23d Excerpts from Publications listed in 18b above

This item contains first a complete list of excerpts from the fourteen Published Items edited by key members of the Shap Working Party as listed in 23b above, plus the excerpts themselves. These are listed in order of date of publication.

While no documents represent any official Shap policy, those listed below give an impressive indication of Shap viewpoints on a wide range of issues, and the excerpts chosen attempt to offer a flavour of the contents of these publications.

Items Listed

Hinnells, J.R. (ed) *Comparative Religion in Education* Oriel Press 1970

Contents p3

'Editor's Introduction' J.R. Hinnells pp ix-x

Woodward, P. (ed) *World Religions: Aids for Teachers* CRC *(*Community Relations Commission) 1972 and 1973

Contents pp 2-3

'Introduction' P. Woodward pp 4-6

Hinnells, J.R. and Sharpe, E.J. (eds) *Hinduism* Oriel Press 1972

Contents p v

'Introduction to Hinduism' Eric J. Sharpe pp 1-7

Finel, J. (ed) *World Religions at CSE or 16+* Shap 1974

World Religions and Examinations at Sixteen Plus W.O. Cole pp 3-4

Smart, Ninian and Horder, Donald (eds) *New Movements in Religious Education* Temple Smith 1975

Contents pp 5-6

'Religious Education in Secondary Schools' Donald Horder
. pp 175-187

Cole, W.O. (ed) *World Religions: A handbook for teachers* CRE (Commission for Racial Equality) 1977, 1979, 1980, 1982, 1984

Contents pp 3-4

'Comparative Religion Cliches' Ninian Smart pp 12-14

Ibid. 'The use of Visits in Religious Education' Mary Hayward pp 37-39

Gates, Brian (ed) *Afro-Caribbean Religions Ward Lock 1980*

Contents

'Introduction' Brian Gates

Jackson, Robert (ed) *Approaching World Religions* John Murray 1982

Contents p ix

World Religions in Primary Schools Jean Holm pp 5-15

Brown, A. (ed) *Festivals in World Religions* first edition Longman 1986

Contents pp 3-5

'Introduction' Geoffrey Parrinder pp 1-18

'Observing Festivals in Schools' Peter Woodward pp 266-276

Brown, Alan (ed) with Vida Barnett, Owen Cole and Clive Erricker
The Shap Handbook on World Religions in Education CRE 1987

Contents p v

'Religious Education – A Middle Way Robert Jackson pp 17-19

Ibid. 'New Religious Movements' Clive Erricker p 135

Gluck-Wood, A. *Religion and Education* BFSS National RE Centre 1989

Contents p 3

'Introduction' Angela Wood p 4

Erricker, Clive (ed) with Alan Brown, Mary Hayward, Dilip Kadodwala, Paul Williams

Contents pp v-vi

Teaching World Religions: A Teacher's Handbook Heinemann 1993

'Teaching World Religions in schools: methods and strategies'
. John Rankin pp 2-4

Ibid. 'The Jewish Perspective' Clive A. Lawton pp 59-62

Ibid. 'Amritdhari, keshdhari, sahajdhari and patit Sikhs' W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi pp 114-116

Ibid. 'Being a religious minority in contemporary Britain: the Zoroastrian experience' John Hinnells and Rashna Writer pp 138-142

Gates, Brian (ed) *Freedom and Authority in Religions and*
Contents p v

Religious Education Cassell 1996

'Introduction: By What Authority? With What Freedom?' Brian Gates pp vii-ix

Ibid. 'Freedom and Authority in Judaism' Hugo Gryn pp 51-58

Ibid. 'Freedom, Authority and the Study of Religion in the United States' Ninian Smart pp 188-196

Woodward, P. (ed) with Cherry Gould and Riadh el Droubie
Festivals in World Religions second edition RMEP 1998

Contents p5

a) *Festivals in the Primary Classroom David Rose pp 137-142*
b) Festivals in the Secondary School Peter Woodward pp 143-144

Excerpts

Comparative Religion in Education

Ed. John R. Hinnells 1970 pp ix – x

Editor's Introduction

From a number of different quarters the suggestion is being made that the comparative study of religion, or teaching of World Religions, should play a greater part in the educational system that it does at present. The subject is to some extent being thrust before the public through mass media coverage of other nations, greater travel, and the presence of immigrant communities in Britain. The Humanist supports a wider study of religion to overcome what he considers to be the 'parochial outlook' of traditional RE; many people in education believe that it is important to cover religions other than Christianity or Judaism in order to give a wider and deeper understanding of religion, to stimulate thought, and to provide a more sensitive awareness of man; others believe that by understanding the culture and faiths of immigrants one of our greatest social problems can be alleviated. For these and other reasons, many universities, colleges and schools have begun or expanded their teaching of comparative religion. Admirable though this maybe it is important that the enormous problems involved are not ignored or taken too lightly.

This book, in bringing together the views of a number of specialists, examines carefully the nature and scope of the subject at all levels of education. Scholars have been far from unanimous in their appraisal of the discipline. To some, as Dr Sharpe shows, the subject has been the key to explain away Christianity, to others it has been anathema. Even where the subject has been favoured there has been little agreement over the method by which it should be studied, indeed, even over the name to be given to it! The structure of the comparative study of religion, the variety of possible approaches, and the rather bewildering number of disciplines it spans (philosophy, psychology, sociology, to say nothing of the languages, histories and cultures of the different religions) are discussed by Professor Smart. Teachers in colleges and schools are understandably cautious about the possibility of incorporating such disciplines into their syllabus. Yet the fruits to be gathered are such that they (see the surveys of Hinnells and Sharpe), together with Humanists (see Blackham's article), and Evangelical Christians (see Johnston's

article), believe that an effort must be made. Perhaps one of the exciting possibilities of comparative religion is that it is a form of religious education where teachers of any religious faith, or those of none at all, can work together in all conscience and agreement. It is the practical aspect of the subject which appeals to so many. From an understanding of the beliefs of immigrants can grow a more sympathetic attitude to them as people, as Dr Parrinder's article shows. For all these reasons then it is important to look at the problems and methods of teaching comparative religion in schools (see Professor Hilliard's article).

Although progress must not be so slow that the whole process grinds to a halt, as all contributors stress, any advance must be made wisely, cautiously and patiently. By bringing together such different outlooks and by attempting to hear all sides it is hoped that this book makes a useful contribution to that advance.

John R. Hinnells

Woodward, P. (ed) *World Religions: Aids for Teachers* CRC (Community Relations Commission) 1972 and 1973

'Introduction' P. Woodward pp 4-6

World Religions – Aids for Teachers

INTRODUCTION

The teacher in this country who wishes to present information about the World's Religions is in some ways like the mariner of mythology, steering an uncertain course between the Scylla of "too much too soon" and the Charybdis of "too little too late". His route between the many headed monster and the yawning whirlpool is uncharted and indistinct.

Certainly there is much in the subject material of World Religions to help him find his "true mean". Buddhism teaches a doctrine of the Middle Way; Islam instructs that the Qur'an should he read in neither too loud nor too soft a voice; and the religion of the followers of Zoroaster encourages moderation in all things.

On the other hand religions have a reputation for producing a devotion of their several causes that verges on the fanatical. The search for truth has often in the past led to extremism, and martyrdom and violence have been much too common. Even today the contribution of the study of World Religions to inter-racial and international harmony is only struggling up the first step of a steep and rocky pilgrimage.

In this situation the teacher stands, like the mariner, in need of all the help and guidance he can find. This article, along with the rest of the booklet, is an attempt to provide some initial outline of where the teacher may turn in his search for the material, methods and aids to inspire his teaching.

First however, a word of warning; the availability of such helps in a field as exciting and as productive as this can well encourage the view that it is an easy matter to teach children about the world's religions. In my opinion this view has many dangers. The vast extent of the material, the variety and complexity of conflicting beliefs, the ease with which offence is taken at careless treatment of cherished ideals, these and various other factors demand that the subject be approached in a serious and responsible way.

For the Primary teacher who wishes to involve his (or her) children in an understanding of the various religious viewpoints represented in the classroom, it will be vital to cultivate a sympathetic approach that seeks not so much to describe and prescribe as to explore. For the Secondary SP8Ci&list in Religious Education, anxious to avoid overemphasis on one isolated religious system, sensitivity to the deeply held beliefs of other people is essential. This, I believe, will involve the teacher in wide reading, deep thought and careful planning. These are essential if he is to do more than provide superficial facts and vague ideas.

This sort of careful approach is, of course, already developing in a great many cases. Sometimes it is seen in a study in some depth of one individual religion. More often (but more riskily) it is attempted by a survey of a wide number of the various religions. Occasionally it appears in the view of a religion set against the backcloth of the society in which it developed- what Professor Trevor Ling describes in the Aryan Path (August, l97l — "The Role of Comparative Religion") as being the "ghost of a great civilization", a "nervous system existing in separation from the flesh which formerly surrounded and supported it and which in turn it animated and controlled". Now, increasingly through the thematic approach, the subject is beginning to receive the attention it deserves.

This latter method has been more widely used so far with younger children than with older pupils, but surely the immediate future lies here for all age groups: the themes selected can vary from the descriptive and exploratory with Juniors (buildings, forms of prayer, costume and food, etc.) through "people-centered" themes with lower Secondary classes (festivals, religious pioneers, holy books, etc.) to more theological themes with upper Secondary students (items of belief or of conduct, mostly — see, e.g., "Worship in the World's Religions" by E.G. Parrinder and "Problems of Suffering in the Religions of the World" by J. Bowker Even this method is, however, in its infancy, and the wisest course may be for the teacher to spend some time clarifying his reasons for teaching such material before he decides to jump on this particular bandwagon.

The reader who wishes to indulge in some such process of self-examination may well find the Calendar of Festivals proves of help to him. The situations where he draws on it will, of course, vary considerably. Some schools will approach it as a feature of Assembly; others may draw on it for classroom purposes, as providing illustrative material for lessons; others still may incorporate it as a source of project material, or use it as a basis for thematic study. In each case it can be a profitable exercise for the teacher to ask himself why he is using it in his particular way, and what are his motives in so doing. Festivals quickly lose their original simplicity and vigour, they tend to become allegory instead of parable, but the search for the original can often turn a fascinating window on the world into a reflective mirror of the Self. I hope some teachers will find the Calendar helpful in

this way too.

The list of Visual Aids is more ordinary and needs little exposition. It may well be incomplete, and will be most useful when the materials listed can be tested, compared, priced and described with critical comment. Readers who know of omissions or who have the time and interest to help in this process are invited to let me have further details.

Like Topsy, the Bibliographies, along with the other aids, have "just growed". They were born in the attempt by the Divinity Department at Borough Road College to produce helpful lists for teachers, reached adolescence with the addition in l970 of the first twelve Shap Working Party Bibliographies, and have now matured to their present middle-aged spread with the support of the Community Relations Commission, who have generously taken over the production side and are distributing this booklet. Further copies are available from The Education Department, the Community Relations Commission, 15-16 Bedford Street, London WC2.

Two additional bibliographies on Communism, Western and Eastern, by Mr A M Cunningham of Lancaster University and Mr J H Macdonald of Leeds University, are also now available, although not included in this booklet. These are obtainable from me at Department of Religious Studies (W.R.), Borough Road College, Isleworth, Middlesex, on receipt of a stamped self—addressed foolscap envelope.

In most cases the selection of books for the Shap Bibliographies is fairly wide in its scope. As a result they have suffered from the criticism that they do not help the teacher who merely wants to know where to start. As I have hinted above, however, it may be better that the dilettante should never start at all, but leave well alone! A more positive result is that the original lists have in some cases proved useful as surveys of the particular field, and have opened the eyes of certain readers, at least, to areas of study they had previously ignored. While the lists were originally intended for teachers, they are also meant to be of interest to students in Colleges and Universities where more specialist study is in view. From the publisher’s angle also it is perhaps less misleading and invidious to present a comprehensive list than to select five or six "best buys". The details contained in the first twelve lists have not been rechecked since their initial production in the autumn of 1970, and I must apologise if through decimalisation and soaring costs prices have risen above the figures quoted. The figures indicated in the new lists (13-22) are mostly those quoted in British Books in Print, 1970.

Peter Woodward

Hinduism

Hinnells, J.R. and Sharpe, E.J. (eds)

Oriel Press 1972 '*Introduction to Hinduism*' Eric J.Sharpe pp 1-7

THE WESTERN STUDENT approaching Hinduism for the first time is faced with what may seem to be insurmountable obstacles to understanding. Not the least of these is the problem of definition. What exactly is Hinduism? Is it a religion, or many religions and many philosophies? Certainly it is kaleidoscopic in its variety, and a slight change of approach or emphasis may well give the observer the impression that all its elements have shifted – some merging into others, other again standing out with renewed colour and clarity. The historian sees one thing, the mystic another, the sociologist something quite different.

Perhaps, therefore, the first question which we ought to ask is whether the single English word 'Hinduism' is at all appropriate to describe the phenomenon we are trying to study; It is not merely a matter of diversity. Christianity, Islam and Buddhism are also very diverse religions; but in these cases the problem may in part be resolved by making reference to the teachings of a founder and to the beliefs and practices of a historic community of believers. Judaism is capable of fairly closed definition on similar lines, through Moses, the Law, the Prophets and the community. However, in the case of Hinduism this approach simply will not work. It is not a 'founded' religion. It has no creeds - except in some unusual cases, and these are as a rule accepted only within the group which has produced them. Its holy scriptures are of immense size and staggering diversity. It has nothing even remotely approaching a central organization (or ecclesiastical authority), and would not know what to do with it if it had one. In short, whatever it is, and whatever its unity, that unity is neither doctrinal nor organizational. Not surprisingly, then, one modern western observer, whose opinions must always be treated with respect, has written that "The term 'Hinduism' is …a particularly false conceptualization, one that is conspicuously incompatible with any adequate understanding of the religious outlook of Hindus."[1]

The stages by which this term came into popular use in the West to describe the traditional religion of India are interesting, but we cannot go into them now. It is worth mentioning, however, that the words 'Hindu and 'Hinduism' are basically geographical, derived, *via* Persian, from the

name of that river now called the Indus. A 'Hindu' was originally a dweller in the land of the Indus who did not happen to have made his submission to Islam (and this of course dates the term to the Middle Ages). Hindu*ism*, then – Europeans love 'isms' – is the European blanket term which is used to cover the religion of all those Indians who do not happen to be Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Jains or Buddhists. In other words, it is a term originally applied by those who are not members of this particular tradition (or these particular traditions) to those who are. It would not be surprising to find that it had loopholes and other shortcomings.

Indians themselves, if they belong to the Hindu tradition, have a variety of ways of referring to it. One classical expression is *arya dharma*, the noble order, or noble law; another is *sanatana dharma*, or eternal law; a third is *hindu dharma* which we can only translate as Indian law or Hindu law. What these all have in common is the word *dharma*, which means a variety of things, but which may perhaps be summed up as the sacred order, or law. *Dharma* is both the way things are and the way they should be, the only appropriate order for the universe and for man in it. This includes the various manifestations of what we call religion: ritual, devotion, myth and doctrine; it also includes social order (as *varnashramadharma*, the caste system as a form of sacred law) and philosophical theories of man and the universe. Like all laws, *dharma* may be observed, or it may not; but whether or not it has followers, it will remain inviolate and inviolable.

From the Hindu point of view, then, there is a strong *prima facie* case for avoiding the term 'Hinduism' altogether and using instead *hindu dharma* or some such expression more in line with Hindu usage. But the term 'Hinduism' has become too deeply entrenched in Western vocabulary to be easily dislodged. Moreover, it is now widely used by Hindus themselves whenever they have to express themselves in English. For instance, the first chapter in Morgan's book *The Religion of the Hindus*, written by a leading Indian historian, is called 'The Nature and History of Hinduism'.

Hinduism is admittedly not an ideal term; but provided that we do not suppose that all Hindus share identical religious beliefs or observe identical religious practices, it may serve. One thing which it does unquestionably do is to emphasize the closeness of the links which bind Indian religion to the totality of Indian history and Indian culture. All Hindus do not live in India nor are all Indians Hindus; but since a fruitful understanding of the diversity of Hinduism depends to a large extent on

our understanding of the diversity of India and the India people, we must take a little time to look at the motherland of the Hindu people.

India is popularly called a sub-continent, and it is certainly advisable to think of India in continental rather than in national terms. To envisage India as a country is almost certain to be misleading, since it encourages an impression of overall unity, a unity which may exist as an ideal in India's case, but which does not correspond to the actual situation; India has been effectively cut off from the remainder of the land mass of Asia by the Himalaya and other mountains to the north, north-east and north-west; and by the sea on its other two sides. It is a land of vast distances, at least by British standards, measuring approximately 2000 miles from north to south, and about 1800 miles from east to west at its widest point; Its area is about one and a quarter million square miles, or twelve times the size of Great Britain; in fact the area of India and the area of continental Europe (excluding the U.S.S.R.) are virtually the same. The population of India in 1961 was calculated to be some 442 millions, and since then it has grown to over 500 millions. The difficulties involved in supporting such a large population are well known, although India, when viewed as a whole, is not quite such a poor country as is sometimes supposed. The problem is one of sheer size and distribution, centring in the majority of cases on the supply of water. The question of the distribution of wealth is not one which we can discuss here, but the dimensions of the problem may perhaps be envisaged by reflecting that there are ten times as many people in India as there are in Great Britain, and two and a half times as many as in the United States of America – and this despite the fact that in area, the U.S.A. is almost three times the size of India.

Despite this enormous population, there were at the last census only seven cities in India with a population of more than a million – Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Hyderabad and Madras. In 1961, 82 percent of the people of India were listed as 'rural', that is living in villages and small towns and making their living either directly or indirectly from agriculture. This is a fact of some importance for the understanding of Hinduism, since it is in precisely this section of the population that so-called 'popular' Hinduism is observed in all its many forms. And explain it how we will, it is an uncomfortable fact that although the West claims to know a fair amount about Hinduism, what is known best is the sophisticated religion and philosophy pf a rather small minority, while the actual beliefs and practices of the overwhelming majority of Hindus remain virtually unknown.

We have said that not all Indians are Hindus. More precisely, at the last census 85 percent of the people were returned as Hindus – more than 375 millions in all. For purposes of comparison we may note that other important religious groups in India include Muslims (10 percent), Christians (2.3 percent) and Sikhs (1.7 percent).

A further measure of the continental diversity of India is to be seen in the inter-related areas of race and language. India has many distinct racial types, and a bewildering variety of languages. Methods of computing language diversity vary, of course, but if we reckon simply in terms of numbers of speakers, there are between as dozen and twenty 'major' languages, and more than two hundred 'minor' ones, not counting dialects. These languages correspond broadly to racial differences, and fall into three main classes. The major norther languages are derived from Indo-European sources, being descended more or less directly from Sanskrit. Examples of these are Hindi, Bengali and Marathi. In the south, the main languages, such as Tamil, Telegu and Malayalam, are Dravidian. A third class comprises languages of Tibeto-Chinese origin. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the differences between the Hindi-speaking north and the Tamil-speaking south is not merely one of dialect. It is equally a difference, of race, of culture, and of atmosphere – which is why Tamils object so strongly to official attempts to make Hindi into a language for the whole of India. Whatever good the British may or may not have done in India, they did at least provide the sub-continent with a language of universal communication.

Much of the cultural and religious diversity of India becomes more understandable when viewed against the background of the history and geography of the land. Indian history will be dealt with (at least in so far as it has a bearing on religion) in what follows; but a few words must be said at this point about the geographical structure of India.[2]

Stretched like a huge barrier across the extreme north of India are the Himalaya mountains, with their eastern and western offshoots. Their presence has meant that the would-be invader from the north has not been able to enter India, without great difficulty; invasions have, however, taken place, usually through the passes of the north-west frontier. In the Himalaya arise the two great rivers of north India, the Indus in the west and the Ganges in the east. The Indus in particular, thanks to its extensive system of tributaries (*Panjab*=the land of the five

rivers), supported a notable civilization before the coming of the Indo-Europeans in the second millennium B.C. The region between the two rivers, frequently the scene of great battles, was once the heartland of classical Indian culture (*Aryavarta*). Now it is very largely barren, though still densely populated. This is the hottest part of India, and very poorly watered.

South of the great northern plain is a highland area, culminating in the Vindhya mountains, which in the past have acted as a barrier between the north and south of India. South of these again is the dry Deccan plateau, bounded on each side by a range of hills, the Western and Eastern Ghats respectively. The small area between the Western Ghats and the sea includes some of the most fertile country in India, including the extraordinary state of Kerala, while from the Eastern Ghats to the sea there is the broken plain of Tamil Nadu leading down to the southern capital and port of Madras. On the plateau between the two ranges there are cities like Bangalore, which, apart from being one of the most 'Western' of Indian cities, has a type of climate, with hot days and relatively cool nights, which is among the best in India.

Otherwise the chief climatic feature of India (apart from heat) is its almost total lack of rainfall for eight months of the year, from October to May. From October to February temperatures are not extreme; but between March and May they rise steadily, particularly on the plains. All being well, in June the monsoon begins, and the country comes to life again. But after a long period of drought, all too often there is severe flooding. India never seems to be able to do anything by halves!

How far the geography and climate of India have left traces on the religion of the country is a matter of some complexity. Some of its features are more simple than others – for instance, the prevalence of a religion based on the fertility of the earth in a land of agriculturalists, and a land in which seasonal cycles count for so very much. But the historical relationship between the emphasis of 'popular' Hinduism on fertility, and the religion of the Indo-European people, with its pantheon of mainly celestial deities, is a question which has never been satisfactorily settled. And variations between Hindu patterns of belief and practice from one part of the country to another are also, to say the least, disturbing to the would-be student. All the features of India which we have attempted to outline here have their place and their influence within the overall structure of Hinduism, and each is deserving of close consideration when we attempt to describe what Hinduism is, and what it is not.

We might perhaps sum up by saying that the word 'Hinduism' is both elastic and potentially unclear, and that it is possible to make out a good case both for its abandonment and for its retention – provided, in the latter event, that it is defined with some accuracy. The difficulty which commentators find in hitting upon an adequate definition is notorious, and possibly insoluble. Its connection with the land and life of India must be our starting-point, but we must on no account use the word as though it indicated one fixed system of religious beliefs and practices. One of our foremost interpreters of India, the historian A. L. Basham, defines a Hindu (notice, not Hinduism) as '…a man who chiefly bases his beliefs and way of life on the complex system of faith and practice which has grown up organically in the Indian sub-continent over a period of at least three millennia'.[3]

Following on from this, we might provisionally define Hinduism as 'the traditional socio-religious structure of India in so far as it rests on belief in the authority of certain Vedic, post-Vedic or other scriptures, and is contained within the institution of caste'.

In the pages which follow, we shall attempt to trace the historical development of Hinduism from its beginnings in the Indus Valley Civilization and the Indo-European peoples, through its great formative periods, down to modern times.

It will be necessary during the course of this book to make rather frequent reference to Sanskrit names, titles and technical terms. The Sanskrit alphabet is much more elaborate than the Roman, and can be transliterated into Roman only with the aid of diacritical marks. A fully transliterated Sanskrit alphabet will be found in the appendix (48), but in the body of the book, diacritical marks have been omitted. The Glossary and Index contains the majority of these words with diacritical marks.

Where there are common Anglicized forms of Sanskrit or other Indian words, these have been used.

Footnotes

[1] W. Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Mentor edition, 1964, p. 61.

[2] See also P. Spear, *India, Pakistan and the West*, London, 1967[4], pp. 13-32.

[3] *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Living Faiths*, ed. R. C. Zaehner, London, 1959, p. 225.

Smart, Ninian and Horder, Donald (eds) *New Movements in Religious Education* Temple Smith 1975

'Religious Education in Secondary Schools' Donald Horder

pp175-187

Every chapter in this book, including even the previous one, has a bearing on religious education in secondary schools. I want, in this chapter, to pull together some of the threads and show some of their implications for work in the classroom.

Few subjects on the time-table have been so deeply disturbed by changes in educational thinking, and few have been, in certain quarters (including most Examination Boards) so resistant to change. There have been some exceptions, but in most schools this has been an unpopular subject with pupils (Loukes 1961) and teachers themselves have sometimes spoken of it as 'sticking out on the time-table like a sore thumb, because it was not taught like other subjects, and its aims and methods were different.

Those who in 1944 so enthusiastically supported the religious clauses of the new Education Act could not have foreseen that a quarter of a century later these very clauses would be regarded by many teachers as a dead hand upon the subject, fixing not only its aims and objectives, but even to some extent its methods and the concept of the subject itself, in accordance with the educational thinking of thirty years before. It is not perhaps surprising that there is widespread vagueness and confusion concerning the subject in secondary schools. Much that goes on under the name of RE is not really religious education. It may be moral education, social education, aesthetic education, useful social service, pastoral counselling, but it is not necessarily religious education. To deserve that name it must contribute to the religious development of the pupils and to their growth in understanding the religious heritage of mankind.

If the kind of religious education envisaged in 1944, and in most of the Agreed Syllabuses, was found to be no longer effective or appropriate, it was natural that sensitive teachers should explore alternatives; but this pragmatic approach needed the guidance and corrective of educational

theory, and this was not always realised. Fortunately, there is evidence that in the last few years a considerable number of secondary school teachers have been seeing more clearly the real task of the school in RE today (see, for example, Hassall 1974). In this new movement teachers have been encouraged by LEA Advisory Councils (see chapter 7) and even by a few of the Examination Boards. Courses organised by HMIs and by LEA Advisers have also assisted this development, and the Schools Council Project based on the University of Lancaster served as a focus for this general movement to find a 'new RE'. The breakthrough came where teachers, either by instinct or design, turned back to the first principles of teaching, basing their work on the consideration of three factors:

1. the psychological capacity of the pupils, their interests and needs;
2. the social setting in which they and their pupils were working, and the needs and possibilities of that situation;
3. the nature of the subject-matter and the type of learning that can arise from it.

These three form a triangle within which effective curriculum planning is possible. None of the three sides may be ignored – interest, relevance, subject-matter - or the work will fail. The old style of RE failed chiefly because it ignored the first two factors. Many of the new substitutes fail because they ignore the third. They reject undue concentration on scripture or doctrine as too narrow a concept of the subject-matter, but they have no clear concept to put in its place.

The two words 'religious education' can mean a number of different things to different people. In schools they have been interpreted in four different ways.

1. The commonest, the 'received tradition' assumes that the object of religious education is to pass on the beliefs of the teachers – or the religious community they represent – to the rising generation. This has been called the *confessional* approach.
2. At the other extreme is the view that, although pupils should know what religious people say and do, care should be taken to limit this to an objective, dispassionate giving of information. The subjective aspects of religion are to be avoided. This has been called the *anti-dogmatic* approach.
3. A third view, associated particularly with the names of Harold Loukes and J.W.D. Smith, sees religious education as a means whereby 'each society and each age' seeks to 'find its appropriate "form of reverence",' ((Erikson 1965). In this quest for meaning and

purpose in life – and death – all secular experience has a 'religious dimension, or a dimension of depth'. To quote J.W.D. Smith:

> Men may be Christian or non-Christian, religious, agnostic or atheist, but all men are human. True human life begins in the awareness of death. Death symbolises the mystery, and the menace, of conscious finite existence. At some stage – and especially perhaps in contemporary adolescence – we are all 'grazed' by the mystery of being and non-being. We may seek to escape from it. We may rebel against it. We can only become mature, whole and free human beings by learning to live with our finitude. This task reaches the level of conscious response and decision in adolescence. It remains an uncompleted task throughout our mortal lives. Religious education should provide helps in this task (Smith 1969).

This quest for meaning and purpose has been called the *implicit religion* approach.

4. Another view stresses that schools exist to help pupils understand the world in which they live. Since in that world there are a number of religions and religious denominations which have played, and still do play, an important part in the life of society, the pupils should be given a chance to explore them, beginning with the phenomena that they may already have noticed. This has been called the *phenomenological* or *explicit religion* approach.

Only two of these four approaches seem satisfactory for use in secondary schools today. The *confessional* approach may be the proper stance for a believing community, like a Church or Sunday school. It is not an approach that can be adopted by a publicly maintained school in a multi-belief society. Moreover, in most secondary schools, it is resented by pupils and 'does not work'. The *anti-dogmatic* approach is unsatisfactory because it excludes consideration of motives or any other subjective elements. Yet what religious people say or do notoriously looks like nonsense to those outside. This is too narrow a concept of objectivity. (For a fuller discussion see Schools Council Working Paper 36, pp. 24-8).

But the other two interpretations of the term 'religious education' – the quest for meaning and purpose and the quest for understanding or religion and religions (the *implicit religion* approach and the *explicit religion* approach) – are both right and proper activities in schools. In fact, it can be shown that they belong together, like two foci of an ellipse or two overlapping circles. Ninian Smart sums up this fresh understanding of the task of the school as he sees it:

> First, religious education must transcend the informative. Second, it should do so not in the direction evangelising, but in the direction of initiation into understanding the meaning of, and into questions about the truth and worth of, religion. Third, religious studies do not exclude the committed approach, provided that it is open, and so does not artificially restrict understanding and choice. Fourth, religious studies should provide a service in helping people to understand history and other cultures than our own. It can thus play a vital role in breaking the limits of European cultural tribalism. Fifth, religious studies should … enter into dialogue with the parahistorical claims of religions and anti-religious outlooks (Smart 1968, pp. 105-6).

This can be set alongside another quotation from J.W.D. Smith:

> Secondary school classrooms contain boys and girls at many stages of development towards personal maturity. They all need help but they need different kinds of help. The help they need most does not depend primarily on growth in religious knowledge or understanding at the intellectual level. The most important needs of adolescence as of early childhood, lie below the level of consciousness (Smith 1969, p. 98).

Both emphases are needed. Smith begins at the end of personal need and relevance; Smart begins with the subject- matter. Any scheme of work at secondary level is likely to be dealing with both-if it is really contributing to the pupils' *religious* education.

How does the new concept of religious education in secondary schools work out in practice? Where should the teacher begin? There is so much excellent material that might be included but, even when a fair share of the time-table is devoted to RE, he cannot use it all. How should he choose? He should choose by reference to the three factors discussed earlier in this chapter

— the capacity, interests, and needs of the pupils,
— the social setting in which he is working,
— the nature of the subject-matter and the various ways in which it may be apprehended.

The actual process of curriculum planning is outlined in Chapter 8. The real key to this process is the selection of the right educational objectives. Objectives, if they are specific enough, show what 'learning experiences' the pupils must be given, that is, what methods and content are needed. In Chapter 10 Dr Rummery suggests that the task of the RE teacher is not to teach *that*, nor even to teach *about* religion, but to teach *how* to

understand the beliefs of others, and *why* they feel and act as they do. This process of education should be accompanied by — indeed should be part of — what he calls 'education in' religious understanding. We ought not, therefore, to think of educational objectives in terms of subject-matter alone, but in terms of the skills to be developed, the insights to be gained, and the sentiments or attitudes which may result.

The 'knowledge explosion' has made it impossible to think of religious education today in terms of 'communicating a body of knowledge'. Nevertheless, there will always be a 'minimum body of knowledge' required by all pupils growing up in a limited area, like the United Kingdom. All boys and girls growing up in Britain need to understand Christianity, its influence in the past and today. They need to know about some of the religious groups in their own neighbourhood, and the part these play in the life of the community, as well as their links with co-religionists overseas. They also need to be aware of the views and life-style of others in the community
who consciously choose a non-religious stance, and the implications of this. In John Macquarrie's phrase: ' . . . exercising our freedom in finitude in all the light that we can get, we decide to take either the risk of faith, or the risk of unfaith' (Macquarrie 1966).

This 'minimum body of knowledge' is required by all pupils, whether they are natives of this country or immigrants from overseas. But beyond this the programme may branch out in ways congenial to the class and to the teacher, in all kinds of fields. The main thing is to ensure that, as far as possible, the specific educational objectives are achieved, so that by the end of their years in secondary school, when pupils are confronted with aspects of life calling for religious perception, sensitivity and skill, they are able to cope. This calls for much more professional skill than the old style of RE which followed an Agreed Syllabus. The teacher cannot hand over responsibility for curriculum planning to some committee, meeting far away from his classroom at some date long before his class was even formed. He knows the needs of his situation, and of his pupils, far better than any Agreed Syllabus Conference — and he must use this knowledge. The class teacher is the best architect of the syllabus, the principal agent in curriculum development.

