

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

Bachelor of Divinity

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

5-1-1931

Education, Psychology, and Religion as Factors in Creating Happiness among the Deaf

O C. Schroeder

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_schroedero@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schroeder, O C., "Education, Psychology, and Religion as Factors in Creating Happiness among the Deaf" (1931). *Bachelor of Divinity*. 737.

<https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv/737>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bachelor of Divinity by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

**Education, Psychology, and Religion as Factors
in Creating Happiness among the Deaf.**

A Thesis

presented to the faculty of

Concordia Seminary,

St. Louis, Mo.

by

O.C. Schroeder

in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree

of

B.D.

1

Education, Psychology, and Religion as Factors in Creating Happiness among the Deaf.

The purpose of the study of aids to happiness among the deaf is to portray spiritual blessings rather than to evaluate the benefits of education and material success. To a large extent this treatise is narrative and descriptive. Our interest, however is not in narration and description per se, but only as they portray the causes of, and the means to, the promotion of happiness among the deaf.

A study of the mental and spiritual equipment of the deaf leads us to the conclusion that the Gospel of Jesus is the ~~only~~^{sole} power for the promotion of genuine happiness among the deaf.

The subject falls into three divisions which may be characterized as follows:

1. Education as a factor in creating happiness is not sufficient.
2. The application of merely mental principles likewise is not an adequate method.
3. The Gospel of Jesus meets all the needs.*

* This argument has been interwoven with parts I and 2 for the sake of clearer argumentation.

Temporal happiness in the world of the deaf is intimately connected with education. The deaf man who has no education is tragically limited in the enjoyment of the intellectual and temporal blessings of life. This is clearly evident from the history of the education of the deaf.

In ancient times a deaf child was considered useless and barely suffered to live. An old poem reads as follows:

"To instruct the deaf, no art could ever reach,
No care improve them, no wisdom teach."

In Sparta the deaf child was put to death, since it could not reverence the laws and defend the country. Rome first recognized the rights of the deaf, but believed that they were incapable of instruction.

History gives us only meager reports, but there is no doubt that the early work of instructing the deaf first enlisted the aid of Christian missionaries, who by various devices, gave them the rudiments of an education and taught them faith in a Divine Being.

A monk, Pater Ponce, first attempted to teach the deaf in Spain about the year 1530. Until the 18th century these attempts continued in Spain, Italy, Germany, and England. The first regular school for the deaf was established in Paris in 1760 by *Abbe* del 'Epee. At Leipzig in 1778 Samuel Heinicke founded a school for the German deaf, and in 1764 Samuel Braidwood opened a school for deaf children in Edinburgh. Thomas Rolling, an American citizen, about 1771 sent his two deaf children to Scotland to be educated at the Edinburgh school. Later through his effort there was established at Cobbs, Va., a private school for the deaf. The first permanent school for the deaf in the United States was established by Rev. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet in 1817 at Hartford, Conn.

In all schools for the deaf the child is now taught to employ its eyes and touch instead of its ears in order to place the tongue, palate, and lips in various positions to produce speech. The blessings and benefits of educating the deaf

pupils of Rev. Thomas H. Gallaudet were demonstrated to various groups of citizens and numerous state legislatures with the result that today every state in the Union has a public school for the deaf, where the deaf are able to acquire a grammar and high school education. Gallaudet College for the Deaf in Washington, D.C. offers a higher education to deaf persons who have exceptional abilities and mental capacities.

This institution is under federal control of *the federal government.*

When we cast about for whatever avenues there might be, through which facts-- leading to an objective statement of what the deaf themselves feel they need to promote success and happiness, there appear three such avenues: through the individual expression by intelligent deaf men and women, through the significant articles appearing in the various papers for the deaf and through the opinions, expressed by organized bodies of the deaf.

Some years ago requests for opinions sent to some fifty intelligent deaf persons, in various walks of life, scattered from Connecticut to California and from Minnesota to Louisiana, brought a number of highly informative replies.

