The Representation of Christianity in Religious Education in England: the Shaping of a Tradition

by

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Abbreviations

CEM	**Christian Education Movement**
DCSF	**Department for Children, Schools and Families**
DfES	**Department for Education and Skills**
ERA	**Education Reform Act (1988)**
KS	**Key stage**
NUT	**National Union of Teachers**
OCU	**Order of Christian Unity**
OfSTED	**Office for Standards in Education**
QCA	**Qualifications and Curriculum Authority**
QCDA	**Qualifications and Curriculum Development Authority**
RE	**Religious Education**
RI	**Religious Instruction**
SCAA	**School Curriculum and Assessment Authority**
VA	**Voluntary Aided (School)**
VC	**Voluntary Controlled (School)**
WRERU	**Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit**

A note on abbreviations used in Part 2:

The following conventions are used to indicate the religious character of schools

NRC	No religious character
CE	Church of England
RC	Roman Catholic
OC	Other Christian, indicating an ecumenical partnership

A number used with any of these abbreviations is for the use of the researcher and ensures the anonymity of respondents and their schools.

Acknowledgements

Declaration

I confirm that this study is my own work and that no part of it has previously been submitted for examination.

The study contains the following material which has already been published:

Chapter 3 appeared as 'Curriculum Christianity' (2006) in The *British Journal of Religious Education*, 28 (2), 153-172.

Much of Part 2 of this study appears in Hayward, M. (2007) *Christianity in Religious Education at Key Stage 3 – A Research Report.* WRERU Occasional Papers IV. Coventry. WRERU. University of Warwick.

Abstract

Christianity holds a central place in Religious Education (RE) in England. Since the Education Reform Act of 1988, it has been formally named in legislation relating to Religious Education; formerly its presence in the curriculum was assumed, but there was no specific indication of a requirement to teach particular religions – not even in the Education Act of 1944 which was of particular importance in formalising arrangements for Religious Education. Interpretation of ERA (DfES Circular 1/94) suggested that Christianity should 'predominate' in the RE curriculum. This study arises from recognition of the status accorded to Christianity in RE and the recognition that its representation and the shaping of this have not in the main been addressed by research.

My study falls into three main parts. Part 1 considers the shaping of Christianity in RE (Chs.1 and 2) drawing on relevant written sources, among which Agreed Syllabuses hold a key place. Chapter 3 focuses particularly on the representation of Christianity in Agreed Syllabuses from the period 2001-2004, providing necessary background to the research which underpins Part 2.

Part 2's concern is the teaching – and thus representation - of Christianity in key stage 3 in schools with and without a religious character. Based on a survey undertaken across England, it draws on data gathered from teachers. It includes an analysis of the content teachers select about Christianity (Chapter 5), and analyses the aspirations teachers have for their pupils' learning about and from Christianity. Teachers' own experience of studying the tradition is discussed in Chapter 7. These chapters in particular offer material relating to the representation of Christianity and the factors which shape this which, as far as I am aware, is unavailable elsewhere.

Part 3 takes up my contention at the end of Part 2 (Chapter 9), that a new configuration of Christianity is needed in RE. A case is presented for this (Chapter 10), taking into account especially the changing face of the tradition globally, and drawing out possible implications for RE from some recent studies of Christianity. Chapter 11 takes my own recommendation seriously and explores a possible way forward in reconfiguring Christianity so that RE may offer a more adequate representation of the tradition in the present. A final note reflects on the challenge a new configuration presents to RE.

The above summary of my concerns points to the argument I advance: that the representation of Christianity in RE has been shaped by factors extrinsic to a considered study of the tradition; this has allowed the emergence of a 'curriculum Christianity' which fails to do justice to its diverse presence and dynamic, locally and globally. Teachers are heirs to this curriculum tradition and in some measure its guardians and interpreters. The relatively few scholarly attempts to give account of Christianity 'as a religion' bears on their encounter with the tradition in their own studies and, it would seem, on its representation in RE. I argue that a re-conceptualisation of what might be understood by 'Christianity' and the development of new paradigms for its study might contribute to a more authentic representation of Christianity in RE.

The Representation of Christianity in Religious Education in England: the Shaping of a Tradition

Introduction

1. Background to the research

The starting point for this study is deceptively simple. It lies in two observations. First, recognition of the centrality Christianity[1] has enjoyed and continues to hold in religious education (RE) in England; since 1988 its place has been named and secured in legislation (Education Reform Act [ERA] ,1988:8:3) and the interpretation of that legislation (DfES Circular 1/94) has played a significant part in ensuring its predominance. This prominence is maintained in the more recent non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education (QCA: 2004). Second, there is an absence of any serious study analysing the tradition's presence and its representation within RE. Furthermore, with only a few exceptions there has been no major attempt to address *how* Christianity may be represented in RE, although the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority's (SCAA) publicly funded venture into this area (SCAA, 1994c) should be noted.[2] Similarly, while approaches to the study of religion(s) are the focus of current academic debate, studies of Christianity which give account of its complexities, dynamic and cultural transmission remain few. It becomes appropriate to ask, from where does RE derive its understanding of Christianity? How Christianity may be appropriately represented and studied remains largely un-addressed in the RE (and Religious Studies) literature, yet the majority of school texts published for RE continue to relate to Christianity or aspects of the tradition. A central concern of this research is, consequently, to identify and examine some of the factors which have shaped and continue to shape the representation of Christianity in RE in England.

Attempts to address this concern are confronted by the problem that RE and 'teaching Christianity' have been coterminous for much of the period with which I am concerned (1944 - 2004), and for over a half century preceding 1944. This relationship, largely unquestioned before the 1960s, bears on the matter of representation and requires examination. For the researcher this poses a further methodological problem, that the sources to which she turns may not, in the first instance be speaking of 'Christianity' in a reflective manner, or viewing it

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[1] Since 'Christianity' has common currency, it is used throughout this thesis; the research as a whole raises questions about its usefulness in discussions of representation.
[2] SCAA subsequently became the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), adopting SCAA publications 2004a, 2004b & 2004c.

with the advantage of distance on the one hand, or conversely with the recognition that one wears the lenses of an insider on the other. The requirement for a supposedly non-controversial and 'undenominational' RE, which found expression as early as 1870 in the Cowper-Temple clause,[3] also colours key sources available to this research, in particular agreed syllabuses. I shall, however, argue for some reappraisal of the clause's significance in RE and of its effects on teaching Christianity.

I noted earlier that my two initial observations were deceptively simple. A further strand within this study is the paradox of a perennial concern for Christianity's centrality within RE, when evidence from many sources suggests a decline of participation in the life of mainstream churches (Davie, 1994) and the disappearance of a residual folk tradition (Brown, 2001). The severance with worship in particular, Davie suggests, results in a loss of even a basic grasp of the narratives at the heart of Christian identity and community life. Viewed against such a backcloth the RE teacher, albeit unwittingly, becomes the custodian of the tradition; a role in which 40 years ago Martin (1967) saw the teacher - especially the female primary school teacher.[4] Against this picture of the declining vitality of the mainstream Christian churches in England, we may set the strength of Christianity's present in Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, or the Philippines, recognising its diversities in these and other locations and its cultural transformations, themes to which Part 3 of this thesis draws particular attention. We may ask what are the implications of these contexts - England *and* elsewhere - for the future representation of Christianity in RE.

One answer to this question lies in the approach to the tradition adopted by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA, 2004c); but in essence this was, in another key, the same answer which many see as the outcome of the 1944 Education Act, that of looking for (a) common denominator(s) through which the tradition may be handled. Such an answer is in itself immediately limiting, creating a 'curriculum Christianity' which may little resemble the tradition locally or globally, and pointing to the need for new paradigms for representing and studying the tradition.

Martin's observation of the teacher as custodian points to a further strand in this thesis, again one that is also largely unaddressed in RE research or literature. Whilst teachers of RE in the

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[3] See Chapter 1.
[4] Martin (1967) saw schools as 'the most important source of religious teaching' (88) and comments: '.. the central figure for teaching Christianity is a lady in a primary school' (89).

present would, I think, largely eschew the role of custodian, that they play a significant role in the 'shaping' of Christianity in the RE curriculum is incontrovertible. Such 'shaping' will derive not only from their interpretation of syllabus requirements and selection of content but for example, from their own study of the tradition, their professional self-understanding and aspirations for their students and not least, their students' engagement with Christianity in RE. Whilst the present research does not set out to measure or weigh the impact of these factors – indeed I would be hesitant to do so – it does present and examine seminal data gathered from teachers in relation to these matters. This data which is carefully examined in Part 2 of this thesis, as well as contributing significantly to its argument, provides a substantial body of information which has not hitherto been available in the field of religious education.

2. Thesis and argument

The background to my research outlined above points to the thesis and argument which this study will advance; to the broad areas of concern identified for research and to the structure of the study. First, the case I wish to argue. This is focused in the following statements:

- That the representation of Christianity in RE has been for the most part shaped by factors which are extrinsic to a considered study of the tradition and which have served to obscure its diverse expression and dynamic locally and globally. Consequently, it is appropriate to speak of a 'curriculum Christianity', emergent from RE's own history and the place of Christianity within this. Research evidence suggests that teachers are both heirs to this and in some measure its guardians.

- Whilst the constraints and consequences of a western (and by implication Christian) conceptualisation of 'religion' are now commonly articulated within the academic study of religion, especially in relation to 'non-Christian' traditions, there have paradoxically been few attempts to give account of 'Christianity' even within the restrictive boundaries of 'religion'. This bears on teachers' own encounter with the tradition in their studies and consequently on its representation in RE.

- A re-conceptualisation of what is to be understood by 'Christianity' and the development of new paradigms for the study of this tradition are needed to facilitate its 'authentic' representation in RE; such a paradigm is more likely to focus on process than content, enabling teachers (and their pupils/students) to engage with the complexities of

Christianity on a micro or macro scale, with its unities and diversities, and its cultural and chronological embeddedness.

Triangulated, these statements constitute my central thesis. The data examined give rise to the thesis itself and point to a body of evidence which supports it.

3. Data identification and analysis
3.1 Written sources

Parts 1 and 3 of the present study are based in the main on written sources; the identification of a relevant literature, important for any research, thus assumes a particular significance. Literature concerning the history and development of RE, about curriculum and teaching, and especially as this relates to Christianity, is central to Part 1 of this study; agreed syllabuses for RE are pivotal. This literature is illuminated by interweaving political and social circumstance, ecclesiastical interests and legislation, as well as by currents in the academic study of theology and religion. There is also an 'unwritten' text concerning the place which Christianity holds within national consciousness and identity, surfacing periodically in sound-byte, press and public rhetoric. Any investigation of the representation of Christianity must then proceed on a number of fronts.

I intend that the present study should offer a past, present and future perspective on the representation of Christianity. This does not signify that I intend to offer a chronological history of developments in RE, although it is the case that Part 1 of this study will draw mainly on sources from the period 1944 – 2004. In marking out material for investigation and analysis (see below) and in structuring my text I have worked *within* and *across* the following areas:

Contextual studies

Here I refer to the wider social and political and religious milieu in which the nature of RE and its consequent subject content has evolved. RE as it emerged in 1944 was in part a resolution of earlier disputes relating to the advent of publicly funded education in England and Wales and the exigencies of the Dual system. Such roots have branches (albeit pruned or trained) which reach into the present. One example is the Cowper-Temple clause (1870); but an absence of Roman Catholic voices in public life from the Elizabethan settlement through to the 19th century, their distrust of 'undenominationalism' and the prevalence of a Protestant ethos in RE are also factors which contribute to the ways in which Christianity is and is not

represented in RE. Studies documenting the history of education in Britain are pertinent to this study; that said, it is salutary to note that whilst the Dual system may come to the fore in such studies, RE *per se* may not even have an index reference.

The more immediate circumstances of the 1944 Act also warrant close attention, not least the experience of war on the one hand and on the other visions for the future, for a reconstructed, more equitable society and a common citizenship. Such renewal, for many of its exponents required a foundation in shared values, which were necessarily Christian.[5] Such sentiments are clearly expressed in the *Christian News-letter* which enjoyed wide circulation in Britain and overseas, and was edited for much of its period of publication by J.H.Oldham, also known for his editorship of *Religion in Education*.[6] Contributors to the former represented a Christian voice throughout the war years; many were also participants in the life of the Moot.[7] The point I wish to note here is simply that there was a tide of expectancy, rooted in Christianity. We need to tease out the relation of this to the hopes placed upon RE at the time, and ask about the relation of these to the representation of Christianity. The prefaces to many agreed syllabuses of the period clearly reflect such hopes. Cambridgeshire (1949) offers a noteworthy example; as Copley (1997:34) notes: 'Few syllabuses in any subject have ever, like the Cambridgeshire one, sought to justify and set themselves within the cultural context of the Western world '. Yet the aspirations of such syllabuses do not always appear to be matched by their subsequent Christian content; indeed such content may be seen as implicitly addressing the concerns of previous generations.

Agreed Syllabuses for Religious Education
The formal designation 'Agreed Syllabus' was endorsed by the 1944 Education Act, but a notion of 'agreement' pre-dates its statutory formulation,[8] as indeed does the existence of syllabuses deemed appropriate for use in Board,[9] and later, county schools; syllabuses formulated before the 1944 Act continued to carry influence after the Act, there was no radical break with the past. The 1944 legislation provided for wide Christian representation,

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[5] See for example discussion of RE in the debate following the King's Address of November 1941, or parliamentary debates surrounding RE in 1944 recorded in *Hansard*.
[6] First published in 1934, this journal was renamed *Learning for Living* in 1961 and in 1978 the *British Journal of Religious Education*.
[7] The *Christian News-letter* and the contribution of the Moot to education are discussed in Reeves (1999); I am grateful to the Special Collections of the Brotherton Library, University of Leeds for access to copies of the *Christian News-letter*.
[8] The Spens Report uses the term 'agreed syllabus' (Board of Education, 1938:206), but without the statutory implications of 1944.
[9] Selby- Bigge (1927) draws attention to several surveys of syllabus provision prior to the Education Act of 1906 and to syllabus activity subsequent to the Act.

including that of the Roman Catholic Church, on the required Statutory Conferences charged with drawing up agreed syllabuses. I have to date discovered no detailed analysis of 'Christianity' in new syllabuses agreed in the years immediately following the 1944 Act; in addressing this question at all, I am aware that it may well mean overcoming a huge barrier of doubt among RE professionals. I am not suggesting that a representation of Christianity appropriate to the present (or indeed to the years following the Act) is to be found in these syllabuses, but my investigation suggests that there are continuities to the present.

Drawing on the report of an inquiry into the working of the 1944 Act (Institute of Christian Education [ICE], 1954) as a guide to the key agreed syllabuses following the legislation, I was able to obtain and examine a cross section of these. Of particular interest are those which operate within a theological framework,[10] which in turn may presuppose particular relationships between Bible and doctrine and the nature of theological language. Other syllabuses choose a path of biblical history. This may work in two directions. On the one hand there is an implied *Heilsgeschichte*; on the other - and this is apparent in books for teachers and pupils dating from the 1950s - a concern for the historicity of biblical narratives. In some measure such emphases reflect Christian concerns at the time - yet may also offer a response to challenges to the tradition from an earlier period.

Additionally, I noted above that agreed syllabuses might perceive RE - and hence the Christian tradition - as having a certain 'instrumentality'; expectations of RE, extrinsic to the study of a religious tradition as such, carry consequences for the representation of traditions. This may derive from government concerns - RE's contribution for example to citizenship, a concern in the 1940s and in the present; or currently the subject's role in promoting community cohesion. I suggest that 'instrumentality' is a perennial issue for RE. It is exemplified in another way in a recurring tension between religious *education* and religious *studies*, whilst in far-reaching and influential RE literature 'edification'[11] (Jackson, 1997a) and 'learning from' (Grimmitt & Read, 1977; Grimmitt, 1987) may also be seen as expressions of instrumentality – although the bearing of these concepts on the representation of religious traditions differs.

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[10] ICE's categorisation of the syllabuses is particularly helpful and referred to more fully in Chapter 1.
[11] More recently Jackson has adopted the term 'reflexivity' (Jackson, 2004:88) a term which perhaps loses something of the moral overtone 'edification' might carry.

At the other end of my period, I include a substantial analysis of 33 agreed syllabuses from 1999-2003, representing about 45 Local Education Authorities. The manner in which Christianity is prioritised, the organising categories employed (after Ofsted 1997) in delineating the field of study in RE and the specific attention the syllabuses give to their Christian content are all areas for analysis. A key issue is the relation of these syllabuses to the Model Syllabuses for RE (SCAA, 1994a; 1994b).

For the midway period of the 1970s, into the 1980s - a small number of influential syllabuses are examined, among them those of Birmingham (1975) and Hampshire (1978), and their associated handbooks, merit special attention. These properly belong with the next group of materials.

Religious Education in transition

Seminal books and reports on RE from the 1960s, and 1970s have also been surveyed. 'In transition' points to the nature of these two decades for religious education and is expressive of the literature and thinking of the period. These years mark a paradigm shift in RE. By the early 1980s it was possible to speak of a new consensus within RE, and point to many agreed syllabuses as evidence of this. In the reformulation of RE's aims, clarification of the teacher's role and the emergence of Religious Studies there was the possibility of new directions in handling Christianity in RE.