At the same time it is possible to offer him suggestions as to the sort of thing that may be appropriate at each stage, and the 'Handbooks of Suggestions' that now supplement some of the Agreed Syllabuses may be helpful here. The Schools Council Project on Religious Education in

secondary schools is publishing a whole range of teaching materials developed by serving teachers, together with an Introductory Teachers' Handbook (Horder 1975). This Handbook contains a section entitled 'An outline programme for the years 11 to 16', which may be summarised as follows:

The years 11 and I2

Here most of the topics described as the 'minimum body of knowledge' are introduced, though some of them will need further exploration later. Also at this stage, it is suggested, pupils need to discover what is meant by a 'religious' question or a 'religious issue'. They also need to understand the language people use to express their religious beliefs - signs and symbols, metaphors, myths, poetry, truth embodied in a tale, etcetera. 'Children of this age', says one of the Agreed Syllabuses, 'need two things - something to think about, and something to think with' (Lancashire 1968). The following teaching units are offered for this age range:

The Man from Nazareth as they saw Him.
Religion in Britain today.
Islam and the Muslim way of life.
Signs and symbols - the language of religion.
Pilgrimages.
An introduction to the first Christian writings.
The Faith that sings.
Who am I?
Creation (a study of myths and myth making).
Religious response.

The years 13 to 16

After two or three years in the secondary school, it is suggested, pupils should be given a chance to choose the units they wish to explore. This is the age when young people are most critical of RE, and suspicious of being 'got at'. By introducing an element of 'opting in' some of this can be allayed, providing there is real choice and a wide enough selection. This means, of course, that there must be more in the way of study boxes and work cards, for individual and group work, with careful planning beforehand to allow for
variety of methods as well as content.

Young people have different needs and interests. They differ in temperament, gifts, previous experience and home background. Nowhere are these differences so significant, for good or ill, as they are in religious education. By providing for this variety we avoid both the fallacy of proceeding as if all pupils had the same religious background and the fallacy
of acting as if they were all secularists. Britain today is a multi-belief society not a secular society. Teaching units offered for these years include the following (amongst others):

Exploring Belief.
The Making and Meaning of the Bible.
How others see Life.
Science and Religion.
What is the Christian Church?
Freedom and responsibility.
Worship.
Why do men suffer?
Religion through culture — Judaism.
Race and Creed.
The Hindu Way.
Humanism.
The Religion of the Sikhs.
Building a Church today.

The Project team emphasise that these units are only a beginning — examples of the way teachers have been developing the new RE in secondary schools. More units are needed, particularly on Christian themes, but the present list provides some choice for both teachers and pupils.

It is difficult in a short space to give an adequate impression of these new teaching units. However, a few extracts from the Introduction and Specific Educational objectives of two of them will show how the writers see their
task:

The Man from Nazareth as they saw him: age range 11—12 years

INTRODUCTION
One of the long-term aims of religious education in Britain is to see that

all children understand the nature and spirit of Christianity. Whether a child is born in Bristol, in Bengal or in Benares, if he is to live in this country and to understand the British way of life he needs this knowledge and insight. Consequently courses offered in secondary schools should include several designed to develop and increase this understanding.

Central to a child's view of Christianity is his impression of Jesus. During the years preceding secondary schooling children hear many stories, usually including some stories of Jesus. By the age of 11 they are aware that many stories are not to be taken literally, and there is a tendency to dismiss stories of Jesus as 'just stories' — part of 'Noddyland', unhistorical. This course is designed to establish Jesus in the children's minds as an historical figure, living in this real world. At the same time by exercising some reserve about the central figure, it avoids trivialising him and allows the children to make their own approach to his uniqueness.

This unit calls for exceptional sensitivity and restraint on the part of the teacher in three respects. In the first place, he must remember that, although some children have a Church background, many - perhaps the majority, — have not. It may be best to assume little or no knowledge of Jesus, and no positive disposition towards him. In the second place, the teacher must resist the temptation simply to pass on his view of Jesus. The course is intended to give children an opportunity to begin forming their own impressions and opinions. This process ought not to be short-circuited. If their views seem at times woefully inadequate, further information and evidence is called for, not preaching or dogmatism. The third matter calling for restraint is the selection and use of resources. Most religious education teachers have at their finger-tips far more material on this subject than the
children need at this stage. Care should be taken not to overload the course. Any additions to the outline suggested here should be carefully structured and limited to material that will promote the specific educational
objectives.

SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

l To recognise that Jesus was a real man, living in this world, and to become familiar with some aspects of the society in which he lived.

2 To begin to discover how to enquire into the origins of Christianity, and to become aware that there has been a great deal of scholarly research of this kind.

3 To appreciate that the Gospels are not histories or biographies in the

modern sense, but that they express the beliefs of four of the earliest centres of Christianity.
4 To see what the Gospels have to say about Jesus' dealings with individuals and with some of the main social, political and religious issues of his day.
5 To note how different individuals and groups appear to have reacted to him, and from this to try to sense what he was like.
6 To see something of the difference his coming has made, and some of the reasons for his continuing influence.

(Horder 1975)

How others see life: age range, 14 and over

INTRODUCTION

There is widespread ignorance concerning the religions of the East, and ignorance is the breeding ground for prejudice. This unit of work attempts to make pupils more familiar with some of the practices and ideas of six world religions. It cannot attempt to give a full introduction to anyone of these, but by enquiring into some of the 'rites of passage', and other details likely to be of interest to young people, it may prepare for fuller study at a later stage.

Most young people are interested in what different cultures believe. Initially it is the 'strangeness' to them of some of the ideas and customs they meet which intrigues them. If presented, with a little imagination this topic is immediately fascinating to a lot of teenage pupils. They are at an age when they are exploring alternative views of life. The other great world faiths have thus a direct appeal.

At the same time it is impossible in one term (or even in two) to give more than a hint of the rich heritage and on-going life of six major religions. The intention of this unit is to convey something of the 'feel' of these great faiths rather than a multitude of facts. The religions of mankind are distinguished as much by their differing attitudes as by their doctrines. These attitudes become apparent not only in what people say but in what they do. The main emphasis of this unit is therefore on what is done.

The unit will have obvious relevance in areas where there are communities of non-Christian immigrants or Jews - and full use should be made of local resources (e.g. visit to, or visit from, local synagogue, mosque, gurdwara, temple, etc.). It should be remembered that in most of these groups the influence of religion pervades the whole of life and no sharp distinction is drawn between religion and general culture. In Britain today religion affects only a part of the lives of practising Christians, who, if the term is restricted to regular church-goers, are only a minority of the population anyway. But to most of the Muslims, Sikhs or Hindus religion is far more all-embracing. It is the central feature of their culture: their social customs are justified in terms of it, and it is one of the most important bonds in the maintenance of the group's social solidarity and cultural unity.

The unit has another value where many children come from a convinced Christian home background. One teacher writes: 'Our school happens to have quite a number of such children. There is great value in introducing them to differing ways of viewing life followed by millions with devotion equal to, and often greater than, their own. This is an education to them! Probably for us this was one of the most useful aspects of the course.'

SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

I To be able to identify and name some of the main ceremonies and festivals of two or more world religions.

2 To be aware of the belief dimension in these practices and to be able to suggest their importance for believers.

3 To recognize that in the crises of human life religion can play an important part.

4 To be able to specify what difference it makes to view these crises from a religious standpoint.

5 To acknowledge the sincerity of those who engage in these religious rituals and ceremonies, and to have a sympathetic attitude towards them.

6 To develop an open and unprejudiced attitude to the beliefs, practices and values of others, especially those of non-Christian immigrant groups.

(Horder I975)

The years 16 to 19

This age range was outside the 'brief' of the Lancaster Project, but clearly the principle of choice and the encouragement of individual and group study should continue into the sixth form. Group discussion, which has played a large part in most of the teaching units, will continue also, but by now it should be less random and better structured, promoting the growth of the young people towards intellectual and emotional maturity. Here the teacher needs to show great restraint. If the objective is to get young people to do their own thinking he must leave them free to do so. Many former pupils have said to me, 'When we got to the sixth form we had lots of discussion and this was fine - except when Mr X or Miss Y took it (usually the Head Teacher). They would allow no opinion to prevail except their own; so there could be no discussion.'

External examinations play a large part in most schools atthis stage. Should there be external examinations in RE? Opinions are fairly evenly divided. There are those who point out that conventional examinations are based on an outmoded conception of the educational process— communicating a body of knowledge. True religious education, as we have seen, is not of this kind; but can one measure — ought one to measure — progress in the deeper kinds of religious understanding? Others point out that, in a school
where every other subject is examined, religious education will not be taken seriously or be regarded as academically respectable unless it is also an examination subject. Some schools manage to strike a balance between these two points of view. RE is offered as a subject for external examinations, and some pupils opt to take it, realising full well that only certain aspects of the subject are examinable. But, having secured the status of the subject in that direction, most of the RE is broader in concept, though no less rigorous.

However, if RE is to be set free from the pressure of external examinations which distorts and cripples the subject in far too many schools, several changes are needed. First and foremost, Examination Boards must begin by considering specific educational objectives. Secondly, they must take into account the wider concept of the subject as seen in schools today. (Some GCE Boards have already made significant strides in this direction, with new alternative syllabuses for O and A level examinations.) Thirdly, if examinations are to cease distorting the whole process of curriculum planning, they must do more than sample factual knowledge. Other aspects of RE can be assessed, but by different methods. Perhaps we need to consider again the possibility of giving real weight to some forms of continuous assessment and course work, as well as to written papers. (For further discussion of this subject see Schools Council Working Paper 36, pp.1O1-103.)

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COMPARATIVE RELIGION CLICHES

Ninian Smart

Crushing the Cliches about Comparative Religion and then Accentuating the Positive Value of the New Religious Education

Most people have views about religion and an image of what the teaching of religion is. Sometimes the image is hateful: sometimes it is too comforting. Typically. it stands in the way of an appreciation of the role and nature of the new religious education of which comparative religion is an important component. Here l shall firstly concentrate on the cliches which
need to be wiped out if a proper view of the study of world religions is to be widely shared. l therefore here look at a few of the main cliches (not always consistent with one another or held by the same people), and then go on to deal with the positive qualities of the new religious education.

'You can't understand a faith other than your own.'

A corollary is that commitment becomes a qualification for teaching a given faith. The cliche can be used both to justify a simply confessional religious education and to exclude the teaching of non-Christian religions. lt is wrong for a number of reasons:

(a) Understanding is a matter of degrees, not an all-or-nothing-at-all affair. A greater understanding is better than a lesser one.

(b) First century Christianity is perhaps more culturally distant from twentieth century Britain than twentieth century Buddhism.

(c) The cliche would wipe out such undeniably fruitful subjects as social anthropology. history of other cultures, etc. — for all these subjects and enquiries involve explorations into religion, among other things.

(d) The adherent can be in a worse position than the so-called outsider: does a Martin Buber or Claude Montefiore know less about Christianity than an Enoch Powell or Cliff Richard?

(e) Besides, many children and young adults - consumers, so to say, of religious education - are either through their parents or in themselves not Christian (l am thinking here primarily of the indigenous Briton rather than of the immigrant, where the point is even stronger).

‘Comparative religion makes men comparatively religious.‘

A cliche derived from a vapid witticism by Monsignor Ronald Knox. Its force derives from two thoughts — first that confrontation with deeper choices from abroad will cause men's hold on Christianity to weaken; second, that the study of religion and religions attracts half-committed, rather superficial folk. lt is silly for a number of reasons:

(a) ln that other profound traditions exist in the world (other that is from Christianity) this is a fact to be recognised, learned from, digested. lf it leads some people away from Christian adherence or makes for scepticism (as in a way it is bound to do), the answer is for the Christian to face up to the challenge. The modern world is like the first centuries of Christianity, when it was making its way in a multi-religious and multi-philosophy Roman Empire: but now it is the wider world of the planet.

(b) The cliche supposed that we are *only* concerned with inducing some kind of religiousness. Knowledge of religions, extending at least to the often despised ‘outer facts’, should be part of the educated person's awareness, irrespective of commitment and salvation.

‘The teaching of “comparative religion" is for older children, i.e. young adults, and for adults: it is unsuitable for younger children.’

This is an educational cliche in this country, heard even from those who wield Bloom ‘s taxonomy. The reasons given are usually: first, that the understanding of other religions is especially difficult (see our first cliche); and second, that since the real point of religious education is to bring pupils to a position where they can make some responsible choice, it is silly to confuse very young and otherwise irresponsible children. The objections are at least as follows:

(a) Some religious feelings overlap religions, so why should not children (sometimes supposed to be especially good on emotions if rather poor on concepts) enter into alien religious feelings?

(b) Many young children meet children of other faiths A Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs. They need to come to terms with these other traditions which is to some extent within their own power.

(c) Commitment is scarcely the only objective.

(d) Religion is not divorced from life, and life is multifarious and planetary. Unless young children are to be deprived of realities (related to their own experience, hopefully) they will have a poor initiation into the ways of the world.

(e) Traditional, biblically based religious education is no more suitable for young children than Buddhist analogues. But this shows nothing about the possible excitements of a wider perspective.

‘A Christian cannot be committed to the teaching of religious values in competition with the Christian Gospel.’

This cliche derives properly from the 1944 Education Act as usually interpreted, and is not to be despised, for it contains an important existential truth about the recruitment and ethics of many teachers of religious education. One can well appreciate that the transition to the new R.E. could be distasteful and painful to many teachers of the subject. However, though this is important as a political and human factor. it should not entirely sway our thoughts about how to deal with religious education; and it should be set side by side with psychic wounds suffered by Jewish and many other young people (many ex-Christian) who have seen the insensitivity of a certain sort of ‘commitment’. Anyway the cliche is silly because:

(a) It depends partly on the *sort* of Christianity professed by the Christian.

(b) The so-called indoctrinating policy in religious education (it does not matter whether the change is true: it is *felt* to be by a substantial number of children and parents and others) is counter-productive and alienates many from the Christian faith. If the latter depends upon extending Sunday schools to weekdays, the grace of God is weak.

(c) Very many people, perhaps all, are interested in religion and in making sense of the universe: this is true of children and young adults. They would be more interested in Christianity if it were not forced down their throats.

(d) Most importantly: children and young adults are swift to perceive the difference between religious education and other subjects; they soon find out if there is an unacceptable bias in the presentation of Christianity — hence the alienation. Conversely an open presentation of religious issues can arouse enthusiasm. ln brief: even from the point of view of the Christian message the open situation is more effective — but this is not to say that preaching is the ultimate meaning of teaching religious education.

(e) ln bringing out the nature of Christianity or of any other tradition the education process in a sense presents it. ln this respect there is no need for preaching! Let religions and religious figures speak for themselves.

(f) A Christian should be committed to working fruitfully in the world. A Christian teacher should be, therefore, committed to good education and this may be incompatible with some attitudes (apparently but perhaps not truly Christian) which the cliche relies upon.

'Religious education is a matter for the churches — so it is the churches' attitude to other religion which should be taken most seriously.'

This is an institutional version of the previous cliche. It neglects any real distinction between denominational and maintained schools — in a way justifiably because the I944 Act made 'establishment' assumption (though stretching 'establishment' beyond the established church to other denominations). However, the general assumption that religious education is a matter for the churches is silly, because:

(a) There are religious groups outside the churches. e.g. Sikhs, Muslims and so on.

(b) ln any event it is not fully justifiable (to say the least) to suppose that a branch of education should be shaped by the interested parties who constitute the object of study and understanding; would we tolerate Politics Agreed Syllabuses determined by conferences of parties, including of course Plaid Cymru, Marxists, Conservatives and so on? If we did so it would be to protect fairness. not to propagate a particular political tradition.

'Teachers are so ill-equipped that teaching other religions could do much more harm than good.'

A good point in a way, but:

(a) lf so, the situation is a disgrace arising often from narrow and unacademic (i.e. badly biased) syllabuses in higher education, which has produced the teachers;

(b) Where there is a will there is no need for a counsel of despair.

(c) Anyway, teachers are not frozen by their training — and learning can be a co-operative enterprise: the teacher does not need to conceal his ignorance.

'There's no time for a decent treatment of Christianity. so...'

(a) The small time devoted to religious education in schools is a symptom of its lack of esteem, arising from its not being the new R.E.

(b) Whatever the slice of time. the times devoted to different areas within the subject should be a genuine reflection of the shape of the subject.

So much for some of the cliches. 'But now let us 'accentuate the positive' regarding the new religious education

What is the new religious education?

lt could be described as being a stage which goes well beyond the idea of ‘open-ended‘ religious education. Why does ‘open-ended‘ religious education need to be open-ended‘? Because it starts from a relatively closed position. It is fine in its way. but it is only fine within the context of the church. lt is in a sense the church (in its teaching mission) at its best. But it is not essentially based upon the inner logic of the subject (if subject be the right word for the area of religion).

However, this way of presenting the new religious education is still negative. More positively: - The new religious education is concerned with initiating young people into the meaning of religion and religions, and not only the Christian religion.

The new religious education recognizes that education in this area is dictated by the ‘logic of the subject’, namely:

(a) The dominant religion of the cultural environment must be given the treatment which its dominance demands, but this must be seen in relation to the other principles contained in the logic of the subject.

(b) Any religious tradition should as far as possible be seen from the point of view of those who belong to it; and more than one tradition should be presented to pupils or students.

(c) Questions of the description of religions (important culturally and as part of the general education of people) should be treated descriptively, not distorted by external judgments of value and truth.

(d) Questions of truth and value should be clearly seen as such.

(e) The new religious education must elicit the religious dimension from the experience and reflective powers of the pupil or student.

(f) The understanding of a religion should no more preserve beliefs, but bring out their living social and experiential context.

(g) The bad side of a religion should not be ignored — within the framework of the principles cited above.

(h) Non-religion and irreligion should find a place in the syllabus.

ln brief the new religious education tries to stare facts in the face; and to present the living world in all its rich plurality. Sympathy, criticism, plurality — these are some of the slogans the teacher needs to use in adapting his understanding to that of the pupils. The presentation of religion and religions must not be merely 'religious' however: that is, it is absurd to look on a religion without seeing how its institutions and psychology are embedded in the society or societies in which it exists. Or to put matters in another way, sociology must supplement history and the other disciplines needed for the understanding of religion. Further, it is useless to discuss religion or to look deeply into it without recognizing that there is a strong agnostic and atheistic secular stand in the modern world. It is absurd, for one cannot insulate pupils from the actual world.

ln short, the new religious education is realistic, impartial, and sensitive. No indoctrination: only initiation into understanding, and so a resistance to the pressures one way and another of a conformist world. Questions of the truth of religion and religions need to be intertwined with questions about religion and religions.

It is a delightful and hopeful future that religious education has, provided that it absorbs integratingly 'the new R.E.'.

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THE USE OF VISITS IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Mary Hayward

The 'field visits' in history or geography is a well established mode of teaching. In religious education, at all levels, it appears to be gaining in popularity — among students on teaching practice who make visits to church and synagogue an integral part of their work; with the probationary teacher in a junior school whose R.E. project evolved from visits to the Metropolitan Cathedral in Liverpool and, by contrast, to a neo-Gothic church in the same city; with yet another student who chose to spend half-term at the Hare Krishna headquarters in Hertfordshire as part of her studies; with the R.E. teacher who will shortly be taking a party of his pupils to Tunisia - as his first visit was so successful! The impression one gains is of a 'growth industry', yet its documentation, both in terms of an underlying rationale and of reports of successful ventures, is rare. What, we may ask, is the purpose of visits in R.E.? What is their potential for R.E. and how can it be
realised? What are the practical considerations in arranging visits? The present article attempts to promote thought and offer some basic

guidelines on these issues.

WHY VISITS?

It could be argued that the visual image — whether offered through film, filmstrip, or slides — provides pupils with a more comprehensive picture of e.g. mosque or church than a solitary visit to one of these buildings. The visual has the capacity to convey variety - of age, style, decoration, location — yet the argument that it conveys more than the visit (which in one sense it does) does not ring true. Why not? The comment of one 11 year old boy on entering a SE London church is apposite here: 'Cor, Miss, it's like a great big antique shop in 'ere, I'n 'it?' Visual materials may promote or confirm the same notion. How then does the visit have the edge over the visual image? The teacher who takes his pupils on a visit, I would suggest, is aiming at something more than the provision of an impressive audiovisual aid. The 'gargoyles and graves syndrome' does of course exist, but against this one must set those who link the outward form of the building with the inner life of the community who meet there, those who, to use Smart's terminology, attempt to 'transcend the informative in their teaching; expressed in a different way, they try to penetrate to the heart of a religion and grasp something of its significance for the committed. Harvey Cox in *The Seduction of the Spirit* (London 1974) gives attention to this same quest — 'learning from other people's religion': not 'investigating but 'learning from'. 'Learning from' is initially the same task as 'transcending the informative', but it goes beyond this and presents a challenge. 'How does what I have learnt and understood affect me?' Good R.E., like good education in any subject, may provoke thought and action; it may affect me.... even when I struggle to draw the eagle-form of a lectern or copy Arabic script??

HOW....

....can visits 'transcend the informative'? A fundamental requirement in the light of the purpose suggested above, would be that a visit to a 'religious building' should involve close contact with the believing community who use it; but school hours rarely permit this and the teacher is often left with no alternative but to visit an empty building. aided perhaps by one or two members of the community who happen to be available. What is to be done in this situation? Cox, in the book mentioned above, attempts to develop a methodology for learning from the religion of others — this he terms 'participant hermeneutics'. This methodology is based, in part, on four principles, applicable essentially to events of a religious nature, but potentially relevant to the specific issue here, that of 'breathing life into empty buildings'. The principles which follow then are essentially those of Cox: but the examples seek to apply them to the aforementioned problem — they offer possible lines of exploration.

1 Discover the prehistory of the event or phenomenon being studied

E.g. When and why was this building established in this place? Who were the people involved and what was their motivation? Does the building still retain its original functions today'? Has it acquired any new functions? What evidence is there of the community's continuing concern for the building?

2 Make a rigorous attempt to learn about the larger setting in which the event/activity takes place (or the significance of the building in the life of the committed and its place in the community at large).

E.g. How often is the building used during the week? What services/meetings are held there? Who comes and why? Which times of the week are the most important? Does the community which meets there show any consciousness of the wider community in which it finds itself.'

3 Thorough observation of the phenomenon in all its many details

Here the meticulous observation skilfully engineered by teachers with long experience of arranging visits comes into its own: but this too must lead to an understanding of a community's life and concerns. E.g. Why do organ and pulpit often dominate the Methodist Chapel whilst the altar is the focal point of a Roman Catholic Church? Why is Arabic script a common form of decoration in the mosque and what does it convey to the Muslim?

4 Meticulous awareness of the meaning this event/place has for me — a prerequisite for Cox of understanding its significance for the committed. Here there will be different levels of apprehension. At one level there might be a direct challenge, a conversion experience, at the opposite extreme only the response of the 11 year old London boy we noted earlier; for many, a middle path of appreciation of mood or atmosphere. like that of a tenth century Russian chronicler who visited Constantinople:

> The Greeks led us to places where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth

there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and the service is fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget that beauty

(The Russian Primary Chronicle: S H Crass)

Cox's four principles may serve as a foundation on which the teacher can build, but it can also be seen that they have a direct bearing on his teaching. Thus, from an early age children can be encouraged to be accurate and sensitive in the observations they make (cf. 3 above); again, children are susceptible to 'mood' or 'atmosphere' and may subsequently give creative expression to the emotions they have felt (cf. 4 above). For example. the teacher whose class sit quietly for a few moments, before leaving the church where they have spent an afternoon of active research, may find that this is complementary to the collection of data in the growth towards understanding.

PREPARING FOR VISITS - SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The teacher then needs to work out his purpose in making visits and to evolve a way of achieving it; beyond this there is a need for a wide range of practical advice, general and specific. Within the scope of this article the suggestions which follow are necessarily of a general nature:

Watchpoints!

1 Visits **can** provide accurate information and foster understanding - but you may have to overcome initial misconceptions and prejudices. Beware they are not reinforced!

2 Avoid the visit becoming purely descriptive, historical, architectural — try to learn something of the significance of the building for those who meet there.

3 Avoid the 'curiosity' line of approach ('Isn't it funny how they have/do 'x' or y!) and try to anticipate those things which the children may find amusing before you go on the visit.

4 Avoid making premature judgements and evaluation of the phenomena observed.

Planning

1 Be clear in your own mind about the specific purpose of this visit: clarity about objectives aids planning. Depending on the context of the visit objectives will vary, as will requirements on the visit: e.g. objectives for a visit in a scheme on 'Religion in the local environment' might differ from those in a scheme on 'Worship'.

2 Try to establish a personal contact with the group you hope to visit. It is usually a simple matter to contact a local church; initial help in approaching Asian communities will normally be given by local community relations councils, whilst contact with Jewish communities may be established through the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

3 Do visit the church/mosque/synagogue, etc. yourself in the first instance, if possible, to (a) ascertain e.g. what features the children might study, (b) meet the person who will be your guide 'on the day' and ensure that you are 'on the same wave length' about the purpose of the visit.

4 If you are to be addressed during the visit, suggest the topic(s) which will be of interest, e.g. 'worship in the synagogue' rather than 'Judaism'. Be specific! Suggest the appropriate length of the talk and take account of any language difficulties which may affect the visit and the work to be done.

5 Note any special dress requirements for the visit, e.g. girls should wear trousers for mosque and gurdwara; and headcovering is appropriate for both sexes at mosque and synagogue.

6 Ensure that any activities planned for pupils are acceptable to the community you are visiting e.g. tape-recording, photography.

7 Do you require parental permission for the visit? (Much will depend on normal school routine here)

8 Preparation of the children: e.g. will it be useful to see a filmstrip before the visit, or to have learnt some key words — mihrab, qiblah, salat, for example, before going to the mosque'? Most important: the children should have some prepared questions to ask, and information to discover, perhaps via worksheets — so don't forget pencils and clipboards!

9 On the visit, be prepared to face questions about your beliefs — directly or indirectly put. (Thus, on a fourth visit to a Muslim community, the question, 'Miss Hayward, as you are so interested in Islam, why don't you think of becoming a Muslim?)

10 Finally, after the visit, letters of thanks are obviously in place — perhaps from pupils. Sometimes a donation is appropriate and the community you have visited may like to see some of the work subsequently produced by pupils - the ultimate test of success in understanding other people's religion!

Resources
There is little relating to visits as such, though materials on mosque/synagogue etc. are available and are listed elsewhere in this publication. The following have relevance to visits: **The Seduction of the Spirit** (London 1974), Part 2 Ch. 6, H Cox; **Religious Studies** (Blond Educational 1972), Part l Ch. 2, ed. J Tooke; **Churches and Religions** (Brandford 1972) R Purton (cf. the suggested discovery assignments); **Christianity**, CEM: Topic Folder No. 1; **How to visit a. Synagogue** (April 1975), Senior Pack 8/9; **Visiting a Synagogue** (Board of Deputies of British Jews), P.Shaw.

The definitive book on visits to places of religious interest remains to be written!

M HAYWARD

Gates, B (Ed) *Afro-Caribbean Religions*, London: Ward Lock Educational 1980

'The book includes contributions from a wide range of specialists including from Shap members Geoffrey Parrinder (the African spiritual universe), Owen Cole (secondary school projects) and Brian Gates (the scope of religion in education), as well as contributions from academics such as Harold Turner and educators, including Kathy Williams. Gates himself comments on the book's Shap connection: 'The book as a whole is the product of a group of people brought together after a Shap course at Goldsmiths College

in 1972 at the instigation of the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education, conscious of the need for a general reference book on Afro-Caribbean religion' (Gates 1980).' Quotation from Bob Jackson in his article at 23a above.

Introduction Brian Gates

Throughout this book there runs a concern for community understanding at both a domestic and an international level… Yet how to cope creatively with this immediate diversity is a problem, not least for schools and colleges. If pupils' imaginations were aroused sufficiently to prompt them to explore the foundations of any one of the several communities in our midst, the problem might be overcome. At the same time, bridges might be built, not only to Europe, but to Africa, China, India and SE Asia.

Part One of the book contains a series of chapters describing Afro-Caribbean religion. The first is a geographical analysis of its distribution and diversity in the West Indies. Chapters 2 and 3 concentrate successively on the traditional African background and on the survival of Africa in Caribbean consciousness. These are followed by a historical survey of Christianity in the Caribbean and a review of new religious movements there. A case study of Haitian Voodoo provides a specific example of the distinctive religion of the area. Finally the scene is changed to England and the religious life of West Indians and Africans settled here.

The rest of the book provides some preliminary indication of how the curriculum of schools and colleges might be extended by reference to Afro-Caribbean religion and communal life. It begins with a positive statement as to the contribution that the study of religion can make to education and the growth of personal identity.

There follow two chapters which review both the present limitations and future possibilities of developing specific themes from African and West Indian heritage – both primal religions and Christianity – in English secondary schools. By contrast, a chapter on food, music and poetry then shows how religious elements can emerge from treating more secular West Indian themes. Two further chapters, one primary school oriented and the other secondary, then develop several classroom projects in a way that illustrates something of

religion's part in an integrated curriculum. Finally a list of resources for the teacher is provided. (Gates 1980, 1-2)

Jackson, Robert (ed) *Approaching World Religions* John Murray 1982

World Religions in Primary Schools Jean Holm pp 5-15

'When should you start teaching world religions?' Many primary school teachers, remembering their own experience of the comparative study of religion in the sixth form, feel that world religions are too difficult for

young children.

In one sense they are right. It is quite impossible for children of primary or even middle school age to understand even their own religion properly, let alone other religions.

But the expression ‘teaching world religions’ is a misleading one, suggesting as it does schemes of work on Islam, Hinduism, etc. What happens if we put the question with which we began in a different form? If, instead of asking, ‘When should you start teaching world religions?’, we ask, ‘When can children start learning about world religions?’ The answer will now be, ‘In the reception class’. It will, of course, be incidental leaming, and it will arise from the children’s own background and experience. It may be sparked off by a child’s response to a story, or it may perhaps come from a contribution to the morning ‘news time? We must not forget that Christianity is a world religion. Among the great variety of experiences which small children regard as important and therefore want to share with their teacher, there are bound to be such things as Easter eggs and Christmas presents and activities; and there is always someone who wants to talk about a family christening or wedding. These are all part of what are called the phenomena of religion, that is, the ways in which a religion is expressed in the life of an individual or of a religious community.

In the multi-faith class the things the children want to talk to their teacher about will come from more than one religion. But even where there are no pupils of other faiths the class will still be leaming about the phenomena of religion.

The teacher will deal with the child’s contribution in the field of religion in exactly the same way that she deals with contributions about the new hamster or auntie coming to stay or the family holiday. By her interest and her questions she will encourage the child to talk about it, and she will help the rest of the class to understand and appreciate what he says.

Talking about the phenomena of religions in the context of the children’s experience is a reminder of three important characteristics of religions.

Firstly, they are not just sets of beliefs and practices written down in books. They are *lived by people*. So we shall not just tell the class about the life of Muhammad and the Five Pillars of Islam. Instead. we shall help

them to enter imaginatively into the life of a Muslim family, to try to understand what Islam is like in practice, especially as it affects the children of the family.

Secondly, when we talk about a religion we are talking about *someone's faith*, so we must treat it as we would like our own faith to be treated. We must help the children to see it from the point of view of the person concerned, to try to stand in his shoes, and to realise that it is profoundly important to him.

Thirdly, religion is always intertwined with the *culture* of the person who practises it, so in the classroom we shall not try to isolate what we consider to be 'religious' - beliefs, worship, etc. - but we shall include all those aspects of the culture through which the religion is expressed: food, dress, customs, dance, music, etc.

It is much easier to follow these guidelines in a multi-faith class. The children are a constant reminder that religions do not exist in a vacuum, but are made up of particular people and expressed through particular cultures. We know that to make a negative statement about a child's religion is to hurt that child and to depreciate his sense of identity. When there are no children of other faiths in the school we have to make a conscious effort to develop that sensitivity which is necessary for talking about other people's religions.

Schemes of work

Children's incidental learning about religions, through discussion of something brought into the classroom, or seen on television, or encountered in a story, will remain important right through the primary school, but how do we set about organising more systematic leaming?

In a multi-faith class this can start quite early, even in the infant school, because the emphasis will be on sharing. Festivals are excellent for sharing because, although they are significant for the community as a whole, they are times of particular delight for children and they almost always involve parties, presents, special food and new clothes. The teachers of one junior school, where children from minority ethnic groups make up 85 per cent of the school population, decided one year to celebrate the major festivals of all the religions represented in the school. As Eid, Divali, Christmas came round they were 'celebrated' by all the

classes, and each class made a contribution to the assemblies, The children were able, with pride, to share their particular cultural background, through dress, dance, food, hairstyles, art, jewellery, worship and information about the practices of their religious community. However, as one of the teachers said, 'We soon discovered that although the Italians and West Indians were Christians, they did not have the same opportunities to share their culture within their religion. So we decided to have a Carnival Celebration or Caribbean week for the West Indians and an Italian week for the Italians, where they could illustrate their forms of worship, bring artefacts and generally share their culture.' The festival experiment was a great success. All the pupils participated and knowledge of the various religions spread throughout the school. But most of all the 'host culture' for each festival took pride in identifying with its own culture.

Teachers may well protest that one cannot just do festivals year after year. Obviously there is more to the study of religion than festivals, but we have to remember that children do not regard the annual celebration of festivals as boring repetition. They look forward to them with keen anticipation. And after all, schools have a long tradition of 'doing' Christmas every year! To recognise the festivals of the children in the class is one very important way of acknowledging the children's significance and valuing their identity.

