

which are necessary for judging the adequacy of religious models. They are the conditions of critical fidelity to the process of educating religiously.⁶¹

Conclusion

In a typical reversal of popular judgment, George Albert Coe wrote in 1924 that society has far more to fear from the young person who is excessively conventional than it does from the young person who enters maturity with a critical and even censorious attitude. « The great and deadly rashness of youth, » he wrote, « takes the form of their hasty acquiescence. »⁶² While youth might be a source of a new « greening » in the culture, most young people merely took on the coloration of their society. Coe was asked what should be done about the few youth who escape becoming conventional. His answer was brief. We should, he said, increase their number as quickly as we can. I could not agree more.

It has been the purpose of this paper to suggest that if we are to enter upon a new qualitative phase of religious educational development, we must seek ways less narrow, less provincial, less backward-looking, and less timid than that which is furnished by the entrenched defenders of the status quo.

The need to take the modern experiment seriously is no less important for those concerned with Christian nurture than is their commitment to Christian tradition. The common sense eclecticism which characterizes much of modern catechesis and Christian nurture masks intellectual chaos and does not attack the roots of the cognitive, ethical and existential crises which haunt us all.

Education, regarded as the development of rationality via initiation into society and into forms of knowledge, should ideally at least, discover the religious dimensions which lie outside the merely factual and the immediately obvious. In a pluralist society, this is as much as it can do in the state school, but ideally at least, education is successful if it leaves its recipient openminded, flexible in outlook, and potentially open to the personal discovery and exploration of the religious element. Christian nurture and critical openness are not mutually exclusive ; they are complementary.

61. For a more complete description of teaching as proposing, see Gloria DURKA and Joanmarie SMITH, *Modeling God*, New York, Paulist Press, 1976, especially Ch. 6.

62. George Albert COE, *What Ails Our Youth ?*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1924.

Religious Experience As a Goal of Religious Education

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Introduction

When one begins to teach a Religious Education lesson, one is sometimes puzzled and vague about what is one's precise objective. I am not thinking so much about the difficulty, if not impossibility, of writing behavioral objectives but rather of the overall result one tries to achieve. It does, however, seem imperative to be able to articulate one's overall aim.

The article that follows will be an attempt to formulate the aim of teaching religious education in terms of what we shall call religious experience. I shall be focusing on the findings of the Roman Catholic theologian, Bernard Lonergan, as a kind of paradigm for my reflections. I have at least two reasons for choosing the thought of Bernard Lonergan. The first is that I feel that Lonergan's writings contain much insight on the subject under consideration. Moreover, I find that Lonergan's perspectives are ecumenical in a rather inclusive sense. When I have outlined the notion of religious experience, I shall then try to focus on some of the psychological aspects of the genesis of such experience.

Notion of Experience

To begin, it seems necessary to clarify what we mean by the notion of « experience ». Experience can be taken to mean something like sensory experience, i.e., what we see, hear, smell, touch, taste, etc. In his book, *Insight*,¹ Lonergan uses « experience » in this sense

* See the biographical note on Father Brendan CARMODY, S.J., in *Lumen Vitae*, Vol. XXXVI, 1981, p. 45. — Address : Church of St. Ignatius, Beit Road, P.O. Box 30125, Lusaka, Zambia (Editor's note).

1. See : Bernard LONERGAN, *Insight : A Study of Human Understanding*, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1957.

when he is speaking of the pattern « experience - understanding - judgment ». However, « experience », in Lonergan's writings, also has a wider sense which includes not only sensory experience but also empirical consciousness, for instance, the experience of oneself understanding.² Given this second understanding of experience, we can speak of understanding, being in love, deciding to do something as experiences. In this context, then, we can speak of religious experience. Like the experience of understanding a puzzle, it is a datum of human consciousness. As religious, it is a special domain of human consciousness. On this dimension of human living, then, we shall focus.

Religious Experience

In *Method in Theology*, Bernard Lonergan describes « religious experience » as being in love in an unrestricted fashion.³ As there are many kinds of human experience, so too there are varieties of the experience of being in love. There is, for instance, the love of a child for its parents, the love of a husband for his wife, love of one's country. Besides these, there is the love of God with all one's being which is described in St. Mark 12, 30.⁴ This particular kind of love is like Tillich's notion of « ultimate concern ».⁵ The ultimate dimension of this experience is, to some extent, correlative to the unrestricted questioning which is the basis of Lonergan's cognitional theory in *Insight* and *Method in Theology* as it was the fountainhead of all philosophy for Aristotle.⁶ Being in love in this unrestricted way is the fulfilment of our human unrestricted capacity to question.⁷

The experience seems to be somewhat akin to what William James speaks of when he considers religion as involving a total reaction to life.⁸ Closely allied to this total reaction to life is the notion of abandonment to an absolute.⁹ In Rudolf Otto's terms, this notion of

absolute includes the sublime.¹⁰ Religious experience, then, as described in contemporary terms by Lonergan, includes elements from Otto and Tillich. Otto's idea of the Holy seems to provide the basis of the experience. Otto describes it as an experience of creature-consciousness.¹¹ This experience, fundamentally, is beyond conception. It has tones of the uncanny, the eerie, and the weird.¹² According to Otto himself, it is not unlike the kind of awe experience which one finds, for instance, in the works of Martin Luther.¹³

It could be said to be the experience of what, in the Roman Catholic tradition, has been called sanctifying grace.¹⁴ It is a gift that creates a major exception to the scholastic tag, *nihil amatum nisi praecognitum*.¹⁵ Another way of describing it might be that of « consolation that has no cause » of St Ignatius of Loyola as it is interpreted by Karl Rahner.¹⁶ One could, perhaps, speak of religious experience in this sense as an instance of what Abraham Maslow has described as a « peak experience ».¹⁷

Not only is religious experience a « being in love without condition » but this very experience is not limited to any religious tradition.¹⁸ If Friedrich Heiler's analysis is accurate, religious experience, as common to world religions, has the following characteristics. There is a notion of the transcendent immanent in the human heart who is supreme in beauty, truth, righteousness, goodness, love, mercy, compassion. One reaches him through self-denial, repentance and prayer.¹⁹ Through the experience of the transcendent one, a person is led to love of one's neighbour even of one's enemies. Finally, one hopes to achieve blissful union with this transcendent being.²⁰ If Lonergan's equation of this transcultural experience with being in love unconditionally is correct, then, religious experience, as we have outlined it, is fundamentally, being in love without limits with somebody transcendent.²¹

10. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, London, Oxford University Press, 1923, p. 73.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

14. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, p. 107.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

17. See : Donald GELPI, *Charism and Sacrament*, New York, The Paulist Press, 1976, p. 151.

18. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, p. 109.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

2. Bernard LONERGAN, *A Second Collection*, edited by W.F.J. RYAN and Bernard TYRRELL, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1974, p. 269.

3. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, London, Darton, Longman and Todd, 1971, p. 107.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 106. See also : David TRACY, *Blessed Rage for Order*, New York, The Seabury Press, 1975, p. 92.

6. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, p. 106.

7. *Ibid.*

8. William JAMES, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York, Mentor Books, 1964, pp. 4-5.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 321.

We are, then, speaking about religious experience in a sense that is wider than Christian experience. In this we are following Lonergan's suggestion which invites us to be ecumenical. This is not intended to undermine the richness of specifically Christian religious experience. However, we may need to be reminded that, despite the importance of the Christian dimension of religious experience, it is only part of the quest of humanity for God.²²

How do we promote Religious Experience ?

So far, we have tried to clarify the nature of religious experience. Among other things, we have said that it entails a sense of awe, wonder, mystery and gift. We shall now attempt to indicate how one can foster this kind of experience in people at various stages of their school life.

One might argue that, since religious experience is a gift, it cannot be developed. In this matter, Rosemary Haughton makes a useful distinction between formation and transformation, where formation is seen to be the process of using all the influences of culture to help people understand themselves while transformation is a total personal revolution.²³ What we are saying then is that the educational process can and should lead to transformation even though we recognize that transformation is itself a gift of God.

Our concern, then, is with the formation that leads to self-transcendence, where the first vestiges of self-transcendence appear in the intending subject.²⁴ The self-transcendence about which we speak manifests itself, for instance, with the emergence of « what » questions which are later replaced by « Is » questions that are in turn superseded by personal response to value.²⁵ Self-transcendence of this kind reaches a high point in religious experience.²⁶ Our task, then, can be seen to be that of tracing the path that leads to self-transcendence. Put in other terms, our concern will be with the evocation of the kind of wonder which Aristotle spoke of when he indicated that wonder

was the fountainhead of all philosophy.²⁷ In Lonergan's terms, we are speaking about the activation of what he has called the pure desire to know.²⁸ This human dynamism is described by Lonergan thus :

... deep within us all, emergent when the noise of other appetites is stilled, there is the drive to know, to understand, to see why, to discover the reason, to find the cause, to explain.²⁹

Clearly, that wonder can have many manifestations and, so, can have many possible sources of evocation. It can, for example, be evoked in almost any subject in the sense that all human experience can have a religious dimension.³⁰ In this way, almost any sphere of human consciousness can lead to the question of God.³¹ One could, thus, perhaps, agree with Whitehead in saying that the essence of education is that it be religious.³² All true education should lead to the question of God.

Why Religious Experience does not emerge

There are, however, difficulties with evoking the pure desire to know. Moreover, when this desire becomes operative, the path to truth, beauty and goodness is by no means automatic. As well as the deep felt Aristotelian wonder about which we have spoken, there are obstacles to the flowering of such wonder. Culturally, there can be a systematic neglect of such wonder or of the questions that evoke such wonder.³³ This is particularly true when educational institutions become too forthrightly engaged in meeting the technical and professional needs of the economic, political, and social order as at the present time.³⁴

On a more personal level, bias in its various forms can block the

27. See : Garrett BARDEN, « The Symbolic Mentality », in *Philosophical Studies*, XV (1966), p. 45.

28. Bernard LONERGAN, *Insight : A Study of Human Understanding*. See the index under « Desire to know », p. 755.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

30. David TRACY, *Blessed Rage for Order*, pp. 91-109.

31. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, p. 163.

32. A.N. WHITEHEAD, *The Aims of Education*, London, Ernest Benn Ltd., 1962, p. 23.

33. See Martin HEIDEGGER, *Being and Time*, translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, New York, Harper and Row, 1962, pp. 149 ff. Here, he speaks of concern with the « They » world as opposed to such notions as « potentiality for being », « fundamental care », « authenticity », etc.

34. Robert NISBET, *The Degradation of the Academic Dogma : The University in America, 1945-1970*, New York, Basic Books Inc., 1971, p. 128.

22. Thomas H. GROOME, *Christian Religious Education*, San Francisco, Harper and Row, 1980, p. 25.

23. Rosemary HAUGHTON, « Formation and Transformation », in Walter CONN, ed., *Conversion*, New York, Alba House, 1978, pp. 23-26.

24. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, p. 107.

25. See : Bernard LONERGAN, « The Response of the Jesuit, as Priest and Apostle, in the Modern World » in *A Second Collection*, p. 166.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

unfolding of the pure desire to know.³⁵ In this context, one could conceive the concern of the school as an attempt to break the student out of the practical, common sense, pattern of experience so as to be able to enter the intellectual pattern.³⁶ At more advanced levels, we see how the pure desire to know can become perverted in terms of what Lonergan has called the counterpositions.³⁷ Basically, there is, according to Lonergan, a very stubborn conception of reality as « out-there-now-real » which dies a hard and slow death, if it dies at all.³⁸

In the preceding pages, we have suggested that the pure desire to know, as described more fully by Lonergan, can lead to religious experience which we have chosen as an aim in religious education. The deep-seated wonder of the pure desire to know can be evoked in almost any pattern of human experience. However, there are deep-rooted checks on its emergence, which, as educators, we need to realize. Evocation and promotion of the pure desire to know is a difficult task and in the following pages we shall deal more specifically with the path along which the person may pass on his or her way to religious experience.