Teaching Christianity

The development of teaching about 'world religions' during the 1970s, not unknown in earlier periods, but integrated now into an 'open' RE, stimulated new consideration of 'Christianity'. Again we may detect 'transition'. Reports of conferences from the mid 1970s (Shap, 1973;[12] Order of Christian Unity 1976; CEM, 1978) provide cameos of thinking at the time - and of factors at play in Christianity's representation. OCU's title which also headed its conference report (Tulloch, 1977) is expressive of anxiety - *Curriculum Christianity: Crisis in the Classroom,* whilst Shap's conference boldly invited a Hindu, Swami Yogeshananda to speak on Asian Christianity. Shap's commitment and contribution to the teaching of Christianity 'as a religion' and that of the associated Chichester Project (1976 -1992) are considerable, constituting probably the key attempt in RE to engage with what it might mean to 'teach Christianity'. Others have offered a sharper pedagogical focus (Grimmitt & Read 1977; the

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[12] Many of the papers from this conference appeared in *Learning for Living,* 13 (4), 1974. They are discussed in Chapter 2 and are listed by authors' names in the Bibliography.

Westhill Project RE 5-16 in the 1980s; and later WRERU's Bridges to Religion and Interpreting Religion Projects), or, where primacy is given to beliefs in teaching Christianity, have sought to develop pedagogical processes pertinent to children's engagement with theological concepts (Cooling, 1994); pedagogy too shapes the representation of Christianity.

Academic texts on the Christian tradition

Generations of RE teachers have encountered the Christian tradition through its biblical foundations, its creeds, theology, ethics, dogmatics, and church history. As Smart (1979:7) noted, 'there is surprisingly little on Christianity as a *religion*' and 'Christianity is maybe the least understood of the world's religions'. In advance of his time, he warns that 'it is doubtful whether there is some 'essential' Christianity' and draws attention to its variety. It is with such parameters in mind that I have approached recent books which purport to give account of 'Christianity'. There is still surprisingly little. Smart noted some 'fine general histories' and histories continue to prevail (for example, McManners, 1992; Küng, 1995; Hastings, 1999), and to shape introductions to Christianity (McGrath, 1997; Woodhead, 2004a & 2004b). Walls (in Hinnells, 1998:55-161) attempts to give some account of the 'religion' whilst offering his distinctive perspective on Christian history and its cultural transmission; the latter theme is further explored in Walls (2002). Wilson (1999) and Chidester (2000) Balling (2003), Irvin & Sunquist (2001), Norris (2002) and Kim (2008) come to Christianity with fresh eyes, but a historical perspective and/or sequencing is usually present. A significant feature of many of these books is recognition of Christianity's global presence – past as well as present.

Of a different nature is *Themes and Issues in Christianity* (Davies with Drury, 1997) adopting a mainly phenomenological approach and a more recent introduction (Adair, 2008) which brings together historical and phenomenological approaches. Many accessible 'introductions to Christianity' prove to have a theological focus, for example Ward (2000) whose work takes key theological tenets, but explores and demonstrates Christian diversity through contrasting positions; Olson (2002) in the subtitle to his volume on Christian belief, 'Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity', reflects a concern not unlike Ward's. Miles (2005) prefers to speak of Christian thought, offering a history distinctive in its attempt to recover 'the rich pluralism' *within* Christianity, its dissidents and marginalised, the people who were formed by and shaped its communities, and who gave it a visual and sensual expression.[13] Finally here, we

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[13] Miles's book is accompanied by a CD of music and visual images pertinent to her conviction that '..Christian "thought" is not limited to the verbal articulation of beliefs, doctrines, and ideas. Artistic expressions – music, architecture, painting and sculpture – also *conceptualize* and communicate Christianity, and are accurately called "Christian thought." ' (7)

may note Palmer's relatively light volume *Living Christianity* (1993), primarily because it raises the question of where one draws boundaries: What counts as 'Christianity'? Here the question is asked with regard to those seen as 'in' and 'out' from earliest times. Consideration of Cannel's edited volume (2006), *The Anthropology of Christianity* may further prompt this kind of question, its contributors highlighting 'diverse Christianities' in different localities, moving into a field (Christianity) where anthropologists have apparently been nervous to tread (*op.cit.,* 3).

A cluster of other books document the global drift south of Christianity (Jenkins, 2002; Sanneh, 2003 & 2008 for example) and point to an awakening of the tradition which presents challenges to long held perceptions in the north. Davie (2002) in her consideration of the 'parameters of faith in the modern world', working through a number of geographically bound case studies, alerts her readers to three global movements, '...global Catholicism, popular Pentecostalism, and the possibly overlapping category of fundamentalism (encompassing a variety of world faiths).' (22), and to a consequent need for a conceptual mapping which recognises the centrality of religion in modernity, and sees the secularism of (western) Europe as the 'exceptional case', as one element in the global picture, not the path which others are following. Whether the representation of Christianity in RE should – or can – be alert to these kinds of perspectives presents an interesting and challenging question.

A significant part of my argument then is that the representation of Christianity *in RE* appears not to have been informed by studies of the tradition which have, necessarily, stood back and grappled with precisely that issue - its representation. My concerns here are the 'model(s)' of the tradition underpinning some of the studies identified above, the approaches taken to the tradition and the 'landscape' which they describe, and to ask whether Christianity's representation in RE might be informed by them. Are they suggestive of new paradigms for studying Christianity which in turn may carry implications for the representation and teaching of Christianity in school? These matters – and hence this group of texts – are central to Part 3 of this study.

A note on other areas

In addition to the areas identified above attention may be drawn to current issues in the study of religion(s) and their potential bearing on my concerns in this study; whilst I have attempted to be alert to these they have been a less explored area for the purposes of this study. Alongside this I am aware of a movement variously expressed among those professionally

engaged in RE for a re-appraisal of 'religion' in religious education (see for example Miller's editorial in *Resource 24:3;* Gearon, 2002; and contributions to *World Religions in Education 2002/2003*) and for an 'engaged' religious studies (Cush, 2005); both trends are relevant to this study.

I am aware that I have said little of theology. A recent publication finds the time right for a renewed discussion of the relationship of RE and Christian theology (Schreiner, Pollard, & Sagberg, 2006); such conversation lies outside the immediate scope of this thesis. It may however be useful to comment a little further on the relation of theology and religious studies in relation to this study.

Setting aside theology in this thesis is in part for economy of space and the necessity of focus; it is also because I believe that the matter needs to be looked at in relation to the understanding of RE in schools – and especially community schools – and that this larger discussion should precede that of the particularity of religious traditions. However it would be perverse to ignore the importance of theology in the context of any study of Christianity as a 'world religion'. The current complexities of discussion regarding the relation of Theology and Religious Studies in the academy (see for example Warrier and Oliver, 2008), a preoccupation within Religious Studies with its own identity and disciplinary integrity, and recognition of RE's current pathways (the plural is deliberate) suggest a need to position the present study.

I come to the study from a religious studies perspective; in this study (Chapter 2, Section 1) I suggest that religious studies brought about a liberation of RE in the 1970s, doing so from its then phenomenological base - but one which was attenuated in RE (Jackson, 1997) and also tempered by RE's concern for young people's personal development. The phenomenological stance, when well employed, had the effect of opening up new vistas for RE, pointing to religions as multi-faceted and 'living'. Theology and text (Bible) which had determined the representation of Christianity for so long, might now become situated within the life of the tradition as it was presented in an 'open' RE in schools. The potential of this kind of focus on living traditions was taken a step further in the work of the Warwick Religions and Education Unit's (WRERU) development of its 'Interpretive Approach' to the study of religions, which drew on another 'tool' of religious studies in its development of an approach drawn from social anthropology, as well as employing – on its own terms – Cantwell's Smith's modelling of 'faith'

and 'tradition' (Smith, 1962/1978). Jackson's critique of essentialism and his reminder[14] that religions are not the closed systems which RE has tended to present, serve to highlight the dynamic of any religious tradition. In calling also for the development of reflexivity (Jackson, 2004:88-89), Jackson tries to meet the charge which any student of religion must face of the structures they may impose on the study of 'another's' faith, and the possibility that they are changed by their encounter with it. I return now to the matter of theology. If then coming from a religious studies perspective to *Christianity* in RE, where do I place theology – at least for present purposes? At the risk of too simple an approach, I want to suggest first that we need to distinguish more clearly between belief(s), doctrine and theology – though clearly they are connected. Theology is here understood as an *ongoing process* through which individuals in communities within the Christian tradition, continue to reflect on the Jesus story and articulate their beliefs about that story's significance in the context of their lives and situations. Put another way, my understanding of theology assumes that a 'step' has already been taken – the story is already affirmed by the participant and their beliefs about it are part of what shapes their life. This reflection on and articulation of Jesus' story as existentially significant may happen informally in local communities, or more formally through ecclesial or scholarly exploration of the tradition.

3.2 Survey data

Part 2 of this study draws on research undertaken in the period 2004-2007. This was made possible by an award from the All Saints' Educational Trust for research relating to Christianity in the RE curriculum at key stage 3 (KS3) in secondary schools in England.[15] In its focus on KS3, the research recognised both ongoing discussion of the quality of learning in RE at this key stage (Wintersgill, 2000; Rudge, 2001; Ofsted, 2002a:159; Ofsted, 2002b:4; Ofsted, 2005:6) and government concern to strengthen pupils' learning during this phase of education.[16] But it also recognised that it is in RE lessons at KS3 that pupils in schools with no religious affiliation will have their main opportunity to study Christianity. The absence of teachers' voices in the RE research literature and the absence of data about teaching RE coming from teachers themselves determined the course the research took. The decision was taken to conduct a survey across England which would invite practising teachers'

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[14] With that of others, see for example Geaves (1998) and Searle - Chaterjee (2004), each writing here for the attention of RE professionals

[15] The basic curriculum (RE+National Curriculum) in maintained schools in England is structured in four key stages, corresponding to the age groups: 5 -7; 7-11; 11-14 & 14-16.

[16] The Key Stage 3 Strategy was launched by government in 2001 and remains fundamental to their ongoing concern to improve pupils' learning during this key stage. See http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/aboutKS3/

responses to a questionnaire, drawing on their knowledge, practice and experience of teaching about Christianity. The evidence base on which I was able to draw and the issues involved in the analysis of the data collected are described in detail in Part 2 of this study. Whilst the data collected bears strongly on my central theme of the representation of Christianity, it also provides information of importance – and hitherto not available – for RE more broadly.

PART 1: 'CURRICULUM CHRISTIANITY'

Chapter 1: The shaping of a tradition

It is over 60 years since the 1944 Education Act and approaching 140 years since that of 1870 which brought the state into ownership and responsibility in the sphere of education. In the years that have elapsed since these seminal Acts Christianity has enjoyed a significant presence in the curriculum of schools in England and Wales. This is especially so in the sphere of religious education, though its influence has frequently been more far reaching in the debates surrounding education and in the life of schools. My focus is primarily religious education. Given this presence, its expressed affirmation in the legislation of 1988[17] (ERA, 8:3) and the interpretation of ERA 8:3 in DfES Circular 1/94, it is surprising to discover that there has been little serious consideration and reflection on either Christianity's presence or its representation in RE throughout the whole period to which I refer. More precisely, there has been little 'standing back' from the tradition with the kind of distancing which may offer new insights and fresh perspectives.

1. Christianity in decline?

The observation - which I shall demonstrate shortly - is all the more surprising when the declining attendance in the mainstream churches and the increasing secularisation of Sunday and calendar are considered. Brierley has monitored church attendance in Britain for many years and given little cause for optimism; whilst Brierley's commentary (Brierley, 2006) on the results of the most recent English Church Census (Voas, 2005) appear under the title 'Pulling out of the nosedive', the Daily Telegraph headed its report (Petre, 2008) 'Migrants fill empty pews as Britons lose faith'. The figures reported decline of church attendance at a rate of 2.3 per cent per year, although this is not evenly spread across churches; where there was growth it was in the Pentecostal churches. With decline in church attendance, as Grace Davie (1994) observes, there comes a vagueness of belief and understanding of the tradition among a nominally Christian public; as church affiliation and attendance declines the links with the traditional 'carriers' of belief, the Word, the words and music of liturgy - however understood - are severed. Belief is residual and confused. A more recent book has as its title *The Death of Christian Britain* (Brown, 2001); this documents not only the evidence of falling church roles and membership, but - to summarise - the death of a way of life and of

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[17] Endorsed also in the Education Act of 1996.

community in Britain, of an ethos which was shaped and indebted to the Christian tradition.[18]
I am interested that in the 1950s Murray in his *Education into Religion* employed the concept
of the *diffuse* presence of Christianity in Britain (Murray, 1953:33), the Christianity of the
majority. This needs further exploration, but a reading of *The Death of Christian Britain* would
suggest that it is precisely this which has died, and according to Brown its demise may be
placed in the 1960s.[19] Set against this kind of background, the insistence on a Christianity
which *predominates* in the RE curriculum and the suggestion of a presentation which is
confined to England (ERA, 8:3) surely demands further investigation.

To these observations may be added one further comment. It has become commonplace to
note that the growth of Christianity and its strength now lies in sub- Saharan Africa and in
Asia. Europe is not the locus of the tradition - and there are those who have asked 'Europe -
Was it Ever Really Christian?' (the title given by Wessels to his book of 1994). And lest
anyone should be tempted to think that England is in some sense central, Chidester (2000)
commenting on his attention to *local* communities in the preface to his *Christianity A Global
History* asks,

> '...where is the Church of England? In England, of course, but the global history of
> the Anglican communion has resulted in a church that is predominantly African
> ....statistics suggest that the Church of England is by numerical majority an
> African church. But the Church of England is also an Indian church, with about the
> same number of Anglicans living in southern India as in England'. (2000, x)

Chidester goes on wryly to recall a comment of Salman Rushdie's that 'the English do not
know their own history because it happened elsewhere'. The globalisation and cultural
transmission of the Christian tradition must surely figure in the future study and representation
of Christianity.

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[18] There are of course other perspectives. Gill (1993), for example, resists monocausal explanations of
secularisation, and especially those claims which relate to church membership or affiliation. He turns instead to
look at patterns of church going in relation to 'physical' rather than cultural conditions across England over two
centuries. He posits that decline in communal belief is more recent than that in churchgoing, and that it need not
be an irreversible process. Brown's book has been challenged by others and met with a riposte from Brown
himself (see Brown, 2008). Whilst Brown focuses on Britain, recognition by others that globally religious faith is
by no means in decline, has led to reconsideration of 'secularization'; Europe's experience may constitute the
'exceptional case' (Davie, 2002). Martin, who embarked on critical engagement with secularisation theories in the
1960s, has recently in a widely acclaimed volume offered a reappraisal of the relationship of Christianity and
understanding of secularisation (Martin, 2005).
[19] At the same time it is important to note that when the 2001 census asked for the first time for information about
religious identity, in the UK overall 76.8% recorded a religious affiliation; the percentage recording Christian
affiliation was 71.6%.

For the present, I return to my initial point - the absence of serious consideration of Christianity in the RE curriculum despite its historical presence there and its assured place in current legislation. My brief excursus into the state of Christianity in Britain and its strength elsewhere, I suggest, points to the need for an understanding of its past and present place in RE and also to a re-visioning of its future place and representation.

2. Looking for Christianity in the RE literature

My immediate concern in this chapter is with the former issues: the absence of a 'serious' literature (debate even) and gaining some understanding of Christianity's past 'shaping' and presence in RE. I shall briefly address the absence of a serious literature; subsequent historical reflections may perhaps go some way to accounting for this. Even the energy expended on producing the *Faith Communities' Working Group Reports* (SCAA .1994c) and Model Syllabuses (SCAA, 1994a; 1994b) was arguably meeting the political needs of the moment and I shall later want to argue that the activity was neither sufficiently reflective, nor sensitive to the realities of the cumulative tradition in its outcomes. Perhaps to overstate my case, it may be that with respect to Christianity the activity seen in this venture represents the death throes of 1944, if not of an earlier period.

Turning to the absence of a 'serious' literature, RE is distinguished by having its own professional journal going back to 1935: now the *British Journal of Religious Education* (BJRE), formerly *learning for Living* and before that *Religion in Education*. A search covering the period from the first issue through to the last issue of 1999, and using 'Christian' / 'Christianity' gives a return of only 31 articles in 65 years [Table 1]:

Period	Relevant years/number of articles where in excess of 1 in any year	Total number of articles
1935 to 1949	1935; 1937; 1941;1947	4
1950 to 1969	1953; 1962	2
1970 to 1989	1974 (3); 1981; 1982;1989	6
1990 to 1999	1990;1991;1992(7); 1993(3); 1994(2); 1995(2); 1996(2); 1999(1)	19

Table 1: Articles addressing 'Christianity': 1935 – 2000

These articles may also be presented according to their broad area of concern:

Broad category	Number of articles	By year
Nature and identity of Christianity	4	1947; 1953; 1962; 1974.
Christianity in world perspective	3	1935; 1974; 1982.
Christianity in RE [Christian Education]	9 [1]	1974; 1981; 1992(4); 1993 (3). [1994].
Christianity and broader educational issues	2	1937; 1941.
Attitudes towards Christianity among young people	10	1989; 1990; 1991; 1992(2); 1993; 1995(2); 1996; 1999.
Other	2	1994; 1996

Table 2: Breakdown of articles addressing Christianity by broad categories

A search on Christian(ity) alone of course is too narrow. I also sampled 'Church', 'Jesus', 'Bible' and 'God'. Since a central feature of Christianity from earliest times is its expression in community and hence 'church', I thought this search might give some indication of concern within RE for Christianity as a *living* tradition. Out of some 31 articles, only 10 relate directly to the teaching of RE; of these five have a preoccupation with church history and fall between the years 1937 and 1960; the other five are concerned with the investigation of churches and fall between the years 1951 -1967. It seems probable that on the one hand these articles reflect the historical concerns of agreed syllabuses and on the other the interest in studying local church history highlighted in some post 1944 syllabuses.