Festivals can be handled in different ways. One year it may be enough, particularly at the junior school stage, to wish the Jewish children a 'Happy New Year' at Rosh Hashanah or the Hindu children a 'Happy New Year' at Divali and to allow them to talk to the rest of the class about how their family is celebrating the festival. Another year the festivals may be part of a wider scheme, such as a study of the local community, which, in addition to all the usual ingredients – buildings, occupations, public services, etc. - would include customs and ceremonies in the homes and places of worship of the different religious groups.

A different angle on festivals can be given by including them in a topic on *Time*. The cycle of the religious year is one way of measuring time, and the festivals linked with seasons — spring festivals, such as Passover, Holi, Easter, and autumn festivals, such as Sukkot (Tabernacles), Divali, Harvest - are appropriately dealt with in this context. One school included annual festivals in its study of seasonal patterns. within a topic on *Patterns*.

In the multi-faith school *Families* and *Growing up* are examples of topics which make it possible for younger children to share their own cultural background with the rest of the class and to learn about the cultural background of other children.

But what about schools where there are no children of other faiths? They are of course deprived of the opportunities we have been describing of discovering through first hand experience the different ways of doing things in different cultures; but there are variations even within the same culture. Children can be helped to accept and respect differences through finding out about such things as likes and dislikes within the class, family customs, and so on, or through good children's literature. which makes possible an exploration in some detail of characteristics and situations which distinguish people from each other. This is a most important foundation on which can be built an acceptance of the value of other cultures and religions.

We don't do anything on world religions because we have no immigrants in our area', said the headmaster of a lively rural primary school, well known for its imaginative teaching. 'These religions are outside the children's experience.' 'But didn't you do Tutankhamun'?' 'Yes. but that was different. We took the children to London to see the exhibition.' The school is only 60 miles from London. but it is less than 20 miles from a large town with a high proportion of so-called 'immigrants'. Moreover, it could be argued that the religions practised in Britain in the twentieth century are much closer to the children's experience than the culture of ancient Egypt, or for that matter the culture of the ancient Greeks or the Vikings which junior school children study with such enthusiasm.

The argument about starting from the children's experience is an important one in the infant school, but by the time children are about eight or nine they are capable of being interested in a whole range of topics. They have a natural curiosity, and they enjoy acquiring knowledge. However, in addition to the characteristics of religions already mentioned, there are other points to remember if the children are to find learning about contemporary religions as absorbing as they find learning about ancient cultures.

1 We must *start with the concrete* that is, with what can be seen, either literally or in pictorial form. Children in the junior school are at the concrete stage of thinking. They are capable of quite extensive questioning and discussion, but they need as a basis a solid foundation of

factual information.

2 Children need *lots of detail*. Juniors love collecting things, including facts. They soon lose interest in something if it is being treated superficially. And the more removed a topic is from their immediate experience the more important it is that they should be given plenty of accurate information. Confusion and misunderstandings about world religions are an almost inevitable consequence of topics being dealt with too quickly and too superficially.

3 We need to develop a *positive attitude* towards religions. This does not mean pretending that every aspect of every religion is perfect. What it does mean is that we should introduce children first to those aspects which they are likely to admire. For example, it is better for children to meet Muslim art and architecture or Arabic script before they leam about the Muslim prayer positions. This is especially important if they do not know any Muslim children, or if there are tensions between ethnic groups in the local community. The last thing we want is for children to laugh at other people's ways of doing things, particularly when they involve something as central to a religion as its worship. If they find Muslim geometric patterns and Arabic script fascinating they are much more likely to take a positive interest in aspects of the religion which might otherwise seem odd.

4 The pupils should be leaming about *living religions*. The emphasis should therefore be on what it is like to be a Jew or a Hindu or a Christian today. We have to resist the temptation to deal first with the origins of a religion. This is far too complex a subject for children of primary school age to understand without distortion. and if we present it to them in 'simple' terms which they can 'understand', then we shall without doubt have given them a misleading and inaccurate 'understanding'. It is only when pupils have developed the ability to handle historical concepts, that is, not before about 13 or 14, that they can take a real interest in movements in history. (See below for the problem of teaching about the founders of religions.)

5 The children need access to a *variety of resources*. Ideally they should be able to make visits to the places of worship and the homes of adherents of the religions they are learning about, they should be able to see and if possible handle religious objects, for instance a joss stick holder or an image of Ganesha used by Hindus. a Seder dish used by Jews at Passover

or a nine-branched candlestick used by them at the festival of Chanukah. If the children cannot have firsthand experience of these things they must have clear and accurate pictures and descriptions. Again, ideally they should have access to some of the literature which the religious community uses. Books, pamphlets, posters, and so on, which are produced for the community's own children are excellent, but even adult literature, such as a book used in worship, can be useful. Sometimes older juniors will be able to use it for reference purposes; but even if the content is too difficult for children, simply handling a book which is important to the adherents of the religion being studied helps to bring that religion to life and to make the study authentic.

6 Children need to undertake *practical activities* related to the religions they are learning about. Merely copying facts out of books is a completely inadequate way even of mastering those facts, let alone learning what it must be like to be an adherent of a religion. Just as children need a variety
of resources to help them to understand something as complex as a religion, so they need a variety of ways of expressing what they are discovering about the practice of a religion. For instance, in addition to such familiar activities as drawing, painting, making models and wall charts, they could prepare food, learn a traditional song (and tape it), write out prayers or short passages from the scriptures and decorate them with the characteristic symbols and art forms of the religion, reproduce key texts in the appropriate script – Arabic, Hebrew, Punjabi, Gujarati, and so on. The activities must be imaginative and varied and they must give an accurate picture of the religion.

ln a school which is not multi-faith an excellent scheme to introduce nine or ten year olds to a systematic study of world religions is *sacred places* - learning about the places of worship of two or more religions. It illustrates how we can put into practice the principles outlined in the last six paragraphs. Top juniors enjoy finding out about different kinds of buildings — their characteristic architecture, furnishings. forms of decoration and symbols, the placing and use of the scriptures - and the ways in which the adherents of the religions use the buildings, for worship and for other activities.

Children of this age cannot comprehend a religion's beliefs about God or salvation or the nature of man. These belong to the adult reflective activity which we call theology, and even the adherents of a religion themselves seldom study their beliefs in any systematic way. Rather, the

beliefs are expressed through the different aspects of the religion such as worship, prayer, meditation, sacred buildings, places of pilgrimage, festivals, scriptures and other sacred writings, and the way in which the children are brought up. As our pupils learn about these aspects of a religion, focusing particularly on what can be seen and what people do, they are gradually building up an understanding of the things which are important in the religion. and laying a foundation for a much later study of a people's beliefs, the nature of their faith, the significance of their worship, and so on. It is also at this later stage that it becomes relevant to look back to the origins and the historical development of a religion.

Founders

Religious education books frequently recommend that founders of religions should be studied in the primary school. How sound is this advice? Of course children should become familiar with the names of the founders of the religions practised in Britain (where there are known founders), and by the end of the junior school stage they should know something of the significance of the founder within a particular religion. For example, they should know that Muslims object to being called Muhammadans because that seems to suggest that they worship Muhammad, whereas they believe that Muhammad was a wonderful human being but not in any sense divine.

However, a study of the life and work of the founder of a religion is inappropriate in the primary school, for two main reasons. First, founders are concerned with belief systems and, as we have seen, any adequate understanding of beliefs and their relationship to one another is impossible for children at this age. It is true that most lives of founders written for children focus on ethical teaching more than on beliefs, but we are giving a misleading impression of what founding a religion involves if we suggest that the founder's main achievement was to teach that people should be honest and sincere and that they should love and care for others. At this rather simple level such teaching can be found in all religions. What caused a man to become a founder of a new religion lies at a much deeper level.

It may perhaps be argued that no serious harm can come from showing children that the ethical teachings of the founders of different religions are
similar. However, there is a more serious objection to teaching about founders.

This objection relates to the fact that a new religion always arises from an existing one, keeping some features of the original religion and rejecting or modifying others. The process is highly complex and it requires considerable maturity to understand not only the inevitable tensions it creates, but also the genuine anxieties of sincere people who believe that truth is at stake, and feel threatened by the new teaching. This is reduced to such a simplistic level in the stories of founders written for children that the impression is often given that all those who supported the founder were 'good' and all those who opposed him were 'bad'. If our aim is to help pupils to develop a positive understanding of religions, we shall be making the achievement of that aim virtually impossible if, for example, in learning about the founder of Sikhism or Christianity the children come to regard Muslims or Jews as villains.

Of course it is appropriate that children in school should learn more about the founder of the religion which has had a major influence on the culture of the country than about the founders of other religions. Children in Britain will therefore learn about Jesus. This does not mean that our approach will be the same as it was when the aim of religious education was confessional. Instead of assuming that Jesus is the Son of God, or even just the greatest teacher of ethical values, we have to help the pupils to see him as the founder of a world religion and to understand something of his importance for Christians. The problems this raises. particularly at primarv school level. are so complex that they cannot be dealt with here:
they require a separate and detailed discussion.

The same or different?

In the days when the study of religions was confined to a short course in the sixth form, the emphasis was put on the differences between religions.
Now we are possibly in danger of going to the other extreme especially in the primary school, partly because of the tendency to oversimplify for young children and partly because we are no longer trying to demonstrate the superiority of one religion over its 'rivals'. We have to tread a very narrow path if we are to help children to see both what religions have in common and what distinguishes them from one another.

Topics such as *sacred places* and *festivals* and *signs and symbols* are useful

for keeping this balance, but we get into deep water if we try to do cross-cultural schemes on subjects like the heroes or the stories of world religions. One cannot find comparable examples, even in the five main religions represented in Britain. Must the heroes, for example, be historical characters? If so, that would probably exclude one of the main Hindu heroes, Rama, whose significance in Hinduism is completely independent of any historical situations or events. It would be confusing to children to have historical characters from some religions and mythical characters from others, all called 'heroes'. It would also be confusing if we were to select figures from very different periods in history, with different sets of values. Children might be tempted to think that the religion represented in the later period was superior to one whose 'hero' lived in much earlier times: but it is not possible to find heroes from each religion, contemporary with one another and suitable for primary school children.

What about stories? Surely we are on safer ground here? Children love stories, and it is often through stories that we can gain an entry into the 'feel' of another culture. This is certainly true. There are many stories drawn from different religious traditions which are suitable for children.

The problem arises when we try to set stories alongside one another as illustrations of different religions. For example. if we wanted to have a scheme on myths in the religions represented in Britain. what would we choose? The Hindu myth would be easy. The story of Rama and Sita is central in popular Hinduism, and is suitable for primary school children. What would we choose as a Christian myth? Would the stories of King Arthur be appropriate? But they are legends rather than myths, and in the junior school we help children to distinguish legends from myths proper. Genesis I is sophisticated theology, expressed through a borrowed Mesopotamian myth, but even if it was regarded as a myth should it illustrate Christianity or Judaism in our scheme? Muslims would strenuously deny that there were any myths at all in Islam. And before we have even started to ask about myths in Sikhism we have discovered that a scheme on myths in world religions could be only an artificial construction, which would not be true to some of the religions and which would inevitably fail in its original purpose of illustrating one theme from different religions.

As we have already seen, however, the fact that such schemes are impossible does not mean that stories from the different religious traditions cannot be told to children. Sometimes a story may stand on its own, and be told just because it is a good story. If the children are

learning about a religion's festival we may tell a story which is associated with that festival. Or if they are learning about boys and girls growing up in a particular religious tradition it would be appropriate for them to hear one or more of the stories which those boys and girls enjoy. Our main criteria in selecting the stories will be that they are stories which the religious community itself would be happy to have told, and that they should be suitable for the age and background of the children in the class.

Judaism - a world religion

Teachers who say that they do not approve of world religions in the primary school, and that they are sticking to good old-fashioned Bible stories, seem to be quite unaware that they are actually teaching two world religions - Christianity and Judaism — albeit in a way which does justice to neither. The children may be learning stories from the Christian (and the Jewish) scriptures, but they are certainly not leaming about Christianity or Judaism as living religions. However, the distortion of Christianity is as nothing compared with the distortion of Judaism which results from this kind of approach.

In the first place, 'the Jews' are presented as opponents of Jesus. The fact that he himself was a Jew, as were his disciples and all the earliest Christians, is ignored. The stories in the gospels of Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees are treated as straightforward historical accounts, and children are given the impression that all the Pharisees were legalistic hypocrites. Most primary school teachers are not RE specialists, and they cannot therefore be blamed for not knowing that the Pharisees were the most devout group within Judaism and that their teaching had a great deal in common with the teaching of Jesus; or for not knowing that the gospels took their present form at a time when the Christian Church was emerging as a separate religion from Judaism, with all the tensions that involved. The responsibility lies primarily with those who write books for teachers and pupils to use, but if we are aware of the problem we can at least be alert to the dangers of stereotyping.

Secondly, the impression is given that Judaism came to an end when Christianity began. This is not confined to Bible-based religious education. It is astonishing how many teachers who are happy to teach world religions use only biblical material to teach about Judaism, ignoring all the developments of the past 2,000 years. When they teach about Passover, they focus not on the Jewish family's celebration in the late twentieth century, but on either the slaughter of the Passover lambs in the Temple

in Jerusalem in the first century or the story of the origins of the festival at the time of Moses. Similarly, a description of Jewish worship is more likely to contain details of the Tabernacle and the Temple than of the synagogue today.

One of the problems is that while many people are aware of their lack of knowledge of Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism, they feel more confident about handling Judaism because of their familiarity with the Bible. But because Judaism is a religion with 2,000 years of history since biblical times, and because Jewish interpretations of its Bible (the Christian Old Testament) are in any case not identical with Christian interpretations, we have to be particularly careful about how we present Judaism to children.

Resources

It is unfortunate that few books about world religions take the approach that is required if children are to understand what it is like to be an adherent of a religion. Almost all the available books, even those written for children, start with the origins of the religion and include something about its history and its main beliefs before describing its practices. A notable exception is the Understanding Your Neighbour series published by Lutterworth. The books in this series deal mainly with the practice of the religions in Britain where they are minority faiths, and where therefore the expression of the religion is different from what it is in its own cultural setting.

Another problem is that many authors attempt to summarise a religion in one small book. How can children possibly do detailed work on a festival that is described in a few sentences, or undertake a study of sacred places if the books they are using give only the briefest information about the mosque or synagogue or gurdwara?

Generally speaking, the best literature is that produced by the religious community itself, especially when it is in the form of books or leaflets on individual aspects of the religion. There is a wealth of this kind of material available from Jewish sources, and an increasing amount available from Muslim sources, though as yet there is not the same kind or quality of literature available for Hinduism and Sikhism.

As we have already seen, children need more than books if they are to the feel of a religion. Multi-faith schools have a tremendous advantage

here, as families are often prepared to lend objects or to bring them into the school for the children to see. Other schools in towns or cities where there are religious communities will find that the communities are usually very willing to help when there is a genuine desire to learn about their religion.

With a little ingenuity a school can build up an inexpensive collection of useful resources which illustrate religions and cultures: festival greetings cards, calendars, prayer leaflets, examples of the script of languages (e.g. in newspapers circulating among the different ethnic groups in Britain or brought back from a holiday abroad), postcards, travel brochures, photos from colour supplements and so on.

In some localities primary and secondary schools have combined to create a joint bank of resources. This is a great help to the primary schools, with their limited funds for individual subjects, and a very useful collection can be built up when a number of teachers pool their knowledge and experience of different religions and make available copies of slides or prints.

We end this chapter as we began it, with the pupils. They are one of our most important resources. Whether the class is multi-faith or not, there will be some pupils who come from families where religion is practised. By sharing their experience of the different aspects of their religion, such children can make an invaluable contribution to the class's understanding of the nature of religion. There is, of course, much more to be learnt about religions at secondary school, but the realisation that they are *lived by people* is an excellent foundation for later study.

Jean Holm

Brown, A. (ed) *Festivals in World Religions* first edition Longman 1986

'Introduction' Geoffrey Parrinder pp 1-18

'Observing Festivals in Schools' Peter Woodward pp 266-276

'Introduction' Geoffrey Parrinder

Religious believers may be expected to pray, meditate or perform some pious act each day in all the major historical and literary religions, and probably most others. Certain times and places are designated as being of particular significance, calling for devotion to a deity or holy being. Special days are prescribed for feasting or penitence. The observance of these occasions is important to the devout worshipper, and his or her participation may require absence from work or school, for a whole day or part of a day.

Absence from work for a religious festival is a holiday in the original sense of 'holy day', and indeed, normal work may be forbidden at such times. Such absence is, however, difficult to understand unless the employer or teacher has some knowledge of the religious requirement, and some idea of how important or obligatory the festival may be. In a multi-racial and multi-religious society, therefore, religious festivals and calendars are also of importance to all those who need to be aware of the customs of employees and pupils.

In many parts of the world, notably Asia, diverse religious communities have lived side by side for centuries, influencing each other's beliefs and practices, and often sharing festivals. This sharing continues today so that, for example, many non-Christians send Christmas cards, often with motifs from their own religion. In India cards showing Krishna and the milkmaids present a sort of 'Happy Krishnas'; in Japan mechanical dolls beat out *Jingle Bells* or *Silent Night*, but change to Chinese music for the New Year. In the West, on the other hand, there has not until recently been such religious diversity apart from the presence of small

communities of Jews. The situation is now changing and increasing numbers of different religious communities have developed. Ln Britain alone there are more than two hundred mosques, more than fifty Sikh temples, and one hundred and fifty Buddhist societies have been listed, though they are mostly small study groups.

Religious festivals have widely differing characteristics: a Christian holy day may be observed from dawn to dusk, only in the morning or evening, or at a church service; Jewish holy days start at dusk and continue until dusk the next day. The Muslim fast of Ramadan need not involve absence from work, but it demands abstinence from all food and drink during the hours of daylight for a whole lunar month, and this may seriously affect work. In northern countries this requirement implies great self-discipline if Ramadan falls during the long days of summer in the solar calendar.

Feasts and festivals

In early English the word ‘festival’ was often used as an adjective, as in ‘festival high day’, but now it seems to have take over noun usage, as in ‘harvest festival’. But the word ‘feast’ is useful to show that an occasion is one for rejoicing, as opposed to a fast. After the fast of Lent, an annual observance and traditionally penitential, came the feast of Easter. In both the Jewish and Christian Bibles the Passover, like other celebrations, is called a feast. The feast was a time of celebration, even merry—making, but perhaps nowadays we tend to think of a feast as solely concerned with eating and drinking in large quantities, so it may be more helpful to use the term festival, which suggests more spiritual occupations.

Festivals are of different kinds, the most frequent being weekly celebrations for communal worship. The Christian Sunday has been observed on the first day of the week, in the Hebrew and Gregorian calendars, as a regular commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ which was held to have occurred on ‘the first day of the week’. It seems that the first Christians (as Jews) kept Saturday Sabbath and also the Sunday, but in 321 the emperor Constantine made Sunday into a general holiday. A few Christian sects, such as the Seventh Day Adventists and some early Puritans, have observed the Saturday Sabbath, and Victorian Christians often spoke of Sunday as the Sabbath. It is curious that western European languages generally retain ancient pagan names for the days of the week: Sunday is the ’day of the Sun’ worship, interpreted by Christians as dedicated to

the ‘Sun of Righteousness’.

The Jewish Sabbath, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, is the seventh day, ‘the Sabbath of the Lord’. Sabbath means ‘cessation’ or ’rest’, recalling the cessation of the work of the Creator on the seventh day, which God ‘blessed and hallowed’. The Jewish Sabbath, like the Christian Sunday, is the chief festival and the Ten Commandments decree that no work should be done on that day, an injunction which has been observed by Jews, with different interpretations of the kind or time of work. The Muslim Friday, Jum’ah, is the ‘day of assembly’ on which males gather for worship at midday in the chief mosque. It is not mentioned as such in the Qur'an, but according to Traditions, the Prophet was said to have established this day by divine command. Legend has it that on this day Adam entered and left Paradise, and that it will be the day of resurrection. But Friday is not a whole day of obligatory abstention from work for Muslims, provided they have time to recite the prescribed prayers.

In other religions there may be less general regular worship in weekly periods, or little widespread obligation to observe such festivals. In parts of West Africa there is a seven-day week, as among the Akan of Ghana, or a four-day week, as among the Yoruba of Nigeria. Each day may be named after a particular deity, but worship is imposed only upon the special worshippers of that divinity. However in Ghana there was a general taboo against working on the land on Thursday, the day of the Earth Mother, which caused conflict for Christian converts who were also supposed to abstain from work on Sunday and so suffered a double economic deprivation.

The Buddhist Uposatha seems to have originated as a fortnightly fast day on the days of the new and full moons, when monks recited the rules of their order. This became extended to weekly meetings at four phases of the moon, with attendance of the laity also. There were expositions of teachings in monasteries and pagodas, and in modern times ‘Sunday’ or Dharma schools teach Buddhist children and adults, and there may be congregational worship.

Weekly worship may be a ‘day of obligation’, in Christian parlance, or a ‘Red Letter Day’, meaning one that was indicated in red ink in church calendars, like other important feasts. Similar obligation applies to the Jewish Sabbath and the Muslim Friday worship, and in varying degrees in other religions. Although the obligation may involve attending a place of

worship and abstaining from ordinary work, the day is still a feast. It is an occasion for joy in creation, resurrection or worship, and therefore a sad or negative Sabbath negates its purpose.

The growing worldwide adoption of the Gregorian calendar, together with the English tradition of the weekend, extends the worship or rest day and provides a longer holiday for celebrating other religious events. Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists living in the West often defer the celebration of their feasts to the nearest weekend, when they can be sure of free time and communal meeting.

Natural cycles and festivals

Cycles of months and seasons provided the basis for the earliest calendars and religious celebrations were fixed accordingly. The phases of the moon were calculated as four seven-day periods or weeks in a month (a word cognate with ’moon'). Where the moon was deified (in the West ’Moon—day' follows ‘Sun-day’) chronology was linked to religion. In ancient Sumeria the moon god, Sin, was called Lord of the Month.

The cycle of the sun, or rather the earth's movements round the sun, causes the seasons of spring, summer, autumn and winter in the northern hemisphere where all the great religions arose. The solar year was of great importance for the development of agriculture and in Egypt, where a solar calendar was used at least as early as 2776 BCE, this was connected with the annual flooding of the river Nile on which agriculture depended.

Various systems of chronology came into use: in Judaism time is reckoned from creation, in Christianity from the calculated date of the birth of Christ, and in Islam from the Hijra or Hegira, Muhammad’s migration from Mecca to Medina (622 CE). Such chronologies are often called Linear systems: time is measured from a fixed point and progresses in a line to a climax, the end of the era or of the world. Indian chronologies, on the other hand, are based on a Cyclic view of time, in which there is a rise, maturation and decline, followed by a rebirth in another cycle. Eschatology, the ‘doctrine of
the last things’, was fitted on to the linear system as a climax, and also to the cyclic with the end of each period.

Various calendars are discussed in connection with the different religions discussed in the following chapters of this book; here it suffices to note the lunar or solar calculations. In both calendrical systems, the beginning of the year is often marked with festivals of supplication or thanksgiving. The New Year is still celebrated in China and Japan as a time of cleansing and prayer for the future. Traditionally in China this occurs at the beginning of the first lunar month of the year, but in Japan, where the Gregorian calendar is in widespread use, it occurs at the beginning of January. In India, Divali, the Festival of Lights, is a new year festival addressed to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Houses are spring-cleaned, presents are sent to friends, and businessmen open new account books with prayers for success in the coming year. The Jewish New Year in the month of Tishri (September-October) is followed by the Day of Atonement, with penitence for the past and prayers for the future. On the other hand most Christians and Muslims, apart from the Shi'a, have made little of the New Year, concentrating their celebrations on their own particular festivals.

Christmas is one of the clearest examples of the adaptation of a festival from one religion into another. Since the Bible gave Christians no indication of the date of birth of Jesus, it was not celebrated till the third century. The Philocalian calendar, a list of Roman bishops named after an artist of that name, mentioned the observance in Rome in 336 of Christ's birth on 25 December. This coincided with the winter solstice, celebrated by the pagan festival Natalis Solis Invicti (Birthday of the Unconquered Sun), and Christ was now regarded in this light. The winter solstice, the darkest and coldest time in northern latitudes, was the natural new year, as it would give way to longer days and warmer weather. Thus Christmas was a new year festival and in recent times in the West the period of festivity has extended, merging with the calendrical new year to make a long holiday of ten days or so. In Eastern Orthodox Churches the birth of Christ was celebrated on 6 January, but it was still a new year festival.

After the New Year other festivals were celebrated in accordance with the pattern of nature, especially at springtime and harvest. Rituals were performed, and still are in Africa and the West Indies, asking permission of the spirit of the earth for digging the ground and for blessing on the seed. Then thanks were offered when the seeds produced fruit, and the firstfruits were offered to the appropriate divinities. The Jewish Passover perhaps incorporated a sacrifice of the first lambs in spring, which was said to be a substitute for the firstborn male child. The Christian Lent was calculated back from Easter, but its very name in English was probably related to the ‘lengthening’ of the days in spring. The date of Easter varies, falling on the Sunday after the first full moon after the spring equinox, in keeping with the biblical account of the time of the Crucifixion. According to the Venerable Bede the name of Easter was derived from Eostre, an Anglo-Saxon spring goddess.

The Jewish Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, called Pentecost in Greek as the 'fiftieth' day after Passover, was the time when the firstfruits of the wheat harvest were presented to God. The Christian Lammas, still observed as a quarter-day in Scotland, was the Loaf Mass on 1 August, when bread made from the first ripe corn in these colder latitudes was consecrated at Mass. Harvest festivals have remained popular even in urban societies where there is little contact with seedtime and harvest. Rather mechanically, harvest festivals in September or October have spread to tropical Africa where the firstfruits and harvest have occurred in other months.

The worship of the sun seems to have been chiefly the concern of the cold northern regions, since in the tropics the sun is ever oppressively present and does not need to be implored to return north after a winter. There were sun festivals in ancient Europe, such as the Celti Samhain, (Summer End), when fires were lit to strengthen the ailing sun. Bonfires in November and December may perpetuate this custom. In Japan, another northern country, the greatest deity is Amaterasu, the sun goddess from whom came the imperial line. Mythology tells of her struggles in eclipse, darkness and winter; her shrine at Isé is the greatest of all for Shinto Japan.

Sacred history

The Semitic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) are often called historical but their history is sacred, imposing a religious meaning upon events as upon the natural year. Other Asian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism may appear to be less factual, but they also have sacred history which mediates salvation. Mircea Eliade, who has written extensively on the subject calls a 'hierophany' a manifestation of the sacred.

'Every manifestation of the sacred takes place in some historical situation. Every hierophany we look at is also an historical fact.'

M. Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 1958, p 2

The Jewish Passover (*Pesah*) is primarily associated with the deliverance of the Hebrew people from captivity in Egypt at the Exodus led by Moses. Eating the sacrificial lamb united families and larger groups, and bound them to God whose angel had 'passed over' the Israelites when the first-born of the Egyptians were slain. At communal gatherings the sacred history is regularly recounted and confirmed.

Easter had as background the Passover, as well as Eostre, but its Christian significance lies in the Resurrection of Christ, leading on to Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles. The latter was called White Sunday in England, as a time of baptism of white-robed candidates, though it also suggests another link with spring in the new birth of baptism.

The new year festival Muharram is not a great festival for Sunni Muslims, who form the great majority of the religion, except for the fast on the tenth and final day, which is given some historical association as the day when Noah left the ark. But for Shi'a Islam this period is pre-eminent, both historical and salvation-history. It celebrates the martyrdom of Husain, son of Ali and grandson of Muhammad. At the end of ten days of celebration, passion plays enact the sufferings and death of Husain and his intercession for the salvation of believers. The two major Islamic festivals come at the end of the fast of Ramadan and in the month of pilgrimage, with sacrifices and confessions which are observed all over the Islamic world.

Buddhism would seem to be more historical than Hinduism, though the Buddhist scriptures which record the teachings of the Buddha and the events in his life were not recorded until some centuries after his death, and were often altered or enlarged. The life of Gautama, the Buddha of this present long era, is especially revered. The full moon of Wesak or Vaisakha, in April/May, is widely celebrated for the birth, renunciation, enlightenment and *parinirvana* of the Buddha. Mahayana Buddhism also reveres other holy beings, and in Japan the native reformer Nichiren is honoured and his life commemorated by powerful modern sects.

In Hinduism not only is Divali a new year festival, but the Holi festival in spring links up with ancient growing and fertility ceremonies. Yet it is connected with the loves of Krishna and Radha, and the salvation-history of the victory of Krishna over demons. Dashera in September/October recalls both the victory of the Mother Goddess, Durga, over evil and the fight of the avatar Rama with the demon Ravana. Pasteboard effigies of Ravana are packed with fireworks and exploded with fiery arrows from Rama to demonstrate the triumph of good.

Sacred history is re-enacted in rituals, and because the festival is a feast and a sharing, it requires participants, and so absence from daily work. The action of the liturgy illustrates the distinctive character of sacred history, the difference of the religious calendar from the secular, and the

move from the secular into the sacred sphere. The ritual is not a mere repetition of a past event, but a living experience on a higher plane than everyday life.

'Every ritual has the character of happening *now*, at this very moment. The
time of the event that the ritual commemorates or re-enacts is made present, "re-presented" so to speak, however far back it may have been in ordinary reckoning.'

M. Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 1958, p 392

This interpretation may be illustrated from the various names given to the distinctive Christian liturgy. It is called Eucharist (Thanks-giving) from the Greek, or Mass from the Latin words of 'dismissal' at the end, though the words may suggest the eternal nature of the rite. Protestants who speak of the Last Supper stress the memorial aspect of the ceremony, but it is significant that the only New Testament term is the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:20), which indicates the constant presence of the Lord among his followers, a feeling that is preserved also in the term Holy Communion.

So Eliade continues,
'Christ's passion, death and resurrection are not simply remembered during the services of Holy Week; they really happen *then* before the eyes of the faithful. And a convinced Christian must feel that he is *contemporary* with these trans-historic events, for, by being re-enacted, the time of the
theophany becomes actual.'

The purpose of religious worship is not simply to remember the past, but to experience the presence of God here and now.

Similarly during Muharram, Shi'ite Muslims identify themselves with the suffering Husain and vilify his persecutors. It was no sinecure to act the villainous parts in these passion plays, for at times the audience tried to lynch the actors. But the purpose of the play, its salvation value, was declared in the closing words with which the archangel Gabriel delivered the key of intercession with God to Husain.

'Go thou and deliver from the flames every one who has in his life-time shed but a single tear for thee. Bear each and all with thee to Paradise.'

E. G. Parrinder, *Worship in the World's Religions*, 1961, p 198

Sacred times

Religious rituals are necessary to the existence of any faith, expressing its doctrines in action. Therefore believers are justified in claiming absence from work to take part in sacred life. A change from work is a human necessity: 'The Sabbath was made for man.' Even on the trade—union level the need for a break in toil is recognised, Arguments about Sunday closing are complicated because of the many interests involved. One need not share the sabbatarianism of the Lord's Day Observance Society to see the dangers to workers in having no fixed time of rest from toil. Even a secular society needs its celebrations, although a 'bank holiday' must be one of the most profane terms for a time of refreshment and renewal. The disagreement of the Church and State in England as to whether a service after the Falklands war was to be a triumphal celebration or a search for reconciliation, illustrates the clash of traditional religion with resurgent patriotism. But both testified to the need for holiday and representational ritual.

The problems of employers and teachers facing demands for religious holidays are especially difficult in view of the many different religions in our society but, as has been suggested, there is often a willingness to defer celebrations to the weekend, and this is a further reason for safeguarding the rights of workers to a Sunday holiday.

There are also longer holidays, and fortunately the automation of industry helps to allow extended summer holidays for many workers. But holidays have always been part of religious life, and in many religions pilgrimages have formed an important element in occasional or annual celebrations. Six hundred years ago Chaucer began the Canterbury Tales with a description of this custom:

> 'Whan that Aprille with his shoures sote
> The droghte of Marche hath perced to the rote . . .
> Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages . . .
> And specially, from every shires end
> Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,
> The holy blisful martir for to seke,
> That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.'

In England they waited for fine weather, the rising sap of spring inciting to ritual pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas Becket, and they must have saved up money like modern people stinting them- selves for a summer holiday.

Modern European holidays may seem to have little that is holy about them. They simply show a need for change, if not rest. There may be residual or burgeoning faith in many who visit cathedrals or tramp the moors and hills, but there are secular pilgrimages which border on the religious. The multitudes that queue to revere charismatic leaders at the tombs of Lenin or Mao illustrate something of the religious trappings of Communism. And many traditionally religious pilgrimages hold their own or are even more popular owing to the ease of modern travel. Pilgrimages to Lourdes, Fatima or Israel have more participants than ever. About a million pilgrims go annually to Mecca, to make the visit which is a religious duty for all Muslims at least once in a lifetime, and they travel not only on foot or camel as in the past, but by lorry or ship or aeroplane. Over two million go every year to Vrindaban to feel the 'everlasting bodily presence of Krishna', making the round of sacred sites dedicated to his life and actions. Ten million, aided by all the machinery of modern transport, are said to visit the grounds and
shrines at Isé in Japan dedicated to the goddess Amaterasu.