The Genesis of Religious Experience

In this section, we shall trace some of the salient factors that lead to religious experience as we have described it. Before doing so, however, it may be appropriate to indicate that, in line with Lonergan's thought, we consider religious experience and its development to be closely linked to such things as moral, intellectual, and emotional development. In this way, intellectual development may affect moral, emotional, or religious development. While each sphere is distinct, there is a complex interrelationship between them. Periodically, then, we shall try to clarify such interrelationships especially as they affect religious experience. More precise and technical analysis of the relationships between the various spheres of human development can be found in *Method in Theology*.³⁹ A further clarification that may

be in order is that, while we will speak of religious experience as being an aim in religious education, we need to keep in mind that religious experience in the full sense is rare.⁴⁰ Nonetheless, this does not mean that religious experience in a less complete sense cannot be achieved frequently. Part of our task in the pages that follow will be to attempt to articulate how religious experience emerges in conjunction with other spheres of development. We shall be drawing on the findings of Jean Piaget and Erik Erikson, among others. We shall envision the genesis of such things as trust, wonder, awe, the intellectual development needed to distinguish between myth and truth leading to some degree to what Lonergan calls intellectual and moral conversion,⁴¹ a sense of identity, intimacy, and autonomy as steps to religious experience in either a full or less complete sense.

Parental Influence.

The educational psychologist, Jean Piaget, has noted that children's consciousness is undifferentiated.⁴² Gradually, through experience of which education is part the child's consciousness achieves some measure of differentiation.⁴³ Thus, in the early stages of life, the parents or parental figures are of utmost importance. Here, as Carl Jung puts it, the archetypal patterns assume flesh and blood.⁴⁴ In describing the influence of the parents on the child, Jung says :

The condition of the first two or three years of life, when the child is unconscious of himself, may be compared to an animal state. Just as the child in the embryo is nothing but part of the mother's body, and wholly dependent on her, so in early infancy the psyche is to a large extent part of the maternal psyche, and will soon be part of the paternal as well. The prime psychological condition is one of the fusion with the psychology of the parents, and individual psychology being only potentially present. Hence it is that the nervous and psychic disorders of children right up to school age depend very largely on the psychic world of the parents. All paternal difficulties reflect themselves without fail in the psyche of the child.⁴⁵

35. See : Bernard LONERGAN, *Insight : A Study of Human Understanding*, pp. 218-238.

36. James W. SANDERS, « A New Approach to a Catholic Philosophy of Education », in *Jesuit Education Quarterly* (24), October 1961, p. 135.

37. Bernard LONERGAN, *Insight : A Study of Human Understanding*, pp. 387-390, 488-489, 495-500, 680-691. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, pp. 235-265.

38. Bernard LONERGAN, *Insight : A Study of Human Understanding*, pp. 250-254.

39. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, pp. 241-243.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 238-240.

42. Jean PIAGET, *Genetic Epistemology*, translated by E. Duckworth, New York, Colombia University Press, 1970, p. 20.

43. *Ibid.* See as well : Bernard LONERGAN, *Insight : A Study of Human Understanding*, pp. 181-189.

44. « Archetype » in this context is used in the sense which Robert M. Doran uses it in *Subject and Psyche : Ricoeur, Jung and the Search for Foundations*, Washington D.C., University Press of America, 1977, pp. 193 ff.

45. Carl JUNG, « The Development of Personality », in *Collected Works*, translated by R.F.C. Hull, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977, pp. 53-54.

From the perspective of religious experience, then, we find that the home plays a crucial role in the progressive education of such basic feelings as trust and autonomy. This is further substantiated by James Fowler who, when speaking of the faith development of the four to eight year old child, says :

... meaning is made and trust established intuitively and by imitation. Knowing is primarily by intuition, and faith is formed by imitation of the moods, example, and actions of the *visible* human faith of significant others, primarily parents. Affectivity dominates. Knowing and feeling are fused. The locus of authority is in parents and in primary adults.⁴⁶

In later life, this feeling of trust may serve as the basis of faith and love. Moreover, as Erik Erikson points out, the initial childhood conflict between basic trust and mistrust can bring forth a fundamental hope if it is successfully resolved. The favourable resolution of such a conflict is largely dependent on the quality of the maternal care.⁴⁷ It is such care, embodied in the mother child relationship, that creates the most undifferentiated sense of identity.⁴⁸ Tentatively, then, one can conclude that parental influence and early environment have a very important role to play in the formation of the child's religious attitudes.⁴⁹ Parents often, in the early childhood years, assume divine-like qualities.⁵⁰ The divine can be paternalized.⁵¹ The feeling of trust which is critical for religious experience may or may not be successfully developed at this stage depending very much on the quality of family life.

The Conquest of the Symbol.

In what Piaget has called the pre-operational stage of childhood,⁵² we encounter a number of important factors which colour the emergence of religious experience. During this time, the use of symbols becomes operative especially in the development of language, play,

and dreams.⁵³ According to Piaget, the ability to think is closely linked to the ability to function with symbols. This ability to operate with symbols is itself achieved through the internalization of motor action. Play is an important means of enhancing this internalization process.⁵⁴ If David Elkind, one of the recognized authorities on Piaget, is correct, the major cognitive task of the pre-school child is the conquest of the symbol.⁵⁵

With the emergence of the ability to use symbols, one discovers instances of an important phenomenon of what Piaget has called « egocentrism », where everything tends to center on the subject's own activity.⁵⁶ More specifically, John Flavell describes this « egocentrism » as :

... a cognitive state in which the cognizer sees the world from a single point of view only — his own — but without knowledge of the existence of viewpoints or perspectives and, *a fortiori*, without awareness that he is the prisoner of his own.⁵⁷

Closely related to this notion of « egocentrism », and important from a religious viewpoint, is the appearance of what Piaget has called « finalism », « animism », and « artificialism ». « Finalism » is closely linked with the child's ability to wonder, manifested in his or her never-ending series of « why » questions.⁵⁸ If Piaget is correct, for the child of this age, there is no such thing as chance in nature. Instead, everything is « made for » man and children, according to an established and wise plan with a human being at its center.⁵⁹ In a similar way, Piaget describes childhood animism as a tendency to conceive things as living and endowed with intentions.⁶⁰ Consciousness is, thus, associated with life. It is not, however, a consciousness identical to that of man but the minimum knowledge and intention necessary for things to accomplish their actions and, above all, to be able to move and direct themselves towards their assigned goals. The clouds, for instance, know that they move because they bring rain

46. Thomas H. GROOME, *Christian Religious Education*, p. 69.

47. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed., New York, W.W. Norton and Co., 1963, p. 105.

48. Erik ERIKSON, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, New York, W.W. Norton and Co., 1968, p. 105.

49. Antoine VERGOTE, *The Religious Man*, translated by Sr Marie-Bernard Said, Dublin, Gill and Mac Millan, 1969, p. 275. Also : Ronald GOLDMAN, *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964, p. 16.