The situation with books which reflect on the tradition *per se* and its place in RE in county schools reveals a similar paucity of material. Leeson's Bampton Lectures of 1944 address Christian Education specifically, including lectures on the history of Christianity's part in education in England and on the fourfold partnership he sees of state, school, home and church. The Hibbert Lectures of 1965 address 'Christianity in Education' (Hilliard, Lee, Rupp, and Niblett, 1965) and like Leeson's lectures raise issues across a broader front than RE. Niblett's earlier *Christian Education in a Secular Society* is interesting not only for its title, but for its exploration of the life and curriculum of the school from a Christian perspective. Dated in many ways now, this nonetheless clearly manifests a shift from a confessional stance towards objectivity in RE: 'education in objectivity has to take place inside an education which involves deep personal interest and concern' (Niblett, 1960:121). In 1978 and 1982 and again in 1994, Owen Cole was able to write that Christianity had never been taught in our schools;

his own considerable contribution to thinking about Christianity in RE is examined in the next chapter. In the 1970s and 1980s the Chichester Project and the Westhill Project each both broke new ground in approaches to the Christian tradition, the latter indebted to Michael Grimmitt (whose work with Read in the mid 1970s focused on Christianity). Of course there are treatments on teaching Christianity in many RE handbooks for teachers and throughout the 1970s there was a steady flow of practical materials for teachers from the Christian Education Movement (CEM); but my point is the *absence of in depth materials which explore the nature and scope of the tradition in its own right and draw out the implications of this for those who have responsibility for RE..*

The seventies were also distinguished by a number of conferences: in 1973 the Shap Working Party organised its first conference on the Christian Tradition (subsequent conferences were held in Chichester (1984); Winchester (1989) and York (1986 & 1990). CEM addressed 'Christianity in the Classroom' in 1977, whilst the Order of Christian Unity, in November 1976, held a one day Conference, 'Curriculum Christianity: Crisis in the Classroom'. These events are discussed in Chapter 2(1). The DES took up the cause with a national conference on Christianity held in Canterbury in summer 1982, which invited participants (of whom I was one) to explore Christianity locally, and with recognition of its diversity – although this was only perceived denominationally. I cite these as significant national events; doubtless there were many others of a local nature. In such events we see the beginnings of a *conscious* engagement with the tradition in RE.

A further category of materials from which one may expect to gain insight into the representation of Christianity in RE is from syllabuses. They have a long history, an impetus for them being provided by the 1921 Education Act which proposed the extension of secondary education - though the earliest to which I have found reference is that from the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1924. It appears to be less well known (even among the historians of RE) that the National Union of Teachers (NUT) published the equivalent of a Model Syllabus in 1945. But a syllabus is essentially a map and the practitioner has to decide where to travel. We do not now have access to the debates that shaped the earliest syllabuses, or any direct line to the thinking which informed their content. Whilst one may understand very well what Owen Cole meant when he suggested that 'we have never taught Christianity' there is a sense in which his statement is too 'easy'; for compilers of syllabuses, both before and in the twenty years or so after 1944 clearly believed they were bringing

children into an encounter with the Christian tradition; this belief pervades their pages. It requires some examination.

For the researcher then who wishes to consider the representation of Christianity from 1944 onwards the dearth of materials specifically on this subject is both good and bad. Good because it indicates that the subject is unexplored territory, or at least the old has to be examined from a new perspective; bad because *direct* answers to the questions which may be asked may be elusive. Identifying the factors which have shaped Christianity in the curriculum (and are productive of a 'Curriculum Christianity') calls for a 'reading between the lines', the outcomes of which must not be simply conjecture but evidenced.

3. The intertwining roots of RE and Christianity

> Anybody starting from scratch would ever have thought up the
> religious clauses of the 1944 Act. But in human life we never do start from scratch: *there is always a*
> *past within the present that affects what can happen.*
> (Niblett in Wedderspoon, 1966:17) [The italics are mine.]

There are particular problems which confront anyone who wishes to examine 'Curriculum Christianity'. Whilst the study of other religious traditions is also inevitably coloured by the presuppositions which have been brought to their study[20] and by methodologies which, in the light of experience, may be deemed no longer wholly appropriate, Christianity appears to bring its own set of problems. These are in some measure embodied in this rather peculiar phrase 'Curriculum Christianity'. At one and the same time it sounds both familiar and odd. I have not found people speaking of 'Curriculum Islam' or 'Curriculum Hinduism' or indeed applying the term to any other of the so called 'world religions'. The familiarity I suggest lies in the embeddedness of the Christian tradition in the whole enterprise of education in England; or, conversely, in the embeddedness of education in the Christian tradition.

For the researcher who wishes to consider the ways in which Christianity has been represented in RE the situation becomes more complex, since religious education and Christian Education are *in some sense* co-terminous for at least a hundred years of RI/RE's history. Thus for example Dennis Bates (1976) - arguably the most thorough interpreter of the history of RE - uses the term *Christian* Education, since this better describes the subject which emerged in the period with which he is concerned (1900 – 1944). Similarly,

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[20] Chapter 3 in Jackson (1997) provides a useful discussion of this.

Loukes considering the effectiveness of the 1944 provisions and subsequent syllabuses, and suggesting new ways forward, can still in 1965 speak of 'New Ground in *Christian* Education'. Syllabuses for RI before and RE after 1944 shared this perspective, one which I suggest was largely sustained at least up to and probably into the 1970s. In 1960 the compilers of the new Bristol Agreed Syllabus saw it fit to make a conscious decision to name it *The Agreed Syllabus of Christian Education* (Bristol Education Committee, 1960:xii) The point I am making here is that the *embeddedness* of which I have spoken, together with the longstanding assumption and acceptance of RI/RE as Christian Education, (or in Bristol's understanding subsumed under it as part of the larger educational venture of the school) prevailed against the distancing which might facilitate engagement with how Christianity might be represented and studied - or engaged with - in contexts which are *not* ecclesial, theological, confessional or nurturing.

A further problem relates to the role of insiders and outsiders in the shaping of Christianity in the curriculum (I write here with a historical perspective, not in terms of the discussion of the 'insider' and 'outsider' problem in Religious Studies). Again the situation is complex. For those who sought an amicable solution to the internecine quarrels among Christians (insiders) with a stake in education (and a not inconsiderable stake, if only in financial terms), the arrangements for RI post 1870 could scarcely have been seen as a satisfactory Christian education, and indeed the arguments which continued for many years after 1870 (Cruickshank, 1964:43-47; 63-64; 72) suggest this. The extreme case here is of course that of Roman Catholics who were not prepared to accept an undenominational Christianity as embraced by those who gave their consent to the Cowper-Temple clause. Similarly there were High Churchmen, members of the established church who had reservations about this clause and its intentions. Debates surrounding Cowper-Temple display an unease with a form of teaching which whilst it might subdue the anxieties of those who feared proselytisation in Board schools, would present an eviscerated (the term was used by Churchill at a later date) form of the tradition. Devised by insiders, subsequent syllabuses, observant of Cowper-Temple, one might hypothesise, could not have been wholly satisfactory even to the same insiders. As a representation of the tradition they were necessarily attenuated.[21] What we see in all of this is the representation of Christianity taking shape in the context of heated debate about educational provision. Christianity's shaping in curriculum terms is forged *by default rather than design*.

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[21] The case of Roman Catholicism is an interesting one, since here in the shaping of Christianity's representation in RE was a voice that was lost for many decades.

The emergence of the Dual system I would suggest impinges in another way on the shaping of the tradition in schools. It is well known that vociferous secular voices ('outsiders') were heard in the debates surrounding the 1870 Education Act. Such debate then might be seen also as one which was to determine the nature and basis of society. Was England to be secular or Christian? Was the nation in danger of losing its birthright if the secularists won the day?[22] Here are two recurrent themes that emerge when RE is the subject of public debate in parliament. That of the nature of our society and that of children's right to become familiar with the (their?) Christian heritage of this country.

To return to my earlier point, for the person who wishes to examine the representation of the Christian tradition, there emerges a task of teasing out those factors which have shaped this: the task is initially one of 'historical retrieval'. The standing back that I suggest is absent until relatively recently, a capacity to 'see' the tradition in all its richness and complexities, has arguably been impeded by a history which saw RI/RE as Christian Education, which was conceived in and designed to end Christian rivalries, secure a Christian society and affirm Christian heritage. My central concern is the representation of Christianity, but I suspect that there is a strong case to be made that RE, even as expounded in the present (or maybe especially as expounded since 1988) cannot escape its past: *there is always a past within the present that affects what can happen.* Christianity in the context of RE cannot escape this either. The foregoing reflections emerge from a certain struggling to come to grips with the shaping and representation and indeed the understanding of Christianity which informed RI/RE prior to the early 1960s when shifts in thinking about RE begin to emerge, reflecting on the past and looking to the future (see for example, Cox,1966)

The starting point for my research was initially 1944. It is well attested that the 1944 Education Act offered a settlement – a settlement in large measure of the longstanding 'religious problem' in education. The circumstances which made this possible are not my immediate concern, though some will be pertinent to the consideration of Christianity. That this 'problem' was still alive in the minds of those who worked towards educational reconstruction during the war years, and the desire present to avoid its rekindling, especially in relation to RE, led me to look back albeit briefly to an earlier period. The reflections above in large measure emerged from this looking back. I now turn to examine these factors from an earlier period in a little

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[22] Such questions were raised in different circumstances in 1944; there were those who would voice them also in 1988.

more detail and to comment on their significance for Christianity in RE. Linked with this is also a cluster of questions relating to the Bible as the 'expression of Christianity' (the phrase is mine) which emerges post 1870 and 1944. I use the phrase 'expression of Christianity' quite deliberately; I have already suggested that Cole's 'we have never taught Christianity' whilst making an important point is too simple. Advocates of a Bible-based RE believed they *were* offering Christianity; we must take this seriously. I also want to question the accepted wisdom (which I have gone along with) that putting the Bible at the centre of RE was just a pragmatic resolution of denominational conflict over religion in education. As Hull, writing in 1974, puts it

> It was the decision not to include specific denominational teachings which led to the emphasis upon the Bible. Everyone accepted the Bible. So the tradition in religious education which still survives to some extent, that the main content would be the Bible was the result of Christian pluralism. (in Hull, 1998:16)

Working then from these and my earlier reflections, what matters come forward into 1944 (and beyond) from the 1870s - or even a little earlier - which are likely to be relevant to a consideration of the representation of Christianity? For the present, I note the emergence of the Cowper-Temple clause and the repercussions of undenominational teaching; the Bible (as an expression of Christianity) and issues relating to its interpretation; matters related to 'christian heritage' the (perennial) question of the nature of society (and those values and principles which motivate it, are constitutive of identity, and secure social cohesion) and the role and integrity of the RE teacher. There are of course interrelations among these matters.

The Cowper–Temple Clause of 1870
In the state's wish to provide education for all children aged 5-12, it fell to W.E. Forster, a Quaker, and Vice President of the (relatively) new Education Department to steer the necessary legislation through the cross currents represented by advocates of a secular education and those who wished to safeguard the religious nature of schools – and thereby maintain also the *status quo* of the established Church in education. The boundaries among different factions were not of course so neatly drawn but cannot be explored further here; the resultant 'recipe' of the Education Act of 1870 'for avoiding both secularism and Church control was the Dual system' (McClure, 1965:98). Compromise on the 'religious issue', necessary for the Bill's arrival on the statute book, found expression in parents' right to withdraw children from religious instruction in all publicly funded schools, including those church schools in receipt of such funding; the right of withdrawal remains to the present. Additionally 'the most important amendment accepted by the Government....the famous Cowper-Temple clause' (McClure, *op.cit.*) has similarly been retained in successive Acts, and

with only slight adjustment (in the 1996 Act) to the present. The clause of 1870 stated that in schools

> .....hereafter established by means of local rates, no catechism or formulary which is distinctive to any particular denomination shall be taught. (As quoted in McClure, 1965:98)

The wording reflects the background of earlier struggles – teaching the catechism had been a hallmark of National Society schools, unlike, for example those of the British and Foreign Schools Society where religious instruction had rested on the Bible alone. Here is clearly one of those features which has impacted on RI/RE for over 130 years and has implications for the representation of Christianity to the present, despite its 'relaxing' in more recent legislation. The issues the clause raises are both procedural and content related; they are also interrelated. First the simpler point, that of content. The exclusion of any 'distinctive formulary...' from RI removed *something of* the distinctiveness of particular traditions from what might happen in publicly funded schools in relation to the Christian faith. But the clause was not perceived as simply removing content; that is how the clause is sometimes seen now when legislation *permits* use of such formularies as illustration. At the time the clause was also understood as removing the *means* by which teaching might be delivered, thus providing assurance that proselytising had no place in schools[23] and thus resolving the 'religious difficulty'. Murphy recalls Forster's words:

> Forster explained that the government had accepted the Cowper-Temple amendment chiefly because 'there was an objection in the country to catechisms and special formularies... not so much on account of the actual words, but because putting them into the hands of children appeared to be like claiming those children as belonging to a particular Church'. (Murphy, 1971: 59)

The removal of catechisms and formularies was just that, a removal. Murphy comments that it is not often realised that this was its sole intent; it was not intended 'to forbid the expression of the teacher's own doctrinal beliefs' (Murphy 1971:59), nor to lose all reference to tenets and doctrines from teaching. This is substantiated by evidence from Hansard (CCII, 1256 quoted in Murphy. 1971:59) where such exclusion is perceived as impossible and even if it were possible 'an invasion of the freedom of religious teaching such as ought not to be tolerated in this country'. Murphy goes on to indicate that Gladstone made his point with even greater clarity, declaring that there should be 'free exposition of Scriptures open to every schoolmaster who may be conscientiously attached to the Nonconformist community, subject, of course, as I hope it will be, to the restraints of common-sense, but to no other restraints of a legal kind' (Hansard CCIII, 748 quoted in Murphy, 1971:60). The emergent

picture of Christianity represented in RI is thus seen as channelled through one stream of tradition.

The centrality of the Bible

Read just at the level of a prohibition on catechisms and formularies, the impact of the Cowper-Temple clause on Christianity in RE is perhaps not very great. As an affirmation of a Protestant tradition (this is not to ignore Nonconformist dissent) it was to have far reaching effects, not least in confirming the centrality of the Bible; it also deserves further exploration in its marginalising of a Catholic tradition in the representation of Christianity. Whilst the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed were permitted content in schools (presumably being seen as the common inheritance of Christians), Murphy observes that the real decision post 1870 concerning what would be taught in school was left to the Boards and the teachers. That the Bible was not simply a panacea for sorting out pluralism and dispute among Christians is well evidenced in Murphy's exploration of the operation of the 1870 Act. Reading the Bible without comment, reading it without reference to God, were two tried options (Murphy, 1971:67-69).

That the Bible *was* placed centrally at this time is one matter, that it remained there for such a long time as the expression of Christianity is another issue which requires further exploration. That it had enjoyed a central place in education prior to 1870, though contextualised in different ways by the British and Foreign Schools Society (BFSS) and the National Society; that it perhaps represented something deep about English identity, associated with ideas of the cultural heritage of the country are all themes which merit further attention, but lie beyond the immediate concerns of this study.

The emergence and development of agreed syllabuses

If decisions about content were left to the Boards, many Boards took the initiative in bringing together interested parties who might draw up a syllabus of what was to be taught; thus we find that Cambridgeshire and the West Riding of Yorkshire Boards were among the first to take such an initiative, in 1923 and 1924 respectively; each was to remain among the foremost in subsequent syllabus development. As long as individual Boards produced syllabuses, government was absolved from accusations of taking on a task which, in the view of some Christian groups, was considered to be a step beyond the rightful duties of government; moreover, they could stand back from any continuing dissent regarding both the

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[23] Viewed from an educational perspective one might even see this as a step along the way to an open RE.

Dual system and the RI which ensued. Foundations were in effect being laid for the later statutory arrangements and locally agreed syllabuses.

The ICE's report of 1954 looks back to 1930 as the year in which a period of government quiescence and reticence with regard to religion in education drew to a close – in the 1930s the 'tide began to turn':

> 'By that time sectarian controversy in the face of world events, had lost its divisive power and Christians were able to come together and discuss religious education in a new spirit.' (ICE, 1954: x)

In 1930 the Board of Education convened a conference 'to consider the need for improved facilities to help teachers equip themselves for the teaching of religion' (*ibid*); this the report suggests openly marked 'the end of a long reign of discreet silence' on the part of the Board. The 1930s also proved a period of further syllabus development, and the Spens Report of 1938 relating to secondary schools gave clear attention to 'Religious Instruction' or 'Scripture', seeking to establish this as a subject which would stand equally with others in the curriculum. The Spens Report concisely addresses a range of issues pertaining to RE which read as a relevant agenda even seventy years later;[24] it also welcomes 'agreed syllabuses' and offers principles on which the teaching of 'Scripture' might proceed, whilst recognising a difference between RE and 'Scripture' and that teachers' personal commitments may colour how they see this relationship and their role as teachers (Board of Education, 1938: 215-216). Its sense of the importance of the subject is expressed in words which have often been quoted since:

> ....no boy or girl can be counted as properly educated unless he or she has been made aware of the fact of a religious interpretation of life.