Pilgrimages are communal and often jolly, as the Canterbury Tales demonstrate, even if their climax is solemn or their purpose penitential. Their popularity, past and present, may be partly the result of the restless nomadic nature of mankind. But there is also a deeper feeling, an attempt to transcend the limitations of time and space and enter the eternal sphere, re—enacting the pilgrimage and triumph of the deity.

Sacred places
Not only are certain times sacred, but so also are certain places and they need to be preserved.

'Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'

Genesis 28: 16-17

In these verses Jacob refers to Beth-el, 'the house of God', a famous sanctuary down the ages. It was at this royal shrine that Jeroboam

erected a golden calf and Amos prophesied against injustice.

Eliade writes also of ‘kratophany’, meaning a ‘manifestation of power’. He says that
‘Every kratophany and hierophany whatsoever transforms the sacred place where it occurs; hitherto profane, it is thenceforward a sacred area.’

‘In actual fact, the place is never “chosen” by man; it is merely discovered by him; in other words, the sacred place in some way or another reveals itself to him.’
M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 1958, pp 367, 369

The subject of sacred places, whether they be churches, synagogues, mosques or temples, is too vast to explore here, the present concern being with festivals and sacred times But it may be noted in passing that sacred places have always been necessary to religion, and that new religious communities may manage for a time with a private room or secular hall, but will eventually want their own building, consecrated formally and hallowed by worship. Time, work and money will be needed for the erection of such a holy building, and absence from work or school may be requested.

Problems may arise in the registration of a building as a place of religious worship, which allows for solemnisation of marriages and exemption from rates. Organisations such as Scientology have been unsuccessful in obtaining registration, on the grounds that they are not a religion, while the Unification Church (Moonies) has faced demands for its removal from registration. Other problems have faced more established churches. Whether it is desirable or permissible for a church to loan or sell its own buildings to the adherents of another religion is a matter for debate. Permission is sometimes refused, or allowed grudgingly by leasing an ‘ancillary’ building rather than the church. It has been suggested that Hindus, for example, might be allowed the use of a church hall for weddings
provided no religious words are used - an impossible condition.

There is in the East End of London a religious building first erected by Huguenot refugees from France. They worked hard, prospered, and moved away to more prosperous areas. The building was sold to poor Methodists, who also worked hard, prospered and moved away. It was

then taken over by Jewish refugees from eastern Europe, and became a synagogue whose members again worked hard, prospered and moved away. The latest sale is to Muslims from Bengal, and it has become a mosque. No doubt they will work hard and migrate to more prosperous areas. But since the building is listed as a historic monument, dedicated to religious purposes, it may be wondered who will be the next occupants to call upon the name of their God there.

There are economic as well as religious considerations connected with sacred buildings, and within a religious community itself there may be tensions over the proper purposes of the building. There may be struggles between the concepts of the place of worship as a house of God and as a house of the people, between adoration and fellowship; but these are matters which the community has to resolve.

The Gregorian Calendar

Reference has been made to cycles of months, seasons, years and ages, and it remains to consider the different calendars in use. The chapters on the different religions discuss the calendars used in each faith, but most refer to the Gregorian or New Style Calendar; this has been adopted worldwide, but in varying degrees.

The word 'calendar' comes from the Latin *kalendae*, from a root meaning 'call' or 'proclaim': in ancient Rome the first day of the new month was proclaimed on the appearance of the new moon. Like nearly all other calendars, except for the Egyptian, it was a lunar calculation. The ancient Roman year of 355 days was shorter than the solar year which depended upon the seasons, and additional days had to be intercalated between lunar and solar.

In 46 BCE Julius Caesar introduced a year of 365 days, with an extra day every fourth or leap year. The length of the year was then reckoned according to the sun and seasons. In the first half of the sixth century CE the monk Dionysius Exiguus adapted this calendar to Christian usage by dating it from Anno Domini. the 'year of our Lord', that is the year after the birth of Christ. The abbreviations AD for the Christian era, and BC for Before Christ, remain in use, but in inter-religious and many international publications they tend to be replaced by CE for the Common Era, and BCE, Before the Common Era. Similarly in the Islamic world the initials AH have
been used of their era, the Anno Hegirae or Hijrae, the year of the

migration (Hegira, Hijra) from Mecca to Medina.

The Julian Calendar was not quite accurately calculated and there was a discrepancy with the solar year, which amounted to ten days by 1582 when Pope Gregory XIII proclaimed his New Style or Gregorian Calendar which has continued in use to this day. At first only Roman Catholic states accepted the new dating, but Protestant countries gradually fell into line, Britain accepting the continental custom in 1752. France abandoned it for twelve years in favour of a revolutionary calendar but then reverted to Gregorian usage. Turkey and Russia adopted the Gregorian Calendar in 1917, but most Orthodox churches in Russia and the Balkans did not conform till 1923.

Proposals for a World Calendar have been presented to the League of Nations and the United Nations Assembly, which would give equal quarters, an extra day at the end of the year, and another extra day in summer every leap year, but these have not been adopted. The use of the New Style or Gregorian Calendar has spread universally along with western imperialism and commerce, but there have been many variations in its adoption or part-adoption.

Religious festivals in many lands are still often based on ancient lunar calendars, but in the Islamic world and the Indian sub-continent official and commercial publications often print the date in both lunar and Gregorian systems. In China three calendrical systems are in use: the lunar, the Chinese solar, and the Gregorian solar. Urban society in Japan has adopted western usage more thoroughly, for example observing the new year at the beginning of the Gregorian Calendar, as opposed to China and much of rural Japan, which retain the old systems.

Religious festivals are important, but the times of their occurrence are complicated. ln the Christian West most major festivals are celebrated on Sundays or public. But the adoption of Sunday as a day of rest from work was a Christian regulation, and does not fit in with Jewish, Islamic or other systems. Easter and Whitsun fell on Sundays and helped to determine these days as public holidays. Other festivals, such as Christmas, were also introduced from the Christian tradition and, although the dates varied, these became Days of Obligation for both church and state in the West.

Nowadays the diverse religious scene, in both the West and the East, requires more understanding of various religious customs and adjustments in school and work accordingly. As Jews observed their Sabbath on the seventh day in western countries, but worked on Sunday, so other religious communities may do the same and they will expect to be treated with tolerance and respect.

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'Observing Festivals in Schools' Peter Woodward
pp 266-276

Observing Festivals in Schools

My first introduction to a primary school in Moseley, Birmingham, was an invitation to attend its week-long celebration of Divali, arrived in the middle of the week to find a colourful, highly decorated entrance hall where children's delightful work overflowed from busy classrooms into the spacious corridors, and all the staff (except the headmaster) looked more attractive than usual in decorative saris and Asian jewellery. Most of the work on display related to Hinduism, but certain areas of the school featured Chinese lanterns and Islamic buildings in an attempt to encourage those children whose families came to Britain from China and

Pakistan. This
was a possible source of confusion, it is true, but not alien to the Hindu spirit of lively celebration and shared traditions that the staff wanted all the school to discover.

This was not just a pleasant example of topic work or an extended environmental studies project - all the children were celebrating some aspect of their culture and background; white children who had never moved outside Birmingham; black children who had come here straight from their Caribbean and African backgrounds; Asian youngsters from the Punjab and Bangladesh and others whose accents were Irish or Welsh; all were caught up in the excitement of the event, the celebration of an experience.

The wide varieties of age, ability, background and involvement meant that there were, in the celebration, different levels of understanding and participation; but for the children this was more than just learning — it was a sharing of culture, of religion, of life-style (food, clothing and story, particularly), of atmosphere. It was also an experience in which the staff of the school could share.

The British scene

How does the British educational system allow such a celebration to happen? What of the much discussed 1944 Education Act with its Cowper-Temple clause insistence that religious instruction shall be given in every school in accordance with an agreed syllabus drawn up by a conference that represents (i) the Church of England, (ii) other denominations, (iii) teachers' associations, and (iv) the local education authority? Most of the early syllabuses drawn up for religious education were restricted to Christianity, and some still are (though denominational confessionalism is strictly excluded and rarely proposed). But few authorities today object if *additional* material of a relevant nature is introduced into schools, and most recent syllabuses allow and encourage the inclusion of appropriate material from the world's great religious traditions. Not many are as thoroughgoing in this respect as the Bradford supplement and the Birmingham syllabus with its handbook material but the widespread pluralism of British society produces few objections from parents, teachers or religious organisations when an effective balance of multi-faith material is introduced.

School worship or assembly

The same picture holds true for school worship or assembly, which each

school is instructed by law to hold every day for all pupils unless their parents choose to withdraw them (they have this right, though only a small number use it) or the buildings facilities are insufficient to permit the whole school to gather in one place. In many situations the assembly is still an act of Christian worship; in other cases it might be a celebration of a festival from one of the main non-Christian traditions; alternatively it may be a less clearly formulated act of devotion to an unspecified deity to avoid causing
offence to any of the communities present; at a different level again the assembly may be a secular celebration of a moral issue; or it may even become just a meeting point for the school where notices and team results can be announced and discipline enforced.

Both Christian and non-Christian festivals feature frequently, and it is interesting to see how the advent of variety has modified the nature of the contemporary assembly from what was once a straight-forward act of collective worship into a teaching medium, in which information and insights, respectful attention and personal involvement, all have their own place.

Let me give as an example two Christmas assemblies held on separate days but in the same large hall that two church schools share, one an infant and the other a junior school. They are a joint venture of Anglicans and Methodists on the southern outskirts of Birmingham. Two fluorescent ultra-violet lamps had been installed and both audience and participants on the juniors' day were supplied with a star cut out of reflective card. At the appropriate time the main lights dimmed and the special lights glowed with an unearthly pallor that turned the actors into angels and the audience into a circle of twinkling constellations. The very practical set was transformed into a forum where heaven and earth could meet. At the infants' celebration stories from Sweden, Israel and ancient India all featured the coming of light into the world; the use of costume, music and mime drew from parents and children a response that evoked a real sense of encounter and devotion which everybody present could feel.

Both these schools are composed largely of white children, and many of their celebrations centre on Christianity. It is good to find, though, that a growing number of such schools are also selecting non-Christian festivals and using these either as a teaching medium or as a form of multi-cultural education. In either case there is a deepening of the pupils' perceptions of what it means to celebrate a festival, and sometimes this is enhanced simply by the fact that much of the material is unfamiliar - in

just the same way as, in a different context, a vista of the Dead Sea when observed from
nearby Masada adds a totally new element to the concept of inland water for those previously familiar only with boating lakes and inland reservoirs. By way of example, a primary school with a primarily white population in Acocks Green, Birmingham, will serve as a case in point. Here the celebration of Divali and the retelling of traditional stories about Rama and Sita were thoughtfully presented in a striking way. The colour that was missing from the pupils' faces was in no way absent from their acting of the events or the creative work that covered the school's walls.

The close working relationship that is evident here between classroom activity and assembly is invaluable if festivals are to relate to the whole of school life and not just to a tiny 'spiritual' corner of it. The links that are possible with other subject areas often prove particularly effective in exploring the meaning of festivals from different traditions: dress, story, crafts, food and science are all relevant. In this way the celebration of festivals can also be a gloriously creative means of 'celebrating the curriculum', a phrase that has different meanings in different contexts, but which is altogether appropriate in this one where the whole of the school's life, both academic and social, can be caught up in the sustained and joyful reinterpretation of a festival.

Multi-cultural areas

It is in the multi-cultural schools of the inner-city areas that the greatest impetus has come for the celebration of festivals. In many cases this has brought with it the development of a particular type of community participation in the celebration which is distinctive and memorable. Parents will prepare Asian or Caribbean foods and bring these into school for a Divali party or a Mardi Gras carnival-type festival. Eid cards may be made or bought and presented to classmates, again with a party or festive celebration. The Chinese New Year may involve the dramatisation of the Dragon dance - I remember vividly a scene in an infants' class in a Handsworth Junior and Infant School, Birmingham, where all thirty children
danced together as the snaking tail of a magnificent, mythical dragon in his battle for the life the New Year would bring.

Commitment and objectivity

The impact and importance of the celebration of festivals from different religions and cultures lies in the balance it achieves between commitment and objectivity. For those of the faith involved, the festival will express something radically different from its meaning to the majority of the

school staff and to most of the parents and pupils who come from other or no traditions. The former will celebrate with these 'outsiders' something they have elsewhere celebrated with 'believers'; the 'non-believers' will not be able to celebrate at all in the same way, but many will still find scope for rejoicing and entering into the spirit of rejoicing which they observe in their neighbours and friends. Some will feel able to do this without undue concern or anxiety that they are compromising themselves, but this will rarely be universal; it is in part the presence of those who have reservations that will prevent this type of celebration from ever being in school what it could be in church, temple or mosque.

The practice of celebrating festivals in schools

The type of Eid celebration that occurred a few years ago in a Balsall Heath primary school provides a good example. The Muslim festival of Eid ul-Fitr breaks the fast of Ramadan, and Eid parties were arranged for different classes in the school. These could not be held before the festival, since anticipating such events is not normally acceptable in Asian communities. Nor could they be held on the appropriate day, first because it was not certain on which day the new moon would appear and second because most of the Muslim children would in any case be away from school on the actual day of the festival. Instead the parties were arranged for an afternoon two or three days later, by which time the Muslims had returned to school and the immediate impact of fast-breaking was over; but the spirit of joy and accomplishment was still firmly in evidence. Relatives provided the food for the events, many parents and grandparents attended, and even though the proceedings were simple, with a few readings and recitations, speeches, good wishes, distribution of cards and sharing of 'goodies', the impact on the Muslim community of being able, and even invited and encouraged, to mark the event in school was tremendous.

For the staff and non-Muslim children the festival was an eye-opener. They met with parents and grandparents on friendly terms, they saw them in their best costumes, they caught the atmosphere of cheerful festivity that surrounded them at this time, and they perceived a different and novel side of the children's characters as they reacted to the presence in school of their families. The sense of dignity, of community and brotherhood that Islam fosters made an impact on the whole school that was both unexpected and enduring.

For the Muslims themselves there was an initial nervousness and hesitancy - it was the first time the school had celebrated such a festival in this way - but this soon evaporated in the cordiality of the occasion. Indeed many of the adults were increasingly happy to talk about their children and families, their festivals and their faith, although several found their English was too restricted for extensive conversation.

The main danger for the school here lay in their trying to do too much, too seriously, too soon. The staff have learnt from this and subsequent events how slowly relationships have to grow if they are to survive and how important it is to avoid giving the impression of pressurising parents into positions for which they are not yet ready.

At the same time the community gave clear evidence that certain things mattered a great deal to them, and the easy way in which their caring attitudes and standards were conveyed to staff and others was a new and creative experience. In particular their joyful care for the Qur'an and their personal anxieties over the upbringing of their daughters were set in a very natural - and linked - context, which for the staff was an education in itself.
What happened here was a natural development of community life and celebration. It was not a formal school assembly, though the topic is, of course, highly suitable for just such a purpose. Rather it was an afternoon of informally structured activity in which most of the school could join in differing degrees. There was an educational element involved, but this was incidental rather than central. It was above all a happening, an event, in the life of the local community.

Source material
Celebrations like this raise a number of important issues in the life of the community, which are often ignored by those who compile assembly books for use in schools. These books usually intertwine two distinct strands: the presentation of information that can be communicated to pupils at an appropriate level and with varying degrees of interest; and the spiritual homily or moral instruction which frequently appears to be the justification for holding the assembly. Both aspects deal with the cognitive rather than the affective aspects of life, and the writers often seem to have an axe to grind.

This is particularly true of the 'anthology' type of assembly book, and is also a frequent occurrence in manuals that contain a term's assemblies ready made for the teacher to pick up and use just as they stand - an

excellent device for emergencies but one full of hidden hazards in inexperienced hands.

It is all the more refreshing therefore to note contributions where an abundance of selections is provided from which the teacher must select and to which pupils may respond and react, but where the nature of their response is left open. When there is no presentation of a party line to which they should conform, young people will often surprise by the effective and positive nature of their response - though it may take a major act of faith on the part of their elders to stand back and leave them to it.

Signposts to good practice

What can we offer that will provide a positive pointer to good practice? If festival as described above is neither pure information nor message, neither formal assembly nor yet explicit educational content, then what is it and what does it have to offer?

Perhaps another example may help to illustrate the point. A number of Birmingham inner-ring schools have found a rich sense of fulfilment in Asian festivals, especially Eid ul-Fitr, Divali and Baisakhi, and have then moved on from there to ask what they can do to reflect the life and culture of the sizeable minority of pupils in these schools from a Caribbean or African background. One answer they have found has been to stage a Mardi Gras carnival-style celebration.

The ingredients of this pot pourri are very similar to those of the Eid celebration described above: story, speeches, parental and community involvement, and food, with an additional emphasis on music (steel-band style) and dance, reggae and calypso and with rather less concern for scripture and history. The overt links to religion are slight - though the idea of Shrove Tuesday merrymaking in preparation for Lenten fasting has a sun-baked logic all its own - and one which is no less attractive than the more traditional British 'pancake' philosophy! What is most strange is that the absence of such links with religion in no way detracts from the atmosphere of celebration found in more conventional 'religious' celebrations.

Key elements in the celebration of festivals and how these apply in relation to schools are discussed below:

Emotional response

A festival is a time of heightened emotions. Frequently the relevant emotion will be joy, as in Holi (deliverance of Krishna), Christmas (birth of Jesus), Eid ul-Fitr (breaking the fast of Ramadan); but it could equally well be awe (Yom Kippur and the days of Penitence, Holy Weeks and so on), repentance and self-discipline (Lent may figure here, though it is really a period of preparation for a festival, rather than pure festival itself) or sorrow (Good Friday, Muharram, the destruction of the Temple). This is saying something more than simply asserting that the festival is an emotional time. The emotion is heightened or deepened for a purpose, and it follows that the proper celebration of the festival involves an adequate enhancement of this emotional level. In a school situation this may be difficult, and even undesirable, to replicate. But unless there is some depth of feeling involved, the school's celebration will be inadequate, lifeless and barren. A school celebration needs to be more than a clinical retelling of factual data and story. It misses the mark if there is no hint at all of the central emotion that marks out the festival from 'ordinary' days of the school year.

History and legend

A festival usually commemorates some incident in history or legend. There may be exceptions (harvest festivals could, arguably, be one), but they will be few. Historical incidents do, of course, have a tendency to become 'enlarged' with the passing of time and constant retelling, but though the element of history may be somewhat uncertain, the gloss of time may give to the festival a glow of warmth and romance. But a festival that has lost its origins and become re-associated, emasculated or so contemporary in presentation as to be unrecognisable, is of little value to those who celebrate it. In an educational context it is all the more important that this element should remain firmly in view; and a celebration that concentrates on contemporary ritual to the exclusion of historical recall forfeits an invaluable and essential element.

Worship

A festival relates in some degree to worship. It is true that there are a number of secular celebrations where this will not apply, but the normal role of festivals in world religions, even those in Buddhism and Jainism, is to ensure that there is some acknowledgment of power or powers greater than the individual participant, and some form of worship. The problem for a school community here is the danger of hypocrisy, for many of the school (pupils and staff alike) will not join in this particular act. To feign would be deceitful and out of touch with the reality of the situation. In this sense the school community is often unable to celebrate a festival in

the same manner
as the community of faith, and would be well advised not to attempt to do so. At the same time the celebration would be incomplete if there was no reference to worship as the basis of the festival, and possibly if there was no opportunity for the minority, who are committed, to express their response to their faith in a meaningful way, while other friends look on and - in their own style - sympathise, share and participate, even though it be at some degree of distance.

Community activity
Festivals are never solitary events, but reflect the celebratory activities of a community. Concern with the historical work of an individual as the basis of a festival (for example those festivals commemorating the death of a Sikh Guru, the nativity of Jesus, or the birth of the Prophet Muhammad) may obscure this element; however it is important to ensure that any school-based activity reflects adequately the corporate nature of community celebration.

The annual cycle
Another aspect in the celebration of festivals relates to the annual cycle of which most festivals in the world's faiths are a crucial part. The individual festival is not an event on its own: it is part of a regular calendar which has been repeated and observed time and again. Each successive repetition builds on previous celebrations of the festival in the minds of the community, so that one re-enactment of Christmas or Passover recalls previous years' celebrations The annual routine gives a sense of purpose, healthy repetition and regularity to the year, in the same way that the seven-day cycle does to the Jewish Sabbath and the five prayers of *salat* do to the Muslim's day. The festival's celebration provides a sense of fulfilment and completion, to each passing year and it is possible for any school to contribute something valuable both to members of the faith concerned and also to those who are outside the relevant tradition by drawing attention to the annual cycle. It is not so much a matter of factual information, useful though that is, as of catching the mystique of purpose and plan that lies behind the cycle, of being in touch with previous generations of celebrants in their routine of devotion. A school celebration which conveys something of this atmosphere is turning an assembly into an act of devotion without compromising the beliefs of either those within or those outside the relevant community - and that is a valuable achievement indeed.

Festival analysis
The Mardi Gras festival mentioned above was strong on emotion, community involvement and the role of the festival in the annual cycle. History and elements of worship were also involved, though in a less central manner. It would be interesting to analyse any school's assemblies, including the others mentioned in this chapter, in the same way. The value of such an exercise lies not in any introspective self-evaluation, which may be a dangerous exercise if over-stressed, so much as in the making of plans for a full and balanced assembly programme and for achieving what assembly is best fitted to do.

A recent visit to a multi-cultural primary school in Moseley for a Chinese New Year celebration was interesting because here, too, these five elements were all present in some way or other. The decorations on the walls, the role-play as dragons and lions, the attendance of parents and other members of the local community, and the distribution of sweets as pupils left the hall, all produced a heightened atmosphere where history and community met in the observance of this gateway to the annual festive cycle. Of worship as it is known in the West there was little, but that need not mean that worship (or the awareness of worship) was absent. For the few Chinese children present the celebrations may well have been worshipful, though whether they would have claimed that is open to question. The presence of heightened emotion - and this was an event filled with emotion - is not of itself, of course, sufficient to constitute worship, but the two often relate closely and the presence of one may indicate the real presence of the other — or sometimes compensate for its absence.

Assembly and worship

It may be that in this relationship we have another corner piece of the fascinating jigsaw puzzle which depicts the relationship of assembly to worship. These two terms used to be virtual synonyms for each other in the context of schools, but the arguments in favour of retaining and developing regular assemblies in schools no longer posit the need for the school to be a worshipping community. Instead assembly has become a variety of modified cocktails, some bland and smooth, others evocative and innovative, yet others vigorous and challenging, often with a scorpion sting in the tail. The worship element in this cocktail has not been universally eliminated, but where it has, its contribution can in large measure be replaced by a sensitive introduction of the element of heightened emotion.

If this emotional response is coupled with the important consideration, which a multi-faith situation inevitably raises — that some of the community are within the appropriate tradition of faith (and a few of these may have a deep, personal commitment to it) while others stand outside and look in - a way may be opened up for young people to become aware of and develop an understanding of the significance of worship for people of different faiths and cultures.

Here is provided a way to circumvent the valid fear of dragooning people into worship or of pushing young people towards hypocrisy through making assumptions of a premature commitment. It is an approach which admittedly has other dangers (too many high spots too close together, divided loyalties within the community, assumptions about total commitment as opposed to partial belief and assent, and so on but it has the salient virtue that it can effectively open up an exciting and positive approach through festival to celebration. Is this perhaps an adequate justification for a continuing pattern of school assemblies?

Relevant examples here might include a harvest festival at a secondary school in the deep south of Birmingham; an inner-ring secondary school celebration of Divali when the lower school pupils acted as hosts for two classes of top junior pupils who would shortly be joining the ranks of those acting out the celebration; a community school Christmas 'happening' where a tutorial group presented their own understanding of what the festival means today. But for greater detail it would be better to turn back to the opening paragraphs of this article and read again how a primary school celebrated Divali: note the heightened atmosphere, the community involvement, the element of worship for those who honoured Vishnu at home, with an insight into Hindu devotion and culture for those who did not, the retelling of an old story and a flavour of the annual cycle of Indian festivals with its entrancing colour and magical quality. When these elements are present, festival becomes the ideal vehicle for linking together classroom, assembly and community in a meaningful celebration of that larger, unsung curriculum which, increasingly in our schools, is coming to be seen as the central core of daily life.

Peter Woodward

Brown, Alan (ed) with Vida Barnett, Owen Cole and Clive Erricker
The Shap Handbook on World Religions in Education CRE 1987

'Religious Education – A Middle Way Robert Jackson pp 17-19

Ibid. 'New Religious Movements' Clive Erricker p 135

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION — A MIDDLE WAY

The recent history of religious education in England and Wales has involved a process of action and reaction. The predominantly biblical studies approach of the late 1940s and the 1950s gave way in the 1960s to a pupil-
centred life and living style, all but bereft of explicitly religious content.

The reaction in the 1970s was to restore content to RE, but this time the data came from the religions of the world as lived and practised by adherents. The 1980s response is to become once again wary of too much subject matter and to set the child back at centre stage.

Terms like 'personal development' and 'spirituality' are as common in the current RE jargon as 'explicit religion' and 'phenomenology', two terms in common use since the early 1970s. Further, there is a drift away from the study of religions in some recently published curriculum material. Students can gain more spiritual insight, it is claimed, from reflecting on, say, abstract works of art than from learning about Judaism or the Sikhs.

It is time to break the cycle of action and reaction into which RE seems in danger of being trapped. Religious education, it is suggested, should be characterised neither by its database nor by its contributions to pupils' personal development, but by both. Without a study of religions, the subject is likely to attract idiosyncratic and tendentious interpretations of the nature of religion while, at the same time, tending to lose its identity, as it did in the 1960s. Without the opportunity for pupils to engage with the material they study — and in some cases making a contribution to it — the subject will have limited personal relevance to those who pursue it.

Despite the pattern outlined above it is possible to trace a thread running through the recent history of British religious education which represents a middle way, supporting a study of religions conducted in such a way that it makes a distinctive contribution to the pupils' development of a coherent and personally satisfying set of beliefs and values. Both elements appear in some of the key documents in the development of the subject.

The Anglican *Durham Report* 1970 includes the following passages:

> 'Man is a creature who finds himself perplexed with the mystery of his existence. He knows that he is, and ponders why he is, what he is, and what he is for. From the start of recorded history he has sought to find answers to the enigma of his origin and destiny, he has puzzled about the meaning and purpose of his life. The great religions of the world find their frame of reference within these ultimate questions which man has asked and continues to ask — questions which are a part of the human condition ... The aim of religious education should be to explore the place and significance of religion human life and so to make a distinctive contribution to each pupil's search for a faith by which to live'.[1]

Though expressed in different language, the influential Schools Council Working Paper 36 represents a parallel view:

> . 'We incline to the view that religious education must include both the . search for meaning and the objective study of the phenomena of religion. It should be both a dialogue with experience and a dialogue . with living religions, so that the one can interpret and reinforce the other."

This, it should be noted. is a quotation from a document mistakenly regarded by some as a charter for a descriptive, content dominated religious education. The two elements also appear in some recent writing on religious education. in the section on personal development which appears in *Approaching World Religions*[3], for example, and at a practical level in several of the newer agreed syllabuses such as those of Birmingham. Berkshire and. most recently, Warwickshire.

Justifying RE

ln a recent article, David Day criticised such attempts to link what he calls the cultural-intellectual tradition and the personal-existential approach, seeing an ulterior motive behind such an amalgamation:

> . 'As the assumption that religious education is useful for this or that cultural or intellectual purpose is challenged, those involved in religious education try to link the descriptive study of religions with a value that is beyond question — that of the pupil's personal . development."

The rest of this chapter will argue briefly that there are good arguments from an intellectual and cultural point of view which support the study of religion in schools. Finally, the relationship between the study of religions and the pupils who undertake that study will be considered.

A key argument for the study of religion in the schools of a democratic society is the liberal education argument advanced in different versions by a number of educational philosophers. The essence of the argument is that education in a liberal democracy cannot have purely utilitarian goals such as the satisfaction of a society's current needs. Education in an open society
should, preferably, provide access to the full breadth of human knowledge and experience and that includes an awareness of religious experience.

To take one version of the argument, Paul Hirst contends that a liberal education is an initiation into the widest possible range of human knowledge. Such knowledge is ultimately divisible into a cluster of forms, each unique in having its own logic, appropriate methods of enquiry and truth tests. Although, Says Hirst. it is impossible to know whether religion is strictly speaking. a form of knowledge (for there are no agreed objective tests for religious claims), it is certain that people who practise religion and who make religious claims do exist, and that their beliefs, practices, values etc. constitute a body of knowledge which can form the basis of study.[5] One might add that a study of a range of religious traditions can introduce pupils to the distinctive features of each and provide the opportunity to discuss whether religion has any essential features and if so, what they might be.

Day finds a problem with this kind of view. He says: 'It assumes that religion *is* significant enough to justify the detailed and distinct study which is being advocated. But if man's religious experience is a bizarre aberration, then it is clearly indefensible to spend so much time investigating it'.[6] Since there are no agreed objective methods to test this hypothesis, it is preferable to allow young people the opportunity to make their own judgements about religion in an informed and structured manner rather than to gain a piecemeal and distorted account through incidental encounters by way of the media and other sources.

Day is also unconvinced by arguments for religious education that have a more utilitarian ring. In particular, he is sceptical that a detailed knowledge of religion is necessary in order to understand international affairs, and that multifaith religious education can increase mutual tolerance and respect among pupils of different cultural backgrounds. It is significant that Day caricatures world studies and multicultural approaches to religious education as having entirely instrumental goals — to increase international understanding and to reduce prejudice and intolerance. The fundamental reason for studying religion in both cases, however, is that world society and our own society provide examples of religions as they are lived and practised by their followers.

The religions are studied primarily because they are unique and they are there. They are unique in that they comprise a group of distinctive and yet interrelated world views sharing a transcendental reference which distinguishes them from secular philosophies or ideologies. They also happen to influence international affairs and a range of them is active in our own society.

Among the secondary reasons for studying them are the need to promote international or intercultural understanding and to reduce prejudice — reasons equally applicable to, say, world history or multicultural arts. Day doubts that such reasons are adequate: 'It is not uncommon to find that one unwanted and unexpected effect of teaching about world faiths is an increase in prejudice. It is not unlikely that some ego-defensive attitudes and prejudices are actually fuelled by undogmatic, objective teaching about religions.'[7] Expressions like 'not uncommon' and 'not unlikely' allow Day to get away with providing no hard evidence. Nevertheless, he has a point in saying that a too facile connection between information about a religious tradition and tolerance of its adherents is made by some of those engaged in religious education. Day's implied conclusion appears to be to shy away from multifaith teaching, thus sidestepping further reflection on the relationship between information, tolerance and prejudice.

It would be a mistake to claim that accurate information necessarily fosters tolerance; propagandists are aware that lies and misinformation can increase tolerance, sympathy and respect. Yet is it not the case, that knowledge and understanding are necessary conditions for removing prejudice? Knowledge about a religion of itself may be insufficient to change attitudes, but knowledge is essential to break stereotypes or to correct false information. If a religion is presented accurately and well, then the student is, in principle, in a position to judge whether that tradition (in part or in full) commands his or her respect. The problem is that so many treatments of religion make insufficient effort to be accurate or balanced.

An example from international affairs is the presentation of Islam in the western, and especially the American, press. Edward Said, in his book *Covering Islam* discusses the selectivity of the media in deciding what is newsworthy and how that selection determines public attitudes towards Islam. The newsworthy tends to be the sensational, and the image of Islam is projected through terrorism, religious fanaticism and the frightful administration of Islamic law. The result is a crude vision of Islam as a monolithic force which is seen as either for or against American interests.

This sort of distortion can only be corrected by accurate information — something the religious education teacher should be in a position to give.

But the provision of accurate information alone does not guarantee in practice that prejudiced views will be abandoned. Along with all other teachers concerned to remove prejudices, the RE teacher will struggle-by experimenting with teaching methods, for example, to find ways of increasing pupils' sensitivity to traditions and cultures other than their own.

Religious education and personal development

Since there remain strong intellectual and cultural reasons for studying religions in schools, Day's explanation for religious educators' attention to personal development of pupils is shown to be inadequate. Further, his discussion of the relationship between the study of religions and the personal development of pupils is also unsatisfactory. The link between the cultural-intellectual tradition and the personal-existential quest, says Day, has spawned the shop-window approach 'which suggests that pupils peer into a variety of religious systems and then choose one for themselves' and the nest-building approach in which 'the pupil draws eclectically from religious traditions and uses the material to construct a personal system in which to rest'.

Day rightly rejects both approaches, yet neither of them is propounded in serious literature on religious education and it is a pity that Day fails to discuss recent work (by Michael Grimmitt for example)[9] which deserves critical appraisal.