One of the most practical letters came from a shoe-repairer in Oklahoma City, a congenitally deaf man, educated in one of the large state residential institutions, where he learned the trade he is following. He writes:-

"I am working in a leading shoe-rebuilding shop. I have talked with the deaf-mutes of this city, and they declare that the deaf should become masters of their trades and of shop language. Some of them confessed to me that they never have steady work because they are not expert enough in their trades and have poor language.

I am working in a leading shoe-rebuilding shop. When a customer enters the shop with shoes to be mended, the cashier writes down on paper what is to be done to them.

The shoes and slip of paper are sent to the second floor, and we, the shoemakers, read the directions and repair the shoes. Several deaf shoemakers could not understand the language on the slips, and the boss was disgusted and discharged them. I think the deaf

should be taught shop language."

A young man who lost his hearing at about fifteen years of age and who was educated chiefly in the public schools, with one year at a private institution, made this reply: "A thorough foundation in language to serve as a key to enable the pupil to gain entrance to college or to educate himself by home-study after he leaves school. Arouse within the pupil a thirst for knowledge, so that he will use the 'key' as long as he lives."

A Louisiana girl makes this contribution: "If a deaf girl or boy finishes school with a good command of plain, every-day English and a thorough knowledge of a trade much in demand, he or she should find it easy to get along."

The replies from a group of men, members of one branch of the National Fraternal Society for the Deaf, showed consistently a demand for the teaching of such things as make for independence in their dealings with others. One letter reads:

"The deaf should be taught plenty of practical every-day language and a lot of common sense, so they

will know how to express themselves properly when applying for a position, making purchases, communicating with doctor or dentist, and buying a ticket. My long association with the deaf has given me the impressions that that is what they so essentially need."

Parallel with the general feeling on the part of the deaf, that a satisfactory degree in the ability to use good English is a prime essential, there is an insistence that adequate training be given in some trade or vocation for which there is a demand. They agree with Dr. Donald Paterson, Professor of Psychology, University of Minnesota, that "industrial training should become the most important and outstanding feature of the education of the deaf."

A deaf teacher of the deaf gives this norm for the promotion of temporal success and happiness among the deaf:

1. Language ability, the minimum for satisfaction being ability sufficient for expression without embarrassment in every-day situations, such as applying for positions, making purchases, and communication with those with whom they come in contact.

2. In academic subjects, arithmetic, geography, hygiene, and civics. The sort of arithmetic uniformly desired is that which will help the pupil in every-day affairs, such as making change, understanding interest and simple rules of banking. There is a general complaint that too much time is spent on arithmetical procedures of little practical value.

3. Speech and speech-reading for those whose progress justifies the expenditure of time necessary for its acquisition.

4. Proficiency in the trade, with emphasis on the fact that this trade be one in which the pupil has reasonable chance of securing employment. Shop language not to be neglected.

5. Certain social virtues, such as character development, respect for law and superiors, and understanding of the value of money and of the danger of expecting too much when offered employment, religious training, and appreciation of the value of a good name and of a high standard of living.

While these statements are enlightening, they also prove that the benefits derived from education are not as abundant with the deaf as they with the hearing, nor do they lead to an equal degree of temporal success and happiness.

The closing of that important avenue of communication, the ear, in early life, makes the process of education a slow and laborious one, and only a small per cent of the deaf attain a command of language sufficient to enable them to read with either pleasure or profit. This fact has necessarily retarded the mental development of the deaf to a great extent.

Scientific investigations have demonstrated furthermore the startling deficiencies of deaf children in their ability to comprehend and handle printed and written language as well as an apparent general inferiority of the deaf as a group. The average deaf child, regardless of age, method of instruction, possesses language that is only equal to that of an average hearing child of seven, eight,

or nine years of age. This is not true of mental traits in the deaf involving movements, space perceptions and eye-hand co-ordinations.

The deaf child finds more happiness in life if it receives industrial training. In addition to shoe-making, tailoring, barbering, cabinet making, printing, baking, a knowledge of such trades as drill press operating, auto mechanism, gas engineering, vulcanizing, power sewing, and assembling should be a great help to them.