The continuation of this passage is not often quoted:

> The traditional form which that interpretation has taken in this country is Christian, and the principal justification for giving place to the study of the Scripture is that the Bible is the classic book of Christianity and forms the basis of the structure of Christian faith and worship. The content of the Bible has, therefore, inevitably its own dignity and associations. It neither be treated merely as a part of English literature, nor can it be merged in the general study of history, though its meaning is, in the first instance at least, historically conditioned. (*op.cit.*, 208)

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[24] Including the importance of teacher training; the need for specialist teachers; the role of the specialist teacher; the use of non specialists; breadth of experience of the RE teacher; leave for study to gain qualifications; the selection of textbooks; time allocation to RE; weighting of RE in relation to other subjects; examinations and aspects of RE which can/cannot be examined; the need for continuity - 'coordinated and progressive instruction'; the need for competent inspection; the relation of RI and worship in school.

This statement is interesting for this study in a number of respects: its objective tone; its association of country and religion (Christianity); its view of the Bible in relation to Christianity – by implication a protestant stance – as fundamental and generative of 'faith and worship'; its recognition that the Bible has a status in its own right and a 'place' beyond the immediate concern of teaching 'Scripture' – it has 'associations', a place in history' and resonances in literature. Grasping its (original) meaning however is fundamental to 'Scripture' in school, whilst its existential dimension appears to be associated with 'religious education' (op.cit.,208). The approach to the Bible suggested for 'Scripture' is relevant to the consideration of 'Christianity' in agreed syllabuses and examined further below.

By 1940 almost all of the then 317 Local Education Authorities were estimated to have agreed syllabuses[25] and many of these would have established collaborative ventures in their composition (ICE, 1954:23). In effect therefore the 1944 settlement regarding RE was to confirm and formalise such arrangements. The *machinery* for drawing up syllabuses was established by statute – and thus by central government – but *syllabus content* was to be decided *locally* and by agreement. And despite centralising tendencies more recently, exemplified by model syllabuses (SCAA, 1994a & 1994b) and a non-statutory national framework (QCA, 2004), this remains the situation to the present.

Retention of the Cowper-Temple clause

A constant feature in legislation has been the retention of the Cowper-Temple clause. From the outset (as indicated earlier) and contrary to intent there had been disquiet with undenominational teaching. On the one hand it suggested an eviscerated Christianity; on the other it could leave teachers anxious about what was permissible teaching and what was not. That such viewpoints prevailed over many decades is evidenced in some of the post 1944 syllabuses, which are at pains to counter the first problem and, in some cases, to resolve the second by an exposition which distinguishes between 'doctrine' and the particularity of what may be taught by particular churches/denominations. Doctrine in this view is properly understood when it is biblically rooted and prior to those interpretations which divide the churches. As such it has a place in RI/E and may also give purpose to biblical study, since it is doctrine which points to the meaning and significance of biblical knowledge. Again the protestant face of RE is apparent here, as well as a certain lack of sophistication in approaching doctrine. The effect of this on syllabuses can be to push them back into a

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[25] These syllabuses were variously 'compiled', adopted, or adapted' and that of Cambridgeshire especially had wide influence, being used by 100 Local Education Authorities. (ICE, 1954:23).

dependency on biblical text. For example, some suggest teaching about baptism and the Eucharist; they may wish to explore meaning, but may not draw on the distinctive views of any church: 'The teacher must be careful not to include any interpretation of the Eucharist which is distinctive of a particular denomination' (West Riding of Yorkshire, 1947: 53-54). The syllabus in this case went on to say what could be taught, giving a brief exposition and relevant biblical references for each of four identified aspects. First, 'The Holy Communion is a perpetual memorial of the death and passion of Christ, a memorial before God and a reminder to us [*sic.*] ..... '; second, 'The Holy Communion is the Christian family feast......'; third, ' All true religion involves sacrifice, and in this act of communion we [*sic.*] offer to God the only offering acceptable in his sight, 'ourselves, our souls and bodies.........in union with self-offering of Christ on the cross.....'; and fourth, The Holy Communion is an act of corporate thanksgiving.....'. Ironically, the expositions are couched in language that echoes the 1662 Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England; it is difficult to avoid particularity. Better perhaps to name it and understand it teaching; but this was not possible in 1947. This example looked at in the present also serves to highlight the need for reflexivity on the part of those who compile syllabuses.

It is not surprising that some teachers' continuing concern about where boundaries were to be drawn with respect to doctrine, led them to ask for a statement of Christian doctrine on which all might agree; this was duly produced by ICE and subsequently appeared in full in some syllabuses; others offered extended articles discussing the nature of doctrine.

Agreed syllabuses and the social and political context of the 1944 legislation also provide insight relating to some of the other matters, noted earlier in this chapter, which recurrently bear upon Christianity in RE.

National renewal and Christian values
When Butler addressed parliament in his paper on *Educational Reconstruction* (1943), his words looked to a future beyond war in which education could not be the same as before but must needs be mindful of the whole population; but his paper looked also for the moral compass which might guide the nation in the aftermath of two wars, in which evil was felt to have been unleashed on a scale hitherto unknown. In the words of *Educational Reconstruction*:

> There has been a very general wish, not confined to the representatives of the Churches, that religious education should be given a more defined place in the life

and work of schools, springing from the desire to revive the spiritual and personal values in our society and in our national tradition.

The 'defined place' was provided by the 1944 Act and interpreted as reconstructing a society based on Christian principles. Agreed syllabuses were at the forefront of this venture, a venture which found expression in their convictions and aims. Conviction was found in a past rooted in Christianity which also gave hope for the future, as expressed in this aim for RE in schools:

> To secure that children.....may gain knowledge of the common Christian faith held by their fathers for nearly 2000 years; may seek for themselves in Christianity principles which give a purpose to life and a guide for all its problems; and may find inspiration, power and courage to work for their own welfare, for that of their fellow creatures and for the growth of God's kingdom. (Surrey County Council, 1947:6)

Aims of this kind serve to underpin my earlier comments concerning the interrelatedness of the tradition (however generally perceived) and national identity. Similar sentiments are expressed in other syllabuses. That such sentiments were shaped by the very recent experience of war is apparent in other contemporary sources. *The Christian Newsletter*, frequently representing the views of leading cultural voices of the time – T.S Eliot, Dorothy Sayers for example and educationists who names occur also in the pages of *Religion in Education* (precursor of BJRE) express similar concerns. Some syllabuses draw attention to Christian citizenship[26] and offer outline programmes exploring this, especially at the stage when pupils are on the threshold of leaving school and moving (mainly) into the world of work. Cheshire (1949:154-155) for example, offers a programme for 16-18 year olds (and thus those attending grammar schools) on the 'Christian Citizen'.

There was then an emotional investment in the Christian tradition, at least among many of those who drew up syllabuses, and this included teachers. On the other hand such sentiments were not matched by the Christian involvement of the general populace and indeed even back in 1870 parents in the main were probably more concerned about the education of their children in the 3Rs than RI. If RI had a part to play, it was for its moral value. Cairns in her consideration of the 1944 aspirations for RE and the ethos of the country (Cox and Cairns, 1989:5) quotes a verse from T. S. Eliot's *The Rock*[27] which ends '....Here were decent godless people'. In terms of inculcating Christian citizens the time when this might have been possible had probably already passed; yet as Copley (1997) has pointed out

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[26] See Freathy (2008) for interest in citizenship in education in the period leading up to the 1944 Act.

[27] Eliot, T.S. (1934) *The Rock*. London. Faber & Faber.

this hoped for Christian basis for national life was not only for RE but for the whole of education.

Syllabus content: shape and emphases

It has become almost customary to refer to the syllabuses of the post 1944 period as concerned only with the Bible and lists of biblical passages; certainly this can be easily substantiated. The Spens Report had focused on 'Scripture 'as best suited to objective study in school, since 'an objective treatment of Scripture reduces the difficulties in teaching it' (*op.cit.*, 170). The report highlighted what it considered a 'right principle' here:

> 'We consider, in short, that *Scripture should be taught primarily with a view to understanding of what the books of the Bible were in fact intended to mean by their authors.*' (*op.cit.*) [Report's italics.]

It considered this would be welcomed by those who believed the Bible to be ' "an inspired record of a unique revelation" ' who would welcome such 'systematic study' as 'an essential background for religion'; that it would satisfy those without such belief, who 'must admit that Christianity has played the most important part in the development of our civilisation'; importantly an objective study, concerned also with meaning would' increase children's intellectual respect for, and interest in, religion' (*ibid*). Spens' interesting elaboration of its objective stance cannot be discussed here; but its note that there are 'three main departments' into which teaching in schools is likely to fall − Old Testament, the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, and the beginning of the Christian Church − and its conviction (210) that theological concepts would necessarily be involved in discussing the meaning of biblical text, both confirms an emergent pattern in syllabuses of the 1930s and endorses this pattern for the next generation of syllabuses.

The ICE report draws attention to different structural approaches in syllabus content: there are those which approach the organisation of material from 'a psychological perspective', that is from the perspective of finding a correlation between the pupils' interests at a particular stage of development and syllabus content; a second group are theologically conceived − so biblical material is structured under various 'doctrinal' (but undenominational) themes; a third group employs a biblical order of events, whilst a fourth combines these approaches. But it is perhaps the case that the biblical content *itself* dominated. Syllabuses invariably indicated extensive lists of biblical material as example and guidance for the teacher; they stated that their listings of content did not constitute lesson plans and that the teacher needed to select material − but this may not have happened. How this biblical material was regarded or

handled by teachers is now difficult to ascertain; that textbooks like those of Youngman (see Copley, 1997) followed the threefold model and offered a mainly biblical order of events (as then perceived) points to the popularity of this particular stance.

If the Bible was central, what else appeared in these Christian based syllabuses?

Many suggest extensive coverage of the history of Christianity – of the advance of the church. Latourette's vast study of the expansion of Christianity, published initially between 1937 and 1947 shaped the structure of some syllabuses in this respect The lectures he gave on Christianity in the USA in 1940, first published in 1945 as *The Unquenchable Light* – and which look to the future of Christianity – are recommended as a suitable text for in one syllabus. More commonly, history is approached through the lives of individuals'; one is sometimes surprised by the range of names included, some included perhaps for humanitarian reasons alone, but with an implicit assumption that their work is necessarily underpinned by Christian values. Individuals are also seen in many cases as heroic figures, and hence role models who offer inspiration and generate aspiration. And only in historical surveys does the denominational slip in - a study of George Fox perhaps, or William Booth. Missions – an example of syllabuses' global awareness, exhibited also in *Religion in Education* at the time – are also linked with individuals and the expanding history of the church. Whilst the experience of two world wars may not permit triumphalism, Europe tends to emerge as the cradle of Christian civilization.

An extension of this is exploration of Christianity's long presence in Britain and its cultural impact; this finds expression as both content and method. This emerges in some syllabuses' focus on local history, which allows teachers to move from the present to the past in teaching in e.g. the exploration of the local church. But syllabuses are also prone to listing those whose creativity e.g. as poets or musicians draws on biblical tradition - Milton or Handel, for example.

If elements are looked for which might touch on Christianity 'in the present', as a living faith, then the festivals of the Christian year and Christian worship might be the focus of teaching – although often with more attention to biblical credentials than to living practice. The problems of venturing into worship have already been noted in relation to the Eucharist.

Other strands in syllabus content relate particularly to the upper end of the secondary school, and so often to the grammar school. Christianity in relation to everyday living, a common area

of syllabuses, correlates in its interests with the average GCSE textbook today – the key difference of course is the assumption of a shared commitment to Christian values however loosely embraced. In brief, the moral element is a significant element in syllabuses and is under the umbrella of Christianity – much as today. 'Science and Religion' also appears in many syllabuses as an important area either for the teacher to think about and/or for older pupils to address; syllabuses tend to convey the message that science does not disprove the claims of Christianity and that each is a way of viewing the world, making valid claims which are substantiated in different but complementary ways. Many syllabuses also suggest a range of philosophical issues for consideration with older pupils: Suffering, Does God exist? Is there life after death? Miracles. Questions are asked within the context of a Christian framework – here are the roots of a tradition which is flourishing in RE today.

A range of other matters variously appear at sixth form level: a consideration of 'comparative religion' as well as secular ideologies – secular humanism, Marxism, communism. Consideration of religions might also – at least to guide teachers – extend beyond the six common in the present, including e.g. Shinto, the Parsees, Zoroastrianism, and Animism. There is indisputably an agenda here to indicate the ways in which Christianity excels other faiths, and what distinguishes it from them – but there are also attempts to speak positively about other faiths, whilst Judaism and Islam in particular are cited with Christianity as exemplifying the highest ideals among the faiths. Some syllabuses also recognise that in this context teachers will need to address the question of religious truth with their pupils.

Summary

The representation of Christianity in RE is the central theme of this study. In this chapter the deep roots of factors which have shaped and, in some measure, continue to impact on this representation have been identified. They may be summarised as follows:

- that the parameters of its representation arise from tensions between those first providing education – on the one hand the established church, who placed instruction in the tenets and principles of the Church alongside the Bible, on the other those of an apparently more open and inclusive persuasion, represented by the British and Foreign Schools Society (BFSS) who were content to focus on the Bible alone;
- that the involvement of the state in educational provision created the 'religious problem', of which one element was the provision of RI for pupils from different denominations and churches who attended a common board school (or a voluntary school of a religious persuasion not shared by parents). Furthermore tensions existed between secularists

and representatives of various churches and denominations. RI, and its Christian content, was in the public domain;

- the introduction of the Cowper-Temple clause to resolve tensions about the delivery and content of RI was perceived as promoting a bland 'undenominational' faith. Whilst the clause *did* exclude tenets and formularies, it was not intended to restrict the religious freedom of teachers – if of Protestant persuasion; the charge of 'undenominational' persisted into the 1940s and was countered by syllabuses and by the ICE report of 1954;

- the flourishing of Board schools saw the emergence of teachers as the interpreters of the Christian faith (as perceived in the Bible); inasmuch as they moved between Board schools and voluntary schools, a blurring of the boundaries of instruction between the schools would seem to have been inevitable;[28]

- the 1944 Act formalised the Dual system and established it on a firmer footing; it also established the legislative *machinery*, the locally convened statutory conference to produce agreed syllabuses for RE.[29] Government did not itself determine syllabus content – thereby avoiding any resurgence of controversy among the churches; agreed syllabuses are established as 'consensus' documents;

- the syllabuses which emerged post 1944 reflect a commitment to Christianity which places it at the roots of European civilization, and looks to its values as the foundation of the regeneration of post war society;

- whilst the Bible is central to these syllabuses it is variously handled and attention may be specially drawn to their interest in its 'historicity' and to the doctrinal/ and theological frameworks in which some place its 'story';

- all of this is done within the framework of an assumed faith widely shared – even if it may need to defend itself within the modern world.

This chapter has drawn on selected aspects of RE's history, identifying some of the factors at play in the 'shaping' of 'Christianity' in RE. I have suggested that the dominance of the Bible needs to be tempered by awareness of the ways in which this is brought into relation with 'Christianity'; I ventured to speak of the Bible as the 'expression of Christianity' for those engaged in determining the content of RE. Nevertheless the ways in which many post 1944

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[28] Note that the Education Act of 1902 allowed voluntary schools to include teachings distinctive to them.

[29] From 1944 RE was understood as RI + a daily collective worship. RI as a subject retained its name but was also spoken of as Religious Knowledge; sometimes 'Divinity' (in grammar schools and independent schools); by the mid 1960s 'RE' was coming into use for the subject as distinct from collective worship. RE formally became the subject's name in ERA, 1988.

syllabuses were presented was unlikely to promote a focus on Christianity as a living tradition. The assumption that this was the framework within which schools lived was probably already misplaced in 1944, but the country's cultural heritage and the need for a re-visioning of post war society placed education, RE and consequently a 'Christianity' (largely expressed in through the Bible) in itself determined in RE through the exigencies of the relations of church and state in the provision of education. Elements of this past live on into the present, but in the next chapter I turn to a later period and new thinking about 'Christianity' in RE.

Chapter 2: Section 1
Religious Education in transition - Christianity in transition

In the previous chapter I observed that Christianity has received relatively little discussion in the RE literature, despite its assured place in the RE curriculum. In this chapter and its sequel I draw attention to a range of contributions to discussion of Christianity in RE drawn from a period of almost a quarter of a century. The present chapter relates approximately to a period from about 1970 through to the mid 1980s, the point at which a Conservative government turned its attention to a national curriculum. Chapter 2 (Section 2) focuses especially on selected events and developments drawn from c1986-1994, the latter date marking the publication of Model Syllabuses for RE (SCAA, 1994 a&b). I do not attempt to survey all that was happening *in RE* during these periods; my concern is Christianity, its representation in RE and the factors which may bear on this. I have drawn in this first part of chapter 2 on a range of sources selected precisely because of their concern with Christianity in RE and matters which relate to changing views of Christianity in RE and consequently to its representation also. This selective process also enables me to draw attention to sources which do not often feature in accounts of RE's development. These sources did not of course develop or exist in a vacuum – they emerged for example from new thinking about RE, or sometimes have much older roots; I shall refer to these contexts as necessary, but not explore them in detail.

1. From Christian education to religious education

Copley's periodization of religious education sees the 1970s as a time of 'controversies' (Copley, 1997: 89-114). In one way this gives weight to my view that past and present rub alongside each other in RE, but I am reluctant to label the 1970s as a period of controversy. Rather it may be seen as a time of transition and of liberation for RE, a gradual liberation emerging from the ferment and change which marked the 1960s, rather than from what Copley sees as a time of 'iconoclasm' (Copley, 1997: 61-88).

