



Roy Pitcher

Joining Shap

I became a traditional classroom teacher of RE in 1959. In 1966 I had a sharp vision of giving secondary school pupils an Education in Religion, but the step from traditional RE was great. I produced a series of books (The Developing World, pub. Longmans) and Prof. Ninian Smart and Donald Horder at Lancaster University were fascinated by my fundamental idea. I was invited to the Shap Hotel where Owen Cole described my phenomenological approach to the Shap group. I was then invited to join the SWP to balance the team with my teaching and writing experiences.

Memories

This step was very important to me. It took me into the world of academic excellence (eg. Ninian Smart, Eric Sharp etc), but more importantly it linked me with rich multicultural and multi-faith perceptions of RE. Owen Cole in particular, was magnificent in patiently enabling me, a Christian, to work comfortably within the context of Buddhism, Sikhism etc. This became of far-reaching consequence over the following years. The cultural ease with which, for example, Edward Hulmes (a Catholic) and Riadh el Droubie worked together respectfully and joyfully was powerful to observe. The richness of this sustained experience was something I could not have envisaged in my earlier years as a teacher.

Contributions to Shap

What could I bring to Shap as a class teacher with shallow multi-faith understandings? I was excited by the possibilities of taking the SWP ideas into the classroom and publishing the outcomes. Colleagues such as Owen Cole, Edward Hulmes, Riadh el Droubie, Robin Davies, etc, thereby produced about ten books which had a ring of authenticity about them. All of this was personally hugely enriching, especially as I had become a teacher trainer/educator and Inspector of Schools. I was only in the SWP for six years and could not claim to be directly influential as Owen Cole was; the impact was so great the SWP message became remarkably widespread in Christian and non-religious educational circles and for that I am truly thankful.

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