All human life expresses itself through physical, mental, and moral qualities, the fundamental endowments of nature. Intelligent growth demonstrates that all capable advance in knowledge proceeds from simple to complex states of consciousness; each step is attended by accuracy of conception and adjustment to all preceding phenomena. The supreme difficulty of the deaf is their inability to parallel internal with external environment. There is no intelligent apprehension and adjustment of the deaf man's internal mental states to external facts. Phenomena rarely suggest sequences

to the deaf mind. There seems to be no distinct perception of specific facts: reasoning leads the deaf to confusion and error. It appears that they are lacking in imagination in all that relates to purely intellectual exercises, though they have a fairly vivid conception of such physical objects as appeal to the passions or appetites.

Human knowledge depends upon clearness and vividness of images impressed upon the brain. Man's intelligence does not depend so much upon what he beholds, but upon the impression of the phenomena on the brain. With the deaf these impressions are frequently vague and indistinct. Their intelligence is superficial and delusive, though many of the deaf may excel in recollections of a concrete object itself. The reason for the deplorable intellectual state of the deaf is to be found in the fact that their chief mental anxiety is for the immediate gratification of the physical senses.

Universal experience has demonstrated that the ignorant masses of mankind are not elevated by mere

contact with intelligent forces. Dwelling with vigorous and superior minds does not, as a rule, inculcate in them a lofty notion of duty, understanding, and power; nor does it build character. This is eminently true of the deaf also as a class.

The deaf have not the self-propelling force inherent in the hearing; they may seldom or rarely become men of affairs, to take contracts, buy properties, and become substantial citizens.

The deaf man encounters at the very threshold of his career an intense and deep-seated distrust of his ability; he is always subject to suspicion, and surveillance. For this reason he occupies a nondescript relation to the hearing. Odius class legislation is partly to blame, keeping him at times in industrial bondage. His case does not always meet with the necessary humane understanding. For example, there is no justification in law or reason for some of the restrictions placed on him by employers. This condition, however, will perhaps exist as long as employment and idleness, ignorance and knowledge dwell

together side by side and as long as mankind is divided into a served and serving class.

Thus we see that education alone has been unable in the past to correct the deaf man's maladjustments. Moreover, education has been unable to bring to the deaf man genuine happiness because it has made the fatal error of disinterest in the life of the spirit. Educators of the deaf in too many instances have been leading the deaf to seek contentment of soul in material things; they have been making the spirit subject to the body. It is, therefore, true wisdom from above for the instructors of the deaf to lead their charges to abandon this everyday materialism. The briefness of our existence upon this earth should direct their attention to the supernatural and the infinite to which the human soul is related through its relation to God. The deaf, too, must live ^{through} the agonies of separation which death thrusts upon them, and they, therefore, need the marvelous power which the Gospel of Jesus possesses in giving them a hopeful faith in a future world wonderfully arranged and governed. Human life

is more than just a coming on the earth, striving, working, and then sinking back into the earth. For this reason it is brutal and cruel of the friends and teachers of the deaf to neglect the teaching of the Christian faith and the hope of ultimate and eternal happiness in a better world.

Genuine cultural improvements, social progress and happiness are based upon religious convictions, upon belief in the fact of God's rule in the affairs of men. The deaf need proper religious instruction in the Christian religion and pious examples of obedience to divine and human law. Above every other need of the deaf there is the necessity to return to the only true anchor of hope and faith, divine Revelation and the Gospel of the Son of God.

Hence it follows that parents and instructors of the deaf who emphasize education and disregard spiritual development extract the kernel of true happiness and offer their charges the mere shell.

II.

Many people in their pursuit for happiness have in recent years turned from materialism to the ^{purely} mental sphere of human activity. It is indeed a fact that an understanding of mental principles as manifested in the working of the human mind is a great aid to the promotion of temporal happiness, also among the deaf. A knowledge of the science of Psychology is helpful in many of life's vocations. In fact it may be essential to the finding of a satisfactory solution in many domestic, business and educational difficulties. For example, the many deaf men and women engaged as instructors in city and state schools will be more successful in their chosen profession if they have learned to know various facts with regard to the human mind in its effort to accumulate and retain facts. For the instructor it is important to know the psychological rule that the mind is always attended by, and related to the living organism of the human body and that mental states are dependent upon preceding phenomena, such as past experiences, habits and environment in