Two key documents from the beginning of the period 1970-1985 mark RE's entry into a time of transition; from time to time each continues to provoke discussion. These are *The Fourth R* (1970) and Schools Council Working Paper 36, *Religious Education in Secondary Schools* (1971). Copley (1997) also draws attention to them. Both I would suggest are indicative of the ferment to which I have already referred and are also consequences of this – though different

in character. The first is the outcome of a Commission initiated by the National Society, an agency of the established church; the second the outcome a project established in a secular university department of religious studies and sponsored by a government supported educational agency, the Schools' Council. That these reports continue to figure in seminal discussions of RE in the present, points both to their importance and to the tension of past and present in RE.

1.1 The Fourth R

The Fourth R, rooted in the church's historic concern for education in England and hence with the country's Christian heritage, was also the child of new movements and trends in theology and philosophy to which RE in the 1970s had fully to awaken. Educationally the report upheld the 1944 understanding of religious education (that is as comprising religious instruction and collective worship) and embraced the sentiment of the Spens Report of 1938[30] within its own overarching aim for RE:

> The aim of religious education should be to explore the place and significance of religion in human life and so to make a distinctive contribution to each pupil's search for a faith by which to live. (National Society, *The Fourth R*, 1970:103).

This aim reads in a more open manner than those of the post 1944 agreed syllabuses; it is suggestive of exploration rather than induction. Whilst one may assume that 'a faith by which to live' was seen primarily as Christianity, it is doubtful that the report assumed the kind of induction into the tradition envisaged by Thompson or that others concerned for RE set out to subvert this (Thompson, 2004; Gates, 2005). For many the report will be remembered on the one hand for the openness of its aim (from a church perspective), with its focus on the young person's quest and on the other – at a time of ferment – for its attention to religious language and, at a time when RE wished to establish its educational credentials, for Basil Mitchell's carefully worked consideration of 'indoctrination' (Mitchell, 1970: 353-358).

1.2 Schools Council Working Paper 36

Schools Council Working Paper 36 emerged from the same post war and 1960s ferment as *The Fourth R,* but of course a Commission on RE and a Curriculum Development Project, whilst sharing a common interest – religious education – necessarily differed in their focus on this, and the composition of a church based commission was itself different from that of a project team. The Schools Council project was rooted in a Religious Studies department in a

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[30] This report had stated 'no boy or girl can be counted as properly educated unless he or she has been made aware of a religious interpretation of life'. (The Spens Report, 1938:208)

new secular university, and funded by a government educational agency. I think it important to stress this partnership: Religious Studies *and* Education. Many commentators tend to ignore the other conversation partners the project enjoyed during what was a time of curriculum innovation in England. The project concerned with secondary RE thus had contact, for example, with two projects on Moral Education; with projects concerned with Humanities, Integrated Humanities and General Studies similarly supported by the Schools Council, whilst the Council's Middle Years of Schooling project lived 'next door' in the education department at Lancaster University. Meeting with those at Leeds University Institute of Education who were work working on the primary RE project which later produced Schools Council Working Paper 44, *Religious Education in the Primary School* (1972) was also important. I labour this point of the publication of Working Paper 36 being not only the outcome of religious ferment, but also part of a much bigger national picture of new thinking and development in education itself since this is so often missed. Yet this too contributes to what I earlier described as the beginning of a liberation of RE, since it generated new approaches to teaching and learning. The credentials of the working paper were thus different from those of *The Fourth R* and perhaps go some way towards explaining what I suggest is its more far reaching impact.

At this point I want to draw attention to the overarching aim which the working paper ascribed to RE – not least because this is rarely cited: its authors wrote

> We incline to the view that religious education must include both the personal search for meaning and the objective study of religion. It should be a dialogue with experience and a dialogue with living religions, so that the one can interpret and reinforce the other. (Schools Council, 1971:43)

And within this aim I particularly want to highlight its focus on the idea of 'dialogue' which is so central to it. First, because it goes quite against those who suggest that this seminal project offered a dry and objective look at phenomena; second, whilst the subsequent classroom materials may not have adequately demonstrated this idea of 'dialogue', or developed an adequate pedagogy for achieving it (Grimmitt, 1990:27), we need to be aware that the teacher authors of the project's curriculum materials were mainly working with the content of 'living faiths' for the first time themselves. Furthermore it is arguably at just this point that we detect a major fault line within RE as a subject – that tension between an RE which is focused on religions or focused on the students' concerns and interests. And of course dialogue implies more than a balancing of the two, it points to interplay and exchange, interpretive skills which facilitate engagement with the other/another and do not solely focus on self. But my point here is that Working Paper 36 presents a rather more subtle picture of religious education than that

with which it has often been credited. It is *not* simply bringing religious material to bear on personal and social concerns (as for example in so much RE since Loukes in the 1960s), nor is it the same as pupils' concerns and issues being the determinant of the material selected for study. The working paper and *The Fourth R* however both retain that focus on the 'life' of pupils – on their personal concerns – a marker which has been employed to distinguish religious *education* from religious *studies* (Blaylock, 1995:8; NCC, 1991:12; Wright & Mohammed, 2000:145-146).

The working paper did however become most well known through its advancing of a phenomenological approach to the study of religion. Whilst more recently this has been critically appraised within religious studies and within RE on the basis of the difficulties which a phenomenological approach presents – for example in its methodological procedure of bracketing out one's own presuppositions (Jackson, 1997) and, inasmuch as it represents the 'liberal' 'face of RE, in its neglect of 'truth' (Wright 1993:40). But it is doubtful that many teachers fully espoused either a phenomenological methodology or philosophy as such. On the matter of truth Smart himself addressed this in other contexts (see for example Smart, 1975) and more recently O'Grady has demonstrated Smart's interest in this issue (O'Grady, 2005:232); moreover, the working paper itself is not without reference to pupils' engagement in the discussion of truth (Schools Council, 1971:38). In his latest publication Wright acknowledges this (Wright, 2008). If then one is to estimate the impact of the working paper on the 'shaping' of religion in the RE curriculum one has to turn to the dimensional account or description which Smart gave of religion, and which was utilised in the working paper; it is not adequate to dismiss these as imposing a 'liberal myth' on RE (Wright 1993). I should like briefly to comment on the dimensions and to reflect on them in relation to the liberation of RE and of Christianity in particular.

2. The impact of a phenomenological approach to religion

The publication of *The Religious Experience of Mankind* was first published in 1969 in the USA and a little later in the UK; its appearance thus coincided with the work of the Schools Council project. In this Smart introduced six dimensions: the doctrinal, mythical and ethical (pointing as it were to the *Weltanschauung* of a tradition) and to the experiential, ritual and social dimensions. In a later book (Smart, 1989) Smart listed them as the practical and ritual dimension, the experiential and emotional dimension, the narrative or mythic dimension, the doctrinal and philosophical dimension, the ethical and legal dimension, the social and institutional dimension and added the material dimension. His later *Dimensions of the*

Sacred (1996) is subtitled 'An Anatomy of the World's Beliefs'. The notion of an anatomy is a helpful one, pointing as it does to a living organism, in which balance and relationships are important. In this Smart presents his distinctive phenomenology, adding to his dimensions the importance of the political and economic as one considers the future of religion in the context of globalisation. But an understanding of Smart's 'dimensions' was to pass over into much RE in a very attenuated way, often negligent of their interrelationships, of the issues involved in making comparisons and also of context, both contemporary and historical. What was essentially a useful tool tended to become an end in itself.

The most succinct and direct statement on the *use* of the dimensions is probably that found in *The World's Religions*. Of the (now seven) dimensions Smart wrote:

> The point of the list is so that we can give a balanced description of the movements which have animated the human spirit and taken a place in the shaping of society, without neglecting either ideas or practices. (Smart, 1989:21)

It is I would argue in this way that the dimensions were important for RE; the subject began to work with a bigger picture of religion than had hitherto been the case, even if it did not consistently grasp the full implications of Smart's work. In a later volume, Smart again takes up the value of the dimensions, 'by seeing the patterns in the way religion manifests itself, we can learn to understand how it functions and vivifies the human spirit in history' (Smart, 1996:1) . He continues

> In providing a kind of physiology of spirituality and of worldviews, I hope to advance religious studies' theoretical grasp of its subject matter, namely that aspect of human life, experience and institutions in which we as human beings interact thoughtfully with the cosmos and express the exigencies of our own nature and existence. (Smart, 1996:1)

This of course comes long after the introduction of the dimensions into RE, but I cite this to demonstrate that the kind of arid descriptive RE which has been seen by some as the outcome of Smart's approach is in fact quite contrary to his understanding of and approach to religion. Responsibility for such aridness must rest with some of his classroom interpreters, a fact implicitly acknowledged by Barnes, although he holds Working Paper 36 accountable for this interpretation (2000:322-323).

3. A brief note on objectivity and neutrality

I have suggested that the impact of Working Paper 36 lies especially - and not least through Smart's identification of the dimensions of religion – in its enlargement of the subject's scope and vision. It also prompted a further clarification of the aims of the subject which would spill

over into new syllabuses in the 1970s.[31] I have necessarily set aside debates about truth issues which occupy some in the present, but wish to comment briefly on the working paper's references to 'objectivity' and 'neutrality', concepts which have been related to phenomenology's supposed bracketing out of one's own presuppositions, but which also need to be related to the educational temper of the 1960s and 1970s. Regarding the former, RE is now moving in the direction of a 'reflexive' approach (Jackson 2004:88-89,162) and in religious studies the possibility of epoche is now questioned (Geaves & Chryssides, 2007; Jackson, 2007). But to return to Working Paper 36, in its focus on objectivity and on a *procedural* neutrality it was not alone in the field of education; indeed it was the wider Schools Council/Nuffield Foundation Humanities project led by Lawrence Stenhouse which particularly advanced such neutrality. Stenhouse's focus on *procedural* neutrality[32] was both a statement about the teacher's professionalism and about a process of teaching and learning. The possibility and effectiveness of this may of course be questioned, but in relation to what I earlier termed the 'liberation' of RE it is I believe immensely important, and not least in relation to teaching Christianity, in that the subject might be released from its assumed role of inculcating faith and belief, and in some measure 'protected' from this by the teacher adopting such a procedural stance. Even today pupils and teachers remain sensitive about the teacher's role in relation to teaching Christianity; suspicion of indoctrination or at least of being 'got at' may lurk only a little below the surface (see Chapter 7). A care for professionalism did not deny that teachers came with their own personal commitments, including that of faith – and in RE the relation of the two continued and continues to be explored (see for example Hull, 1982:101-110; Doble, 1995:15-22; Cooling, 2002:44-55). That the 'voices' of commitment might be heard within the context of an open RE was however built into the working paper and, like its notion of dialogue, was perhaps in advance of its time. Additionally the working paper's adoption of Smart's 'principle of intentionality' brought the subject's focus on to people and what mattered to them; its insistence too that RE should 'transcend the merely informative' gave the subject a strong push in the direction of 'understanding' – of both the 'other' and oneself – and recognised that this kind of focus meant learning also *how* religions might be studied and approached - that is, it recognised there were skills appropriate to the study of religion.[33]

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[31] 'Further' clarification, since new thinking about RE's aims had clearly started earlier; see e.g. Cox (1966).

[32] The concept of 'procedural neutrality' is briefly discussed with reference to Stenhouse in Schools Council Working Paper 36 (Schools Council, 1971:88-89).

[33] Cf. Schools Council Religious Education Committee (1977) *Groundplan for the Study of Religion* which came some years after Working Paper 36 and was produced by a working party which included Smart. With respect to his dimensional analysis and the disciplines involved in the study of religion see Smart (1996: 15-21).

4. Initiatives in approaching Christianity as a living tradition

There is a sense in which this new thinking about RE expressed in Working Paper 36 could be readily applied to religions other than Christianity. Whilst the idea of including other religions in the curriculum was not new and had been advanced by Christian educationists prior to 1944 (see Bates, 1994), the categories in which they were perceived were not as established as those for handling the Christian tradition, although there was of course a danger that they would be viewed through Christian lenses and misrepresented on the one hand, and found lacking on the other. Approaching the Christian tradition however arguably demanded a greater shift of perspective. I noted earlier that in 1994 Owen Cole still found it appropriate to write 'We have never taught Christianity' (Cole and Mantin, 1994:7) although there had by then been many initiatives in approaching Christianity; Cole himself was among the first to take such initiatives and to draw attention to the need to think how Christianity might be taught like other 'world religions'. To such initiatives I now turn; they straddle a period from the early 1970s through to the mid 1980s – some individually so.

4.1 Individual contributions

W. Owen Cole

Owen Cole is probably most well known among RE teachers for his interest in Sikh tradition and for his academic and educational publications on this tradition; yet a search in the RE literature for material addressing Christianity also shows Cole to be one of the strongest advocates for a fresh approach to Christianity in RE. In 1972 Bradford Educational Services Committee and The Yorkshire Committee for Community Relations published *Religion in the Multi-faith School*; this 'tool for teachers', edited by Owen Cole, carried a preface in which Cole drew attention to emergent courses on 'world religions' for students, which whilst being' academically respectable' might not be 'truly representative of the faith as lived'. Cole continues:

> Having raised this issue one might, in passing, ask whether, in this same way, is Christianity studied in schools and colleges of education in a way which gives an accurate portrayal of the faith as it is lived, expressed and held by the ordinary (?person). (Cole, 1972:7)

The book brought together articles and stories from members of communities and from teachers which might contribute to an understanding of 'faith as lived'. A series of articles addressed the upbringing of e.g. 'a Buddhist child' 'a Jewish child' and so on. Christian upbringing was represented by 'The religious upbringing and education of West Indian children from Pentecostal backgrounds'. In his introduction Cole reminds readers:

In reading the Caribbean articles it should be remembered that by no means all West Indians are Pentecostalists. Many are Roman Catholics, Anglicans or Methodists. Besides Christians there are Hindus and people of other faiths as well as those of none at all. There is no such thing as a West Indian church. Many Caribbean Christians attend English churches; others for a variety of reasons, colour sometimes being one, feel happier in the company of fellow West Indians. (Cole, 1972:9)

In one paragraph he thus alerts us to Christian diversity, to faiths alongside each other, to the avoidance of stereotyping and to the strength of culture and its capacity for inclusion and exclusivity. These issues cannot detain us here, but what must be noted is that Cole is already concerned with enlarging the representation of Christianity – and simply by recognising, so to speak, who is here. Beyond the particular article, this collection did not address Christianity further except for an article by Trudgian (pages137-141) on the Christian teacher in the multi-faith school. When a decade later this publication was taken up by a commercial publisher (Cole, 1983), Cole had himself written a chapter with the title 'Teaching Christianity: issues, approaches and resources'. (The book also included chapters on Christianity and world religions as well as a chapter on dialogue and RE – both remarkably prescient). Cole reflects on both the RE teacher's relationship to Christianity, which is likely to be different from that which s/he has to Buddhism or Islam and notes 'He [sic.] is likely to be a Christian or lapsed Christian. He will be attached to some form of Christianity or alienated from it' (Cole,1983:128); whilst such a teacher may 'happily tell stories attending the death of Guru Nanak' or describe puja, (s)he may be less certain about telling of Jesus' resurrection or ascension, or describing worship and devotion among Roman Catholics. The problem here arises in part because Christianity has not been taught as a living tradition – and one can no longer assume that pupils have experience of it as such. To advance here and teach Christianity in the way others' faiths are handled, demands that 'teachers...first persuade themselves, and their pupils, that the exercise of Christian studies is one of education, not evangelism' (129). This echoes the point I was making earlier, in relation to the early 1970s, that with regard to Christianity in particular a 'liberation' of RE was necessary.

Cole identified two key issues to be addressed by those approaching Christianity; each is pertinent to its representation. The first concerns the relationship of Christianity, Judaism and Islam; the second, how one gives account of 'the rich diversity of Christianity'. It is interesting that almost 20 years later Copley and Walshe's research on teaching about Jesus find this first matter is not addressed (Copley and Walshe 2002), whilst the teachers in the survey reported here (in Part 2) find the second issue important, but difficult to handle with pupils. In his publication, Cole also recognised what many syllabuses over many years have failed to

realise, that since Christianity is taught *throughout* a pupil's time at school, careful attention needs to be given to developing understanding across the age phases. Anticipating SCAA's questions a decade later (see Chapter 2 (2)) Cole poses two questions which need to be asked prior to planning:

(1) What do I need to know to understand Christianity as a living faith?
(2) How can I present this to children so that by the time a pupil is sixteen years old he [*sic.*] can share this understanding?

His subsequent curriculum – and hence representation of Christianity – was tabulated on one page and revolved around seven key areas taken across the age range 5-16: Jesus; Issues in the development of Christianity (at 13+ only); the Christian Bible; Christian worship and festivals; The worldwide Church (from 7+); Authority and Christians living in the world (from 7+), and Christianity and the arts. Possible content is listed for each stage – and indication is given of where this would be enhanced by 'links with other religions' e.g. in relation to beliefs about Jesus; pluralism within Christian thinking is recognised and also Christian attitudes and dialogue with other faiths are on Cole's agenda. Pupils of 13+ are expected to engage with 'Beliefs about Jesus' and the 'Place of Jesus in Christianity (soteriology and christology)'. The fundamental purpose underlying Cole's work here was to encourage a treatment of Christianity commensurate with emerging approaches to other religious traditions – though he recognised the paucity of resources available to teachers at the time. It is noteworthy too that he did not shrink from a consideration of the relationships and thus also differences in key areas – for example the respective understanding of Jesus held by Jews, Christians and Muslims.