50. Antoine VERGOTE, *The Religious Man*, p. 277.

51. *Ibid.*

52. In Piaget's scheme, this is the period between 2 and 7 years of age.

53. David ELKIND, *Children and Adolescents: Interpretative Essays on Jean Piaget*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 52.

54. Jean PIAGET, *Six Psychological Studies*, translated by Anita Tenzer, New York, Vintage Books, 1967, p. 23.

55. David ELKIND, *Children and Adolescents: Interpretative Essays on Jean Piaget*, p. 23.

56. Jean PIAGET, *Six Psychological Studies*, pp. 13-16, 26-30, 40-42, 64-66.

57. Jean FLAVELL, *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget*, New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1963, p. 60.

58. Jean PIAGET, *Six Psychological Studies*, p. 25.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

and night.⁶¹ We find, then, that normal children are practically unanimous in believing that the moon accompanies them on a walk. Their egocentricity prevents them from thinking what the moon would do in the presence of people walking in the opposite direction.⁶² In addition to « animism » and « finalism », there is in children of this age what Piaget calls « artificialism » or the belief that everything has been built by man or a divine being who fabricates things in a human way. Moreover, children do not appear to find a contradiction between « artificialism » and « animism » because, according to their thinking, babies can be both manufactured and living. The entire universe, for the child, is fabricated. Mountains grow because stones have been manufactured and planted.⁶³ Correlated, therefore, to the presence of natural wonder and awe in the child are tendencies towards « finalism », « animism » and « artificialism ». It is reasonably clear, then, to see why, for instance, the young child's idea of God tends to be anthropomorphic. God can be seen as an old man with a beard who can do anything.⁶⁴

At about four years of age or so, the child begins to discover a reality beyond everyday experience. Such things as death, limits of knowledge and power may manifest themselves. Nonetheless, the authority of the parents and other primary adults remains very central.⁶⁵ It is around this time that Erik Erikson tells us that the four year old child experiences a sense of initiative which seems to be associated with the so-called Oedipal complex. Some of the ambiguity and complexity of this stage of development is intimated by Erikson thus :

Infantile sexuality and incest taboo, castration complex and *superego* all unite to bring about the specifically human crisis during which the child must turn from an exclusive, pregenital attachment to his parents to the slow process of becoming a parent, a carrier of tradition. Here the most fateful split and transformation in the emotional powerhouse occurs, a split between potential human glory and potential human destruction. For here the child becomes for ever divided in himself. The instinct fragments which before had entrained the growth of his infantile body and mind now become divided into an infantile set which perpetuates the exuberance of growth potentials, and a parental set which supports and increases self-observation, self guidance, and self punishment.⁶⁶

61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

64. Antoine VERGOTE, *The Religious Man*, p. 278 ; Thomas H. GROOME, *Christian Religious Education*, p. 70.

65. Thomas H. GROOME, *Christian Religious Education*.

66. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 256.

The child's *superego* or, in the present context, his or her sense of duty, can develop in such a way that, in later life, there emerges a deep-felt resentment of parents.⁶⁷ To offset such a danger it is clearly important that the child's family life should be of good quality.

Competence and Industry.

As the child comes to school-going age, there is a growing need for some sense of basic competence and industry.⁶⁸ This is probably part of the child's felt need to be accepted on his or her immediate community, since, as Fowler tells us :

This stage... is an affiliative faith stage in which the person comes more consciously to join and belong to his or her immediate group, or faith community.⁶⁹

The school can of course foster this sense of being accepted if the atmosphere resembles that of a home or family, where all members help each other.⁷⁰ Nonetheless, it seems true to say that children oftentimes find the first days in school to be both demanding and insecure.⁷¹ Above all, then, at this stage, the teacher may need to realize that inferiority and a sense of inadequacy can easily take root. If, for instance, a child despairs of his or her skill or status among peers, he or she may be discouraged from any further learning. Besides the danger of developing a feeling of inferiority, there can also be a danger of over-conforming to the work ethic at this time.⁷² On the other hand, a sense of competence can lead to a positive identity consciousness.⁷³

During these first years at school, the child can be said to be, psychologically, at the concrete operations stage.⁷⁴ By this we mean that thinking is in concrete, sensory, terms, with little abstraction possible.⁷⁵ Concrete thought, at this stage, remains attached to empirical reality.⁷⁶ Because of this predominant concrete orientation, it

67. *Ibid.*, p. 257.

68. Erik ERIKSON, *Insight and Responsibility*, New York, W.W. Norton and Co., 1964, p. 123.

69. Thomas H. GROOME, *Christian Religious Education*.

70. Ronald GOLDMAN, *Readiness for Religion*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965, p. 83.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

72. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 261.

73. Erik ERIKSON, *Identity : Youth and Crisis*, pp. 127-128.

74. Jean PIAGET and Barbel INHELDER, *The Psychology of the Child*, translated by Helen Weaver, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, pp. 92-101.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-130.

76. Jean PIAGET and Barbel INHELDER, *The Growth of Logical Thinking from*

is likely that, from the perspective of religious education, children from six to ten years old will have great difficulty, when interpreting the parables or biblical material in any but a very literal way.⁷⁷

Instead, then, of approaching religious education from a scriptural perspective, it may, at this stage, be more valuable to attempt investigating human experience in depth so that children can achieve some insight into their own feelings and needs.⁷⁸ It seems true to say that life and death (i.e., potentially religious) questions spread evenly throughout the infant school showing a constant questioning about illness, dying, getting older, accidents, dead pets, rabbits, hunting, mummy having a baby, etc.⁷⁹ The child can be led to a symbolic and less literal ways of interpreting life and scripture through themes that are focused on the exploration of the symbolic. Children can, thus, be prepared for more specifically religious thinking.⁸⁰ This is not to say that children cannot grasp profound religious truths. All we are saying is that children's apprehension of such truths will need symbolic rather than intellectual presentation.