Since this is not the place for such discussion, I will conclude with some observations on the relationship between the study of religions in schools and those who undertake that study, which are not considered seriously (my second point below), or are not considered at all in David Day's article.

First, the relationship is often reciprocal. The study of religions may derive something from pupils as well as vice versa. Pupils from religious backgrounds bring with them personal experience and knowledge which may provide material for sharing with others. I am reminded of a middle school lesson in which a class was guessing what was happening in a transparency showing a Greek Orthodox baptism ceremony. Part of the lesson was taken over by a boy who instructed us in the rites of adult baptism in his own Baptist tradition. He was even able to tell us what the word 'baptism' meant and to outline the symbolism of being 'dipped' into death and rising to new life. Other examples of pupils' contributions can be found in the religious education literature.

Secondly, a consideration of some aspect of an unfamiliar faith can prompt pupils to reflect on questions which are of interest and concern to them. Incidentally, this dual aspect is not unique to religious education. Philosophy involves the study of the work of philosophers, partly to stimulate students to do their own philosophising. Further, English, as a school subject has for years been concerned to discuss the issues arising from the study of literature as well as with literary appreciation. A 'pick and mix' approach is implied in neither case. In formulating their own positions on philosophical questions, philosophy students do not add a dash of Kant to a measure of Descartes. Rather, by engaging with what philosophers have written, students are helped to work out their own positions on issues such as the nature of knowledge or the possibility of metaphysics.

In religious education terms this point is made clearly by the recent *Warwickshire Agreed Syllabus*. The aims of this document are: 'To promote in children and young people an understanding of religions', and yet 'to encourage children and young people to develop well-reasoned views and opinions about religion and about the basic questions of meaning and value with which religions and philosophies are concerned'.[10]

A third point arises from the first two. Pupils bring to religious education commitments (whether religious or not) from their family backgrounds. It is anything but religious education's role to undermine such allegiances. The subject does, however, require clarity and consistency of argument, and it does encourage pupils to face questions which are raised by the religious and secular pluralism of our society and our schools — questions which may not have been tackled in the home or the faith community. If the subject can encourage pupils to work out reasonable stances on the relationship between faiths, then it will have made a significant contribution to their personal development.

Finally, it is vital to devise teaching methods and leaming activities which both foster appropriate attitudes for the study of religions and motivate young people to become involved in that study. Some work on small group leaming activities,[11] on the use of artefacts,[12] visits[13] and on the use of various dramatic techniques[14] has already been done. The challenge for teachers over the next few years is to use and develop such methods in order to ensure the effectiveness of a multifaith approach to religious education.

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Notes and References

1 *The Fourth R: The Durham Report on Religious Education*, London, National Society and S.P.C.K., 1970. paras. 204 and 215.

2 *Religious Education in Secondary Schools, Schools Council Working Paper 36*, London. Evans/Methuen. 1971. p. 43.

3 R. Jackson (ed.), *Approaching World Religions,* London. John Murray. I982. Chapters by M. Grimmitt, B. Gates and S. Weightman.

4 D. Day, 'Religious Education Forty Years On: A Permanent Identity Crisis?', *British Journal of Religious Education,* Vol. 7, No. 2, Spring 1985, pp. 55-63.

5 Relevant papers by Paul Hirst include 'Liberal Education and the Nature of Knowledge' in *Philosophical Analysis and Education*, R. D. Archambault (ed.), London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965. 'Morals, Religion and the Maintained School', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, XIV, No. 1, reprinted in Hirst. Knowledge and the Curriculum, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974. 'Religion: A form of Knowledge? A Reply', *Learning for* Living, Vol. 12, No. 4, March 1973.

6 Day. op cit. p. 57.

7 ibid. p. 56. '8. E. Said. *Covering Islam*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.

9 M. Grimmitt. 'World Religions and Personal Development' in Jackson, op. cit. pp.136-149.

10 *Religious Education in Warwickshire Schools and Colleges*, Warwickshire Education Authority, 1985.

11 Some ideas for small group work are outlined in R. Jackson, 'The Concerns of Religious Education and the Characterisation of Hinduism' *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 6. No. 3, Summer 1984. See also R. Jackson and D. Killingley, *Approaches to Hinduism*, London, John Murray. 1987.

12 The Religious Education Artefacts Project (REAP) based at Birmingham University is one example.

13 See Living Together: A First Supplement, City of Birmingham Education Committee. 1982. pp.91-101, and Jackson and Killingley, 1987.

14 An example is David Self, 'Living the Story: Drama in Religious Education', *Resource*, Vol. 7, No. 3. Summer 1985.

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'New Religious Movements' Clive Erricker p 135

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

The first aim of this section is to highlight the dynamic and integrated aspects of religion. Dynamic in the sense that religion constantly changes. Integrated in the sense that change comes about within a religion in relation to its social and cultural context. When teaching about religion it is easy to fall into the trap of stereotyping on the basis of the images we regard as typical traditional features of a particular faith. Hinduism in India with its rigid caste system: Buddhists in Sri Lanka with saffron robes and alms bowls; Hasidic Jews at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem; Islamic pilgrims circling the Kaaba in Mecca in their white robes. Distinctive as these images are, we must not mark them as what is 'typical' or 'orthodox' or in some sense what must be taught about a faith. They may be far from it. In different cultural contexts and as new historical circumstances emerge. so
changes occur. A faith in its contemporary form, especially as it appears on the television. radio and in newspapers will reflect the piecemeal (fragmentary) and pragmatic nature of everyday humanity. It is this that needs to be related to the ideal models of different traditions that we are already working with in order to supplement them. This helps us to realise that religion is part of the pattern of human life not just a backcloth to it.

This section attempts to chart some examples of cultural changes in relation to religion and the developments that have ensued. I am not suggesting by this that the shape of religion is determined by changes without but rather
that religion is one of the activities that make up social and cultural conditions. Therefore the relationship is, to a greater or lesser extent, a reciprocal one.

The papers presented reflect this but fall into three distinct groups. The title New Religious Movements acts as an umbrella term for all three and, by doing so, remains ambiguous and I hope justifiably so.

The first group is concerned with new movements, events or tendencies, making themselves felt within established religious traditions. These may be of three kinds. They may not be original but the re-assertion of recognisable strands in a tradition: as is the case with Militant Islam which at present has a high profile in international affairs and is most dramatically
represented by the Ayatollah's reign in Iran. Alternatively, they may represent important contemporary developments within cultures that are predominantly associated with a particular world religion; such is the case with Liberation Theology in Latin America and the Third World. Contrastingly. They may reflect the changes in a religion traditionally associated with one culture as it makes its home in another. Such is the case with Modern Hindu Movements in the United Kingdom. Into this largest
group, within these different categories, fall the papers on Militant Islam by R. Ostle, Liberation Theology by John Hammond, Modern Hindu Movements by Kim Knott, Buddhism in Britain by Peter Harvey, Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet and in Exile by Tadeusz Shorupski, Buddhism and the Tamil Minority in Sri Lanka by C.H.B. Reynolds, Sikhism and the Question of the Punjab by Chris Shackle and The Influence of the Holocaust on Judaism by Janet Trotter.

The second group of papers deals with global issues that religious traditions are necessarily addressing in their own different ways. Even less than the first group can this be given a comprehensive treatment across all the main traditions and covering the numerous different themes. Rather here are a first selection of papers introducing three contemporary issues. They are Tanii Sarwar‘s paper on Women in the Teaching of the Prophet dealing with the question of the role of women in Islam. Brian Gates’s examination of the Nuclear Debate Across World Religions and John Shepherd's investigation into the influence of religion on World Development.

The third group is concerned with New Religious Movements that stand outside the major traditions and is exemplified by three papers examining two contrasting examples. The first paper is on Rastafarianism with an introduction to it history and philosophy by Aman Saba Saakana. This is supported with a bibliographical paper on the same movement by Harold

Turner. Rastafarianism was chosen as a representative of this group because of its impact in the U.K as well as its firmly-established cross-cultural connections in Africa and the Caribbean. By contrast, Ninian Smart's paper deals with new movements with very different and, at present, less well-established roots: movements indigenous to California. Through them he reflects on the distinctive details of Californian culture and mentality.

Apart from falling into these three categories, there is another way in which the articles differ. The majority have been written by students of religion, academic specialists with a concern for the fields in which they research. However. it is good to include two papers by adherents of particular faiths presenting a view from the inside: these are the papers by Tanii Sarwar and Aman Saba Saakana. In a collection of this kind I believe this
contrast is enriching.

This collection is not. of course. based on an original concept but it is something new to the Shap Handbook, and I hope it helps teachers towards a more complete understanding of world religions.

Many thanks to all those who have contributed and those who helped me bring the contributions together, especially Richard Tames, Richard Grey and Brian Gates.

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Gluck-Wood, A. *Religions and Education* 1988

'Introduction' Angela Wood p 4

Introduction

By the Editor Angela Gluck-Wood

I wonder if you have ever been engaged in the educational 'game' of tipping out the contents of your pocket or bag to be analysed by your peers – in the manner of hypothetical archaeologists – for what they reveal of your life-style, your value systems or even your deeply held beliefs . . . Or perhaps you have given a farewell speech for a dear colleague and you have trembled at the prospect of summing up their achievements and experiences . . . Some of these sensations infused the initial task of selecting for a retrospective volume articles from the annual Journal (which began formally in 1978).

Among Working Party members, the project quickly became know as "The best of Shap" and we certainly knew which articles had been most in demand over the years. A small survey of cross-phase teachers who had been looking at the way religion is portrayed in print revealed other pieces of rare reflection; many colleagues also felt that some items should be included which indicated the development in R.E. over the twenty year period – a development in which the Working Party has had a guiding hand. Still there were some glaring omissions in the anthology so two articles were especially commissioned for this volume. So we began to talk about "The Shape of Shap" – when we could pronounce it, that is!

A lively collection has resulted. It focuses on some aspects of religion which have not been written about elsewhere, or which are generally inaccessible; it permits a healthy tension between contributions within some of the sections on religions; it offers academic rigour and child's-eye viewpoints, both sensitivity and dynamism. No attempt has been made to impose a house style and while this may have produced some idiosyncrasies, it has also given individual writers a great deal of scope. This had made for some very authentic writing. Indeed, all the contributors whose original work was selected were invited to revisit it and some made substantial changes. R.E. has long been understood as a process not a product and this book bears witness to the fact that we never arrive; we are always arriving . . .

In only one aspect of the material has there been an editorial stamp – that concerning 'technical terms'. In some publications religious vocabulary from a non-English language is italicised or slipped between inverted commas or perhaps bolded. The result is that by and large 'Christian words – which are usually in English – are treated as matter-of-fact while others are made into a special case It is an artificial state of affairs in the history of religions and I suggest a norm-and-deviation model which is offensive in the language of world religions today; in this publication all terms are 'normal' and italics are used only to emphasise meaning.

Another unifying factor is the art work. The illustrator has used the same basic style throughout and has connected the sections with certain running motifs; She has tried to balance this commonality by eliciting the particular qualities of each tradition or each educational aspect. The intention is a theme of diversity within unity; In the case of the illustrations of religious traditions, she has selected a central image and embedded it in contextualised details drawn from the articles she is depicting; To be fully appreciated, the art belongs with the words.

Shap has been **Working** very hard for twenty years; this book is a bit of the **Party**.

Angela Gluck-Wood

Erricker, Clive (ed) with Alan Brown, Mary Hayward, Dilip Kadodwala, Paul Williams

Teaching World Religions: A Teacher's Handbook Heinemann 1993

'*Teaching World Religions in schools: methods and strategies'*
. *John Rankin pp 2-4*

re have been many attempts to define what is meant by religion. I remember Professor Ninian Smart saying of religion: 'Whatever it is, there is a lot of it about!' I will not attempt to tackle the question of definition here, but it is important that teachers should be aware of the complexity

of the problem. It was Cantwell-Smith who especially drew attention to the distinction between a religion as it is practised and the ideal presentation of its propositions by adherents.

Sometimes the question is asked: 'What do Christians/ Muslims/ Hindus believe about . . . ' The assumption here is that religion will consist in beliefs about' various things. In fact, adhering to a religion can be on a spectrum from the most gentle, scarcely conscious, adoption of certain customs to a
ferociously conscious and deliberate taking-up of positions and practices. Where people locate themselves on that spectrum is the outcome of a multitude of social influences and conditioning. In homogeneous, religiously conscious societies, some of that conditioning will take place in school as part of the underlying assumptions of the school. In modern Western societies, and in British society in particular, schools also reflect their society, but there is no homogeneous religious assumption. The society reflected is complex, multicultural and open, even if there are

pockets of population which appear to have commonly shared religious values.

It must be clear that schools cannot be used as instruments of particular religious conditioning - except in so far as they will help young people to live productively in a plural and complex society. The sole point of this introduction is to say to teachers that they need to decide what they are trying to do in RE. To what extent and in what sense are they engaged in trying to change or develop the existing religious identity of the students in their care? Is it legitimate to have any such intentions? What are the strategic objectives?

Understanding religion

Religion is so much a part of people's lives and has been so much a part of the history of nations that the need to achieve some general understanding of religion in the course of a school curriculum seems self-evident, and yet it is often treated as some optional addition to what really matters! Part of the content of education must include an understanding of religion — and particularly an understanding of how it is communicated. This applies to the whole age range, both primary and secondary levels.

I have already indicated another part of the strategic aim which I think needs to find its place in RE. It must be part of a teacher's function to help equip students to meet the circumstances of living in society and to become good citizens. It follows that the teaching of world religions has to be sympathetic. Part of the strategy is that our own prejudices will be examined and eliminated so far as is possible. At the very least, we will try not to pass on our prejudices to the pupils. It is, of course, logical and important that the RE syllabus should include the study of religions practised in the catchment area of the school and particularly in the context of the lives of the children attending the school. Sometimes this is not achieved, even between Christian denominations, simply because, for instance, children of Roman Catholic parents will attend a different school. The phenomenon of the religious unrest in Northern Ireland should perhaps have alerted us to the need for mutual understanding and respect. However, it is not enough to be aware of the religions practised in one's own immediate neighbourhood. We are all citizens of the world at a time of steadily increasing mobility and communication, and children need to be helped to prepare for life in a world of very diverse religious commitments.

So we are concerned to achieve a sympathetic understanding of religions, including both those which are locally represented and those which have been formative in the lives of people in the history of the world.

Developing perception

There is a further point to be made. Apart from the contention that religions are important existentially and historically, it is probably true that the understanding of religion involves developing certain perceptive faculties which are not totally represented in any other area of experience at school. Some would deny that there is any capacity to be developed different from those to be exercised in the study of poetry or music, for example. Yet these last do not propose in themselves whole frameworks for the interpretation of life. Whatever one's own view, religion represents a very widespread human activity, both at the personal and collective levels, and there is a need to take care that pupils do not lack the 'antennae' to tune into its significance. However difficult to define, part of our aim in RE is to develop capacities of empathy and of response to ideas which may not have a simple propositional content.

It is clear that in the course of pursuing this strategy RE will also be providing pupils with the information which helps them to decide on their own stance in religion. However, care must be taken that this is not the main purpose. The practice of religion remains always, in some sense, 'extra-curricular'. In this matter, schools must preserve their neutrality.

One last word in this section. The requirement for objectivity and sympathetic understanding should not mean that teachers abandon all critical awareness. For example, it would be wrong to encourage children to live in terror of an avenging deity, or to be unconcerned about the fate of others, or to be intolerant etc. There is no way that humane standards developed in our society should be overruled by the need to be sympathetic to any example of religious practice. However, we need, at the same time, to beware of stereotyping. It would, for example, be very foolish to take the Inquisition as the most typical model of Christianity in action!

Methods

Teaching World Religions requires the use of recognized teaching methods as for any other subject. However, some methods seem to correspond more sympathetically than others to the subject matter of religion.

Many years ago, Jerome Bruner divided learning into three 'modes'.[1] These are the 'enactive', the 'iconic' and the 'symbolic'.

Enactive

In the enactive mode, the learner is involved in 'doing'. Bruner's examples were drawn from learning mathematics, and all infant teachers know that, for most children, leaming about numbers involves a preliminary physical involvement, an engagement with counters or the classification of like entities. When applied to learning about religions, it implies engaging in some relevant experience. When leaming about the mosque or the church

or the synagogue, the best method is to arrange a well prepared visit, in which the children's activities are foreseen. One reason why this method is especially appropriate is that visiting a mosque or a church or a synagogue is part of the actual activity of a Muslim or Christian or Jew. Care should be taken not just to bring back observations from the visit, but to experience something which is part of the normal activity in the building. So in the case of a mosque, perhaps the children could experience the sound of the call to prayer, or some reading of passages from the Qur'an. In the church, it would help if, for example, the organ was being played; and in the synagogue, if someone could show one of the scrolls from the ark. If adults were trying to learn about the practice of any of these religions, they would probably arrange to attend when actual religious ceremonies were taking place. That is an 'enactive' mode of learning. When it is not possible to make visits of this sort, teachers should try to re-create some authentic activity within the classroom, even if it is only to cook the appropriate foods for a religious festival.

Iconic

We use the iconic mode when we make graphs and bar charts and all sorts of diagrams. These are used extensively in teaching and, next to the enactive mode, they are most effective. It so happens that the iconic mode is at the centre of most religious expression, and learning to receive concepts in this way improves the understanding of religion. In the case of mathematics, diagrams are used to focus and summarize mathematical concepts. Often in religion icons are used to convey complex ideas which defy other descriptions; icons are often essential features of religions and not simply devices to convey something which could be otherwise expressed. A useful activity, therefore, is the making of models, especially if preceded by discussion on the reasons for each part of them: for example, the advent crown, the Christmas crib or the Easter garden; or the model mosque. In the cases of Islam and Judaism, there is a presumption against the use of images. Nevertheless, the layout of the mosque is significantly iconic, with the Mihrab marking the direction of Makkah. The synagogue has similar iconic features.

Using the iconic mode can also be pursued in the use of drawings or paintings. These can be used either as illustrations shown to the pupils or as part of their own creative activity. In most religions artistic expression is part of the historical experience. In Islam and Judaism there is a general prohibition against using human figures in religious contexts, but artistic creativity flourishes in other ways. In Islam, there is a great heritage of pattern design and calligraphy. In the Christian tradition there is a very rich outpouring of visual art of all kinds. Here, again, there is a degree of conflict

between specific traditions, where the more puritan of the Protestant tradition resist the use of outward signs. The Hindu tradition is full of visual representation, and, while aesthetic considerations should not be neglected, it is important to discover the underlying meanings portrayed. Artefacts, too, are often works of art in themselves, but more importantly, they often convey something of the inner essence of a religion.

Under the heading of the iconic mode we should also include the rituals and ceremonies of a religion. Here the enactive and iconic modes meet. If actual participation is not appropriate, at least pupils can be helped to understand the representation taking place — for example, the bread and wine of the Christian Eucharist.

Symbolic

The third of Bruner's modes is the symbolic. By the symbolic mode, Bruner means the use of words. This is not the sense of symbolic most of us are accustomed to use. However, a little reflection shows that it is the most abstract of all the modes. Human beings have developed it to an extremely sophisticated level, in which all ideas and all entities can be translated in the symbolic abstraction of words. Language is the most used of all teaching methods, and even when we are using a different mode it is always accompanied by verbal explanations. We know from experience that 'words alone' are an inefficient mode of learning for the majority of students in school. Truth be told, it is probably inefficient for many adults, too! However, words are important to religions for many reasons.

The main reason is that an essential aspect of all religions is that they should be passed on. Religions do not consider themselves expendable: they are 'for ever'. So the effort is always made to pass on the tradition to succeeding generations. All developed religions have their sacred scriptures, and in three of them - Judaism, Christianity and Islam - there is an especial emphasis on the 'word'. In Judaism, the sacred Torah lies at the heart of all its teaching. In Christianity, Jesus is called the 'Word Incarnate', and New Testament is endued with special authority. In Islam, the Qur'an is paramount as the 'Word of God'. So teaching with words, and teaching about the sacred words of a religion, chimes in well with the nature of religion as it shows itself.

So it is that these three modes of learning, the enactive, the iconic and the symbolic, not only point to a suitable methodology, but

simultaneously reflect modes which are part of the common currency of religion.

Notes

1 Jerome S. Bruner, *Towards a Theory of Instruction*, 1961.

John Rankin

Erricker, Clive (ed) with Alan Brown, Mary Hayward, Dilip Kadodwala, Paul Williams

Teaching World Religions: A Teacher's Handbook Heinemann 1993

Ibid. 'The Jewish Perspective' Clive A. Lawton pp 59-62

Ibid. 'Amritdhari, keshdhari, sahajdhari and patit Sikhs' W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi pp 114-116

Ibid. 'Being a religious minority in contemporary Britain: the Zoroastrian experience' John Hinnells and Rashna Writer pp 138-142

The Jewish Perspective

Clive A. Lawton

Any serious student of Judaism will soon be struck by the sheer quantity of material there is to leam. A tradition that values the written text and interpretations of it, which allows for the possibility of there being 70 correct interpretations of each teaching ('Each word of Torah speaks with 70 tongues'), and has been working the material over for about three thousand years in the light of life experiences in pretty well every country on the globe, is likely to be fairly dense!

Recognizing all that, there is a remarkable sense of relief in accepting that no-one can possibly know it all. What distinguishes the good teacher of Judaism from the not so good is the quality of understanding of the underlying driving forces that make sense of all the bits of ritual, tradition and moral teaching. It is as important to know how Jews are likely to respond to their tradition and why as to know what the tradition is.

So what are these underlying threads? Almost certainly the most important is Torah and its implications, but for reasons I shall explain later I shall leave that till last. The other fundamental concepts that will help all the information fall into place are: a sense of place, a sense of time and a sense of identity.

A sense of place

Traditionally, Jewish attention is focused on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. That is the place God chose for the residence of the Shekhina, that peculiarly specific presence of God which is referred to repeatedly in the Bible. It is because the Western Wall is on the border of the Temple Mount that Jews strive to pray there, as near to the Shekhina as possible. (Most Orthodox Jews, at least, do not go on to the Temple Mount itself — now occupied by mosques — because of the prohibition of anyone other than the High Priest to enter the ground of the Holy of Holies; and no one is quite sure where exactly this is.

Jerusalem as a whole is also of intense significance. Zion, from which Zionism derives its name, is one of the mountains of Jerusalem and, particularly immortalized in the Psalms, it is the focus of Jewish ideals for a city of beauty, peace and holiness.

Then, spreading the ripples further, comes the Land of Israel. The boundaries of that Land are variously defined but, without doubt, the most
significant parts are those now generally called 'the West Bank', in Israel, Judea and Samaria. This is the 'Promised Land', the place which, according to the Torah, God gave to the Jewish People as an inheritance in perpetuity. This conviction has confounded geography, history and politics. Regardless of the 'real' situation, Jews have celebrated the

agricultural festivals as if they are in Israel (thus Pesach, the spring festival, is celebrated in Australia in the autumn, and Jews in Britain sit out in their open-roofed sukkot in the growing chill of a British October.

Despite their expulsion from the Land or their physical or economic inability to leave the lands in which they found themselves, Jews have aspired to return to the Land. When they have been able, many have gone, despite the frequent local and health dangers inherent in this move. Even today, Jews leave lives in comfortable suburbia in the West, perhaps to shift rocks for a precarious agricultural settlement in the desert.

This connection with the Land also helps explain a host of Jewish practices. Agricultural seasons inform the workings of the Jewish calendar, many aspects of the festivals, and many minor practices. A remarkable closeness to nature's workings has been maintained, despite the urbanization of the majority of Jews over the century. This contrasts strikingly with, for example, the experience of the urban proletariat that emerged out of the industrial revolution in Europe.

However, there is another side to this coin, without which the picture would be perilously incomplete. The idea that God can be anywhere and - as the Sinai experience demonstrated - frequently at His or Her best outside Israel, gives Judaism a remarkable portability. The diaspora experience is an ancient one for Jews. More than 25 centuries ago, Jeremiah was offering the advice to the exiled Jews in Babylon which has informed the attitude of Jews throughout the world: 'Pray for the welfare of the city in which you live, for therein lies your welfare.' This has led to Jews having no difficulty with their aspirations *vis-à-vis* the Promised Land on the one hand and their
Land of Adoption on the other. Even the Shekhina turns out to be more portable than we might originally have thought. 'Where two people discuss
words of Torah, there dwells the Shekhina,' is a teaching of the rabbis in the Talmud.

Thus, traditionally, Jews live on two intersecting planes. Their place and home and country is wherever they are. They have a religious, let alone a civic, duty to abide by its laws and to further its welfare. At the same time, there is another place, throbbing with the pull of the old ancestral home, with all its dreams and memories. In past centuries this has been much misunderstood. In this age, when half the world seems to be in diaspora, the concept has to be grasped.

A sense of time

Jews also operate at two different rhythms. One is the sweep of history and the other is the here-and-now. This is probably true of most cultures and traditions, but articulating it will help one to understand Judaism better.

The Jews are frequently referred to as a people of history. This doesn't mean that they've been around a long time. It refers to the fact that Jews derive much of their sense of purpose and place by reference to historical events. Thus, the Jewish tradition is about making sense of collective historical experience rather than about exploring personal spiritual experience. Each of the major events is enshrined into the collective memory and explored through study and commemoration or celebration.

The Exodus, for example, is not just an allegory for suffering released by faith; it is a real freedom experience, with political significance and overtones. Similarly, the destruction of the Temple is not just an allegory for the downfall of a people that might lose its way; it is a specific experience of destruction which led to physical exile.

These experiences retain their meaning and significance only by being re-lived on an annual basis. The relevant festival is not a commemoration but rather a re-enactment, so that each Jew makes the experience his or her own. During the course of the year, a Jew experiences the whole of Jewish history at its significant points: annually liberated, wandering in the Wilderness, receiving the Torah, suffering the destruction of the Temple, the Spanish Inquisition, the Holocaust, feeling the relief and joy of the reprieve of Purim or the miraculous victory of Hanukah, mourning through the three weeks of the Roman siege of Jerusalem or the seven weeks of the plague amongst the disciples of Rabbi Akiva.

The meticulous aspect of Judaism delights in the precision and processes of time. A religion which has at its heart the seasons (because of its agricultural concerns), the cycle of the moon (because of its lunar calendar), the week (because of the centrality of Shabbat) and the cycle of the day (because of the original sacrificial system, now transmuted into the
daily services) notes the passing of time in a celebratory manner.

History has an even grander sweep. Jews traditionally number their years from the creation of the world, and the High Holydays celebrate its

birthday. Jews may well be unique in not numbering their years as if their own existence were the definition of time.

A sense of identity

A third feature that runs like a thread through Jewish reality is the sense of Peoplehood. From their earliest records, the Jews have been nothing if not a family, they were bound by a coherent belief system. Even after that coherent belief system has started to fragment, following the 19th-century Enlightenment (what a loaded term!), this sense of belonging to a family has bound Jews together who have often had little else in common.

Identity is a complex and ill-defined concept. We come across it in phrases like 'identity crisis' and 'He's taken away my identity.' It is something about one's essential self which transcends the incidental accidents of nationality or class. It is closely allied with ideas of personality, but 'identity' includes one's place in the world and relationship with it.

Jews are preoccupied with Jewish identity. Creating a strong Jewish identity is seen as a fundamental purpose of Jewish education. Maintaining Jewish identity was the deepest challenge to Soviet Jews or other Jews under psychological, as opposed to merely physical, oppression. Working out what Jewish identity is concerns Jews as they face the new phenomena of purely 'secular' Jews (who adhere to none of the Torah-rooted traditions) and different bodies of authority who act upon their asserted right to define
Jewish converts and, thus, who is a Jew.

Deep in the Jewish consciousness is the mandate God gave to the Jewish People, to be a 'kingdom of priests and a holy nation'. That is extended by Isaiah's challenge to the Jews to be 'a light to the Gentiles'. This practical role in the world's improvement is further bolstered by rabbinic teachings that God needs the support and help of humanity to complete and perfect the Creation. It might well be due to the concept that the Messianic Age might be brought about by the efforts of individual Jews that has led so many Jews, even those who no longer ostensibly adhere to any such beliefs or teachings, to play such a disproportionate part in the process of reform and progress around the world.

The difficulty that much of the Northern hemisphere, in particular, has had (often including the Jews, who have absorbed the *Weltanschauung* of the Gentiles amongst whom they have lived) in accommodating the Jews within their political and social systems is because religion is seen as a matter of faith, nationality as of geographical or political significance, race

(a spurious and unpleasant term) concerning physical appearance and class as relating
to power and wealth. Jews fit none of these categories comfortably qua Jews. They can be found in all groups under each heading, and yet still they are Jews. The missing concept is Peoplehood. It is an expanded form of family, clan or tribe. A study of political history reveals that the progress of many rulers has only been possible by suppressing the patterns of clan and tribe. This will be large on the political agenda of the southern hemisphere in the near future.

Small wonder, then, that Jewish identity sits problematically in today's political and social schemes. At the same time, an understanding of how Jews have preserved it without compromising their function in the other structures will give invaluable insight into the reality of the Jewish People.

Last but by no means least — Torah

This is the bedrock of all. Even the secular Jew who appears to have no relationship with that which most people would call religion derives his or her historical place from the Torah. What is more, the Torah is much more than the first five books of the Bible. It is a whole body of knowledge and an attitude system. Secular, socialist, anti-religious, Government of Israel, official tourist guides carry the book around with them just to explain what you are seeing and how to look at it.

The Torah has its vast hinterland of traditional interpretation and, without at least having an inkling of what sort of interpretations exist, you will never be able to read the Torah. You'll only ever be reading the beginning of the Old Testament!

Why, then, did I leave it till last?

When studying Judaism, it is hugely important not to end up studying the origins of Christianity only or, worse still, of an odd offshoot of Christianity. Most sincere teachers have no intention of doing such a thing, but often we are susceptible to mind-sets of which we are not even aware. By starting at a distance from the text, the way in which the text is used can be informed by the three concepts discussed above.

To be honest, of course, one could not long consider the concepts above without having to come back to the Torah with its interpretations to make sense of them all. But if one started with the Torah one might be tempted to be guided by Rabbi Hillel. In Roman times, Hillel was challenged to summarize all of Torah as briefly as possible. His response is widely known: 'Do not do to others what you would not have done to yourself.'

The response is reassuring for those of us interested in decent relationships between peoples. Nothing too ethnocentric here. That's why some school programmes on Judaism start off with the Ten Commandments.

Hillel's answer foreshadows the debate in the Talmud between Rabbis Akiva and Ben Azzai about which was the most important line in Torah. Akiva said 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Ben Azzai said 'These are the generations of Adam . . . . ' Ben Azzai's answer was judged to be the best because Akiva's choice bases moral behaviour on one's own perceptions. Ben Azzai's choice roots human equality in the objective fact of humanity's common ancestry: we are all created in the image of God. Monotheism and the truth of the Torah are all taken for granted.

Even this little exchange demonstrates why it is so important not to forget the second part of Hillel's answer, which is, perhaps understandably, less frequently quoted: 'The rest is commentary. Go and study it.'

Clive A. Lawton

Erricker, Clive (ed) with Alan Brown, Mary Hayward, Dilip Kadodwala, Paul Williams

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Ibid. 'Amritdhari, keshdhari, sahajdhari and patit Sikhs' W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi pp 114-116

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Amritdhari, keshdhari, sahajdhari and patit Sikhs

W. Owen Cole and Piara Singh Sambhi

The visitor to a gurdwara is often surprised to come across men whose heads are covered with handkerchieves rather than turbans, and who possess short hair and no beards. They are less aware of women who cut their hair because it is hidden by the scarf, or dupatta, which they wear on their heads. However, there are women as well as men who do not observe the traditionally recognized Sikh form. In this article an attempt will be made to explain this situation, and to enable the reader to understand the
terms which are used pertaining to these and other Sikhs.

The clean-shaven Sikh
The Sikh religion originated in the Punjab region of India only 500 years ago. It resulted from the preachings of Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the purpose of whose ministry was to bring spiritual liberation to members of all social classes, women as well as men. The Hinduism which he encountered gave little hope to men who did not belong to the twice—born castes, and none at all to women. What began as a movement to bring spiritual enlightenment and liberation to people trapped in religious formalism, or excluded from it, developed into a distinctive religion with particular practices, beliefs and, above all, the outward form for which it is famous today.

During the lifetimes of the Gurus, and since, there have been men and women who followed the teachings given by the Gurus, while remaining Hindus or Muslims. Although it is a fundamental tradition that Guru Nanak and all his successors kept uncut hair, such devotees would not do so. Although Sikhs would say that keeping the full Sikh form became a requirement of Khalsa (the community of the pure) membership from its beginning, in 1699, nevertheless they would agree that by no means all Sikhs took amrit (sanctified liquid) on that Baisakhi day or in the succeeding months. In fact only a minority of Sikhs do so today.