In the intervening period between the publication of the two versions of *Religion in the Multi-faith School*, Cole had also edited *World Faiths in Education* (Cole, 1978). In his introduction he identified its concern 'as an attempt to put world religions in the total school context'. He expressed some anxiety at the currency of the phrase 'the world religions movement' since it suggested to him 'that battle lines are drawn between Christianity or evangelism on one side and the world religions on the other' (9), and that world religions were merely appended to the existing *status quo*. Consequently he saw two pressing issues to be addressed: that of commitment, and that of the teaching of Christianity. Contrary to some popular perceptions of advocates of 'world religions', Cole argues

> To exclude commitment from the classroom would seem to be an act of emasculation. However, in education there are appropriate and inappropriate ways of expressing and examining it. (Cole, 1978:9)

Honesty in declaring one's own stance and in recognising that it is not universally shared is fundamental; RE should not be the occasion for propaganda. Expressing a model of RE which has held now for many years, he comments:

> ....RE in county schools should be neither faith creating nor faith destroying. It should be concerned with knowledge (for example, what a Humanist or Christian believes, or how people worship), with understanding (what it means to be a Muslim or a Jew), and with helping the pupil to become a mature human being. (*Ibid.* 12)

I cite these quotations for their focus on an encounter with commitment which enlivens RE and Cole's concern for a focus on living faiths and what they stand for. He recognises that at the time of writing anxiety among teachers about expressing commitment – even to the extent that teaching became of a 'Christless Christianity' – and a certain 'embarrassment' for Christianity in the presence of an 'articulate' Islam or Humanism (136) are among the difficulties to be overcome in achieving the 'reinstatement' of Christianity in RE which Cole felt necessary. (I am not sure this has yet been achieved).

In this book (Cole, 1978) Cole wrote of the right of the school leaver 'to know what it means to be a Christian in terms of 'practice, belief and commitment' - three key strands. He went on to suggest three key areas of study: (1) The church – as building and locus of worship. (2) the Christian community of believers – focused on Jesus, celebrating and worshiping; in its divisions and movements and in its social and missionary work; and (3) Christianity and art, music and literature (Cole, 1978:138). But here too there were 'warnings' to be given. About an 'over indulgence in the *history* of church buildings' (my italics), 'becoming absorbed in denominationalism' and 'the tedious discussion of Christian attitudes to sex, leisure, marriage, money, drugs, war, race, work and pollution' (*ibid.*) In the latter area especially pupils need to encounter the *how* and the realities of moral decision making *for Christians*, and in this context to meet diversity and paradox. Referring to the third strand in his picture of RE (see above) Cole comments:

> If we wish our pupils to make some commitment to life, and not merely to be drifters, it seems wrong to present them with some non-existent brand of monolithic Christianity claiming this to be the only way of interpreting life, finding meaning in it and responding to it. (*op.cit.*, 139)

How far RE has managed to move away from monolithic representations of the tradition is debatable even now; and of course avoiding such a representation extends beyond the discussion of moral issues. For Cole a breakthrough in reconfiguring Christianity can only come from adopting the kind of methodology to study Christianity which had been taken up in relation to other faiths.

Cole's writing on Christianity did not end with the aforementioned publications; his chapter in Jackson (1982:76-88) offers a more closely worked and tightly written piece which both reflects and re-works some of the themes we have already noted. A quarter of a century ago Cole was alerting his readers to problems which are still present, thus we may not assume 'any sympathy with Christianity on the part of teachers or pupils', nor a 'cultural general knowledge of Christianity' although then (as now) syllabuses and textbooks tended to assume this. He alerts readers to a pluralism within Christianity – not between the denominations, but 'a theological pluralism' within each (79); and he is particularly concerned with 'the world religions context of Christianity' (79). Here Cole recognises what is only addressed much later by other writers on RE, that religions are not closely bounded systems – they have interweaving relations and histories, perhaps none so much as Judaism and Christianity. This demands both fairness in teaching and a capacity to cope with conflicting perspectives - Jesus is not for example thought of in the same way by Muslims, Jews and Christians. Cole also sees Christianity in global perspective. And thereby identifies another set of issues which

> .....range from interfaith dialogue on the one hand to mission on the other and encompass liberation theology, the growth of indigenous churches in Africa and India, and pluralism in matters of morality. The Latin captivity of the churches is being shaken off, the Constantinian mould is being broken............Christianity is neither western nor white and WASP syllabuses (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) will not serve it or our children well bearing in mind the speed at which the world is changing. (Cole, 1982: 82-83).

Cole offers a prophetic and pioneering voice with respect to Christianity throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s, and one which repeatedly looks for an approach to Christianity commensurate with that being adopted to other traditions, and essentially one which has embraced Smart's dimensions. The organising themes of his later *Teaching Christianity* (Cole & Mantin, 1994) in the main correlate with those which I have identified in his earlier works; at a practical level he also sought to translate many of his concerns into a solid text for pupils studying at GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) level (Cole, 1989).

Cole had had close association with the work of Ninian Smart through the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education, of which he was a founder member. Other members of the working party were also to make significant contributions to thinking about the ways in which Christianity might be approached and modelled in RE. This was a particular interest and concern of Rankin which was exercised especially through his directing of the Chichester Project (discussed later in this chapter), but was also a concern which could be addressed

through the pages of the working party's own publications; thus Whaling in an article first written in 1979, and subsequently edited for a later publication (Wood, 1989: 25-31),[34] gave his attention to 'Christianity viewed as a world religion'.

Frank Whaling

Whaling came to this task, as his article indicates, having immersed himself also in the study of Hindu tradition. Writing of Christianity, he offered his own model for its representation, but also drew attention (like Cole) to some of the factors which (then) worked against the tradition in schools. Among the latter he notes the problem that 'Christianity has rarely been seen as a whole' and a tendency to select different elements in isolation from each other – be it the Bible and the beginnings of Christianity in the first century, or moral questions, or theological doctrines, or aspects of church history (25). The view of Christianity was also too often 'too parochial', western rather than universal or ecumenical – failing to see that its future strength might be geographically elsewhere. He comments also on the matter of critical studies and Christianity (with regard to the Bible for example), drawing attention on the one hand on a tendency to ignore them, or on the other to allow them to take over, missing the 'religious significance of Christianity as a humane subject' (25). Such matters are perhaps as pertinent today as when Whaling was writing. He is also concerned that these – and other factors – may have militated against the promotion of 'a real empathy in regard to Christianity'. Such an absence of empathy for the Christian tradition would I think be recognised among some pupils of whom respondents speak in the survey reported in Part 2 of this thesis.

Turned on their head the problems identified by Whaling become part of a solution when he moves on to place the teaching of Christianity in a world religions context. Two examples of this are given here in view of their continuing relevance. First, taking up the theme of 'a presentation of Christianity in its wholeness',[35] Whaling draws attention to a compartmentalised study of the tradition in Higher Education, particular areas and disciplines becoming ends in themselves so that sight is lost of the whole. The analysis later in this thesis of teachers' study of the tradition suggests that this situation has not undergone radical change. Linked with this loss of the whole is also the view that critical tools may become an end in themselves; I do not think Whaling wishes to dismiss such tools, but rather to draw

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[34] I shall follow the later edited version here, but wish to emphasise that the content is substantially that of 1979.
[35] Whaling is not taking an essentialist position here, nor I think does talk of 'wholeness' lead in the direction of a neat 'package', rather to a conceptualisation of the tradition which recognises its complexity and diversity

attention to the importance of grasping 'the religious significance' of what is studied (27). Amongst the dominant areas Whaling notes is that of theology; he notes

> It has become almost a commonplace to state that Christians have stressed belief, Jews and Muslims have stressed the Law, and Buddhists and Hindus have stressed religious experience. There is an element of truth in this in that Christians have stressed theology more than others but the *pistis* of the New Testament and the *credo* of the medieval church was not so much a believing in intellectual notions but a putting of one's trust in God. Intellectual articulation of Christianity in the form of theology, important as it was, was secondary to the faith that lay behind it. In any case it is difficult to empathise with a set of intellectual formulations. (*Ibid.*)

For a religious education which in recent years has given a greater priority to beliefs at KS3, Whaling's comments are not without significance.

Empathy is my second example. This is important to Whaling, and he helpfully distinguishes between *epoché* – the bracketing out of one's own position - and *einfühlung,* arguing that RE has been more concerned with the former at the expense of the latter, and perhaps especially in the teaching of Christianity.   An acceptance of the importance of empathy is to recognise that the 'data of Christianity'   which we may select 'point beyond themselves to the faith of those for whom they are meaningful and ultimately to the God who is known through them.' (28) Put in another way, Whaling sees the 'faith element' as an important part of the data identified for study (30), something that is 'built into religion' and which demands a going beyond the surface impressions of the data. His ideas here appear to correlate with Smart's notion of 'transcending the informative' in the study of religions (Smart, 1968).   Whilst stressing the importance of the kind of insight outlined above, Whaling also presents a model exemplifying the data of which a study of Christianity needs to take account. He comments:

> The data are set within a historical context which indicates the inter-denominational, international and comprehensive nature of Christianity. The historic process of Christianity is the framework within which the main sub-divisions of the data may be conceptualised. (Whaling, 1989: 28)

Whaling's focus on process and on contexts – historically and globally – signals a dynamic about the tradition and steers one away from monolithic representations of it. His proposed subdivisions of the tradition are expressed as 'dimensions', although these do not altogether correlate with those of Smart noted earlier in this chapter. Whaling identifies eight   inter-linked dimensions:

- the communal dimension
- the worship dimension
- the cultural dimension
- the ethical dimension

- the scriptural dimension
- the doctrinal dimension
- the aesthetic dimension
- the spirituality dimension.

Whilst most of these dimensions may here be left to speak for themselves, it is interesting to note that whilst Whaling acknowledges 'that Christianity is embedded in a wider cultural setting' and that 'Christianity and surrounding culture influence each other and are part of a process that takes different forms in different places' , 'culture' is here set as a 'dimension' rather than seen as context like 'the historical process', since Whaling wishes to draw attention to Christianity *and* culture and varying attitudes held towards culture. The spirituality dimension echoes Whaling's concern with faith as part of the data for study and is described here as 'how Christians experience meaning, truth and God in their lives.' His concern with 'data' then is not just with knowledge, though without this the kind of empathy he looks for is not likely to be achieved.

4. 2 Contributions to debate and discussion emerging from key organisations/ conferences

At a distance of around 30 years it is of course only possible to trace those conferences where some kind of written record followed them. In this section I shall draw attention to three organisations which during our period in this chapter addressed Christianity. The organisations are the Order of Christian Unity which in 1976 mounted a day event under the title 'Curriculum Christianity *Crisis in the Classroom*' (Tulloch, 1977); the Christian Education Movement (CEM), whose Easter Conference for Teachers in 1977 addressed 'Christianity in the Classroom' (CEM, 1978), and the Shap Working Party on World Religions which organised a number of conferences on Christianity from 1973 through to 1990. The tone of the sets of papers I was able to read from each of the conferences of the 1970s is rather different, although each exemplifies RE at a time of change.

The Order of Christian Unity[36]

As I suggested earlier, this one day conference had a title which seemed to ring with alarm: *Curriculum Christianity: Crisis in the Curriculum.* The papers were delivered by some well known public figures at the time − Rhodes Boyson and Lord Longford, for example. The more considered papers were delivered by O.R. Johnston (who had also been present at the

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[36] The Order of Christian Unity is a registered charity in England; in the 1970s and 1980s it organised a number of conferences on RE. For details of current activities see: www.christianprojects.org.uk .

conference at Shap, from which the Working Party emerged and Peter Lefroy Owen, a key figure in the then ARE (Association of RE Teachers) and also involved with the work of the conference which drew up the 1975 Birmingham agreed syllabus (discussed later in this chapter). Many of the themes later advanced, for example by Hart and Burns a decade later (see chapter 2(2)) are already present here. For example an invoking of the 1944 legislation, to call summon government to compliance and asking

> Above all, what steps are the Government taking to ensure that the study of Christianity plays a "leading if not the major part in Religious Education" Because Britain's heritage, Institutions and history are rooted in Christianity, to be fully educated, ever child should have adequate opportunities to study the Bible and understand the Christian faith. (Tulloch, 1977:2)

There are echoes of the Spens Report[37] in the last two lines here, but also the re-recurring argument from heritage, a theme developed in detail by two speakers. Parents it was noted wanted Scripture for their children, but meanwhile 'educational philosophers are so busy arguing about metaphysical approaches to Religious Education' that 'unrepresentative militant minorities' dictate what is going to be in the classroom (*ibid*); and the final cry in the preface to these conference papers is

> There is increasing evidence that Britain's children are leaving school with inadequate knowledge and understanding of Christianity. (*ibid.*)

Several papers pick up these themes, and the focus on Christianity was woven into a ten point list of 'solutions', of which one request was for the Government to set up an Independent Inquiry into the current provision for the teaching of Christianity in County schools. Provision for RE – in terms of funding, teacher supply, training and so on was also addressed in a focused manner by Leroy Owen, who could bring first hand knowledge of RE and some of its achievements to the notice of this conference. Concern for morality (Lord Longford's paper), with 'Christianity and British Civilisation' (Lord Blake) and a suspicion of a pluralist society expressed in the kind of terms much used a decade later is all here:

> We don't want a mash-mash of synthesised religion where nobody knows where they are because this will take them nowhere' (*op.cit.* 36)

Also characteristic of later groups with a similar message were the direct links with central government. Discussion of RE and defence of Christianity evokes powerful forces, ready to shape what happens.

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[37] See also earlier references to the Spens Report, pages 24-25.

The Christian Education Movement

The title of this 1977 conference 'Christianity in the Classroom' points to this movement's longstanding contact and support for teachers – not least in their annual Easter conferences of the past, but also by a constant supply of sound resources, which extended beyond Christianity. Nevertheless the papers from the conference demonstrate the title of this chapter – here is a curriculum area in transition. I shall comment briefly on only two of the four papers CEM published. Newbigin, who had been a Bishop in South India, offered a thoughtful paper offering some critical thinking on the stance of the Birmingham 1975 syllabus, and living in a pluralist situation. Two of his concerns are first, that in adopting a critical stance and distance towards religions, as the syllabus appeared to demand, he is left with the concern that RE cannot reach the heart of any. Objective study is part of an underpinning ideology of a liberal, capitalist, post Christian and secular west, 'our particular cultural model'. Newbigin questions its impact on RE via the syllabus. A capacity to believe he argues has to be developed alongside critical faculties. This he finds missing in the syllabus's intentions; teaching pupils about religious traditions means also opening up the realities to which they point. In this venture teachers' commitment (not neutrality) must be open and apparent – this is what will be remembered.

The other paper which particularly points to this time as one of change and transition, was given by Ian Birnie. His case, to summarise, turns to the pupils, to the big questions of life - he uses a long quotation to illustrate these from Küng's *On Being a Christian* (Collins, 1977) which had just been published. RE's failure to address the existential questions with pupils needs to be addressed ; he does not see the adoption of a neutral stance in RE, or a survey of the phenomena of religions as any key to RE's revitalisation. Rather, the answer lies in a theological approach which allows for engagement with fundamental questions of human existence and experience. Here again is a debate which goes forward into the future and bears upon how Christianity may be addressed in the curriculum. He is particularly critical of the agenda set by the Birmingham syllabus for studying Christianity (see later in this chapter); he comments on the content, that unlike the human questioning he has described, this syllabus material

> ....does not grow out of the living experience of pupils, it does not bring Christian thinking into a dynamic relationship with the pupil's developing understanding of his own nature. (CEM, 1978: 23)

As I suggested earlier, the place of theology in RE needs still to be re-visited. Here I note it as one interpretation of Christianity's place in the curriculum.

The Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education

This working party was established in 1969, an outcome of a conference[38] under the auspices of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne (Hinnells, 1970); from its outset the working party was characterised by the collaboration of colleagues in both religious studies and educational fields. It is worth noting at this point that a majority of those involved in its conception were themselves Christian – and of varied Christian persuasion; Humanists were also represented. The working party quickly established its intention to further the teaching of 'world religions' in schools and in higher education and identified its objectives (Hinnells, 1970; Hayward, 2008). One way in which this key aim was advanced by Shap was, from the beginning, through conferences which brought together practising teachers, those engaged in the academic study of religion(s), and faith members.

Shap held its first conference on Christianity in March 1973. Many of the papers delivered at this conference were subsequently published in *Learning for Living*, 13(4), Hull's editorial to this issue recognised that RE was at a point of change or transformation with regard to Christianity. Noting that the Christian pluralism which had since 1870 'created the limits of acceptable RE' and placed the Bible at its centre as content was giving way to discussion of Christianity in RE, in a new pluralist context where he suggested '…. No religion can claim to control the general intentions of the subject or provide an exclusive rationale for it.' (Hull, 1974:130) Contributors to this issue of *Learning for Living* included Ninian Smart, Jack Earl (then D.E.S. Staff Inspector for RE), Desmond Brennan and Swami Yogeshananda. An earlier issue (12(5), May 1973) had also included a piece from the conference from Harold Turner, 'Dynamic religion in Africa'. No particular representation or model of Christianity was advanced across these articles, but it is instructive to draw out some of their strands of thinking.

Earl's paper seems poised between the past and a tentative step towards a different future. Recognising the cultural pervasiveness of Christianity, he warns (like Cole) that it is difficult for teachers to adopt a distanced stance; inevitably teachers bring their individual perceptions of the tradition and it is best to be aware of these. He continues by looking at 'four ways in which Christianity enters into national life and education' (132). Although these may read as 'of their time', they surface also in contemporary debates. Earl first reflects on the importance of

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[38] This was held at a hotel on Shap fell in Cumbria - hence 'Shap'.