general. It is absolutely true that there are differences in human abilities or capacities. The teacher of the deaf must learn to recognize these varieties and by observation endeavor to apply the proper stimuli or motivations for study. A knowledge of **Psychology** will enable them furthermore to utilize the natural instinct of curiosity in their pupils to promote a logical association of ideas and to secure the proper responses from their charges. Again, in this connection, the deaf teacher must consider the inherited tendencies and peculiar traits of mind of the deaf. Further than that the deaf teacher can learn from the study of **Psychology** how to enter into the student's way of thinking and reasoning, which is one of the secrets of successfully imparting knowledge to others. It is eminently proper for him to realize that all mental life is primarily teleological, that is, the essence of mental life and bodily life are one, in other words, health is a prime factor in the intellectual abilities of the deaf students and necessary for moral and intell-

ectual development. The instructor, therefore, should know the laws of health pertaining to food, drink, cleanliness, and exercise. Because the body, mind, and soul of man are intimately related, the instructor will recognize the fact that an undernourished child or one living in impure surroundings is mentally handicapped as well as physically. It is clearly apparent to an experienced psychologist that intellectual and emotional activity results in a flow of blood to the brain and that electrically excited brain cells produce alterations of respiration and circulation with their harmful effects. It should furthermore be clear to the instructor that character remains unaffected for the better if the subject does not take advantage of opportunity. To summarize, these and many other psychological truths frequently determine the success or failure of a teacher in his work.

Everyone knows that a knowledge of Psychology is likewise a great asset to the deaf man who is in the business world. Feelings and sensations are

essential features of logic. For example, intellectual feelings of likenesses or opposites, causes and effects, create judgments in the individual's mind that certain benefits or advantages exist. He must know how to present in a pleasing manner the satisfactions derived from certain selections and associations; for they are the motive force of actions and operate along the lines least resistance. To be successful the deaf man needs to recognize the further psychological fact that there are various types of human beings, such as the phlegmatic, the choleric, the sanguine and the melancholy, as well as the truth, that these types respond in different ways to the same stimuli. Furthermore he dare not overlook the racial characteristics of his prospects. The conclusion cannot be escaped that men feel about their possessions as they do about themselves. For this reason the deaf business man will not belittle the home or the achievements of a prospect. He realizes that the social Me in a man has a propensity to have himself and his possessions favorably noticed in the community.

A knowledge of ~~Psychology~~ psychology is helpful not only to the teacher of the deaf and the deaf business man but in the deaf home as well. When a man is aware of the mental fact that a woman is more idealistic, more intuitive and more sanguine than a man, and, when the wife realizes that a man is natively more phlegmatic than a woman, this knowledge will aid in promoting understanding, harmony and peace in the family. With regard to the children in a home deaf parents will do well to bear in mind the psychological fact that obedience ought not to be secured ^{not} by egotistic motives, such as rewards and punishments, but through a sense of obligation, through a knowledge of the law of God and a love for the Savior; that stories and examples with a moral point help to deepen in the child the feeling of obligation; that the play instinct can be utilized to instill in the child a sense and habit of co-operation for the promotion of law and order; that all the child's feelings are reactions to external sensations and stimuli.

The above described advantages of knowing the

fundamental laws of the mind are only a few of its blessings in the material world around about us: they could be multiplied to some extent, but our chief aim in presenting this subject is to show its inability with regard to the promotion of true happiness in the soul of man. We do not favor the making of Psychology into a religion as do the Christian Scientists and other cults. The tendency in many circles has been to over-emphasize the mind at the expense of the soul. For example, individuals such as judge Daniel Simmons of Florida make this mistake. He says: "Our conscious mind regulates the movement of a hand or a foot; nerve telephones run to them from the section of the brain occupied by the conscious mind; the beating of the heart, the healing of a wound, are realized by the sympathetic nervous system or Universal Mind, the section of the brain reserved by the infinite, creative, and sustaining God-mind. The seeker after happiness must look within himself into that realm in which this God-mind reigns. We must set ourselves in tune with our own God-center to come into harmony with God-wisdom and God-power and draw unto ourselves

the things necessary to our welfare and happiness. These words are used cautiously, advisedly and with a full realization of their tremendous significance. Without clash or clatter, but silently and calmly as the healing of a wound things begin to come toward the one who is in tune with the God-mind; he grows better, nobler, and happier."