From the moral viewpoint, children move from considering only physical consequences and punishments to considering the intention of the doer.⁸¹ Around the age of seven, for instance, a lie tends to be judged in terms of its size while, later, at eleven or so, the child begins to judge in a subjective way.⁸² Moreover, from ten years and after, children judge in terms of the intention of an action.⁸³ Generally speaking, it seems that children up to the age of seven think of right and wrong in terms of material consequences while, at about nine or ten, intention becomes significant. Thus, the child from seven to ten needs help in coming to judge actions by intentions, for :

... This is a perspective that he simply does not have in early years. Both family and school have ample opportunities to provide this in discussing stories, in judging other people's actions, and in

reflecting on child's actions. A child's often uttered statement « I didn't mean to do it » indicates that he is beginning to look at actions by intention, and if the societies of family and school appear not to consider intentions, but only consequences, the child may rebel.⁸⁴

It is about this time, too, that justice comes gradually to prevail over obedience.⁸⁵

Formal Operational Thought.

As the child moves into the « formal operations » stage of development, we find that he or she is beginning to acquire the ability to think deductively and hypothetically.⁸⁶ By comparison with a child, an adolescent is one who constructs systems and theories.⁸⁷ The child thinks concretely. He or she deals with every problem in isolation and does not integrate his or her solutions by means of any general theories from which a common principle could be abstracted. By contrast, the person in the « formal operations » stage is interested in theoretical problems which are not related to everyday realities.⁸⁸ Thus, one finds that the adolescent or, here, the person in the « formal operations » stage is characterized affectively and socially by a liberation from the concrete in favour of being oriented towards the non-present and the possible.⁸⁹ According to John Flavell, the most important property of formal operational thought concerns the real versus the possible. Piaget puts it like this :

... the great novelty of (the stage of formal operations) is that by means of a differentiation of form and content the subject becomes capable of reasoning correctly about propositions he does not believe, or at least not yet : That is, propositions he considers pure hypotheses. He becomes capable of drawing necessary conclusions from truths that are merely possible, which constitutes the beginning of hypothetico-deductive or formal thought.⁹⁰

Thus, when confronted with a problem, the adolescent seeks to check all possible solutions by systematically isolating every individual variable plus all the possible combinations of these variables.⁹¹ Because of this newly acquired ability, it is now possible to introduce such things as parables in religious education since

Childhood to Adolescence, translated by Anne Parsons and Stanley Milgram, New York, Basic Books, 1958, p. 251.

77. Ronald GOLDMAN, *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 23.

78. See, for instance : Michael GRIMMILT, *What Can I do in R.E. ?*, Essex, Mayhew-McGrimmon, 1973, pp. 27 ff.

79. Ronald GOLDMAN, *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 228. Ronald GOLDMAN, « Readiness for Religion », in *A Reader in Religious and Moral Education*, edited by Eric LORD and Charles BAILEY, London, S.C.M. Press, 1973, p. 31.

80. Ronald GOLDMAN, *Readiness for Religion*, p. 228.

81. Ronald DUSKA and Mariellen WHELAN, *Moral Development*, Dublin, Gill and Mac Millan, 1977, pp. 24-27.

82. *Ibid.*

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.*

86. Jean PIAGET and Barbel INHELDER, *The Psychology of the Child*, p. 132 ff.

87. Jean PIAGET, *Six Psychological Studies*, p. 61.

88. *Ibid.*

89. Jean PIAGET and Barbel INHELDER, *The Psychology of the Child*, p. 130.

90. John FLAVELL, *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget*, p. 204.

91. Jean PIAGET and Barbel INHELDER, *The Psychology of the Child*, p. 132.

oftentimes they require a certain amount of propositional thinking if they are to be interpreted correctly.⁹² According to Goldman, the child can now conceive of God in terms of symbolic, abstract, and spiritualized ideas.⁹³

Development of Conscience.

Along with the new cognitive capacity, there are, of course, other psychological developments. Among other things, there is the onset of puberty, which, according to Erikson, can lead to identity problems :

... with the advent of puberty, childhood proper comes to an end. Youth begins. But in puberty and adolescence all sameness and continuities relied on earlier are more or less questioned again, because of the rapidity of body growth which equals that of childhood and because of the new addition of genital maturity... In their search for a new sense of continuity and sameness, adolescents have to re-fight many battles of earlier years.⁹⁴

In adolescence, the universal tends to be perceived in ideological terms. The adolescent adopts an ideological position for which the younger child is cognitively unprepared. Following the reflections of Erikson further, we find that the developing person begins to free himself or herself from the power of the *superego*, that is to say, the power that dictates the restrictions which the *ego* must follow.⁹⁵ Now, the *ego* or that which, in Erikson's terms, « keeps tuned to the reality of the historical day, testing perceptions, selecting memories, governing action, and otherwise integrating the individual's capacities or orientation and planning » assumes a more dominant role.⁹⁶ From Erikson's perspective, where *ego* and *superego* meet, we have conscience.⁹⁷ Conscience is neither of them. Much of the maturation process in adolescence can, in Erikson's scheme, be seen to be a development of conscience in that it is at this stage that the *ego* integrates and neutralizes the autocracy of the infantile *superego*. Through the *ego*, the *superego*'s alliance with the unreconstructed remnants of infantile rage is prevented.⁹⁸

From a Jungian perspective, we might say that the maturing per-

son's socialization is shifting from being dominated by the *persona*, the outer mask we wear before others, to being more *ego* centered. In this context, *ego* is taken to mean something like :

... the set of psychic complexes — constellations of images, ideas, feelings and capacities — that constitute what in Loneragan's terminology would be called differentiated consciousness.^{99 100}

This process of differentiating the *ego* from the *persona* is a first, but often lengthy, step in the movement to *individuation* or what Robert Doran has called psychic conversion.^{100 101}

Nonetheless, despite the importance of the integration of the *ego* and the *superego* in adolescence, adolescence itself has been termed as a kind of moratorium in terms of personal growth. By this is meant a psychological state between the morality learned in childhood and the ethics of the adult.¹⁰¹ In this state of uncertainty, the adolescent tends to look for men and ideas in whose service it would seem worthwhile to prove oneself trustworthy.¹⁰² From the point of view of education, religious or other, one finds that the adolescent is greatly dependent on models and on the guidance of adults.¹⁰³ Using Christ as a kind of paradigm or model can be appropriate at this stage since one can now often be led to some form of conversion. Conversion, we are told, is :

... a normal phase of adolescence in every class of human beings... usually falling between fourteen and seventeen. The symptoms are ... sense of incompleteness and imperfection ; brooding, depression, moral introspection, and sense of sin, anxiety about the hereafter ; distress over doubts, and the like.^{104 105}

While peer-groups tend to have a great deal of authority in the person's life at this point, the real bases for security lie outside such groups.^{105 106} According to Goldman, these bases are :

... the home, school, community, church, wherever there are sympathetic adults whom adolescents love and respect.^{106 107}

In late adolescence, *egocentrism*, in Piaget's sense, often manifests

99. Robert M. DORAN, « Jungian Psychology and Christian Spirituality : II », in *Review for Religious*, Vol. 38, 4, November 1979, p. 745.