Another reason for the clean-shaven Sikh has to do with family membership. It is possible to be a Sikh and a Hindu. The notion that one can belong to only religion is more a part of the semitic world than of the Indian. This does not mean that Hindus or Sikhs treat their beliefs and

practices lightly. Far from it, as anyone who knows devout members of these religions can testify. It is, however, by no means rare to find extended families which have Sikh and Hindu members, and for marriages to be preferred across religion rather than between castes. In such circumstances it might be deemed wiser to maintain the same forms within the family, instead of some members dressing in the Sikh manner and others as
Hindus.

In Britain, the idea developed among Sikhs that the beard and turban were impediments to obtaining employment. Many Sikhs seem to have had their hair cut almost as their first act in landing in the country. Some have not bothered to revert to their original appearance, especially if they have had sons who were or are bullied or ridiculed for wearing long hair with a top knot.

If one asks clean-shaven Sikhs about the various attitudes which they have to the long hair and turban, they will provide the kinds of answers given above, as well as pointing out that it is the moral and spiritual teachings of the Gurus that are important, not outward appearance. There are some Sikhs who remain clean-shaven and do not wear the turban intentionally, to indicate that they do not accept the tradition associated with Guru Gobind Singh as the norm. Moreover, the local Sikh congregation, or sangat, is made up of men and women at various stages of spiritual development. For a variety of reasons, including those mentioned above, one rarely finds total uniformity of appearance.

The Sikh ideal

Despite the variety that may be observed in a gurdwara, it has come to be accepted that the Sikh ideal is for the hair not to be cut, and for men to wear the turban (not to keep the hair tidy, but as a mark of identify). Both these requirements are laid down in the Rehat Maryada, the Sikh Code of Discipline which was promulgated by the SGPC, Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, an elected body responsible for gurdwaras in Pubjab, in 1945 after more than a decade of discussions. It gained swift acceptance as an authoritative statement of the Rahit, and is now universally recognized to be the standard guide. It arose from codes of Khalsa conduct (rahits) going back to the days of Guru Gobind Singh, and assumes that the normative Sikh is a member of the Khalsa.

The definition of a Sikh given in the Rahit Maryada is: any person whose faith is in one God, the Ten Gurus and their teaching and the Adi Granth. In addition, he or she must believe in the necessity and importance of amrit (i.e. initiation into Khalsa membership) and must not adhere to any other religion. (As earlier paragraphs show, this injunction is not universally followed.)

Amritdhari
One who has taken amrit pahul, khande di pahul, or khande ka amrit (a number of terms are used in reference to the amrit ceremony) is known as an amritdhari Sikh. Such a person must always keep the five Ks of kesh (uncut hair), kara (steel band worn on the right wrist), kirpan (sword never called a dagger, even if it is only short in length), kangha (comb worn in the hair) and kach (short trousers worn by men and women, often as an undergarment). In rural Pubjab, Sikh men may wear them as shorts when
working in the fields. Amritdharis must also adhere to a strict moral and dietary code.

Keshdhari
In a general section entitled *Living according to the Gurus' Teachings*, the Rahit Maryada rules that Sikhs should not cut their children's hair, and may wear any clothing 'provided it includes a turban (for males) and kach'. Such a Sikh is traditionally known as keshdhari. More Sikhs may fall into this category than into the amritdhari group, though it is difficult to distinguish between them quickly. No statistics are kept of Sikhs who have undergone initiation. (Some individual gurdwaras or sant groups may hold records relating to their own conduct of amrit ceremonies. There is nothing in the nature of a central registry of amritdharis.) Evidence which does exist is of an anecdotal nature. The only visible ways of recognizing Khalsa Sikhs may be that they carry a kirpan, though this may be concealed under a shirt, or kameeze, and that men allow the beard to flow, rather than using a net or trimming it. However, these are not reliable tests.

Sahajdhari
The clean-shaven Sikh may be described as a sahajdhari by some Sikhs. Sahajdhari has the literal meaning of one who proceeds in easy stages. The
Gurdwaras Act of 1925, amended in 1959, defined sahajdhari as a person who professes the Sikh religion, can recite the Mool Mantra, performs all ceremonies according to Sikh rites, does not smoke, use tobacco or kutha (halal meat) in any form, does not take alcoholic drinks and is not patit (see below).

Although it seems clear that sahajdhari is intended to refer to someone who is progressing towards Khalsa membership, it is common nowadays to find it used, somewhat negatively, to mean a non-Khalsa Sikh.

Patit
This is a term that has no positive connotations attached to it. Such a person is a lapsed Sikh, whose status is symbolized by their abandonment

of the kesh. To quote the Delhi Gurdwaras Act, 1971: 'Patit means a Sikh who trims or shaves his beard or hair or who, after taking amrit, commits any one or more of the four kurahts (i.e. shaves the body hair, eats halal meat, commits adultery or uses tobacco).

The Delhi Gurdwaras Act, 1971, also legislated on who could elect members to the Delhi Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, the body which controls gurdwaras in the Delhi area, and on who could become members. The qualifications of an elector include the provision that no one may be registered as an elector who trims or shaves the kesh; smokes, or takes alcoholic drinks. Qualifications for membership read: 'A person shall not be qualified to be chosen or co-opted as a member of the Committee if such a person is not an amritdhari Sikh; being an amritdhari Sikh, trims or shaves his beard or kesh; takes alcoholic drinks; smokes; is a patit.' It further defines a Sikh as 'A person who believes in one God, follows the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Ten Gurus, the bani of Guru Gobind Singh, takes amrit, and has no faith in any other religion whatsoever.' The increased emphasis on the importance of amrit should be noted. It relates to Sikh concern with preserving and stressing the distinctiveness of the Panth (Sikh community) in the context of a growing fear of assimilation into Hinduism.

Gurdwaras outside the areas and types covered by the Gurdwaras Acts of 1925 and 1971 may determine their own rules governing membership, the electoral roll and qualifications for the right to serve on the committee which runs the affairs of the gurdwara. There is no need to go into details here, and no comprehensive study has been undertaken, but it seems that the trend in many British gurdwaras is to restrict rights to keshdhari Sikhs and to bring moral pressure to bear upon sahajdhari Sikhs to adopt the kesh. Many kathas (sermons) in gurdwaras emphasize the keeping of the Sikh form to this minimum extent at least. There seems recently to have been an increase in the number of young Sikhs wearing the turban and keeping kesh as a consequence of such preaching.

The importance of the kesh

Although it may lie slightly outside the remit of this article, it might be helpful to explain why there is such insistence by Sikhs upon the kesh. There are a number of reasons which may be elicited from individual Sikhs, including that of being distinct from Hindus or Muslims. Perhaps the most important underlying reason, however, is that the Gums stressed that their followers should keep the natural body form with which they were born. Hindus shave the head of a child soon after birth, and when undertaking various vows or performing certain ceremonies. Muslim boys are circumcised. Sikhs reject the necessity or efficacy of any such rites. The Rahit Nama attributed to Chaupa Singh, a servant of the Tenth

Guru states succinctly: The kesh is the outward symbol of the inward faith of a Sikh.'[1] Other prohibitions are also aimed at preserving this bodily integrity and may be seen as endorsing the teachings of Guru Nanak that spirituality is the product of inner experience and development, not the result of external practices. Guru Nanak kept the kesh to repudiate the spiritual worth of rituals in general: 'Some pick and eat fruits and roots and live in forests. Some roam about wearing ochre robes and are sannyasis. Within them is a great desire for food and clothes . . . Take the Name of God with wholesome heart and mouth. All else is worldly ostentation and the practice of false deeds.'[2]
For the Sikh the question is not why Sikhs keep the kesh. It is why others do not.[3]

Notes

1 W. H. McLeod, *Textual Sources for the Study of Sikhism*, Manchester, 1984, page 75.
2 Guru Granth Sahib, page 140.
3 Copies of the Rahit Maryada, often printed as Rehat Maryada, can often be obtained from gurdwaras, but it is also printed as Appendix One in Cole and Sambhi, *The Sikhs, Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*, Routledge, 1989.

Piara Singh Sarnbhi died on 30 November 1992. The last major joint work of our twenty-two year friendship will be published on October 1993 — *Sikhism and Christianity: A Comparative Study* (Macmillan). — W. Owen Cole

W. Owen Cole

Erricker, Clive (ed) with Alan Brown, Mary Hayward, Dilip Kadodwala, Paul Williams
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Ibid. 'Being a religious minority in contemporary Britain: the Zoroastrian experience' John Hinnells and Rashna Writer pp 138-142

Being a religious minority in contemporary Britain: the Zoroastrian experience

John Hinnells and Rashna Writer

The question of recognition

One problem for many religious minorities is external recognition of what they are. This problem is particularly acute for the smaller minority groups. Anyone who claims to be a Zoroastrian generally meets a blank stare. If people do not recognize what you are, how do you identify yourself?

The typical Zoroastrian sees him- or herself as part of the world's oldest prophetic religion; as part of the foundation of the great Persian Empire which ruled the world from Cyrus the Great in the 6th century BCE to the rise of Islam in the 7th century CE; as one of a stalwart few, ruthlessly persecuted by Muslim rulers in their Iranian homeland; as part of a community which included the great educators, industrialists and politicians of 19th-century India; and as part of the oldest Asian community in Britain. In 1992 Zoroastrians emphasized the fact that their community provided the first three Indians to become MPs at Westminster (the first being Dadabhoy Naoroji in 1892, who campaigned for such issues as votes for women, universal old age pensions, limiting the working day to eight hours,
the abolition of the House of Lords, and justice for India and Ireland).

Outsiders commonly mistake Zoroastrians from Iran either for Arabs or for Iranians (and therefore associate them with Islamic militancy, a cruel irony
in the light of their history). The Indian Zoroastrians are descendants of those who migrated eastwards in the 10th century CE in search of religious freedom, and are known as 'the Persians', or Parsis; but in

present-day Britain they are often given what is to them the offensive label 'Pakis'. The other external image, held by the slightly more informed, is that they are the descendants of the Magi, said in Matthew's gospel to have visited the infant Jesus. 'Magi' is the plural for the singular 'magus', the correct term for a Zoroastrian priest. (Their identification with kings is a much later Christian legend.) From the Zoroastrian perspective, a priest is a man of moral and spiritual righteousness, a wise and holy man. School Christmas plays often stereotype 'the wise men' as subservient, subordinate, bowing the knee before, or inferior to, the infant Jesus, or as astrologers.

The Zoroastrians in Britain

Who are the British Zoroastrians, when did they come, why and what are their problems, and what are the tensions and dynamics of the community?

The first Zoroastrian to come to Britain arrived in the 17th century; a number came in the mid-19th century in search of education (mainly in law and medicine at the universities of Edinburgh and London) and of trade (mainly textiles in London and Manchester). The Zoroastrian Association was formed in 1861 in London. It grew after World War II, with an influx of doctors, and again with the migration from the New Commonwealth in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Zoroastrians are based mainly in London but have a formal group in Manchester and informal groups in Leicester, the North-East and Birmingham. There are about 5,000 members, typically middle class professionals; most (72%) have a university degree; they almost always have small families (rarely more than two children); most have migrated from India, and some come from Pakistan, East Africa (mostly Kenya and Zanzibar) or Iran (mostly after the fall of the Shah and the rise to power of Ayotollah Khomeini). This has created some tensions, in that the different countries of origin have produced different patterns of life, emphases of belief etc. The biggest difference now is between Iranian Zoroastrians and the émigré Indian Parsis. The former speak Farsi, eat Middle Eastern food and have assumptions regarding religion not unlike some of those in Islam, e.g. that religious authority lies with the words of the prophet revealed in the holy book; priests are often associated with the later corruption of the pure teaching of the prophet, and complex temple rituals may be thought to obscure the route to God. India-based Parsis, however, speak Gujarati or English, eat Indian food and have more Indian-style religious assumptions: that a priest is a man of holiness and a spiritual guide; that rituals involve powerful forces which assist the soul on its heavenly path; and that purity is a necessary condition for spirituality.

Internal community dynamics

The migrants' countries of origin have an effect on how they settle in a new environment; thus Parsis who have migrated from rural Gujarat are typically more traditional, speak in Gujarati and 'acculturate' less than those who have migrated from cosmopolitan Bombay. The word 'acculturation' needs comment. There is no common pattern associated with this phenomenon. Not only do various people acculturate in different ways; individuals acculturate differently in different parts of their lives, e.g. they may think in English but follow traditional attitudes to marriage. The language in which people think affects their pattern of acculturation (e.g. preservation of religious beliefs), although what language individuals think in can vary according to the people they are with (e.g. school friends or grandparents) or what they are talking about (e.g. business or death).

Another obvious dynamic or tension is that between generations. The outsider's caricature of migrants from the sub-continent is that the older generation is more traditional, while the youngsters drift from the religion and the third generation assimilates. Our research suggests that this is a gross oversimplification. In so far as there is a pattern, we suggest rather that those who came to Britain in the 1960s tended to be the more upwardly mobile, Westernized, liberal individuals, and it is among them that there are often symptoms of acculturation. More recent arrivals, especially those from East Africa and Pakistan, tend to be more traditional (though in slightly different ways); the women tend to be more traditional than the men (especially regarding issues relating to the family, such as intermarriage); the very highly educated (especially science post-graduates) tend to acculturate more than the business men. Although there are some ways in
which the second generation have acculturated, there are signs that the third generation may swing back to the traditions they feel their parents have 'thrown overboard'. Currently, among the British Zoroastrian youth, there is quite a revival of interest in their heritage. In so far as there is a 'life cycle' of Zoroastrians, what seems to be typical is that, until children leave home at 18 or so, they follow the religion of their parents; at university (a far higher percentage of Zoroastrians than white Anglo-Saxons go there, in excess of 60%) they commonly leave their religion behind; and when they approach marriage, traditional ties are often revived, and these ties are consolidated when they have children.

External relations

Relations with those 'outside' the community raise a whole different set of issues. In a survey of Zoroastrians in India, Africa, Britain, America/ Canada, Australia, and Hong Kong, the authors found that more

Zoroastrians in Britain than anywhere else in the world thought they faced frequent racial discrimination. Despite the popular image, most did not think they found this among the police, but rather in schools: especially from peers, but also from teachers and the structure of the school curriculum (the next most common sources were employment and housing). Generally the reaction to perceived racial discrimination was a tendency to withdraw more into the community and to reaffirm identity. Relatively few thought that they would acculturate to avoid prejudice. Their overwhelming impression of the majority white Anglo-Saxon population was one of moral laxity, especially with regard to sex and family responsibility; 100% of elders questioned said they would not like their children to grow up like the white Anglo-Saxons. The other 'British' characteristics commonly referred to were 'coldness', 'unfriendliness' and 'distance'.

However such a small minority may perceive the majority population, they obviously mix more frequently with them than with their co-religionists. They cannot, therefore, live in isolation. What are the effects of interaction? One obvious effect is intermarriage. Typically, Zoroastrian parents regret such a step and, indeed, most of the youth questioned preferred to have a Zoroastrian spouse, if a suitable partner could be found. The reasons are many. Historically Parsis may have been affected by the caste system. Iranian Zoroastrians also oppose intermarriage because they do not want to see any weakening of their distinctive 'Iranian-ness' (there is a very strong sense of their being the original Iranians and Islam being a later, 'foreign' Arabic conquest). In addition, there is a strong belief that intermarriage brings a clash of cultures, a weakening of sense of religious identity among the offspring and a loss of family ties. Because of the greater numbers and resources of Christians, there is a fear that intermarriage will mean the loss of the next generation from the community.

Another common problem is what to do about non-Zoroastrians attending ceremonies. One group considers that they should be encouraged because it will help deepen appreciation of the 'goodness' of the Zoroastrian religion and thereby aid recognition of the community (many find that because few have heard of Zoroastrians they are assumed to be members of a 'weird, new cult'). However, Zoroastrianism has a strong tradition of ritual purity. Fundamentally their belief is that God created the world perfect, all that is conducive to suffering, misery, disease and death — e.g. dirt, rust and tarnish — or anything leaving the good living body — such as breath, spittle or blood — are dead matter, and are therefore locations where the destructive work of evil is powerfully present. The pure life is one lived apart from evil in both the spiritual and the material world. Non-Zoroastrians, naturally, do not follow these codes and are, therefore, ritually impure (although that is not to question their

goodness). Hence non-Zoroastrians should not be present in the prayer room, for impurity should not be brought into the presence of the holy. But the issue is more complex than this. If any small minority allows 'outsiders' to be 'spectators' at their worship, then being 'stared' at changes the atmosphere. It produces a 'zoo effect'. Further, as one 16-year-old Zoroastrian informant put it: 'Every day of the week I am in a multicultural environment at school. I want one place where l can go and be myself.'

Diaspora religion

A diaspora religion, be it Jewish or Zoroastrian, must necessarily differ from that in 'the old country'. There is not the same support network of consecrated temples, full-time priests or access to community centres. The religion has to meet different needs; for example, in Zoroastrian communities in Iran or India, the religion is 'caught not taught'. People grow up into the tradition, and it is not something they have to justify or articulate. The well intentioned teacher or friend asking a Zoroastrian (or a
Zoroastrian child asking his or her parent) 'What is the Zoroastrian teaching on . . . ?' is calling for an explanation or rationalization which the individual
may not be in a position to give. The practice of worship changes. In temples in 'the old country', worship is commonly seen as a pilgrimage conducted alone, and in purity, to stand before the flame of the sacred fire, the 'symbol of He who is pure, undefiled light', the living, formless icon of the source of heat and life (Zoroastrians have often in the past been referred to as 'fire worshippers', a deeply offensive term). Such permanently burning temple fires are not available in the West, where the need is for the community to come together as a group, so that congregational worship, not typical of the ancient tradition, has gained ground (through the development of a traditional rite known as the 'jashan'). It also, of course, accords with the main perception of worship in the Western world.

There are numerous other ways in which religion is affected. Perhaps the most common is that Zoroastrian children rarely wear the badges of the faith with which they are invested at initiation, namely the sacred shirt and cord (the sudreh is like a white vest, the kusti a long cord, tied around the waist to the accompaniment of prayers). The reason for not wearing them is most commonly the mockery of other children when they are changing for PE or 'games' at school. Religious problems can cause severe personal distress. The traditional Zoroastrian funeral involves exposing the corpse in a 'Tower of Silence' (or daxma), a practice accompanied by long and solemn rites requiring the resources of a fully consecrated pure temple. Such funerals cannot take place in Britain, so the faithful have to evolve a rationale for a funeral that they believe to be

wrong (e.g. cremation, where the impurity of the corpse pollutes the pure flame of the fire; or burial, which pollutes the good earth created by God). The natural grief felt at bereavement is compounded by the sense of not being able to do the 'right' thing for the soul of the deceased. This grief is made yet worse by the gross insensitivity of the Western press in the way these practices are reported, which in the eyes of Zoroastrians holds them up to ridicule, both before the public and before their own children. From the Zoroastrian point of view, the rite of exposing the dead is swift (they argue that the vultures take 20
minutes to do what worms take eight years to do after burial); hygienic, with no rotting bodies left, hence ecologically sound; natural, since, as we eat birds and animals in life, it is natural to feed them at death; economic with land (no vast cemeteries); and socially significant, for the rich and poor are treated alike, with no scope for lavish expenditure on ornate monuments (Zoroastrians have always, instead, given to charity in memory of the deceased).

There is currently in Britain a vast 'race relations' industry, but few books consider the specifically religious dimension of 'ethnic relations'. This is a serious omission, for our research strongly indicates that people are more 'religious' after they have migrated than they were back 'in the old country', and that for the youth born here, religion can often be a marker of identity, a link with one's roots. The transmission of that tradition is not easy in an environment perceived as at least different, if not alien; as 'unfriendly', if not 'immoral'. How minority groups maintain their identity is, therefore, at once a crucial and complex matter.

An international comparison

There are interesting comparisons between the different processes of preservation of tradition in different countries — for example, between England, America and Canada. This is not the place for a detailed analysis, and therefore generalizations are essential, some of which merit qualification or elaboration. Broadly speaking, Britain tends to be seen by Zoroastrians as a secular country, and they fear lest their offspring are distanced from religion. However, they also fear the 'covert' indoctrination which can come through RE. They rarely withdraw their children from lessons because they do not want to be thought unco-operative, and because it may weaken the interest of the young in matters religious. In infant schools it is, in any case, practically impossible to withdraw from religion, not least at the time of the Christmas play. Christmas also presents
other problems. Should they decline to celebrate it, and give presents, because it is a Christian festival? Or would that make them seem mean in comparison to the parents of their Christian counterparts?

America generally presents a different range of problems. There, religion has a high profile in society, though excluded from school. Evangelism concerns Zoroastrians for two reasons: (a) tele-evangelism (and the antics of many of the preachers) makes the parents fear that the young will think all religion is like that, and will be put off altogether; and (b) the local but well resourced evangelical groups pose threats of conversion through the attraction of teaching materials, youth centres and religious facilities, in contrast to those of such a small, disparate group. A yet greater perceived danger is the threat of the 'American melting pot'. Official American policy has now changed, but the image has remained of a culture where all individual features are 'melted down' to produce one conglomerate 'American'. Zoroastrians have always been loyal subjects in whichever country they have lived be it Hong Kong, Australia or Pakistan, and so they wish to be in America. However, they also want to preserve their Zoroastrian identity. The way they have sought to counter the threat of the 'melting pot' is to evolve the most developed RE programme and network of youth groups of any Zoroastrian community in the world. There are 18 formal Zoroastrian Associations in America and Canada, with an over-arching organization, the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA), to try and pool the resources of the different groups. The problems vary in different centres, e.g. between Chicago and Houston, Texas, but by working together they hope the Associations can overcome their diverse problems.

The situation in Canada is slightly different. Racial prejudice, at least before the 1960s, was strong. The government has, however, realized that with its declining population (due to a falling birthrate), it is going to have to attract migrants to develop industries and resources. To this end, migrants have to be harmoniously settled; hence there is a high profile multicultural programme, with funding, which encourages groups to preserve their identity. In Toronto, for example, the Zoroastrians were given a substantial grant by the State Authorities to develop their own centre. 'Canadian-ness' is not, therefore, typically seen as a threat to being a Zoroastrian, and in our study we found more Zoroastrians in Canada willing to assert that they are Canadians than we did Zoroastrians in the States willing to say that they are American. There are countless other differences: different types of people tend to be drawn to different countries, e.g. the States tends to attract high-flying scientists (in New York and Chicago 92% of Zoroastrians have been to university), and this has inevitable consequences for the internal dynamics of the community. It also has an impact on the community in 'the old country', because many of its potential leaders, especially the able young males, are migrating, leaving a social imbalance back in India.

Conclusion

The concluding point has to be the vital importance of religion within small diaspora communities: religion understood not simply as a set of beliefs, or even (ritual) practices, but rather the total culture, value system and ideals. Knowledge of other cultures is woefully lacking in British society, and without knowledge there is inevitable prejudice. The problem is far greater for members of the smaller minorities, because the ignorance is greater, and there is no powerful international force or oil-rich state to help them as there is, for example, in the case of Islam. Schools tend to look just at the big groups, leaving the smaller ones to struggle ever more with the problem of how to help their young preserve their identity.

John Hinnells and Rashna Writer

Gates, Brian (ed) *Freedom and Authority in Religions and Religious Education* Cassell 1996

'*Introduction: By What Authority? With What Freedom?' Brian Gates pp vii-ix*

Ibid. 'Freedom and Authority in Judaism' Hugo Gryn pp 51-58

Introduction

Brian Gates

By What Authority? With What Freedom?

It is commonplace among liberal-minded commentators to make remarks about a world-wide rush to fundamentalisms. Faced with a climate in which uncertainties abound, people are portrayed as looking desperately for secure shelter. It is said they find it by retrenching in traditional religion, or some new age equivalent. The time is ripe for authoritarian rule.

By the same token, from other points of view within the faith communities themselves, there is evidence of a view that intellectual pundits and politicians have misled their followers. Once on the academic and political escalators, those in authority lose touch with the delights and dangers of ordinary life and death. More generally. it is judged that the modem world as characterized by technology and scientific reasonableness has somehow lost its way. Some re-examination of the assumptions taken for

granted in Western modernity is urgently called for.

Although it may seem otherwise, if there is a crisis of authority. it was ever thus. So far as we can tell, human beings have always, at least potentially. had the freedom to think and do things differently from what parental society has expected. That questioning may take the form of thinking which is discontinuous from its conditioning context. Alternatively, it may express itself in terms of outright disobedience. But the scale of all such challenging has become more obviously apparent as we have come to know more about our collective humanity. Our propensity for deviance in thought and action
is magnified, not only in documentary television and investigative journalism, but also in personal diaries and artistic explorations in drama, fictional writing and film. Arguably, tensions between freedom and authority, as between chaos and order, are as fundamental to our primal past as they are to our present. In their absence we would cease to be human.

Schools are public market-places which contain all these strains at once. Even before the days of the magnifying glass, to find stress in them should be no surprise. Now, it will be continually apparent, because each school finds itself prey to the variously competing pressures of funding, health, family breakdown, cultural and/or ethnic diversity, high and low expectations, changes in official education policy, and prevailing social and national moods.

Tensions also arise directly from whichever model of education is deployed in the school. With the *instructional model*, the authority of teachers resides in the superior knowledge base into which it is their duty to induct the pupils. Such is the enormous wealth of human knowledge, that the individual teacher knows that what is imparted must be highly selective. In that very process of selection, there may be tension between teacher and syllabus or textbook. However. whether teacher or textbook 'says so', the authority with which it is said may be only partially visible, with the consequence that the pupil is encouraged to 'take it on trust'. As a result. although what is taught may be publicly authoritative, the approach employed may still be perceived as authoritarian, because it is lacking in available corroboration by the pupils.

By contrast, in the discovery model the emphasis is on enabling children to find out for themselves. They are encouraged to reason their way to a particular conclusion in some maths conundrum or miniature science

experiment. Similarly, rather than taking them over second-hand, they are to feel the weight of words and images they use in English or art lessons. The teacher's task is to manage the pupils' learning in such a way that they can subsequently do it of their own accord. On this model, it matters greatly that the teacher understands each pupil and where he or she is at in their thinking, so that what is being taught may be appropriately mediated to the particular pupil. The emphasis on pupils first, and subject knowledge second, leads critics of this approach to judge that teaching authority has been abdicated and discretion wrongly passed to children. which will only serve to reinforce a false sense of freedom and power that they cannot possibly deserve.

National curricula tend to assert the authority of an established order of life. with self-evident standards and norms. Their face value is to give priority to inducting pupils into prespecified concepts, skills and attitudes. As such this is in a clearly instructional mode. However, in so far as there is also an emphasis on outcomes in how well pupils can manipulate concepts, use skills and make effective judgements, aspects characteristic of the discovery mode are also involved. Either way. the teacher is at the same time bound and free in the process of teaching, and pupils are exposed to the attendant tensions. These are the more obvious to the teacher when elements of arbitrariness obtrude in syllabus specifications, where the political establishment pushes one particular view of what counts as correct, for instance in the teaching of history, English or RE.

Religions can be subjected to the same critique as education. Those which defer to the power of external revelation, without any accompanying proof immediately acceptable to common sense, are presented as authoritarian and prone to divisiveness. Their defences in persons (Ayatollah, Mao or Pope X), in places (Ayodhya, Jerusalem or an African Zion) or in parchments (Qur'an, Granth or Book of Mormon) are dismissed as sectional and involving special pleading. Those which rely instead on interior illumination are accused of simply subjective trips. By a short cut. they may even be presented as well on the way to a cult of selfish excess — peaking individualism or total obliteration: either way they are the enemies of social responsibility. Such distortions, along with the criticisms which go with them, are direct counterparts to those which are found in the contrasting instructional and discovery modes of education. Accordingly, in RE which brings together the two fields of religion and education, it is no surprise to find that there too the tension is to be found between instruction and discovery. Accordingly, the challenge for the teacher, as for anyone who would operate responsibly in this territory, is daunting.

In the chapters which follow, there is companionship for meeting that challenge with greater confidence. The book began as an anniversary conference theme of the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education. It remains largely that. Most of its contributors are Shap members. In common with the Shap aspiration, first expressed in 1969, they believe that every human being would be enriched by a better understanding of religion. For full effect in a plural world this cannot fairly be singularly done. Without any imputation that all religions are equally true (or false), there is conviction that any one faith remains the poorer if it is not held or heard in conversation with others. The position which rejects all religious claims to truth is comparably impoverished unless it in tum has allowed, in an educational setting, entertainment and interrogation from those who believe otherwise.

The book is in two main parts. The first concentrates on the boundaries which define religious experience and tradition. It begins with a dire warning from John Bowker that political neglect of the significance of religion in the fundamental human make-up is as great a threat to human survival as any hole in the ozone. It then focuses in tum on the nature and sources of authority in each of six major religions and on how freedom is perceived and achieved in them. It goes on to examine the religious contexts of two examples of nations divided within themselves: Northern Ireland and Israel.

The second part is concerned more with the process of education, the tensions between freedom and authority within this, and their implications for RE. John Hull explores the social and psychological dimensions of religion and religious development in both negative and positive forms. He presents the challenge to RE as no less than that of overcoming human estrangement. There follow a series of studies of how children from each of the six faith backgrounds are responding to the tensions of living in a society which is secular and multifaith. Finally, there are overviews of the different developments in RE provision as found in Europe and North America. It becomes difficult to escape the conclusion that the absence or presence of effective RE has critical significance for the future of every continent and country.

Brian Gates

Gates, Brian (ed) *Freedom and Authority in Religions and*
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Ibid. 'Freedom and Authority in Judaism' Hugo Gryn pp 51-58

Freedom and Authority in Judaism

Hugo Gryn

It is helpful to consider the theme of freedom and authority in the Jewish tradition under the twin subtitles of the authority of God and the authority of human agencies, notably and chiefly the role of the rabbis, both in the formative Pharisaic period, and through some of the ways in which this authority devolved on successive generations and schools of thought.

The authority of the word of God is a very sophisticated concept. God speaks to men and women and the people can hear. Indeed, there are occasions when they have no alternative but to listen. Of the many well-known instances in the Torah where this happens, it is possible to see a progression in the effect that divine communication has on subsequent events. Adam is addressed by God, he hears the voice of God, but he

hides.
Abraham also hears the voice of God and he responds. Indeed, he, in turn, pleads with God. God also speaks to Sarah, she hears — and she laughs. Likewise. Moses hears and eventually he acts. The episode at the Burning Bush is well documented as an instance where Moses, the individual, receives communication and responds: and because of this encounter his entire life undergoes a radical transformation. Equally well documented isthe encounter between God and the entire collective of Israel at Sinai. There everyone listened and heard something. The response of the people prior to the revelation has become a paradigmatic feature of the Jewish attitude to the word of God. The people, when asked by Moses whether they are prepared to be addressed by God, respond: *na'ase v'nishma* — 'We will do and we will hear'. It is instructive to note that in Hebrew *shema* connotes both hearing and understanding. It is also interesting that it is 'do' then 'hear' — an apparent inversion of accepted logic. Action results in understanding. The pattern of revelation is the presence of a potential conflict which then reaches a proportion of crisis in which a choice becomes readily apparent. In the act of revelation there is a sudden illumination followed by certainty and the vanishing of all doubt.

The classic example is the account of the Theophany in Exodus 33 and 34. All the foregoing elements are present. However, it is interesting here to note the comments of the great medieval philosopher Moses Maimonides. Moses makes a radical request: 'Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory' (33:18). It is the ultimate request in revelation and one that God resists. Instead God suggests a compromise: 'I will make all My goodness pass before thee ... (but) thou canst not see My face for no man shall see Me and live … thou shalt see My back: but My face shall not be seen" (33: 19—23).

Most biblical scholars and commentaries agree that this episode indicates the opportunity for men and women to make certain discoveries about the nature of God through God's effects on creation and the experience of God's creatures and their understanding of the physical and spiritual phenomena around them. Maimonides does not share this accepted wisdom. He offers the analogy of a man walking some distance behind another man. From the way the one in front moves his body and holds his head the one behind believes this has to be his friend so-and-so. But the fact is that unless the two can look at each other, face to face, there has to be an element of doubt. So, Maimonides concludes, it is with God. It is simply not possible for human beings to have that absolute certainty. There must always be an element of doubt in asserting this or that quality or action in God: 'And that is how it is.' Reflecting on this medieval insight

at the end of the twentieth century, we may add that this is a 'saving doubt' and perhaps the surest way to avoid falling into the many and attractive traps of religious fanaticism.

The biblical account of the prophets reveals experiences very similar to those of Moses. Issues of personal morality or social concern reach towards a climax whose resolution comes about in an act of revelation. Amos is overwhelmingly concerned with social justice. For Hosea, God's love is interpreted through a traumatic personal experience. Isaiah and Ezekiel have mystic visions. The general reaction of the prophets is that there is an initial reluctance to accept the mandate which flows from an act of reve- lation. But once this is overcome there is no going back. In time there emerged prophetic guilds, professionals who claimed ability to contact and discern the will of God, as it were, at will, but these guilds soon fell into disrepute. The amateurs ultimately won immortality.