We ascribe no such power to the human mind, but we do believe the assertion of the psychologist James when he says: "Spiritual self-seeking includes impulses, toward psychic progress. It is social and self-seeking beyond the grave. Our thoughts choose one of various selves and reckon it no shame to fail in another. To give up pretensions is a blessed relief. The history of evangelical theology, with its conviction of sin, its self-despair, and abandonment of salvation by good works is the deepest possible example."

Psychologists, as a rule, ignore the existence of the psychic or soul entirely. They speak only of the body and the mind. They assert that all human behavior is merely a series of habits. While it is

a fact that the starting point of all intellectual life is instinct, and, that the equipment of instinct and capacities depends not only upon the constitution of the nervous system, but also upon the law of heredity, yet psychologists rarely, if ever, mention the qualities of the soul, such as faith, hope, and gratitude. Still we find that all races of men at all times have had soul-life or faith in a Supreme Being. Plutarch, the ancient historian, tells us: "You may see states without walls, without law, without coins, without writings; but a people without a god, without prayers, without religious exercises and sacrifices, has no man seen."

The human soul, the psychic in man, really exists; it is the living principle in ~~man~~ ^{him}. The Bible tells us that God created man a living soul. These words are significant. Man was endowed with spiritual gifts in distinction from all other creatures. Natural man's mind, however, since Adam's fall, is not attuned to the will of the Creator; man is dead in sin. In spiritual death the soul of man has lost its union with God.

Animal life is not on an equal plane with the human soul. Animal soul-life is instinct, intelligence, seeing and hearing. In plants it is overcoming matter through functions of birth, growth, and reproduction. Man, however, can think and holds dominion over the animal and plant world by means of his rational soul. All the world was created for man.

Spiritism or idealism teaches erroneously that only the soul is real, while materialism holds that the body alone exists. For example, Spencer says: "I am but a piece of animated clay, equipped with a nerve system and in some mysterious way connected with a big dynamo called the world." We believe that the mind, the body and the soul are real and that they influence one another. Many scientists freely admit that religious facts are as real as psychic facts. We realize that natural religion with its intuitive knowledge of God's existence, is incomplete and can lead only to despair. We note with satisfaction that natural man, including also the deaf, has an inborn knowledge of God's existence. Men never were able to satisfy their souls with the agnostic attitude.

Natural man, however, fears God. No matter what his scholarship may be the natural heart of man is opposed to God and impenitent. He can see God's power and wisdom in nature and his imperfect conscience reminds him of God's justice, but he has no knowledge of the Creator's love and mercy in Jesus. This knowledge has prompted the heathen of all times to worship their hand-made deities and to offer sacrifices to their nature and local gods in an effort to appease the idols' wrath and gain its favor. The Gospel of Jesus has changed all this. From the teachings of Jesus, which supplement natural religion and psychology, man learns that God is a person, that He is omnipotent, all-wise, gracious, holy and just; that He has in His mercy provided for the spiritual needs of the sin-ridden world by sending His own Son to redeem the lost race from condemnation and death. Thus sinful human beings learn by supernatural faith, instilled by God's own Spirit through the Gospel, that God is their Friend in Christ. They learn to love and esteem Him, who first loved them and they gladly place all their affairs in

*and, above all
bring the revela-
tion of God's
grace in Chr. J.*

*and above all bring the
revelation of God's grace in
chr. j.*

His gracious keeping. Thus we see that natural faith believes in a god, but that supernatural faith believes in the true, living God.

The same applies to the natural conscience of man. The natural conscience of man, including also that of the deaf, perceives moral distinctions, but it grumbles at the demands of the voice within. Many deaf, too, have lived through the miseries of hell because of the pangs of their conscience. Divine Revelation enlightens the conscience so that it not only recognizes guilt, but also flees to the Savior for refuge. Yes, natural man has a conscience and it is vivid in imagination, as is proved by the actions of criminals whom no one pursued but their own inner convictions. A conscience, unenlightened by the Gospel, can drive a man only to despair. The enlightened conscience, however, not only gives peace to the troubled mind, but also makes the conscience more tender and responsive to the will of God and furthermore helps to overcome ~~the~~ innate selfishness.

