who have chosen an arena like religious education, where teaching and learning are emphasized. People are attracted to the field because they find satisfaction in seeing and helping *others* experience the “Aha!” of understanding. Indeed, the point of teaching is not found in the teacher or in the subject, or in teaching itself, but in the learner’s *learning*. To put it plainly, in our experience, for many APRRE members teaching is not ego trip, it is an “other” trip.

APRRE’s interest in both pedagogical and theological commitments in institutions and teaching sometimes raises questions about how what we do and what we say fit together. A member was surprised to learn in a conversation with a philosopher of education from another country that John Dewey’s approach was highly influential in that country, and constituted a significant portion of his own teaching time. When asked how he handled that material, he replied, “I lecture on it.” The member was left wondering how fully that method encourages a learner to do what Dewey insisted upon: interact with her natural and social environment, and thus to reflect upon and reconstruct her experience. Can one understand Dewey’s notion of “experience” via lecture alone or vicarious experience? Or we could ask if different religions or different theologies require being taught in different manner if one is to communicate “the heart of the matter”? Are educational procedures or methods neutral? Are institutional structures neutral? Do some faculty members “serve” on committees, while “lording it over” students? Does it matter? How do the “what” and “how”

fit with each other?

¹Stephen A. Schmidt, *A History of the Religious Education Association* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1983), 43.

²For example, see Moran's *Interplay: A Theory of Religion and Education* (Winona, Mn: Saint Mary's Press, 1981); Jack L. Seymour, Robert T. O'Gorman and Charles R. Foster, *The Church in the Education of the Public* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984); and Mary C. Boys ed., *Education for Citizenship and Discipleship* (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1989).

³See, e.g., the recent articles by Terrence W. Tilley "The Misunderstood Mandatum," *CSSR Bulletin*, Vol. 30:3 (2001) and by Raymond B. Williams and respondents, "So, What Are We Professing Here? Religion, the Liberal Arts, and Civic Life," *CSSR Bulletin*, Vol. 29:3 (2000).

⁴Some of this turmoil and the issues entailed are aptly described recently by Wilburn Stancil, "The Religious Mission of University and Academic Freedom: An Uneasy Relationship," *CSSR Bulletin*, Vol. 30:3 (2001), 58-61.

⁵This article uses the term "religious education" not to ignore critiques, other options and its links with an earlier historical period, but because it is part of our Association's name.