100. *Ibid.*, pp. 744-746.

101. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 263.

102. Erik ERIKSON, *Identity : Youth and Crisis*, pp. 128-129.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

104. Walter CONN, ed., *Conversion*, p. 125.

105. Ronald GOLDMAN, *Readiness for Religion*, p. 167.

106. *Ibid.*

92. Ronald GOLDMAN, *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 23.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 239.

94. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 261.

95. *Ibid.*, p. 187.

96. *Ibid.*

97. Erik ERIKSON, *Young Man Luther*, New York, Norton and Co., 1968, p. 195.

98. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 279.

itself in terms of naive idealism, bent on intemperate proposals for reforming and reshaping reality.¹⁰⁷ As Piaget puts it :

... the adolescent goes through a phase in which he attributes unlimited power to his own thoughts so that the dream of a glorious future of transforming the world through ideas (even if this idealism takes a materialistic form) seems to be not only fantasy but also an effective action which in itself modifies the empirical world. This is obviously a form of cognitive egocentrism. Although it differs sharply from the child's egocentrism (which is either sensori-motor or simply representational without introspective « reflection »).¹⁰⁸

In a somewhat similar way, the choice of career or occupation in life assumes a significance beyond the question of remuneration or status.¹⁰⁹ The adolescent mind is, as we have indicated, ideological in that he or she likes to become involved in theoretical and abstract matters. He or she can construct elaborate theories or invent philosophical doctrines developing plans for the complete re-organization of society.¹¹⁰ From the adolescent's perspective, he or she must make intellectual contact with social collectivities much less concrete and immediate than family and friends. However, the adolescent is forced to move beyond *egocentrism*. In moving from an ideological phase to one that is more realistic through entry into the world of work, the young person may be in danger of losing much creative idealism. In this context, Groome's criticism of Piaget's *status-quo* mentality may be worth noting.¹¹¹ It would seem that in this area of social reform Piaget's viewpoint is rather limited. In any event, Piaget describes the decentering process that occurs when the young person undertakes a job thus :

... he or she is transformed from an idealistic reformer to an achiever. In other words, the job leads thinking away from the dangers of formalism back to reality.¹¹²

Personal Autonomy and Socialization.

During all this period, it is not greatly surprising that there is a continued search on the part of the young person for a sense of self.

107. John FLAVELL, *The Developmental Psychology of Jean Piaget*, p. 224.

108. Jean PIAGET and Barbel INHELDER, *The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence*, pp. 345-346.

109. Erik ERIKSON, *Identity : Youth and Crisis*, p. 129.

110. H. GINSBURG and S. OPPER, *Piaget's Theory of Development*, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1969, pp. 204-205.

111. Thomas H. GROOME, *Christian Religious Education*.

112. Jean PIAGET, *Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence*, pp. 346-347.

Part of this search can express itself in the experience of « falling in love ». The young adult is ready for intimacy, that is, the capacity to commit oneself to concrete affiliations and partnerships and to develop the ethical strength to live by such commitments even though they call for significant sacrifices and compromises.¹¹³ As intimacy is the positive element in this stage of development, so isolation is the negative one. One can begin to avoid contacts that lead to intimacy. Isolation, in some form, can therefore be a possible outcome of his stage. Moreover, there can develop a readiness to destroy those forces and people that seem dangerous to oneself.¹¹⁴ In Erikson's terms, there can be « distantiation », which is :

... the readiness to isolate and, if necessary, to destroy those forces and people whose essence seems dangerous to one's own, and whose territory seems to encroach on the extent of one's intimate relations.¹¹⁵

We can see, then, that love can easily become distorted at this point in human experience. There is, besides, the challenge for the young adult to come to terms with his or her own sexuality. Changes have taken place in the reproductive organs which affect the physical, psychological, and social behavior of the person.¹¹⁶ Sexual development with its difficulties in the area of masturbation can cause psychological guilt which is characterized by feelings of unworthiness and social isolation.¹¹⁷ There is then a great need for mutuality or sharing of identity so that as one loses oneself in another one finds oneself.¹¹⁸ Development of a true sense of love at this time is crucial for the emergence of a mature attitude to such things as competition, co-operation, procreation, and production. Eventually, the love of mutual devotion between boy and girl should help overcome the antagonisms that are inherent in sexual and functional polarizations.¹¹⁹ Now the young adult has to learn to love and work where there is not overpreoccupation with work to the extent that he or she loses his or her capacity to be a genital and loving person.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, attempts, psychoanalytic or other, which hope to convince people that their only occupation in life is to have good orgasms is to be counterbalanced especially in much of contemporary culture

113. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 263.

114. Erik ERIKSON, *Identity : Youth and Crisis*, p. 136.

115. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 255.

116. Ernest HILGARD and Richard ATKINSON, *Introduction to Psychology*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1967, pp. 92 ff.

117. Antoine VERGOTE, *The Religious Man*, p. 293.

118. Erik ERIKSON, *Insight and Responsibility*, p. 128.

119. Erik ERIKSON, *Identity : Youth and Crisis*, p. 137.

120. Erik ERIKSON, *Childhood and Society*, p. 256.

where human sexuality has been banalized to the point of near meaninglessness.¹²⁰

The Search for the Meaning of Life.

As we have indicated already, Piaget was principally concerned with cognitive development. However, his analyses have social and moral implications. Piaget, for instance, tells us that the fundamental distinction between concrete and formal operations is as important for affective development as it is for cognitive development.¹²¹ The world of values can remain bound by concrete and perceptible reality or it can encompass many interpersonal and social possibilities.¹²² Adolescent affectivity asserts itself through the development of personality. In this framework, personality is opposed to self for, according to Piaget, personality is the result of the submission of the self to discipline. Personality is fundamentally a social reality entailing both co-operation and personal autonomy.¹²³ Accordingly, as the adolescent becomes an adult, there tends to be a transition from conventional to principled moral reasoning.¹²⁴ In Fowler's terms, from a religious perspective, we find that :

Now the responsibility for synthesis and making meaning shifts from relying on conventional authority to taking personal responsibility for commitments, lifestyle, beliefs and attitudes.¹²⁵

From the perspective of religious experience, we can see that intellectual development is one manifestation of the deep-set awe and wonder about which we have spoken earlier. Emotionally, adolescence seems to be a period of intense searching. The adolescent wonders about himself or herself and the meaning of his or her life. This wonder also expresses itself in moral terms with the emergence of great idealism. All this searching for some form of self-identity and vocation in life is closely allied to the notion of religious experience or conversion as we have already intimated.¹²⁶ More specifically, the experience of love which is a very important adolescent phenomenon can lead to some perception of love in an unconditional, absolute, sense.