Both natural and supernatural faith have not only a conscience aspect, but there is an element of feeling as

well. The natural mind of man has a feeling of hostility toward God; for it knows the Creator's power and feels his unworthiness to stand in the presence of its Maker. Supernatural faith, which is instilled by God's Spirit through His means of grace, gives him a firm conviction of things not seen and changes his natural feeling of fear and hostility to one of love and esteem. In the true believer's heart fear is supplanted by trust, hatred is displaced by love and despair replaced by a happy hope.

Supernatural faith, instilled by the Gospel, furthermore has a most beneficial effect upon the depraved will of natural man. The Creator has endowed man with a free will, but since Adam's fall this will is out of tune with God. The natural will of man centers its interest in its own ego; man delights in doing the biddings of his own evil flesh and those of Satan. By the gracious influence of God's Holy Spirit the will of man receives an entirely new volitional trend. Because the believer has learned to know God as His best Friend in Christ Jesus, he now endeavors seriously to do the will of God and to conquer the natural

depraved desires of his wicked heart; he tries to do the work of Jesus, to spread the glad tidings of His salvation, and to make Christ known by word and deed.

In addition to the above supernatural faith has a tendency or the power to create a more healthful state of mind and body. It influences the physical well-being of man; for it instills peace of mind which in turn affects all the functions of the bodily organism; especially the digestive system. When genuine Christian faith rules the heart man's footsteps become lighter, his facial expression becomes peaceful through the relaxation of the muscles, his nerves become relaxed and his heart beats strongly and happily. Many disturbed nervous systems are merely the result of a lack of faith in God. Thus we see that a healthful state of soul also creates a healthful state of body and mind.

Moreover, supernatural faith enlightens and elevates the natural, cynical, sophisticated intellect of man; it influences all of his natural faculties. The best in human achievement has been the result of Christian

influence upon the mind and soul of man. The most attractive and successful characters, also among the deaf, are those, whose souls have been touched by the power of divine Revelation. All the steps of the natural mind in knowing such as intuition, sensation, perception, association of ideas, memory, imagination, conception, judging and reasoning are subject to the beneficial, elevation ~~power~~ of revealed religion. Without this power the natural faculties of mind can create no lasting peace or happiness and can lead man only to a virtual reversion to paganism, so that he makes pagan enjoyments the chief object of his existence. Thus we see that Christianity is well able to supplement in an effective manner the natural religion of the deaf: it gives them the explanation to the otherwise unanswerable problem of self.

The Gospel of Jesus deals conclusively and convincingly with the intimates of life while ~~natural~~ ~~psychology~~ deals with ~~the~~ intellectual advancement and with other merely passing phases of ^{the} transient interests of men.

Summary, the science of Psychology is incomplete and lacking in real power to bless without the addition of the Gospel. We conclude, therefore, that neither education nor the application of mental principles alone are able to create true and abiding happiness in the hearts of the deaf. The deaf, like all other men, need above all other things the Gospel. The importance of the Christian faith must be impressed upon them for the making of a successful life. Moreover, the enlightened deaf should not only assist the intellectual world in abolishing ignorance, poverty, and various social maladjustments, but should also assist the Church to hold before the deaf world the historic and eternal Christ, the God-Man and Savior from sin, guilt, death, judgement, and a troubled conscience. Thus they will be rendering a real service to afflicted humanity; for time cannot age the Gospel of Jesus nor can society outgrow its need and blessing.

Bibliography:

Seashore: Introduction to Psychology.

Baldwin: Elementary Psychology and Education.

Norlie: Christian Psychology.

Kretzmann: Psychology and the Christian Day-School.

The Volta Review. (A journal for the deaf and workers among ^{deaf.)} the deaf.)

The Minnesota Companion. (A magazine for the deaf.)

The International Encyclopaedia.

Sheldon: Unbelief in the Nineteenth Century.

Horsch: Modern Religious Liberalism.