Throughout the Bible authority is derived from God. There is generally a two-way system of communication and a discernible pattern in which this takes place. When the Bible is 'edited', it also becomes 'authorized' and something of its authority becomes an essential and indeed decisive element in all subsequent developments in Jewish law and morality. As the biblical period gives way to the rabbinic one, *Halacha* — literally 'the way' and a generic term for Jewish law — evolves and becomes the most decisive influence in the course of the subsequent centuries.

The problem for the leaders of the Pharisees who emerge as the religious authority in the first century BCE and in the course of the next six centuries before the Mishnah and the Gemarah,[1] the twin elements that comprise the Talmud, is to determine how laws change.

The most obvious and 'authoritative' way is through revelation — but no one makes such claims after the prophets. Legislation was a very reliable instrument for change as well. The Sanhedrin, a supreme religious court. whose seat was in Jerusalem and which had a membership of 71, did legislate and its decisions were universally accepted. However, the Sanhedrin and its power to implement and enforce its rulings came to an end with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. For the subsequent generations there remained two other and more problematic instruments. One was interpretation. The rabbis devised agreed hermeneutic rules of exegesis. Norms as well as changes derived their authority from biblical texts and their acceptance was a matter of consensus wherever possible. Where this was not possible, the authority of a given scholar was generally the

deciding factor. The other instrumentality of change derived from the *minhag* or custom. It was regional rather than universal. Where a community or group of communities had evolved certain religious practices, in the fullness of time they had assumed the force of law. It was a flexible but also limited mode of change.

In this period, too, there emerged the rabbinic notion or doctrine of the two-fold Torah. There was the *Torah Shebichtav,* 'the written Torah', revealed by God at Sinai and committed to writing by Moses in the form of the text of the Pentateuch. There was another revelation at Sinai as well in the form of the *Torah sheb'al pe*, 'the oral Torah', which was preserved in its totality. handed down by means of oral tradition and considered as authoritative as the written text. These 'oral' laws amended and supplemented the biblical legislation. In time, and because of the ever-widening dispersion of the Jewish people, the 'oral Torah' was also cast into written form. Academies in Judea and in the numerically larger community of Babylonia had produced two parallel versions of the Talmud which remain the basic and authoritative literature to this day.

A justification for this authority is succinctly expressed in the Talmudic tractate of Baba Batra (12a): 'Prophecy was taken from the prophets and given to the sages.' In a general way it is possible to state that the function of the biblical prophets was to show the ways of God to humanity. The emphasis of the rabbis on the Talmud is more of a search for ways in which men and women can imitate God. Unlike the prophets. The rabbis were prepared to compromise and were satisfied with approaching the ideal even
if not fully realizing it. A paradigmatic principle in tractate *Pesachim* (50b) asserts: 'Man should always be occupied with Torah and the commandments even if not *lishma* (for the sake of heaven — meaning, purely for its own sake) because from what may not be initially *lishma* he will come to *lishma*.' In another passage the rabbis went so far as to state: 'A sage teacher is better than a prophetic dreamer' (*Baba Batra* 12a).

For the rabbis there were no theological problems. The Torah was of divine origin but it was given 'in human language' and the fact that the rabbis located and classified 613 laws was a sign of divine favour. It should be noted that one of the favourite rabbinic terms for God is *Rachamana* — 'the compassionate one'.

There are certain caveats. There is a strong feeling throughout rabbinic literature that the sages must somehow be right. This is sometimes carried to an extreme but inevitable conclusion: 'Even if they (the Rabbis) tell you that left is right and right is left, hearken unto their words until they tell you that right is right and left is left' (Jerusalem Talmud *Horayot* 1:145d). The freedom to interpret and expound texts is a constant concern. In the Midrash, which is a homiletical collection that parallels the Talmud, the question is asked whether it was possible for Moses to leam the entire Torah in the course of the 40 days he spent on Mount Sinai. They concluded that 'God taught Moses the principles' (Exodus *Raba* 41:6). The medieval philosopher Joseph Albo interpreted this to mean that

the Law of God cannot be (given) in a complete form so as to be adequate for all times ... and therefore at Sinai Moses was given general principles by means of which the sages in every generation may formulate the details as they present themselves.

(*Ikkarim* 3:23)

There was already in the Talmudic period a problem about coping with the 'weight of the past'. The possibility is recognized that future scholars might not be as learned or as wise as their predecessors. Nevertheless. there is an unexpected mandate that contemporary scholars and judges be regarded with the same esteem as those of past generations.

'Whoever is appointed leader of the Community, even if he be the least worthy, is to be regarded with the same esteem as the mightiest of earlier generations.' There is a healthy corrective in the statement that follows it: 'Say not "How was it that the former days were better than these?" for it is not out of wisdom that you inquire concerning this' (*Rosh Hashanah* 25b).

There were two tendencies which became clearly discernible and remain a feature to the present on the part of religious authorities. There is the *machmir*, literally 'the heavy one', and there is the *meikil* - 'the light one". It reflects an understanding that there are those who are instinctively severe, inclined to say 'no', and there are those who are temperamentally inclined to be liberal and look for ways in which they can say 'yes'.

Time and again the rabbis find ways to express the prophetic thought that the ways of God and the ways of men and women are not at all the same. In a classic collection of homilies known as the *Midrash Tanchuma*, we

find the following: 'What difference does it make to God how we slaughter an animal and what foods we eat? Except that He desires by such laws to benefit His creatures by ennobling their characters.' Indeed, the laws were almost invariably considered as a means to an end: moral perfection.

Something of this radicalism is also reflected in the Talmudic maxim 'Not all the ritual laws of the Torah can equal a single moral principle of the Torah' (Jerusalem *Peah* 16d), and the injunction that goes to the heart of spiritual understanding: 'To preserve the spirit of the Torah you can abrogate the letter of the Torah' (*Menachot* 99a/b). The first of the true underlying principles appears to be that 'The Law' is to further the course of humanity and that every human being has some capacity to contribute to the cause of humanity and in that way help in the realization of God's plan for His creation. The law shifted from the purely divine to the realm of human consensus. Indeed, the very imagery of *halacha*, namely of walking in godly ways, implies a fluidity.

There is a dual image of halacha which finds expression in two fundamental and apparently contradictory dicta. On the one hand, there is a basic tenet that the Torah is from Heaven, and, on the other, the principle that the Torah is not in Heaven. A classic story in the Talmud (*Baba Mezia* 59b) describes a fierce dispute over an apparently very trivial matter. It concerns the oven of a man called Aknai. Instead of being made of one piece, it had a series of separate sections with a layer of sand between each section. The head of the academy, Rabbi Eliezer, insisted that the oven is not a single utensil and therefore not liable to ritual uncleanness. His colleagues insisted with equal certainty that the outer coating of the mortar acts as a unifying force and therefore if any part of it becomes unclean the whole is affected. Perhaps the very triviality of this issue only highlights the extraordinary debate that ensued in the passage which I would like to quote in full:

> It has been taught: On that day R. Eliezer brought forward every imaginary argument but they did not accept them. Said he to them: 'If the *halacha* agrees with me, let this carob-tree prove it!' Thereupon the carob-tree was torn a hundred cubits out of its place: others affirm, four hundred cubits. 'No proof can be brought from a carob-tree', they retorted. Again he said to them: 'If the *halacha* agrees with me, let the stream of water prove it!' Whereupon the stream of water flowed backwards. 'No proof can be brought from a stream of water', they rejoined. Again he urged: 'If

> the *halacha* agrees with me, let the walls of the schoolhouse prove it', whereupon the walls inclined to fall. But R. Joshua rebuked them, saying: 'When scholars are engaged in a halachic dispute, what have you to interfere?' Hence they did not fall, in honour of R. Joshua, nor did they resume the upright, in honour of R. Eliezer; and they are still standing thus inclined. Again he said to them: 'If the *halacha* agrees with me, let it be proved from Heaven!' Whereupon a Heavenly Voice cried out: 'Why do ye dispute with R. Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the *halacha* agrees with him!' But R. Joshua arose and exclaimed: 'It is not in heaven!" [Deuteronomy 30:12]. What did he mean by this? - Said R. Jeremiah: 'That the Torah had already been given at Mount Sinai: we pay no attention to a Heavenly Voice, because Thou hast long since written in the Torah at Mount Sinai.' 'After the majority one inclines' [Exodus 23:2].
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> (*Balm Mezia* 59b)

The outcome of this debate was not only a victory for that majority of the sages who disagreed with the ruling of Rabbi Eliezer, but the deposing of Eliezer from his position of authority. All accounts of this event consider this action to have been both necessary and tragic. But the story has an even more unexpected postscript. A certain Rabbi Nathan, who was present at the debate, met the prophet Elijah not long after. By then Elijah had become a legendary figure capable of moving between the heavenly and the earthly worlds. Nathan asked Elijah: 'What did the Holy One. blessed be He, do in that hour?' Elijah replied: 'God laughed with joy, saying, "My children have defeated Me, My children have defeated Me!"' They were not swayed by miracles. They had, as it were, come of age and were capable of making their own decisions.

This principle that 'the Torah is not in Heaven' implies that while the source of the halacha is divine, its place and life. as well as its development and formulation, rests with humanity and in the life of society. The scholars and sages of Judaism saw no inconsistency in these two principles. They believed that in their exegesis, enactments, innovations and creativity they were merely giving practical expression to the continuous unfolding of the revelation at Sinai.

The medieval scholars of Judaism continued to insist on this freedom to interpret and develop religious authority. The eleventh-century moralist and philosopher, Bahya Ibn Paquda, states explicitly that

> On the question whether we are under the obligation to investigate the doctrine of God's unity or not, I assert that anyone capable of investigating this and similar philosophical themes by rational methods is bound to do so according to his powers and capacity. Anyone who neglects to institute such a inquiry is blameworthy and is accounted as belonging to the class of those who fall short in wisdom and conduct.
>
> (Chovot Ha-Levavot. 'Duties of the Heart', chapter 3)

Maimonides echoes this view in much of his work and so do many other major Jewish thinkers. The last of the great philosophers of the Middle Ages, Joseph Albo, sums up this tradition of freedom of thought: 'It is clear now that every intelligent person is permitted to investigate the fundamental principles of religion and to interpret the Biblical texts in accordance with the truth as it seems to him' (*Sefer Ha-Ikarim*, 'Book of Principles', Part I. chapter 2).

This freedom is evident in the lack of any official Jewish creed. There are, of course, many proposed creeds which are developed in the course of the centuries and generations. They vary in content, principles and number. Any survey will reveal that from antiquity to the present time Judaism has found room for almost every conception of God known to civilized men and women so long as it is consistent with the one overriding principle: the affirmation of the unity of God.

Most of the development in Jewish law since the end of the Talmudic period took place in the context of what is known as the Responsa method. Individuals or communities would pose in writing questions or problems to recognized and authoritative scholars — but of their own choice. Their answers and reactions were generally accepted and — when appropriate — implemented.

Another method through which religious authority continued to evolve was by means of varying the arrangement and classification of laws and customs. From time to time great scholars would compile and publish their own arrangements, and the very shifts and prioritizing in these codes proved to constitute a very helpful instrument for keeping legal developments in harmony with the social, political and economic conditions of their respective times. The difficulties that these codifiers faced were formidable. They had to know the entire body of the law. They required great breadth of mind and self-confidence. It was in fact much

easier to make one’s point by way of a commentary on already existing and authoritative texts, especially texts of the Bible and the Talmud. Generally, the codifiers did not engage in Responsa writing and vice versa. The reason is a psychological rather than a philosophical one. After all, when a scholar
had done his research and prepared a Responsum that shed new light or provided fresh insight, he almost inevitably amplified the law. The aim of those who produced codes was generally to simplify the law.

It is. I think, fair to say that the Responsa writers remained authorities par excellence in Jewish experience. A count made in 1930 found over 15,000 volumes of Responsa literature! They originated in Spain, France and Germany as well as North Africa, Turkey, Poland, Russia and Hungary. Their subjects were equally wide-ranging: marriage, divorce, the ordination of rabbis, dietary laws, and laws of inheritance, the ransoming of captives, reactions to persecution and apostasy, laws relating to business, agriculture and industry as well as insurance and banking. Virtually no aspect of indi- vidual and communal life goes untreated.

Of the many codes which were also produced in fairly regular and rapid succession, one needs to be singled out because of its great influence and. Indeed, authority, which continues to the present time. The *Shulchan Aruch* (‘The Prepared Table") was destined to become the last great code in traditional Jewish life. Its author, Joseph Caro, was born in 1488 in Spain and died in 1575 in Safed, the Galilean home of Jewish mysticism. It has four sections: *Orach Chayim* deals with everyday commandments, sabbath
and festival observance; *Yoreh De’ah* is concerned with a variety of subjects including dietary laws, interest charges, laws of purity and mourning; *Eveh Ha-Ezer* focuses on marriage and divorce laws: and *Choshen Mishpat* is a ‘user-friendly’ section of civil and criminal law. The book was first printed in Venice in 1565 and achieved great popularity, paradoxically in consequence of the swift and many attacks on it. The Polish authority, Moses Isserles, though a great admirer of Caro and his work, objected to the absence of the *minhagim* or customs of Central and East European Jewry and he added a series of explanations and supplements to Caro's work under the title of *Mappah* - literally ‘the Table cloth’. The combination of the two texts made it a halachic best-seller without precedent. It should be pointed out that there was great opposition to codes which, as it were, ‘laid down’ the law. The impression is that while both Caro and Isseles considered their work to be at the most ‘a last word’ on the question of religious authority for their own age

and society, in fact, it became 'the final word', and to this day Orthodox Jews and communities consider it as the definitive statement on Jewish law.

Reform or Progressive Jews do not give the Shulchan Aruch and its predecessors the same degree of authority. In a recent 'Collective Theological Essay' published in *MANNA* magazine by the Reform movement in Britain, it is stated:

> Whilst respecting the halachic system as a dominating aspect of our inheritance, we do not believe that a system of law is adequate to enable all contemporary Jews to express their relationship with God and other human beings. This is firstly a reflection of the shift from a society which addressed groups and classes to a society which addresses individuals. Secondly, it stems from a process whereby the Jewish Community has handed over responsibility for such areas as criminal and civil law to the State, leaving only the deeply personal area of ritual and subtle issues on ethics to the domain of *halacha* . . . . We recognize the primacy of individual judgement and conscience, but individuals have to recognize that they exist also as part of a community and a tradition. . . . Progressive Judaism embraces that process of creative change and development which brings with it new patterns of Jewish practice.[2]

There is a growing body of literature pioneered by the late Solomon Freehof, an outstanding leader of the Reform movement in the USA, which uses the Responsa method in shaping contemporary attitudes and practices but there is great reluctance to produce a comprehensive code. Anyone tempted to do so must be sobered by the realization that there would be no chance of having such a code accepted as binding on all communities and individuals.

My personal conclusion is that the revelation at Sinai continues to reverberate. There is a Rabbinic notion of the *Bat Kol*, literally 'the daughter of the Voice', which is a way of saying that the will and ways of God resonate and echo throughout God's Creation and in all times and places. The task remains to be open and receptive. Is there only one Voice or are there many Voices'? At the end of some great controversies between equally leamed and sincere teachers and authorities, when a conclusion one way or another was simply not possible the rabbis of old found it both liberating and spiritually realistic to leave such unresolved issues with the humble maxim *elu v'elu divrei Elohim chayim hem*, 'These

(words) *and* these are both words of the Living God'. Perhaps the most spiritually sensitive and ambitious mandate for the present was given by Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935), the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel. The task for contemporary Jewry, he insisted, is 'to renew the old and to sanctify the new'.

NOTES

1. The Mishnah in its present form was edited by Rabbi Judah Hannasi ('Judah. the Prince') around 200 CE. It is based on earlier codes of law. Its six volumes or tractates are systematically arranged under the headings of *Zeraim* (Seeds), which deals with laws of agriculture, *Moed* (Set Feasts), laws relating to the observance of the sabbath and festivals, *Nashim* (Women), which deals with marriage and divorce laws, *Nezikim* (Damage) - a collection of tort laws which also includes the well-known collection of ethical aphorisms of *Avot* (the Fathers) - *Kudashim* (Hallowed Things), which deals with the sacrificial cult as practised in the Temple in Jerusalem, and *Tahorot* (Cleannesses), which deals with a wide range of laws of purity and issues of personal and public health.

   The Gemara is a record of the wide-ranging discussions of the rabbis and their decisions based on the rules promulgated in the rather sparse text of the Mishna. The combination of the texts of the Mishna and Gemara is the Talmud, of which there are two versions.

   The Palestinian or Jerusalem Talmud was developed mainly in the academies at Tiberias, Caesarea and Sepphoris. It consists of 39 tractates and was redacted around 450 CE.

   The more authoritative work is the Babylonian Talmud. which was developed in academies at Nehardea, Pumberdita, Machuza and Sura and was finally redacted around 500 CE.

2. 'Progressive Judaism: a collective theological essay and discussion paper' (1991)

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Hugo Gryn

Gates, Brian (ed) *Freedom and Authority in Religions and Religious Education*

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Ibid. 'Freedom, Authority and the Study of Religion in the United States' Ninian Smart pp 188-196

Freedom, Authority and the Study of Religion in the United States

Ninian Smart

Attitudes to religion and education are remarkably different in the USA than in Europe. They are determined by several forces. First, there is the United States Constitution, which lays down, through the First Amendment, a separation between Church and state. Second, there is the actual history of religions in the USA. A predominantly Protestant atmosphere gave way in the late nineteenth century to a phase when both Roman Catholics and Jews came to be vital ingredients in the melting pot. And later, non- Western faiths and other new creations have emerged as a vigorous new motif, particularly during the decades from the 1960s until the early 1990s. Third. US experience contains a high degree of individualism, in part because of the mobility of the US people, first during the push westward as the frontier met up with ocean-borne immigration in California. Partly. too. individualism arises from the continuing mobility which is a consequence of a vital industrial capitalism. Another factor is the relative fragility of the US family, mostly nuclear in scope anyway. A third factor in US experience is the large number of private schools. particularly at college level. which has
meant a fairly heavy investment in classes on religion, often the major source of knowledge among those who have left high school. Fourth, even more strikingly than in Europe, the USA is a plural society ethnically. The institution of slavery brought many uprooted Africans into the country, so that Black religiosity is itself an important part of total US religion. Contiguity with Mexico has multiplied Hispanic presence in the USA. In California, labour recruitment among Chinese and Japanese in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has given Far Eastern populations a solid presence, as have more recent migrations of refugees and others from Vietnam, Indo-China more generally, and Korea. But even rather small groups. such as Indians from South Asia, are making themselves felt. Malibu Canyon, the back from Los Angeles offshoot where many stars reside, now boasts a great replica of a South Indian temple. In Los Angeles
everyone, even Anglos, is in the minority.

These phenomena affect rhetoric and language, and this is vital to grasp, since the rather divergent US vocabulary can cause confusion. Generally speaking. the USA has experienced aggressive secular ideologies. Though the Enlightenment was vastly important in the foundations of the country. its suspicions of religious establishment and emotionalism were clothed in the polite dress of deism, not of atheism. There was never a really strong socialist or Marxist movement, sometimes deeply hostile to all forms of faith, in the USA. Generally, therefore, public opinion looks on religion as a good thing. This has been taken up in the social civil religion (Bellah and Hammond, 1982). It is common for presidents to invoke the name of God in exhorting the nation: there is typically an invocation at presidential inaugurations; and the White House has, since Eisenhower’s time, been

the scene of prayer breakfasts (Cruise O'Brien. 1988). There is usually among practitioners of civil religion an awareness of the old trinity of Protestantism, Catholicism and Judaism. In short, there is a general ethos in the USA in favour of religion, while in Britain and Australia, and in a different way in France or Italy, there is a strong strand of anti-religiousness and anti-clericalism. In brief, public rhetoric in the USA is favourable to religion. On the other hand, the strong sense of the importance of dividing Church from state leads often to vigorous opposition to public or official manifestations of religion: thus city halls may be criticized for putting up Christmas decorations and public schools for incorporating anything faintly suggesting religious commitment in the curricula. Sometimes there is a collision between public piety and devotion to liberalism as according to the Constitution. Ronald Reagan could call for prayer in public schools (but even he had to allow that all it could be would be a period of silence, when faced with the question of the formulation of prayer).

One result of the differing configuration of religiosity in the USA is that the expression 'religious education', which is so common in Britain and elsewhere, has a narrower sense. For British theorists, the incorporation of the term 'education' in the phrase is to be favoured: it shows that we are involved in genuine education, with all that that implies, and not just 'instruction'. Now, of course, in British usage religious education covers both what goes on in what may be loosely called state schools and what occurs in faith contexts. In the USA, the expression 'religious education' covers only the latter. Consequently, practitioners of what in Britain would be called religious education refer to the subject in public schools as 'Public Education Religion Studies', a somewhat awkward locution (Will, 1981). The general clearance by the Supreme Court for work of this kind occurred through the decision known as Schempp (1963). This had a wider consequence than some changes in high school and primary education: it also helped to release energies for the setting up of programmes and departments in public universities.

Here it is worth reflecting on another difference in styles of English usage. Because so many colleges in the USA are privately founded and funded, from Harvard to Grinnell and from Rice University in Houston to Mills College in Oakland, it has long been common for them to have departments of religion (sometimes merged with philosophy). Such were typically centred upon the main faith of the founder or founding group — so they could be Catholic or drawn from a variety of Protestant groups, or Jewish. So it is that a programme on religion has a more tradition-bound shape than one of the new departments of religious studies formed in the State universities since the second half of the 1960s. Consequently, too. the majority of members of the main professional body, the American Academy of Religion, are from denominational institutions and many look on themselves as theologians rather than pluralistic students of religion as

according to the religious studies model. Moreover. many private institutions have seminary-type activities and so have divinity schools. It is not normal in the USA to talk about theological faculties, and not normal at all to have theology departments, as occurs frequently enough in Britain. (The term 'faculty' in the USA typically refers to professors, i.e. the teaching staff of a college, and also to high school and other teachers — and, by the way, 'staff' usually refers, not to faculty, but to what are often called 'assistant staff' in the British university scene.) And so there are divinity schools and seminaries in addition to undergraduate religion programmes. Mostly they offer professional and graduate training. Famous seminaries are Union Theological Seminary in New York and Hebrew Union in Cincinnati. These represent important centres of learning, but are denominational in essence. and hence unsuitable as parts of public universities.

Despite the difference indicated above, religion programmes have increasingly converged with the religious studies model. This was partly due to the revolution in student opinion and tastes during the 1960s and early 1970s. This put pressure on many institutions to widen their curriculum. Courses in Buddhism, Native American religions, Chinese religion, African religions and so on became common, as well as more traditional offerings in forms of Christianity and Judaism. Religion programmes thus became plural. On the other hand, the religious studies model evolved something more — an integrated approach which was both plural and multidisciplinary, drawing, that is, on the methods of history, sociology, anthropology, phenomenology, philosophy and so on to illuminate the various dimensions of religion. Consequently there are vigorous religious studies departments and programmes at various of the large State universities, such as Virginia, Iowa, Arizona State, Colorado, Kansas, California (at Santa Barbara) and elsewhere. However, it must be noted that the chief beneficiary of the 1960s revolution was maybe the University of Chicago, whose history of religions. dominated by the guru-like figure of Mircea Eliade, supplied many of the doctorally trained professors in the new programmes. Chicago is a private university, and the history of religions was a segment of the divinity school offerings. Also influential was Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions, also part of the divinity school, under the leadership primarily of Wilfred Cantwell Smith. It may be noted that an aspect of the ideology of the centre was pluralism in the sense of acceptance of the claims and equality of the great religions, and not just the promotion of the plural or cross-cultural study of religion. In principle. on the other hand, the State institutions espoused a more neutralist position, since it was their job to study religion and the religious, and not to promote any particular doctrinal position, even the position that all ways lead to the same Truth.

The Church—state separation in the USA has sometimes led to a fearful negativity because up to Schempp and beyond the prevalent

interpretation was negative about both teaching about religion and teaching of religion. This has raised a question among conservative Christians, particularly in the 1980s, when they were influential during the Reagan era, as to whether humanist values were not dominant among high school teachers and administrators. Was not humanism itself an ideology which was being imposed on the curriculum? There was some logic in such critiques of educational practice, though it was often expressed arrogantly - for instance, through a campaign to have Creationism taught in schools as a contrast to Evolutionism (conservatives tended to think that the biblical doctrine of Creation denied the theory of evolution). The fault of this logic lay in supposing there were only two alternatives. namely biblical fundamentalism (of a sort) and the scientific view that human beings arose by evolutionary processes. Their critique may have had merit, in so far as there was in most schools no attempt to show how one could be both an evolutionist and a Christian, or a Buddhist, or a Muslim, and so on. A thousand flowers should actually bloom, not just two. Both rather sickly ones, in that they did not display the blooms of deep philosophical thought.

The fact is, of course, that in the USA the conservative wing of Christianity has a much greater influence than it does in Europe. This leads to some polarization between the liberal cast of the Constitution and much public opinion on the one hand and conservative piety on the other. This affects school districts. since conservative factions can exert some degree of censorship, through parents' associations and the like. The reasons for conservative influence are threefold. First, there is the traditional weight and extent of highly Protestant viewpoints, such as those of the Southern Baptists. Second. there is the problem of education: so many high schools and colleges teach technical and business education without giving students much sense of a liberal perspective in religion. Third, there is the clever use of the media by conservatives, who until the late 1980s (when a series of scandals undermined their influence) were much better at using modern media, notably television. Basically. in my view, the problem is an educational one, though one should also note that liberals may succumb to different temptations than those of anger and angst, and adopt a politer form of cultural arrogance.

The special configurations of US religiosity which I have lightly sketched above account for some of the major differences from the European scene. They deeply affect the way in which the study of religion can be promoted in the USA. They also deeply affect aspects of the problem of freedom and authority. Basically. I would argue that authority as a whole, considered as an offshoot of tradition or located in tradition, has faded away greatly in the USA (and in California in particular: I am writing this in California which, because it is the end of the US frontier and has a freshness in conceiving of new lifestyles and ideas, is often regarded as

the Future). There are many indications, especially in the Northern world of the crumbling of traditional authority. It is evident, for instance, in Catholicism, where the papal teachings on birth control are obviously widely disregarded, even in Italy (northern Italy has the lowest birthrate in the world).

Traditionally there are various sources of authority in religion, and they are everywhere in some trouble. but most of all in the USA. Thus, for instance. Catholicism depends on a monarchical and bureaucratic hierarchy in Rome, and a subsidiary hierarchy in the USA. The advent of J. F. Kennedy as a presidential candidate marked a significant turning point. In order to become President he had to pledge his adherence to the Constitution, which was at variance with certain aspects of Catholic thought. These elements of the old traditionalism were challenged at the same time during the Council of Vatican II (1962-65). Indeed, the long campaign against Catholic
Modernism carried on by the Papacy collapsed at that time: in other words Catholicism embraced a liberal perspective. It is interesting that in more recent times liberal Protestantism has undergone statistical decline: the mellownesses of liberalism are perhaps a way in which Protestants get to be effete. Yet at the same time liberalism has never had it so good, since it has largely conquered the Catholic Church. But there remains the important tension between the Papacy and the new liberalism. This liberalism in effect is the embracing by Catholics of an individualist perspective. They adhere to the Catholic tradition because they choose to. Indeed, Catholic loyalty is impressive: but the logic has changed. There is no need to stay Catholic. Who is afraid of excommunication except, of course, for a few priests?

In Protestantism things are different, for the only Pope left is that famous old paper one: the Bible. The way that book is interpreted is, of course, multi-form. In fact, on the far right, where fundamentalism reigns, the situation is ironic: it is the charisma of the preacher that counts. The results are similar to those in Catholicism. As the loyalty of Catholics to the Pope governs his acceptance, so the decisions of individuals shape Protestant groups. In short, individualism prevails even among those who choose community. But an even wider critique of tradition is taking hold. Why choose the Bible rather than the Bhagavad Gita? Why the Buddhist canon rather than the Hebrew scriptures? The Zen Centre in Los Angeles is full of Jews: Hare Krishnas recruit among Roman Catholics; Islam has strong appeal among African American Christians. Others simply choose their mixture of values. In short, the wider question of authority is obviously important among individualists, and individualism is probably the main US ideology.

Now, of course, individualism as an ideology relates to the study of religion in high schools only on one flank. That is to say, one aspect of the

educational process is to prepare young people for sensitive decisions about important matters. From this flank, the study of religion is in a way a form of philosophy. It is a way of introducing young people to alternatives in their lives. The information that may be given about religion and religions has relevance to the choices in life that they can make. The general ethos is that people should make up their own minds. This is one problem for parents, who sometimes have a different slant. They do not want their own children to opt for anything but their tradition. Individualism is thus itself a threat to their position (at which they themselves may have arrived from an individualistic direction).

But on the other flank the educational process has nothing much to do with choices. It concerns knowledge of history and of cultures. From this flank the study of religions has to do with understanding the world. It was this aspect of education that the Supreme Court in 1963 chiefly drew attention to. There are aspects of human history which require for our understanding an insight into religion and religions. Therefore the study of religions needs to be woven well into general history, whether of the USA or of the wider world. Recent events. since the Khomeini revolution in 1979 in Iran particularly, have given Americans at large a sense of the vitality of the study of religion as a key to the understanding of world history.

It is largely for this reason that in many public high schools the study of religions has been included in the curriculum. Still, there has been little systematic preparation of curricular materials. But there have been programmes, for instance in California and Illinois, which have combined the descriptive approach, rather than the existential one, with local studies. It so happens that in many, indeed all, regions of the USA (except for highly localized areas) there is a large or significant presence of migrants from various parts of the world. This gives the opportunity for students to have first-hand knowledge of alternative traditions. It also gives the local traditions the opportunity to express themselves. For instance, at the University of California Santa Barbara we have been pursuing (since 1987) a programme called Religious Contours of California (similar programmes have been launched in Illinois and elsewhere), which aims to introduce students to world religions, from Catholicism to Buddhism, through their manifestations in California itself, for instance the Catholicism of Chicanos (people of Mexican descent) and the religion of Chinese Americans.

It is hard to separate out such education in religions from programmes designed to promote ethnic understanding. One of the major concerns of US high school instruction is the necessity of combining both something of the melting pot idea and at the same time the appreciation, in a positive way, of differences. The result perhaps will be the emergence of a two-tier set of values, one expressing the US ideal, of a freedom-loving,

egalitarian, opportunistic mode of living, and the other expressing different ethnic and religious values. dwelling together, however, in harmony. This will help to reinforce a certain privatization of religion. This is already apparent in some communities, even outside of the three main strands of Judaism, Catholicism and Protestantism.

Another major effect of the diminution of external authority has been the emergence of syncretisms — blended kinds of religion. At one level such blending occurs individually. This is summed up in the figure of Sheila in Bellah and others' *Habits of the Heart* (Bellah *et al.,* 1985). She represents the religious individual who has made up her own mélange of spiritual values. At a more communal level there are movements which merge differing strands from world religions and elsewhere — such as Unificationism, which has elements of Confucianism and Christianity, Transcendental Meditation, which blends South Asian techniques and Western individualism, and various forms of new age ideology.

So far our exploration of freedom and authority in the US scene suggests that the question of freedom of belief is no longer a serious one. It is true that school boards of a conservative cast may wish to censor materials in schools. But generally a kind of libertarian individualism is dominant. There remain, however, problems of promoting curricula in the field. To these I shall come back. Meanwhile. one aspect of the conservative critique of humanistic values is worth dwelling on. As I have noted above, though often conservatives draw the wrong conclusion from noting that certain values are being promoted in school textbooks (for instance, there may be an absence of reference to religious factors in history), there is a vital issue underlying such a line of criticism. It is the question of the proper definition of religion.

It is a somewhat ironic thing that many professionals in the field think that religion cannot be easily or at all defined. Wilfred C. Smith's *The Meaning and End of Religion* (Smith, 1963) projected a strong critique of the Western notion of religion, especially when applied to non-Western phenomena. However. it would seem that the right conclusion from such a critique is that there is no clear demarcation between religion and so-called secular world-views and systems of practice. If so. then secular ideologies
should equally be taken into account in dealing with the question of whether education involves an even-handed and plural approach. This seems to me something which the conservative critique has raised, even if it tries to resolve the issue in a narrowing rather than a broadening direction. But the step of treating all world-views similarly has not been taken in the US educational world, as yet. There would of course have to be the recognition that the doctrine that all world-views are to be treated impartially is not itself a world-view in the relevant sense — or it too would have to be taken equally with the view that educational impartiality

should be disregarded. and this would be a contradiction. The point is that liberal neutralism would give each position maximum fairness, but lack of such neutralism would involve unfairness.