What we have been concerned to point out, then, is that, with the advent of the ability to think abstractly, adolescents are ready to

approach such things as scripture and church history in a critical way.¹²⁷ Moreover, at the onset of puberty, the adolescent begins to search for new meaning in life. Part of this search can entail exaggerated idealism as well as a deepening need for intimacy. This insecure period of life can lead to religious experience of the type with which we have been concerned. In the setting of religious education or education towards religious experience, what seems crucial is that the adolescent feel part of a loving, caring, community where he or she has sufficient liberty to discover meaning in his or her own life.¹²⁸ Here, it is appropriate for teachers to assume the role of guides who offer support, example, and encouragement to the growing person. The religious education class is called to emphasize and demonstrate the personal relevance of all that is being taught.¹²⁹

During adolescence, we have indicated that there is a gradual movement towards personal autonomy. This, of course, continues beyond adolescence. Its continued emergence in early adulthood has been detailed by William G. Perry in *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*.¹³⁰ As the young adult moves through nine different intellectual positions from a viewpoint which sees the world in terms of « right-wrong » « good-bad » to that of perceiving all knowledge and values as relative and contextual, he or she is faced with the challenge of personal commitment.¹³¹ This commitment is special and of great importance from the point of view of religious experience. It can be contrasted with unexamined commitment. In Perry's words, the difference between this kind of commitment and unexamined form of commitment can be put in terms of the difference between belief and Faith thus :

... belief may come from one's culture, one's parents, one's habit ; faith is an affirmation of the person. Faith can only exist after the realization of the possibility of doubt.¹³²

In moving to this position of commitment and faith, the person, often during College years, experiences lostness and aloneness which, according to Perry, needs to be complemented by some experience of

127. See : Sr Mary Virgine PUGH, « Special Problems of the First Two Years of High School », in Gerard S. SLOYAN, ed., *Modern Catechetics*, London, Mac Millan Ltd., 1964, p. 223.

128. Ronald GOLDMAN, *Readiness for Religion*, pp. 136-139, 168-174.

129. Ronald GOLDMAN, *Religious Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 80.

130. William G. PERRY, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1970, pp. 86 ff.

131. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

132. *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 131.

121. Jean PIAGET and Barbel INHELDER, *The Psychology of the Child*, p. 149.

122. *Ibid.*

123. Jean PIAGET, *Six Psychological Studies*, p. 65.

124. Ronald DUSKA and Mariellen WHELAN, *Moral Development*, pp. 42-49.

125. Thomas H. GROOME, *Christian Religious Education*, p. 71.

126. Walter CONN, ed., *Conversion*, pp. 125, 139, 141, 154, 176.

community.¹³³ In a supportive community, the good teacher becomes the one who supports his or her students in a sustained groping, exploration, and eventual synthesis.¹³⁴ As at other stages in the educational process, the need for some form of community seems paramount.

Faith and Religious Conversion.

What we have briefly looked at through the research of Perry seems to be paralleled in the writings of Bernard Lonergan. Perry has described the emergence of some form of Faith. Lonergan speaks of religious conversion. From Lonergan's perspective, conversion is something like what Joseph de Finance described as a vertical exercise of freedom in that :

... a vertical exercise of freedom is a set of judgments and decisions by which we move from one horizon to the other.¹³⁵

Conversion is an about-face for the better. It can occur on a moral, an intellectual or a religious level of the person.¹³⁶ Lonergan's work, *Insight : A Study of Human Understanding*, is a detailed account of what he means by intellectual conversion.¹³⁷ The experience of the book could be said to be an attempt at rational self-appropriation not unlike the experience of the student in the first five positions of Perry's model. Lonergan, like Perry, emphasizes the personal nature of the endeavor of becoming familiar with the activities of one's intellect.¹³⁸ For Lonergan, this experience should lead to a self-affirmation of the knower which is not a judgment of necessity but of the unconditioned.¹³⁹ It is a judgment of fact that is not open to radical revision. This is an epistemological position which is not shared by Perry who espouses a more process, relativistic, viewpoint.¹⁴⁰ Nonetheless, while the epistemological positions of both Lonergan and Perry differ, it seems that they are in agreement on broad outlines of the emergence of what, for Lonergan, is intellectual conversion. More specifically, intellectual conversion is :

133. *Ibid.*, pp. 121, 125, 214.

*134. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

135. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, p. 237.

136. *Ibid.*, p. 241.

137. Donal DORR, « Conversion », in *Looking at Lonergan's Method*, edited by Patrick CORCORAN, Dublin, Talbot Press, 1975, p. 175.

138. Bernard LONERGAN, *Insight : A Study of Human Understanding*, p. XIX.

139. *Ibid.*, p. 319.

140. William G. PERRY, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*, p. 201.

... a radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn myth concerning reality, objectivity, and human knowledge. The myth is that knowing is like looking, that objectivity is seeing what is there to be seen and not seeing what is not there, and that the real is out there now to be looked at.¹⁴¹

Moving towards intellectual conversion is not easy in the same way as moving through Perry's various positions is not automatic or without resistance.¹⁴² What Perry describes in position five is very much like what Lonergan describes as intellectual conversion. In position five, Perry says :

Theologically speaking, position 5 represents the point of critical division between « belief » and the possibility of « faith ». Belief requires no investment by the person. To become faith it must be doubted. Only in the face of doubt is the person called upon for that act of commitment that is his contribution, his faith. In position 5 one can no longer « believe » in the simple unquestioned sense.¹⁴²

As a person moves to position six, in Perry's model, he or she is faced with the question of commitment. For Perry, commitment :

... refers to an affirmation made in a world perceived as relativistic, that is, after detachment, doubt and awareness of alternatives have made the experience of personal choice a possibility.¹⁴³

From Lonergan's perspective, it would seem that commitment would be principally located on the level of moral conversion in so far as :

Moral conversion changes the criterion of one's decisions from satisfactions to values. As children or minors are persuaded, cajoled, ordered, compelled to do what is right. As our knowledge of human reality increases, as our responses to values are strengthened or refined, our mentors more and more leave us to ourselves so that our freedom may exercise its ever advancing thrust towards authenticity. So we move to the existential moment when we discover for ourselves that our choosing affects ourselves no less than the chosen or neglected objects, and that it is up to each of us to decide for himself what he is to make of himself.¹⁴⁴

The criterion of one's decisions shifts from satisfactions to values which are apprehended in feelings.¹⁴⁵ Our feelings not only respond

141. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, p. 238.