Christianity as a basis for moral education; but he also recognises the work of moral educators who wish to be independent of religion, and consequently looks for a values base which is shared with others, though it may be essentially Christian. Such shared values may themselves be objectively studied and the focus of discussion in RE (or ME), and thus there is a shift away from Christianity

> .....as the provider of hard sanctions for morality, or a codified moral law, but rather as expressing basic principles by which men [sic] can live. (Earl, 1974:133)

Second, Earl draws attention to the place of Christianity in national and cultural identity; this he sees as persisting even in a secularised Europe. Whilst the figures he cites for the population's involvement in the church e.g. though baptism or weddings would today be radically challenged, his reminder that the 'close relationship between religion and culture is clearly written into our identity' (133) is of contemporary concern also. Earl cites telling examples of such relationships within Europe's history, recognising that they may continue to function as fault lines: thus he comments (in 1973) for example that '...it is surely no accident that the line between the Soviet bloc and Western Europe runs so close to the ancient division between Roman and Byzantine Christianity' (133). Within the United Kingdom, he recognises that 'versions of Christianity different from those of the established Church of England' have impacted on Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall (133).

Earl next turns to Christianity as a religion – recommending Smart's dimensions – but also shifting the perspective from those who count themselves as 'committed Christians' – since they do not constitute a full picture of the tradition. A similar feeling was expressed by just a few teachers in my survey – who asked how may the nominal Christian feature in RE. For Earl it is also a case of both 'heretic' and 'saint' having their place (134).

Fourth, Earl points to Christianity's place in establishing pupils' individual identity; this is how he interprets the second part of the aim of *The Fourth R* (which he also links with that of the Spens Report); for Earl this is not to prioritise Christianity, nor to fail to recognise that others' will find meaning and identity within their particular traditions, but to be 'realistic' and recognise that 'the average pupil will articulate his [sic.] search most readily in Christian terms or at least in terms derived from a Christian background (134). Whether the 'common Christian background' which Earl speaks of can be so readily affirmed today in England is debatable; that Christianity persists woven into the fabric of society is doubtlessly so, but awareness, understanding and articulation of this may be far less than at the time of Earl's writing.

In the light of these four considerations Earl turns to what is desirable in the curriculum's treatment of Christianity, structuring his representation around three themes: Knowledge of the Bible; What Christians believe; What Christians Do. Objective study, alert to critical and contemporary developments in each of these areas is recommended, as well as a possible moving beyond 'the mainstream churches' and 'European versions of Christianity' (135). 'What Christians do' focuses on expression and contexts – on the one hand on art, architecture music and also social activities at a local, national and international level; but also on 'the sociological and historical manifestations of Christianity, not shirking those which are regrettable' (135).

The theme of drawing on the artistic expressions of religion was taken up at the Shap 1973 conference by Brennan (1974: 144, 158-159), who developed a particular interest and expertise in the use of the visual in RE. Turner developed an 'international' perspective, focusing on Africa and thereby trying to shift perceptions of Christianity which participants might hold. Turner hits the matter head on. Although there are already 'new forms of the christian faith drawn from its grass roots manifestations in the West Indies and Africa' present in England, they are overshadowed by the presence of other faiths and little is known of them. (Turner, 1973:3). Additionally, Turner suggests, 'we have taken our own form as being Christianity itself and expected the rest of the world to be like us...' (3). He then continues – and I quote here at some length because of the resonance of Turner's writing with more recent writers (see Part 3):

> The truth is that we have only one tribal form, that of the Western Europeans, albeit with minor variations as between the clans. Other peoples, other cultures bring out possibilities in the Christian faith that we have never known, or at best long forgotten. This serves to put both ourselves and the christian religion into a truer perspective. (1973:3)

This ethnocentric view of Christianity – and of its demise – is for Turner challenged by 'the continuing vitality of the christian faith' witnessed to by immigrant congregations in British cities who 'ride on the crest of a religion that works' (4). Turner reflects on both the history and nature of Christian expansion, an understanding of mission and the 'patterns' of Christianity in Africa in a manner which anticipates the later studies, for example, of Sanneh or Jenkins (Part 3) in the present. In terms of RE Turner was in advance of his time in attempting to shift the way in which Christianity might be seen, and to urge understanding of its many manifestations especially those among 'that wide section of mankind (*sic.*) whose cultural background is of the preliterate and tribal form' (7). It is important to note here – and indeed later in part 3 – that recognition of the vitality of Christianity beyond Europe - is not to

engage in a kind of triumphalism with regard to the tradition, although sometimes expression of its global presence and vitality borders on this – but not I think in Turner's case.

Offering a further shift in perspective for conference participants, Swami Yogeshananda offered an Asian view of Christianity, focusing in the main on India (Yogeshananda, 1974:153-158). After reviewing the historical circumstances and cultural implications of a Christian presence in India, and the impact, good and bad, of Christian missions and Christian education, he moves beyond what he terms the 'Good Samaritanism' expressed through Christian social and humanitarian service in India to those aspects of Christianity which may resonate with Indians' experience. Here he identifies the character of Jesus – Jesus as a person, rather than his teaching; Jesus present on earth; to the mystics of the tradition; to devotional approaches to the religious life and to renunciation. By contrast, rigid sectarianism, definition (doctrine), missionary activity and exclusiveness are disliked, finding the 'fluidity' within Hindu tradition the antithesis of these, Yogeshananda writes

> Sects, where they exist are seldom rigid; names where they are used, are not exclusive; doctrines, where they are made explicit, do not become dogmas; affiliations, where they are formed, are not commanding or possessive; devotion, where it goes deep, tries not to narrow itself. (Yogeshananda, 2004:156)

It is not the present concern to comment on this assessment of Hindu tradition, but what it offers for the purposes of this thesis is a kind of mirror image of Christianity and one which comes from an 'outsider'. Recognition and understanding of 'how we see each other' would appear to be a necessary preliminary to moving in the direction of a substantive understanding of each other.

At this first Shap conference on Christianity two papers were also delivered by Ninian Smart. One addressed Christian 'uniqueness' (Smart, 1974:136 -138) and the other understanding myth (Smart 1974:138 -144). Smart explores 'uniqueness' in the context of a world of religions, turning first to similarities among religions – personal devotion, mysticism, morality, doctrines (here the focus is 'God' or concern for 'some kind of transcendental liberation'). And since looking at similarities (of Christianity with other faiths) itself calls for qualification '...distinctiveness tends already to emerge along the line of comparisons' (136)

Smart next turns his process on its head, turning to Christian understanding of and claim to distinctiveness as seen in the Incarnation; a corollary of this is the importance attached 'to revelation as historical' since 'God in Christ commits himself so to speak to the vagaries of

human events in time.' (137) Smart makes the important observation here that this has generated 'modern investigations of the New Testament' which in turn contribute to the tradition's self criticism, this in turn for Smart 'avoids the inflexibility which would make the faith hard to reconcile with modern knowledge of all sorts.' (137) This highlights a point which RE has never clearly addressed; that is the place of a critical study of the tradition – exemplified in its textual and theological aspects especially – which has come and continues to come from those who would place themselves within the tradition.

There are other 'distinctive features 'of Christianity to which Smart draws attention, among these a fear of syncretism resulting in an ambivalent attitude to other religious traditions; the linking of a social ethic with a sense of meaning in history and human progress; and whilst other traditions may have ideas of humankind's 'original ignorance', Christianity speaks rather of original sin (138). Smart's second paper picks up this last theme. To explore the concept of 'myth' Smart takes up an Irenaean exposition of the human condition to demonstrate the character of myth. In a tightly written paper, he recognises that he may be seen to be advancing a structuralist position, but he wishes to resist this, and to allow for the vitality of myth, and to resist also the kind of 'seepage' into myth which destroys its potential – such as asking whether or not Adam was a historical figure. In the asking of this kind of question 'biblical literalist and rationalist' alike follow a route which misses the 'potency' of myth. Myth is 'slit like a fish' (140), a major obstacle to its understanding:

> We slit it in two like a fish – putting interpretation of event on one side, and event on the other. The Christ myth is slit into talk about God on the one side and talk about the man Jesus on the other. How are the two parts of the fish to be put together again? The answer is a Zen one: 'Lo, the two parts are joined and the fish was swimming all this while'. (144)

This observation may also be identified as an 'edge' upon which religious educators often walk – whilst failing perhaps to notice the view.

Smart's concluding comments on myth may also have continuing relevance for RE:

> ....the problem of understanding is different from the hermeneutical problem as commonly understood. Modern hermeneutics mediates the message for a modern age, and so in a sense changes it. In trying to understand myth we should forget the credibility or otherwise of the material under consideration. Rather we need to work at the myth in its original luxuriance. (144)

To do this may involve grappling with the principles (elaborated in the article via the case study Smart took) which operate in mythical mode, and in this encountering the experience of

the numinous. [39] The point is well made and I suspect that in the case of teaching Christianity there has been and remains much of the 'mediation' Smart identifies above – and not least through the kind of activities in which RE has too often engaged.

In this first conference relating to Christianity participants were alerted to a range of issues which continue to press on those who pause to consider the representation of the tradition: distance from that assumed to be familiar; addressing Christian global diversity and presence; seeing Christianity both in its distinctiveness, but also its 'place' among the religions; Christianity from the perspective of those of other faiths; the inter-relation of history and myth; recognising both the positive and negative dimensions of Christian activity; grasping how it may convey a sense of the numinous or transcendent. The identification of such matters is to begin to realise the complexities of handling this tradition (and indeed others). Identifying the dimensions of religion provides a helpful descriptive map, but these issues cut across this demonstrating the complexity of the terrain.

The Shap Working Party continued to give attention to Christianity throughout the period under consideration, organising several other conferences which focused solely on Christianity[40] or where Christianity was considered alongside other traditions or in dialogue with them.[41] It is worth indicating some of the dimensions of these ventures, which in turn demonstrate a determination to encourage a lively approach to Christianity and explore it as a living tradition:

- providing an opportunity for a multi-dimensional study of Christianity, paying particular attention to dimensions which had been largely neglected in RE;

- encountering Christianity in different global contexts;

- offering what were for many at the time new experiences of the tradition;

- encounters with 'insiders' of different persuasions, convictions and cultural backgrounds;

- meeting 'academic' study of the tradition alongside the voices of adherents;

- exploring interfaces between Christianity and other faiths/worldviews.

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[39] The priority which Smart gives to experience and to the numinous in these two articles calls for further exploration of these concepts within his work. Suffice it to note here that to highlight these features is also to point to aspects of religion rarely addressed in RE.

[40] For example, 'Christ and Christian Worship' (1984); 'Approaching the Christian Tradition' (1986); Christianity in World Perspective' (1990).

[41] 'Christ and Buddha in History, Art and Ethics' (1978); 'Jesus, Muhammad and Marx in Conflict and Congruence' (1979); 'Transforming the World: Christian and Buddhist Approaches' (1990).

In all of these ways the conferences were trying to do what we earlier noted Cole asking for – that is, relating Christianity in a manner similar to that applied to other traditions – but also providing a bigger picture of the tradition than had hitherto marked its representation in RE.

4.3 Projects addressing Christianity

There have been a number of projects which have had Christianity as a central focus, but not all within this period of transition and change. The Culham Institute for example launched their *Christianity in RE Programme* in 1989. Their initial national survey of schools in England and Wales however focused on gaining a picture of RE in schools and extended well beyond their Christianity focus; much of the energy of the project went into producing materials for schools including an ambitious series in collaboration with the BBC on Christianity around the world which was accompanied by a short textbook for pupils – in many ways the kind of material needed now. The Westhill Project also addressed Christianity at a later point (see Read *et al.*, 1988), but the first of two projects considered here paved the way for Westhill's work.

4.3.1 The Christians Today Project 1975-77: Michael Grimmitt and Garth Read

The work of Michael Grimmitt in RE is well known in the UK, especially through his *Religious Education and Human Development* (1987) and for an earlier generation through *What Can I do in RE?* (1973). My immediate concern in the present context is a much slighter publication (in textual terms), a collaborative venture which Grimmitt undertook with his colleague Garth Read, an Australian religious educationalist. The publication consisted of two sets each of 32 photographs – *Christians Today* – with a short accompanying 'companion', *Teaching Christianity in R.E.* (Read & Grimmitt, 1977). This resource provides an important example from the 1970s of the transition in RE to thinking about Christianity as a living tradition. It also anticipates the later work of Grimmitt and also that of the Westhill Project (Grimmitt 2000:34; Rudge, 2000:88-111),[42] evidenced in its structuring of the Christian tradition and its relating of this to pupils' learning. The *Christians Today Project's* representation of Christianity, whilst persuasive in many ways, is subservient to a particular understanding of RE and, schematically, to a framework which represents a generalised structuring of the pupils' world and experience. In these contexts Grimmitt and Read also introduced and succinctly explained the now extensively used terminology of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion, terms which Grimmitt has more recently explained were shaped by his encounter with the writing of Harvey Cox (Grimmitt, 2008:5).

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[42] A complete list of the Westhill Project's publications is given by Rudge; their key publication for teachers on Christianity is listed in the bibliography to this thesis (Read, Rudge & Howarth, 1988).

The pictures which were central to this resource showed

> ..... *Christians Today* in four inter-dependent contexts acting in ways which are clearly related to their religious beliefs. These contexts are: their homes and their churches...and the local community and the world community..... . A wide range of countries and most of the denominational groups within this complex religion are represented... (Garth and Read, 1977:3)

The 64 photographs lived up to this description in their range and variety in a way which has probably not been replicated since.[43] They were grouped to correspond to the model of Christianity Read and Grimmitt offered, and to their resultant spiral curriculum plan.

The model of Christianity which was offered was closely related to the authors' understanding of education and of religious education in particular. Both the photographs and RE itself were seen as 'channels' through which 'the educational process might work' (*ibid.* 4). This process is seen as 'a process by, in and through which pupils may begin to explore what it is, and what it means, to be human'. Within this context, RE is concerned with the 'inescapable' questions with which human beings are confronted, and especially those which 'constrain' them 'to formulate normative views of what it means to be 'human' ' and offers pupils the opportunity to 'investigate what it means....to make a 'faith response' to such questions. The idea of 'faith' here points to all those circumstances 'where there is a commitment .... to reflecting and acting on a view of man (*sic.*)' which is expressed through 'a developed and coherent system of concepts and principles'; 'communicated through distinctive forms of human behaviour' and provides a 'stance for living' (ibid: 5-6). In effect, the existential and dimensional approaches developed in Grimmitt's earlier book (Grimmitt, 1973) emerge here as fundamental and interrelated aspects of RE, and are pedagogically realised through the twin foci of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion.

In the present context however it is the nature of a 'stance for living' noted above which is of particular interest since this determines the model of Christianity which is employed. The authors are clear that they do not wish to make a definitive statement about the structure of Christianity, but to present *a* structure, which in turn may provide 'a helpful overview of the subject matter of Christianity'. Visually presented, the model consists of two concentric circles; the outer circle is divided into four (named) quadrants. In the inner circle are listed those concepts which express Christianity's response to ultimate questions: the selection here – 'an essential minimum' – includes God the Father, The Holy Spirit, View of man (*sic.*),

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[43] I did not have access to the pictures, but a full list is provided in the 'companion' booklet.

Jesus Christ, Salvation, The Bible, Church and Mission.[44] In the outer circle with its quadrants headed 'Personal life', 'Family life' "Religious' community life' and 'Secular community life', are distributed a wide range of phenomena through which the key concepts are expressed.

The model described above is seen as establishing two important criteria for *selecting* material. First, the concepts must be discernible within any phenomena selected for exploration; second, the designations of the quadrants are suggestive of different contexts within which the subject matter may be explored, thus facilitating a return to topics in learning and teaching, but with the possibility of seeing them in differing contexts. It will be clear that this model is a tool for the teacher – a kind of condensed compendium of information about 'Christianity'. The next step is to model the curriculum but in a way that recognises the interrelation of its existential and dimensional aspects. 'Growing together', 'Celebrating together', 'Learning together', 'Living together' and 'Choosing together' thus find their counterparts in five themes 'Christians together', 'Christians celebrating', 'Christians telling' . 'Christians acting' and 'Christians claiming' - the last theme finally and explicitly articulating the concepts. These five themes, placed in a matrix whose other axis shadows the quadrants of the model of Christianity – '....in their families, ...in their churches,...in their local community... in the world community' (12-13), thereby providing four lenses through which Christians may be seen. Teachers are thus provided with a curriculum framework within which 'Christian phenomena' (and concepts) may be placed.

In relation to the representation of Christianity the *Christians Today Project* was important as an attempt to 'map' Christianity in terms of its living contours, to relate phenomena to beliefs, to recognise contexts in which Christians 'function' and to recognise the global presence of Christianity. It is also important in its recognition of the need for a spiral curriculum in an area of RE – Christianity – which is going to appear *throughout* pupils' education. All these matters appear as urgent in 2007 as they were in 1977 (see Part 2 of this thesis). In terms of factors shaping Christianity in the curriculum, it raises the question which was to be addressed much more fully by Grimmitt at a later date of criteria for selection of material in handling religions in the classroom; for Grimmitt this is not according

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[44] In their subsequent *spiral curriculum* for teaching Christianity (pp.12-13) the focus concepts become God, The Church, the Bible and Man – although of course other important concepts are subsumed under these key headings e.g. Bible points also to revelation and to authority.

to *'phenomenological principles'* but 'in accordance with *pedagogical principles, informed by a theory of human development'* (Grimmitt 2000: 36 [Grimmitt's italics]; Grimmitt 1987).