Of course, it can be argued that liberal neutralism is already protected by the US Constitution. There is no doubt that on the whole Americans. because of loyalty to the Constitution, do take freedom of religion seriously: on the other hand, during the McCarthy era, a secular ideology was identified as un-American. Interestingly, his witchhunts would never have worked had they been directed against Jews or even Moonies: his perception of communism as a common enemy paved the way for the full acceptance of Catholicism in the political process, as witness the election of John F. Kennedy as President. When Protestantism fully dominated the US public scene, there was often much overt anti-Catholic rhetoric. But the US is still some way from world-view neutrality (Smart, 1982). The conservative critique brings out the point that a certain set of values is often promoted in public education which in a broad sense comprise a form of scientific humanism, without paying attention to those philosophical issues which indicate ways in which science and religion. whether Christian, Islamic, Buddhist or Jewish (say), are compatible. Often therefore, the only viewpoint contrary to scientific humanism which high school students hear about is a highly conservative one, and this may reinforce the scientific humanist ethos. Another factor is that in many college and university philosophy departments world-view neutralism does not at all prevail, nor even a lesser degree of pluralism: this typically gives scientific humanism a privileged position. It is interesting to note that secular, that is to say pluralistic, universities have never addressed the question of world-view homogeneous departments (such as many economics, sociology and political science departments, as well as philosophy departments).

The Schempp decision rested on the perception that religion is an important factor in many phases of history, social development and so on. It is therefore primarily the descriptive and historical treatment of religion that has entered into public school curricula. Hence treatment of religions appears within the broader embrace of such subjects as social studies, economics, world history and so on. Also in the USA there is quite a lot of interest in courses on the Bible as literature, and by implication other scriptures as literature. The fact that so much education simply ignored religion, in order not to cause turbulence and possible illegality in the face of the Constitution, led to a felt need to treat the Bible as literature in view of its important place in the English literary heritage. It is quite common for such courses to be given in colleges and universities in departments of English.

The result of the integration of religious material into ‘other’ subjects such as social studies is that most teachers who handle the field are not especially trained in it. This is creating a growing concern in public universities and especially in State colleges to help to educate teachers in this area. (By ‘State colleges' I mean that second tier of universities in many States below the so-called State university — thus as well as the campuses of the State University, for instance the University of California, there are various State universities such as California State University Northridge, Cal State San Francisco and so on: the whole nomenclature is confusing for outsiders. The State colleges tend to be more closely tied in with the validation of school teachers in the various subjects.)

In brief, the major form in which the study of religion appears in high school and other curricula is as the descriptive or historical exploration of the role of religion in human affairs. Nevertheless, because young people are at a formative stage, and because ethical issues are frequently tied to religious ones, the existential and philosophical concern with issues of truth and falsity can hardly be avoided, and here considerable sensitivity, in view of the Constitution, and of the more vital role played by local school boards, is necessary.

In this connection it is vital that the distinction. alluded to by the Supreme Court in the Schempp decision, between teaching religion and teaching about religion be kept to the forefront of attention. Or to put matters a different way, pupils need to be clear about the classroom situation and that of the religious community. Here different forms of authority are evident. The teacher’s authority springs from his or her standing as representative of a wider society concerned with passing on knowledge and the means to form sensitive and sound opinions. The teacher, from this base, should be seen as a kind of chairperson in conducting debates, if the kind of material under discussion turns to existential and ethical issues. The role of the pastor or priest or rabbi. by contrast, springs from her or his role in a committed community, concerned to pass on a certain framework or style of commitment. It is often difficult for the distinction of roles to be
kept in mind, and this can lead a faith community into trying to pressurize the wider community to accept its particularistic standpoint by censoring literary texts, insisting on Christian-oriented textbooks and so on. This remains a clash of authority not without significance on the US scene. Nevertheless. one should not overlook the role which liberal Church organizations, for instance the Council of Churches in Minnesota, have played in promoting religion studies in the school system.

In more recent years the pattern created in California, known as the Religious Contours paradigm, has been influential. This was to explore world religions through the presence of religions in the State. For

instance. there is a strong Chinese community, especially in the Bay Area, which can be used as a bridge to the history of religions in China. Similarly, there are many Hispanics in the State whose religion is predominantly (though not only) Catholic. There are many new religions and old religions in new places, like Zen Buddhism (many of whose members are Anglos and Jews), which has a flourishing centre in Los Angeles. A series of studies of California's religions has been launched through the University of California Press (edited by Phillip Hammond and Ninian Smart). Similar experiments have occurred in Illinois. The fact that such a paradigm works by looking at local communities helps to reinforce the distinction between teaching a religion and teaching about one.

So far I have mainly sketched the situation in relation to public schools. What of private ones? The pressures appear to be towards the convergence between the two segments of education. In colleges and universities there is increased pluralism, which is fuelled by student demand. While an interest in Eastern religions is not as intense in the early 1990s as it was at the beginning of the 1970s, it is still highly significant. Moreover. the new ethnic self-consciousness drives demand for courses in Native American and African religions. Moreover, events since 1979 have brought the question of Islam to the fore of many American minds. Individualism reigns as much among private school students as among their public school peers. All this of course raises deep questions of authority among religious educators within the various communities. Apart from those groups which try to deal with the problem by isolating their members from within the midst of an open society, it appears to me that they need to rely increasingly upon intrinsic rather than extrinsic authority. It is not possible to have one area of human life sheltered from the rest where appeal is made to obedience. In an educational system which is greatly problem-oriented, it is not easy to lay down the religious law.

By 'intrinsic authority' I mean that authority has to spring from the intrinsic qualities of what is appealed to. It is the holiness and perceived judgement of the guru, not his gurudom, which counts. It is the plausibility of arguments for revelation which counts rather than a bare book. It is the poetry and depth of a scripture that counts rather than sacral status. It is the strength of argumentation which counts in a theological book rather than its being commended by some bishop or community. It is the fruitfulness of religious life that counts rather than tradition. It is the experience of faith rather than its orthodoxy which should weigh. It is the power of ritual rather than its provenance which counts. Such intrinsic authority poses challenges to all communities and traditions. It is true that there are severe backlashes as the disturbing implications of such a concept become manifest. But beyond every backlash lies another generation, where the hardnesses of fierce

commitment are mellowed. The USA has probably sailed further along this individualist voyage than any other society.

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a) *Festivals in the Primary Classroom David Rose pp 137-142*
b) Festivals in the Secondary School Peter Woodward pp 143-144

Festivals in the Primary Classroom

David Rose

Introduction

The eight themes below and the exemplar festivals within them are derived from the recommendations of the various faith communities as being appropriate for study in the primary classroom (see the SCAA Faith Communities' Working Group Reports, 1994). The selection is neither exhaustive nor complete, but it is intended that some of the suggested approaches may equally well be used by teachers for other appropriate festivals. A range of different approaches should be used. These may include:
. using cross-curricular elements such as music, story, drama, art;
. exploring concepts such as forgiveness, charity, incarnation;
. utilising themes such as key figures, food, clothing, travel.

The purpose of this chapter is to enable the teacher to be imaginative when exploring festivals in the classroom. (The spelling adopted reflects the SCAA
Glossary, 1994, which is increasingly being used in schools in the UK.)

Theme 1 Pilgrimage

Id ul Adha

Id ul Adha, or the greater *Id* festival, is a multi-faceted festival with several focal points for the Muslim. It reminds Muslims of the sacrifice of Isma'il (Ishmael) which Ibrahim (Abraham) was willing to make for God. Allah accepts Ibrahim's devotion and love and tells him to sacrifice a lamb instead. The festival marks the last major stage of the *hajj*, the pillar of Islam whereby Muslims go to Makkah on pilgrimage. *Id ul Adha* is also the day that celebrates the completion of the revelation of the Qur'an through

the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). It reminds Muslims of the Prophet's completion of the restoration of the *Kabah* in Makkah.

The teacher, when considering *Id ul Adha*, must bring out the salient points. It is a reminder to Muslims of the duty of pilgrimage as well as an expression of their belief in the revelation of Allah through sacred writings and through his Prophets. The key lesson is that God wants the devotion and love of Muslims more than anything else.

Increasingly within the UK Muslims celebrate this day as a holiday, as it is in Muslim countries. So *Id* prayers will usually be observed at the mosque,
followed by community activities which include eating and sharing. Teachers should recognise that for Muslims *Id* is a religious obligation as well as a social one.

The range of aspects of Islam deriving from this festival is great. Themes such as pilgrimage, sacred writings and key figures, and concepts such as devotion, sacrifice and love may aptly be explored. Topics like clothing, food, greetings (cards) and celebration in the home and community can usefully be addressed.

Janamashtam or Krishnajanmashtami

This festival celebrates the birthday of Krishna, one of the avatars (incarnations) of Vishnu. As Krishna displays many excellent human qualities, he is very popular, the ideal person to follow as an example, and accordingly this day is treated as different and significant by most Hindus. Many Hindus will travel to the places associated with the life of Krishna and
local variations of the festivities may occur there.

The religious significance of the festival is reinforced for many Hindus by fasting for twenty-four hours and reading sacred texts. As Krishna was born at midnight, so people will celebrate particularly at that time with a special *puja* (for some this takes place when the moon is visible). Shrines are decorated and light, tinsel and glitter will be evident. Many Hindus use *rangoli* patterns to welcome God into the house.

Some families will construct a cradle with a baby Krishna inside it. This will be rocked by pulling cords. Other families eat butter and curds, food

associated with Krishna when he was a young boy. The number of traditional stories related to Krishna is great and this is a significant starting point in the classroom. Stories can be enacted through the medium of dance, again a popular form of expression for many Hindus. Other forms could include art and craft work, or the computer may be used to design a suitable birthday card.

Theme 2 Colour

Holi

This is a festival of spring which celebrates romance and merriment. It marks the start of the hot season in India. This full-moon festival exemplifies the spirit of life, embracing hope, new year and spring harvest. It falls in February or March and reminds devotees of Krishna and the *gopis*, as well as of Lord Shiva and the re-creation of his marriage. It is an occasion for enemies to become friends, even if only for that day. It is a morning at least where everybody is equal. At the temple Hindus will give their devotion to Krishna.

The day is one of fun, jokes and pranks. It is associated with the throwing of coloured powders and paint dyes, and women and children are allowed unaccustomed liberties.

In parts of India processions, the singing of ballads, bonfires and effigies feature. Sweet foods are eaten and coconuts are shared, the latter being seen as a complete food. Milkshakes are sometimes drunk. ln Gujarat *Holi* is celebrated with special stick dances. Many mothers will walk around the fire with their babies and remember the story of Prahlad.

In schools the fun of this festival may be recognised — all are equal and can share in the occasion. Several of the songs and dances may be learnt, though it is ill-advised to introduce some of the excessive pranks of the day! Various stories may be used as a catalyst to the celebrations, and sweet foods can be made and shared. For this festival *rangoli* pattern making is practised in many areas.

Chinese New Year

Possibly as many as one in four people in the world today celebrate Chinese New Year. Its significance therefore may be secular and merely a reflection of culture. To those for whom it is religious it may derive its meaning from several religious traditions. For some this will be Buddhism,

and there are various stories relating to the animals of the horoscope and the Buddha. Others celebrate the kitchen god and for them the occasion symbolises family unity, gratitude for the past, and anticipation of the future.

This is an occasion when shopkeepers update their accounts and debts are settled, During the three days of New Year shops are shut and events centre
on the family. New clothes are worn, friends are visited, the elderly are worshipped and the deceased are offered incense, food, drink and paper money when families visit the temple. Greetings cards, coloured red, are exchanged, various mottoes are decorated in red, and children receive money in red envelopes. In some communities there is lion and, more rarely, dragon dancing.
This colourful occasion is very popular in primary schools, where it often has a more cultural bias. The use of cards, posters, mottoes and decorations with an emphasis on red colours makes for attractive display work. The horoscope animals are a favourite in the infant class with the opportunity for role-play with masks and costumes. Food may be savoury or sweet and the use of chopsticks allows new skills to be tried.

Theme 3 Good triumphing over evil

Wesak

Wesak is celebrated within the *Theravada* tradition for the three days embracing the full moon in May. It commemorates the birth, enlightenment and entry into *Nirvana* by the Buddha, which all fall on the same day. It marks the beginning of the Buddhist year.

For lay Buddhists it is a time of rest from work, visits to the temple, giving food to the monks, listening to sermons, and taking the Eight Precepts. At the temple lights are lit to symbolise illumination or enlightenment. In certain areas *Wesak* may include processions, with presents being given to the monks as well as to the needy.

In school, stories from the life of the Buddha are appropriate. Work deriving from this could be in the form of art — perhaps exploring the diversity of symbolism in Buddhism. Attitudes towards the natural world

and codes of morality could be part of circle time or discussion.

Purim

This festival celebrates Jewish unity and courage, as well as freedom and hope. It has a heroine, Esther, whose story may be found in the Bible. It is
sometimes known as the Festival of Lots.

Like *Pesach* it is associated with a special meal or *seudah*. It is really a day of carnival atmosphere and dressing-up and is celebrated in the community as well as within the family.

Elements often featured in *Purim* celebrations include costumes, masks, farcical plays and role-play, and puppetry. *Tzedekah* (gifts of fruit and food
given to friends, neighbours and the elderly) is carried out: at *Purim* this charitable giving is called *mishloah manot*. The *megillah* or the story of Esther is read. Special foods such as *hamantaschen* are eaten.

Theme 4 Faithfulness and friendship

Sikh *Diwali*

Sikh *Diwali* provides an opportunity to consider the life of the sixth Guru, Hargobind, as well as to explore the concept of goodness triumphing over evil, as expressed in this festival of light. The Guru remained constant and true to his beliefs, and continued to care for those around him while he was
in prison. This is an autumn festival, which also commemorates the founding of Amritsar, as well as the Guru's release from prison in 1620 CE.

Sikhs celebrate this event with fireworks, candles
and sweet foods. The *gurdwara* is specially decorated and homes will be tidied and sometimes painted. The family will wear their best or new clothes and presents will be given. Diwali is celebrated as much at the *gurdwara* as at home. It is an occasion for congregational worship.

Sikh *Diwali* in the classroom may be explored in similar ways to Hindu Diwali, even though the central story is different. Children could be encouraged to make cards and sweets and to present an assembly, using role-play to enact the central story, with an emphasis on caring and friendship and being true to one's beliefs.

Raksha Bandan

The term Raksha means 'protection' and *Bandhan* means 'to tie'. This festival was originally a *Brahmin* festival, but is common now amongst most Hindus. Brothers make promises to protect and look after their sisters. This can also be extended to male cousins who may count as brothers. The brother is given a *rakhi*, or coloured thread, to wish him good fortune and protection from evil. The sister may affirm, 'May his ambitions be fulfilled in life'. This festival may be celebrated in various ways in different parts of the Indian sub-continent and amongst Hindu communities elsewhere.

Raksha Bandhan is a special holiday for brothers and sisters. The actual tying of the *rakhis* will usually be done at home.

In school children could make and exchange bracelets as a token of friendship. Cards could be made which explore the notion of friendship, and a range of other relationships. Teachers might like to think of the importance of tying and knots in various religions and rites.

Theme 5 Newness/New life

Baisakhi

This festival commemorates the date in 1699 when the tenth human Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, tested whether the followers of Sikhism were prepared to die for their faith. Five men volunteered. Todav they are known as the *panj piare*. This was the day that the Sikh community — the Khalsa — was founded. To mark this event the Sikh flag is renewed and the flagpole washed. On this date Guru Gobind Singh gave the name Singh (lion) to males and Kaur (princess) to females. It is a day on which the *amrit* or initiation ceremonies are popularly celebrated.

The *Khalsa* emerged after a period of persecution, so this day marks the unity of the community and its dedication to God. This finds expression in service and devotion. Baptised Sikhs wear the 5 K's and it was at *Baisakhi*

that Guru Gobind Singh instituted the wearing of these symbols.

Whilst *Baisakhi* is a harvest festival in the Punjab, it is celebrated with the *akhand path* (a non-stop cycle of reading the whole of the sacred text). After the community has joined in the washing of the flagpole and renewing the flag, there will be a shared meal in the *langar*. The day may include singing and folk dances.

In the classroom *Baisakhi* could be explored through topics such as clothing, communication (looking at the flag), symbols, key figures, as well
as through rites of passage (initiation), new year/calendar or story. *Baisakhi* has a dramatic storyline and judicious use can be made of drama,
especially in assembly.

Pentecost

Fifty days after Easter comes *Pentecost* when early Christians received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Today *Pentecost* is often called Whitsun (from White
Sunday) because of the white robes worn by believers who wished to be baptised on this special day. *Pentecost* marks the start of the Christian Church. The story of the first *Pentecost* can be found in Acts, chapter 2, where it is recorded that the Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus, was given to the disciples, while tongues of fire hovered above them; they were able to speak in tongues and perform extraordinary signs and miracles.

Teachers should note that the tongues of fire are symbolised in some churches today by the wearing of red clerical garb, as well as by the altar being 'dressed' in red. Charismatic churches emphasise the presence of the Holy Spirit as God's gift and celebrate many of the practices of the early Christians. *Pentecost* for Christians is accordingly a reminder of their individual relationship with God as well as of their loyalty to each other as a community. It is often thought of as the 'birthday' of the Christian Church.

This Christian holy day is marked in many schools by a holiday. The manner in which Pentecost is celebrated depends on the type of church. Teachers can use this diversity of practice as part of their teaching. just as the Holy Spirit enabled early Christians to practise a range of activities,

this finds expression in different church activities today.

Colour and clothing are of significance in exploring *Pentecost*. Teachers can encourage their children to find out about the range of Christian practices, e.g. teaching, healing, preaching, *glossolalia*, and how these are expressed. Children could also find out about key figures in the earlv Church.

Theme 6 Charity and almsgiving

Id ul Fitr

Id ul Fitr is a celebration marking the end of *Ramadan*, the month of fasting for Muslims. The observance of this fast is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and is of great significance to them. *Id ul Fitr* is, accordingly, a great contrast and is much enjoyed by the whole of the Muslim community. It is
characterised by family gatherings and elaborate meals, by visits to the mosque and the family grave, and by new clothes and presents. Alongside this is a strong emphasis on responsibility and caring in the form of another pillar, namely *zakat*. Many Muslims practise *zakat ul fitr*. It may take the form of money or food given to the poor.

Teachers should note the balance in Islam between celebration and caring for others. It is an achievement to observe the fasting requirements of *Ramadan*, though that is tempered by thoughts and actions for the benefit of others. As Muslim children are fully involved in the celebration of the festival, it is unlikely that they will attend school at *Id* when it falls on a school day. Teachers will find it better to explore *Id* in school after the event rather than during *Ramadan*.

Islam is based on the lunar calendar and the phases of the moon are very important. Teachers should consider talking about this in relation to the direction of Makkah and the requirement that Muslims face in that direction when praying. Children could make *Id* cards, noting that the emphasis is on geometric patterns and floral designs so characteristic of Islamic art.

The *Kathina* ceremony

This ceremony occurs at any time within a month of the end of the *Vassa* retreat (which coincides with the rainy season) and falls usually in October or November. It is a kind of thanksgiving ceremony whereby lay

Buddhists express their thanks and gratitude to the monks for keeping their religion alive in their community. The people do this by offering useful gifts, especially the cloth for new robes. In return, the monks bless the laity. It is seen as a time to gain merit. In Thailand the king joins in the thanksgiving and offers gifts to the monks.

Kathina is an opportunity for Buddhists to take the Five Precepts and share in the offering ceremony as well as to listen to talks on the *Dhamma*. It is a day of great importance for devotees. The fact that the monks and lay Buddhists give to each other what they can appropriately offer is significant. Time is set aside for this mutual paying of respect.

Since one of the key elements of the ceremony is robe giving, teachers should use the opportunity to explore religious dress and the symbolic use of colour. Looking at ways in which religious leaders and groups are supported by the lay community is also important in the study of most religions. Dramatic enactment of this occasion, with pupils writing an appropriate script, would assist empathetic awareness.

Theme 7 Repentance and forgiveness

Lent

Lent is the period of forty days preceding Easter. It culminates on Easter Day, when Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. It is, however, the most solemn period in the Christian calendar, a time of personal penitence and reflection. Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent and it includes Holy Week, which recalls the momentous events in the last week of the life of Jesus. The early Church marked this period of penitence with fasting, although today different churches adopt differing practices. Whilst fasting is still practised in some form by many, it is also traditionally a period of preparation for baptism at Easter.

Many families celebrate Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day) as a time of enjoyment before Lent begins. On Ash Wednesday the use of ashes to mark a cross on the forehead is observed by some people to recognise the transience and brevity of human life and human dependence upon God. Palm Sunday marks the start of Holy Week and the emphasis shifts very much to the sufferings, emotions and death of Jesus. Small crosses made from palm leaves may be distributed and kept in the homes of believers until they are burnt for use as ashes on the following Ash Wednesday.

The symbol of the cross is central to Christians. Teachers can explore various forms of crosses found in different regions of the world. The nature of the cross and the crucifix could be used with older children to explore the concepts of vicarious suffering and the resurrection of Jesus. The symbol of the cross is evident in Christian architecture (for example, the cruciform shape of many churches) and on a personal level in the necklaces worn or rosaries used by many Christians. Where appropriate, a study of the Stations of the Cross maybe a helpful aid for those attempting to explore the intensity and diversity of feelings and emotions experienced by Jesus.

Symbolic foods that could be made with children are hot-cross buns or, for the adventurous, the simnel cake. Aspects of Christian belief can be explored through designing and making a range of Easter cards. Music and hymns are another rich source of study. Traditionally passion plays have been used to enact these key events in the life of Jesus.

Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur

Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year, though the period of ten days that follows, culminating in *Yom Kippur*, is the most solemn period in the year. These are the High Holy Days. They are a time of penitence, although it is not a mournful period. *Yom Kippur* is considered the most solemn day in the year, and rigorous fasting marks the whole of the day.

Rosh Hashanah is celebrated in community. The blowing of the *shofar* (ram's horn) in the synagogue in the month before the festival celebrates the fidelity of Abraham in being prepared to sacrifice his son, Isaac, to God (see Genesis 22, which is the portion of the *Torah* read on *Rosh Hashanah*). During the ten-day period Jews heal rifts and forgive each other for any wrongdoing. In preparing themselves in this way they enter Yom Kippur in the frame of mind needed to appreciate the atonement offered by God to people (the story of the scapegoat is found in Leviticus, chapter 16).

Cards are sent at *Rosh Hashanah*, depicting symbols such as the *shofar*, the *Torah* or honey (combs), which feature in the New Year celebrations. Teachers may like to help children design some of their own. The way in which the calendar is ordered and New Year celebrated helps pupils understand cultural and religious diversity. Bible stories and the work of artists can also be incorporated into topic work.

Theme 8 God with us

Christmas

The birthday of Jesus is traditionally celebrated in the western Church on the fixed date of 25 December. Its origins are somewhat obscure, and practices from a range of traditions have been incorporated into the celebration during the course of its history. There is a danger today that its real meaning is being lost. The period of Advent is a preceding time of anticipation and preparation for Christmas.

For Christians the key concept of Christmas is the Incarnation, or 'God with us' in Jesus. They believe God has intervened in the history of the world in order to re-establish a covenant relationship. Christmas is the start of that process, culminating several months later in the events of Easter. It is a time of community as well as a time of being together as a family. The giving and receiving of presents is symbolic of this, and most families will share a meal together. It is also a festival of lights and coloured decorations such as Advent wreaths and calendars. Advent marks the start of the Christian calendar.

Teachers have the opportunity with Christmas to show pupils that Christianity is a world faith, and the richness and diversity of celebrations can be developed in the primary school so that annual repetition and disaffection need not occur. The various elements of Christmas can be explored, including such ideas as giving to charity and caring for those less well off. The story of the birth of Jesus (in the gospels of Matthew and Luke) may be explored through drama, the designing and making of cards, making Christingles, looking at some of the symbols of Christmas, as well as looking at the contributions of key figures to the development of the festival. Christmas is associated with music and carols, and children can write and perform their own songs. Work on religious calendars could include lunar and solar examples and the animal cycles of events which allow religious communities to share and express their faith together.

Shavuot

The Feast of Weeks, also called *Shavuot*, is the period of fifty days after *Pesach* (Passover). Many synagogues have a special calendar (the *Omer*) which counts down through these days; and some rabbis have referred to *Shavuot* as the 'closing feast of *Pesach*'. It is also one of the three pilgrim festivals of Judaism.

Shavuot is a day of rest with no obligations and itis celebrated for many reasons. In Israel it marks the beginning of the wheat harvest, but its importance lies in that historically it celebrates the gift by God of the *Torah* to Moses on Mount Sinai. It also marks the freedom and deliverance of the Jews from their time of slavery in Egypt. Many synagogues are decorated with flowers at this time.

Shavuot links well with the idea of God's gift of the law and the development of different codes of conduct. Many teachers will try to develop moral/ethical awareness through circle times and invite pupil participation in exploring the nature and relevance of law. The legacy of the Ten Commandments (Sayings) in western society and how people's conduct is influenced by their beliefs can be developed in relation to the *Torah* in Jewish life. Additionally, there is opportunity to explore the lives of key figures in Judaism and the transmission of identity. *Shavuot* also has links with the practice of pilgrimage.

David Rose

Woodward, P. (ed) with Cherry Gould and Riadh el Droubie
Festivals in World Religions second edition RMEP 1998

a) *Festivals in the Primary Classroom David Rose pp 137-142*
b) Festivals in the Secondary School Peter Woodward pp 143-144

Festivals in the Secondary School

Peter Woodward

Diversity, colour and vitality are the terms that come to mind when festivals are considered in the school context, whether it be primary, middle or secondary. The range of suggestions for describing and exploring festivals in the primary classroom put forward in the previous chapter by David Rose will spark off a variety of evocative trains of thought for those who teach Years 7, 8 and 9 in Key Stage 3 classrooms (P7, S1 and S2 in Scotland); and for many middle and secondary school teachers the value of including festivals in the curriculum for these years lies in the impetus they bring to contemporary RE and the lively interest

the topic can evoke on the part of very many pupils.

For older pupils especially, festivals often provide the means of adding depth to the descriptive and insight to the evocative — necessary ingredients if RE/RS is to transcend the informative and stimulate reflection and response. A glib phrase, this, easy to express, but less straightforward to accomplish. The function and purpose of this chapter is to outline the possibilities and difficulties involved in such a task and to indicate some practical approaches that have worked in certain schools and may well be worth trying in others.

Adding depth to the descriptive

One of the strengths of RE today is that lessons are often lively, colourful and interesting. Rites of passage in different traditions, people in their millions making journeys to pilgrimage centres round the world, patterns of worship in their rich variety, it is a fascinating mixture that whets the appetite and stimulates the attention. Festivals too can have the same strength in their colour, variety and ritual.

At the same time there is a danger that this kaleidoscopic pattern can lead to superficiality of treatment, and that the sparkle of so many systematic lessons and the new breed of textbooks that cover and illustrate these topics can emphasise vivid descriptions and encourage memorisation of detail without provoking deeper thought and reflection.

The central strength of studying festivals lies in the variety of possible approaches there are to this area, and also in the thoughtful treatment of ethical and spiritual issues they can elicit. For instance, festivals are often treated in isolation from other festivals or topics, but at other times they can be seen as part of a calendrical sequence; or alternatively a trio of pilgrimage festivals (such as *Eid-ul-Adha* at Makkah, Pentecost at Lourdes, *Baisakhi* at Amritsar) or Festivals of Light (Christmas, *Hanukah*, *Diwali*) may be linked thematically, offering in their relationships to each other a focus for both insight and reflection.

Alternatively a spiral treatment of festival topics over a number of years could steadily enrich the understanding of *Pesah* or Easter: Year 7 pupils might focus on the storyline, Year 9 on a character study of the principal participants, Year 11 on the meaning and the message (Freedom and Creation in the one case, Self-sacrifice, Redemption and Resurrection in the other), and Years 12 or 13 on the insights that meditation on these

issues can bring to the observant participant (freedom to choose and to celebrate, the nature of divine grace, the quality of life that faith evokes).*

Sometimes a festival may be the focus for a whole school, with an act of collective worship, marked perhaps by brevity and humour, serving as the trigger for subsequent RE lessons, treating the issues raised at an appropriate level. All Saints' Day, or a Parsi or Baha'i celebration of an event in the life of their initial leader/teacher would benefit from such treatment. A visiting speaker, especially one who has been on pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, Jerusalem or Varanasi (or Vrindavan), can also illuminate and
deepen understanding.

A display of artefacts and pupils' work in a central place (the main vestibule or the school hall) can again focus attention on a particular fast or festival,
and Ramadan and Lent may give the opportunity for the displayed artefacts to grow in number week by week until the climax of *Eid ul Fitr* or Holy Week and Easter rounds off an extended exercise. This takes time and needs careful planning, but the response from playground and corridor conversations can be a useful stimulus in the RE domain.

Two exercises undertaken with the top years of middle schools in the Midlands come to mind here. In one case the year group studied the book of Esther and learnt how Jews express their loathing of the actions of Haman towards their race, entering into an appreciation of what it means to be a persecuted and homeless minority. They probably remembered most the vivid aspects of foot stamping, booing, hissing and blowing hooters and rattling *greggers* that Purim requires, but the deeper issues were there too as seeds sown for subsequent reflection.

In another middle school in the same town, where some ninety children in three Year 8 classes were preparing for a model *Seder* celebration, a 'cascade' approach was undertaken with four bright pupils from each of three classes being detached for an advanced course in the symbolism of the festival's ingredients. They then returned to their own classes to pass on to their fellows the information and ideas they had acquired, so that on the day of the celebration every child had received a basis of initial information on which to build. What they lacked in pronunciation they made up for in the zeal of their singing and their realisation of what the

freedom to sing means to contemporary Jews.

Bringing insight to the evocative

In what ways is 'bringing insight' different from 'adding depth'? Principally that 'depth' can involve a purely intellectual element, appropriate to the age of the pupils. An understanding of a *gurpurb* for instance, may revolve around a story about a Sikh Guru that will at various ages focus on: (a) the
storyline of the festival; (b) the personality/nature of the Guru; (c) the issues of persecution, freedom and identity that are involved; and (d) some perception of the response of the *Khalsa* Sikh to the life and example of the Guru he/she seeks to emulate. These may all challenge and stimulate pupils' mental processes without going any further. For many teachers that may be sufficient and they will be happy to let matters stand at that level.

Bringing 'insight to the evocative' would by contrast relate to additional elements that could involve pupils/students in taking up positions, whether ethical or spiritual, in relation to the festival or story concerned. In a comparable example of a Sikh festival (*Diwali*) the pupils might feel prompted to analyse the selflessness of the Guru's actions and to relate this to their personal patterns of behaviour, exploring ways in which their own ingenuity in helping others might match that displayed, for instance, by Guru Hargobind when offered release from prison. Or, as an example of the enrichment of the spiritual aspect of life, a study of the involvement of several members of a family in the Sikh community who share in reading hour-long sections of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in an *akhand path* as the build-up to a traditional *gurpurb*, might prompt pupils to reflect on the nature of the readings they themselves could perform in an act of worship or a year group assembly. This type of reflection is very close to the nature of spiritual insight, and ensures that evocative and richly descriptive material is not the end of the RE process but a catalyst to deeper reactions and responses.

Not all festivals will be equally effective in this direction, but examples that have relevant potential include: the lighting of lamps at *Hanukah*, where each Jewish child usually has a personal candelabrum and lights candles in ascending (or, in certain traditions, descending) number for eight successive days; Hindu *Diwali*, where the stories of Rama's struggles against evil and Sita's defence of her purity and loyalty reinforce ethical standards that relate naturally to the morality of the twentieth (and twenty-first) century; Ash Wednesday, where worshippers submit to the marking of their foreheads with ash from the previous year's burnt

palm leaves, kept over from Palm Sunday; and *Dhammacakka* Day (Asala) when Theravada Buddhists focus on the teachings that constitute the Middle Way, linking the theology (if that is not too inappropriate a term) of the Four Noble Truths with the morality of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Attempts to achieve insight and depth are probably easier to accomplish where teachers are familiar with festivals in the better-known traditions and celebrations. Confidence and experience are useful in the choice and manipulation of material. There are festivals, however, in the less familiar
faiths that can also be useful in this direction. Examples might include: in the Parsi tradition the August-based celebrations of Zarathushtra's birthday, together with *Farvardigan* and *No Ruz* (New Year's Day); *Mahavira Jayanti*, when]ains remember the birthday of their last great teacher and model; *Chung Yuan*, the Chinese 'Festival of Hungry Ghosts', when boats and other utilitarian objects made of paper are burnt as offerings to the spirits of the dead to aid them in their onward journeys; *Omisoka*, a Japanese festival whose ethical dimension relates to both Shinto and Buddhist beliefs; and also certain secular events, where the examples of famous men and women and the lessons of history can serve to evoke response and reflection.

Of course festivals are not unique in what they can achieve. Nevertheless, they provide a cutting edge in the variety of approaches they permit and the ease with which they allow teachers and pupils to transcend the informative and ensure their teaching is characterised by depth and insight. Here is ample justification for the space allotted to them in the contemporary RE curriculum.

*Comparable year groups in Scotland would be P7, S2, S4 and S5 or S6.

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