142. William G. PERRY, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years*, p. 131.

143. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

144. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, p. 240.

145. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

to values but they do so in accordance with a scale of preference.¹⁴⁶ As Lonergan sees it, one can distinguish vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values in an ascending order.¹⁴⁶ Our intentional feelings can, thus, be educated to choose the truly good through reinforcement and approval of what is worthwhile as well as curtailment and disapproval of what is not good.¹⁴⁷ On the question of education of feelings, Robert Doran further develops Lonergan's thought by introducing the notion of psychic conversion.¹⁴⁸ Doran describes psychic conversion thus :

Some of the concrete areas of one's inattentiveness, obtuseness, silliness, and irresponsibility are revealed one by one, and can be named and quasi personified. They are complexes with a quasi personality of their own. When personified, they can be engaged in active imaginative dialogue where one must listen as well as speak. The dialogue relativizes the ego and thus frees the complexes from rigidity. Some of them can then even be befriended and transformed. When thus paid attention to and in a sense, compromised with, they prove to be sources of conscious energy one never knew were at his disposal. Such is psychic conversion.¹⁴⁹

It is in the area of psychic conversion that feelings, intentional and others, can be integrated with intellect thereby setting up some internal communication between mind and heart.¹⁵⁰ Psychic conversion can be seen as the appropriation of one's feelings analogous to the kind of rational self-appropriation that is detailed by Lonergan in *Insight*.¹⁵¹ Since feelings have a large role in religious conversion, as we have already indicated, psychic conversion can lead to religious conversion.

Earlier, we noted that religious experience focuses specifically on the intentional feeling of being-in-love in an unrestricted fashion. Nonetheless, it has become clear in the course of our discussion that religious experience can be evoked in other areas of our intentionality. Intellectual, moral, or aesthetic experience can have a religious dimension. Religious experience, in the sense in which we have distinguished it from other experiences, is, according to Lonergan, frequently introduced into a person's life through the recognition of

moral impotence and the need for a solution.¹⁵² As Lonergan puts it, moral conversion which can result from intellectual conversion often leads to religious conversion. The awareness of a need of God can be the beginning of religious conversion in the full sense which we have outlined. Religious conversion can emerge when a person experiences so-called limit situations. These situations include experiences of guilt, anxiety, sickness, the recognition of one's destiny in terms of death as well as the so-called ecstatic experiences of intense joy, love, re-assurance and creation. The passage from the ordinary to the dimension of religious experience can come quite suddenly as, for instance, when we are told of the serious illness of ourselves or somebody who we love. In such a situation, we can begin to experience the everyday, « real », world, as suddenly unreal, petty, strange, foreign to the now real world.¹⁵³

Depending on our state of emotional integration, « peak experiences » such as love, joy, creativity can help us to transcend our « everydayness » so that we touch a dimension of experience that cannot be translated easily into familiar, everyday, language. True love, for instance, can bring us into contact with a reality whose power we cannot deny.¹⁵⁴ In our moments of ecstasy, we can experience a reality simply as given, gifted, and as having taken place. Such a reality may be a taste of that self-transcending experience of « being-in-love without qualifications » which becomes familiar to the authentically religious person. Such ecstatic experiences can render a person more perceptive to the possibility of an existential grounding for those everyday experiences of self-transcendence which disclose the most deeply held meanings of our lives. Art and symbol, in whatever form they assume, have a special role in intimating the beyond — the ecstatic, the other-worldly.¹⁵⁵

The gradual awareness of the dimension of the beyond, the ecstatic as gift, the human as ambiguous, can constitute the beginnings of religious conversion. While religious conversion in the sense which we have taken it is something that emerges about the age of thirty, it begins to appear much earlier and continues throughout life.¹⁵⁶

146. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

147. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

148. Robert M. DORAN, *Subject and Psyche: Ricœur, Jung and the Search for Foundations*, p. 246 ff.

149. *Ibid.*

150. *Ibid.*, pp. 63, 245.

151. *Ibid.*, p. 105.

152. Bernard LONERGAN, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, pp. 718-730.

153. David TRACY, *Blessed Rage for Order*, p. 105.

154. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

155. Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, pp. 61-69.

156. Antoine VERGOTE, *The Religious Man*, p. 300; Bernard LONERGAN, *Method in Theology*, pp. 117-118.

We have outlined the aim of religious education in terms of what Lonergan has called religious experience. We tried to trace the path through which religious experience emerges. We noted the importance of feelings and their development in the context of the home and the early days in school. Following Jean Piaget's research, we focused on the cognitive development of the person through the concrete operational period and tried to spell out some of the implications of this stage for religious development. Mainly through the works of Erikson and Piaget, we examined the movement of the person from adolescence to early adulthood. Here, we attempted to discern the first glimmerings of intellectual, moral, and religious conversion. We utilized some of the findings of William Perry and Bernard Lonergan when dealing with intellectual and moral conversion during the College years. We noted that religious conversion is, ideally, the outcome of the other conversions. However, in line with Lonergan, we did not conclude that the sequence was necessarily temporal. Religious conversion could be temporally prior although it would, logically, be the completion of the other conversions.

Religious experience has many manifestations. Its manifestations in early childhood are not the same as those of the adolescent. If we are correct, its emergence in a fairly complete sense occurs about the age of thirty. This is not to say that children, adolescents, or young adults do not have many of the components that make up what we have described as religious experience. They do as we have tried to indicate in this essay. Similarly, religious experience or conversion does not stagnate at the age of about thirty. Through authentic living, this experience, ideally, grows in fullness and depth with the passage of life.

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