4.3.2 The Chichester Project

Origins

This project was an initiative of the Shap Working Party;[45] its life spanned the period 1977 - 1992, and whilst not all of this time was concerned with Christianity, this tradition was its *raison d'etre*. Brown (its secretary for much of that period) has written of the foresight demonstrated by the Project in its work on Christianity, in its recognition of a disjunction between the way in which other religions were being introduced in the RE curriculum as living faiths, whilst Christianity 'tended to retain a biblical and historical profile', and its determination to address this (Brown, 2000). Directed by John Rankin[46] the project worked from the outset with a core team who managed and maintained the momentum of the project and were, over the project's lifetime, able to draw in many other RE professionals (from schools and higher education) as authors and as consultants. Its method of working is outlined by Brown (*op.cit.*) and need not be addressed here, except to note that its 'seminar-style' meetings, efficiently documented by its Director, offer insight into the Project's lively discussion of Christianity at a time of transition in RE.[47]

Context

One of the first tasks undertaken was a survey of books on Christianity available to schools (Jones, 1977). A supplementary survey covering the period 1979 -1982 was undertaken in 1983 (Doble & Hayward, 1983), and in addition to this the project also attempted to gather literature from churches represented in the U.K (as listed in Barrett,1982:911-912), which had been prepared by the churches themselves and might thus provide authentic source material to inform teaching (Hayward, 1984). Some of the emergent features of this kind of groundwork can be briefly noted, since they are relevant to the period under consideration. Jones' comments are pertinent to what we have seen in the post 1944 period (Chapter 1):

> It goes without saying that the bulk of material for teaching Christianity has a confessional bias, if not specific ecclesiastical concerns. This not only reflects the place of Christianity, historically and sociologically, in our society and educational

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[45] Brown (2000: 53-54) clearly indicates this link and the working party's concern for Christianity exemplified in a paper written for the Working Party by Ninian Smart and Edward Hulmes

[46] John Rankin was a member of Shap and also Head of Religious Studies at what was then Bishop Otter College, Chichester (now the University of Chichester).

[47] I have personal copies of many of these papers; they will ultimately be placed in the Shap Archive at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

system, but also the academic background. Christian theology dominates, for example, this study of Christian origins and that of Church history.

Jones observed that the project would be interested in any resources which didn't fall into these categories, since it was attempting to adopt an objective stance; at the same time he recognised the 'usefulness' of many confessional resources, especially the 'technical expertise and the sensitivity to educational criteria' characterising new Roman Catholic catechetical material at that time. It would, Jones warned, 'ill become a 'Chichester-style' teacher to lapse into the kind of anti-dogmatic dogmatism which ruled out Church-produced materials altogether.'

It is also instructive to note some of the materials Jones listed. One series for secondary schools, *Living Religions* published by Ward Lock Educational, included among its titles books on The Protestant Churches (1971), Roman Catholicism (1971) and The Orthodox Church (1970); the title of the series is in itself interesting in its focus on *Living Religions*. A collection of pocket sized books were published by REP (now RMEP) in 1977/1978 under the heading of *Christian denominations*, whilst the diversity of churches and denominations in the UK was more extensively explored in a series of ten books (Lutterworth 1977/1978) which included, for example, The Church of Scotland, The Society of Friends, and The Pentecostal Churches. Jones found those on the Salvationists, the Methodists, Pentecostals and Baptists best from an educational stance, commenting that 'each also seeks to cover both official doctrines and everyday life and worship, and to introduce famous Christians from past and present in the context of their denominational allegiance'. I cite these examples as they appear as a departure from the strictures of the Cowper-Temple clause as commonly understood in RE prior to the ERA 1988. They also point to shifting ground in RE in its representation of Christianity and demonstrate an interest in its varied presence in Britain. They recognise the tradition's inner diversity, and signal that this may now be recognised in the curriculum.

A series of substantial school textbooks was also represented by Birnie's series *Focus on Christianity* (Edward Arnold), which I note here on account of the series' political and social engagement and community focus – one book for example was titled *Christianity and Politics* (1970) addressing an area it is relatively unusual to find covered to the present, and certainly outside the scope of most agreed syllabuses. Here was an attempt to root Christianity in a real world. Birnie 's editing of the SCM series *People with a Purpose* whilst

in a well established tradition of using biographies in RE, similarly broke new ground in including contemporary figures who were politically engaged Christians and known, in varying degree, on a world stage – Helder Camara and Kenneth Kaunda for example.

On another front, Jones comments that (unsurprisingly) books on 'the life, times and teaching of Jesus are of course legion' and continues that it 'is also notorious that modern Gospel scholarship has been so slow to percolate down' – arguably an unresolved issue in RE to the present (see Chapter 3). The further survey to 1982 pointed to new publications, but not to significant changes in perspective overall; new books might, for example, shake off confessional assumptions, but retain a historical perspective in their treatment of Christianity, and - rather like the post war syllabuses - cover so much ground that they were unlikely to prove engaging to pupils.

Jones' resources survey, like that which followed it included non-book resources too, and it is salutary to note that sophistication then might extend to a filmstrip and accompanying audio tape. Filmstrips could bring colour in both a literal and metaphorical sense to the portrayal of religions, for the world of textbooks into the 1980s was one of shades of grey. These matters are more than anecdotal: they point both to the presentation and representation of Christianity *possible* then and now, and the implications of this for RE in the 21st century.

Purposes and principles

For the Chichester Project the above books were part of the context in which its work commenced. Within the first year of the Project it was decided that its purpose would be 'to develop methods and materials for teaching Christianity in English Secondary schools in accordance with progressive thinking in Religious Education and in conformity with the kind of objectives associated with the Shap Working Party' (Rankin, 1978). The *approach* taken by the project was to be:

- 'an open exploratory approach';
- one through which some sense of Christianity's importance should be conveyed, 'importance, that is, in the lives of those for whom it has been the key factor';
- one which would 'convey an awareness of the Christian dimension in the history and tradition of this country' (i.e. England);
- and which might 'encourage children to learn …how to begin some intellectual engagement with religious propositions' (*ibid*).

A further underlying principle was that 'nothing produced to teach Christianity should do an injustice to any other World Religion', a principle which the project felt to be 'particularly apposite in relation to Judaism which Christianity has frequently misrepresented in the past'. Reading these principles now, it is difficult to 'feel' the shift from past practice to an open approach; Rankin writing at the time captures something of the moment:

> We sometimes felt we were trying to walk a tightrope, and yet we felt that there is an approach which will neither be matter-of-fact description nor vigorous propaganda. The former fails to do justice to the nature of the religion; the latter offends against the best principles of education' (Rankin, 1978)

In terms of the representation of Christianity the project did not start with any preconceived blueprint – it was felt that there was 'no ultimate prescriptive content for teaching about Christianity'.; Brown records that one of the earliest discussions of the problems surrounding the teaching of Christianity considered whether there is a 'mainstream Christianity' (Brown, 2000:55). The project's aims however, as expressed by Rankin, were indicative of its intended scope:

> The aims associated with the project materials are both cognitive and affective. It is thought desirable that children should know about the beliefs, practices and values to be encountered in Christianity; and that they should become aware of the importance and influence of these in the lives of Christians. But learning must go further. There must be some opportunity to perceive some of the profound mystery encountered in Christianity and to touch upon its deepest insights. (Rankin, 1978)

At an early stage some broad *areas* of Christianity were also identified as important, but not intended as teaching topics: The Person of Christ; Christian Worship and Spirituality; Christian Community; What Christians believe; Christian Ethics; The Text of the Bible.[48] Translated into texts for the secondary school, the focus was mainly on a lived and living tradition; the eight books[49] produced for secondary schools did not constitute a 'course' or share the kind of common format which publishers welcome. Each author was permitted to develop their book's content and its learning style(s) in their own way – although drafts were submitted to the close scrutiny of one's peers in the project. The books were to be essentially 'work' booklets, well illustrated, but not information heavy. Pedagogically the intention was that the material should '.. link with the children's experience and lead to heuristic learning of some kind at each key stage..' (Rankin 1978). Within this basic framework the books displayed different styles, and often brought fresh material and

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[48] Brown (2000:57) has a more finely tuned list of topics suggesting areas in which the Project thought they might publish; many still read as desirable in the present.
[49] These were: 1. Christian Worship, 2. Christian Communities, 3.Christian Experience, 4. Jesus, 5. Exploring the Bible, 6. The Christians' Book, 7. Christmas and Easter, 8. Christian Ethics, 9. The Eucharist.

approaches to the teaching of Christianity; the inclusion of a book on *The Eucharist* (Rankin, 1985) was a novel move in RE, and probably remains the only RE text on this topic *not* directly written for schools with a religious character.[50] Approaches to learning adopted by the books need not detain us here - their authors reflect on both content and learning in the project's later book, *Teaching Christianity* (Erricker, 1987); the different styles of the textbooks are also discussed in this book (Hayward, 1987:157-167) and elsewhere by Brown (2000:64-67).

Emergent issues in representation

In terms of the representation of Christianity, the papers of the project point to discussion and debate about the aspects of Christianity to be covered, although no 'model' of Christianity was advanced. Aspects of these discussions remain pertinent to the present. I will comment briefly on three of these. First, there were a number of attempts made to address Christianity on a global scale, and to produce a book in relation to this. Questions raised included, for example, whether this should be a study of a geographical area e.g. Christianity in Africa; whether it should be a focus on Christians worldwide, or on 'Christianity'; on how it might be 'representative' – was a study of a Baptist family in Russia for example appropriate or not? Would an approach which looked at western missionary activity be appropriate? Ultimately, the various attempts made to write this kind of study were abandoned – and the question of whether pupils would have an interest in Christianity somewhere far away was asked, but set on one side.

A second area of discussion – topical today – was that of relations among different faiths; again a substantial text was prepared on this, but was ultimately considered to be too complex for pupils and perhaps written in a style which would have greater interest for Christians who might themselves be engaged in interfaith dialogue. I cite these examples to demonstrate a degree of prescience shown by this project in their identification of issues relating to presenting the Christian tradition. Each of these issues I suggest still calls for attention in the present in relation to Christianity in RE. Thirdly, attention must be drawn to the absence of a book on Christian belief from the Chichester Project. Discussion of draft proposals for such a book record deliberation about whether the focus should be on 'people rather than the abstraction of doctrine'; on 'mainstream' Christian beliefs which could be described; on avoiding 'falling into an attitude of powerful advocacy' in writing about belief;

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[50] I know of only one other RE textbook which makes this a key theme in its presentation of Christianity (see Hammond & Jacobs, 1990).

and about whether the starting point is 'the concept of God or the person of Jesus' (Chichester Project, 1980: Consultation No. 9). Brown's later discussion of the absence of a book on belief suggests that a fundamental problem lay in the, 'the variety of interpretations which exist within Christianity'; should one give full weight to such diversity and disagreement, or offer a monolithic view of Christian belief, or choose a focus on ecumenism and Christians coming together? And what is likely to engage students who are unlikely to be motivated by an encounter with a fine tuned study of the diversity of belief (Brown, 2000: 58-59). Later, *Teaching Christianity* included a chapter on teaching about Christian belief (Morling, 1987:128-136). But this focuses on the term in a different (but nonetheless instructive) way, where pupils come to understand the concept of 'belief' in the first instance, not in a doctrinal sense, but in the sense implied by the chapter's full title: 'Teaching about belief: trust and risk', pointing to a concept of believing which some find more helpful than belief understood in a doctrinal sense. There are resonances here with Whaling's focus on the concept of *pistis* noted earlier in this chapter. Whilst no book on belief emerged from the project the case could be made that the topics which were addressed convey something also of distinctive Christian 'beliefs'. There were other aspects to the Chichester Project's activity (see Brown, op. cit) but its interest for this thesis is its initiative in addressing Christianity as a living tradition in the secondary school, and its advocacy of an open approach to this and giving Christianity parity with other so called 'world religions'. Its insistence on openness also meant that the role of the teacher demanded attention – not least perhaps because this project was concerned with Christianity, and might by association be considered to endorse the view of earlier syllabuses that teachers should ideally have a Christian commitment themselves.; this matter was addressed at a very early stage in the project's life (Brown, *op.cit.*) and subsequently addressed in the project's Teaching *Christianity* (Doble: 1987:15-22).

4.3.3 Some comments on the Christians Today Project and the Chichester Project

These two projects, each having its roots in the 1970s exemplify a 'shifting' of the ground in the representation of Christianity which occurred towards the end of the 1970s and continued into the 1980s. My intention is not to compare these examples but from them to draw out some of the emergent 'shifts' features and issues. These may be summarised as follows:

- movement towards representation of Christianity as living tradition;
- recognition of *context* as a significant factor in considering 'phenomena', but also that being Christian - living as such - works itself out in different contexts and situations for communities and individuals;

- awareness of Christianity's global presence in a way which begins to move beyond the missionary interest found in the agreed syllabuses post 1944 and earlier. The Chichester Project grappled with how this might be approached; Grimmitt and Read used the pragmatic device of selecting visuals, impressive in their global coverage, but I suggest, leaving some questions about context unanswered. Is it for example enough to simply *show* Christianity in another cultural context – or are there aspects of the particular 'setting' which it is necessary to know more about? [51] (The question remains applicable to many RE textbooks in the present);

- recognition of 'belief' as a significant factor, which in 'some way' relates to the totality of 'being Christian'; in 'some way', since the Chichester Project grapples with this as an issue, whilst Grimmitt and Read – in that 'stances for living' give primacy to belief(s) – do not hesitate making core beliefs central to their modelling of Christianity. Whilst recognising that their model is not a blueprint, it may be asked whether the expressed relationship between belief and 'phenomena' (that the former is expressed in the latter) is too simple a view both theoretically and in terms of the reality of religious practice and belief;

- each appears to anticipate an 'open' approach to Christianity, and that other traditions will be similarly studied; Chichester was arguably ahead of its time in recognising that work would also have to come at the interface of religions – even though their attempt to produce appropriate materials did not reach fruition.

I reiterate that each of these features marked a shift in approaching Christianity; at the same time the issues I have identified remain pertinent to discussion of the representation of Christianity in the present. In the case of Grimmitt, his later work would further advance his 'learning about' and learning from' religion paradigm, and give priority to the shared world of young people in determining the identification of religious content.

The work Grimmitt had begun with Read in the *Teaching Christianity* Project was continued by him over the next ten years, resulting in the publication of *Religious Education and Human Development* (1987). Writing at a later date of his fully developed approach to RE in this volume, Grimmitt comments:

> The model that is developed is derived from the view...that the *structure of the curriculum and the choice of content and teaching methods* must *all* be specifically

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[51] As I have not had access to these pictures it should be noted that they may of course come with appropriate background information – like the later Westhill Project 5-16 *Christians* Photopack.

designed or chosen to enable pupils to develop the skills and abilities of being able to apply religious insights to an understanding of their own situations and experiences and to their own self-concept. (Grimmitt, 2000:36) [Grimmitt's italics.]

This is of course consistent with his exposition of 'learning about' and learning from' religion. He goes on to indicate that the content drawn on in RE is:

> ...not chosen or structured in accordance with *phenomenological principles* (i.e. by using typological themes like founders, festivals, sacred places, etc., with reference to the 'logic' of religion or by incorporating content identified by the faith communities), but in accordance with *pedagogical principles, informed by a theory of human development.* (*ibid.*) [Grimmitt's italics.]

In this paragraph Grimmitt clearly distinguishes *his* work from the kind of RE which had come to prevail in a period from the early 1970s through to the late 1980s and which focused on the religious traditions; the representation of religion here becomes subservient to a curriculum and pedagogy theoretically underpinned by a theory of human development and an understanding of learning underpinned especially by the work of Brunner. Additionally – and here we anticipate discussion of the SCAA Model Syllabuses (1994) (in Chapter 2, Section 2) Grimmitt also rejects the later part played by faith communities in shaping the RE curriculum (Grimmitt 2000:13-15). From the perspective of the present thesis, we note that questions of how and by whom the RE curriculum is to be shaped is not wholly resolved by adherence to the legal arrangements under which the subject operates – that is the locally based agreed syllabus conferences. There is debate outside of these.

Grimmitt's work probably constitutes the most thorough theoretical basis for RE which has been developed to date and has had wide influence, but not necessarily an influence underpinned by a full understanding of his approach. With respect to the representation of religions in RE we have noted that his criteria for the content of RE give priority to the horizons of the learner; pedagogical principles based on an understanding of human development are given priority. Whilst Grimmitt's *utilisation* of religious material is certainly not random, it does require both a particular perspective of religion(s), which may not be shared by adherents; in RE I suggest it may lead to a prioritisation of the exploration of human themes and concerns at the expense of students' critical understanding of religion's role in the contemporary world. It should not do this, but I would suggest that this is often its effect. It may also be asked if Grimmitt's 'use' of religion promotes an idealist view of religious traditions in human society.

5. The new face of agreed syllabuses

The 1970s and the 1980s (Hayward, 1987a) saw the development of new agreed syllabuses in RE; as with earlier generations of syllabuses, some came to be well known beyond the local education authority where they were developed. For example Hampshire's syllabus (1978) was widely known and promoted by the authority's RE adviser at the time, and was supplemented by two substantial handbooks offering advice and sample schemes of work. (Hampshire 1980 & 1986). It is probably not an overstatement however to suggest that the publication of the Birmingham agreed syllabuses in 1975 marked a watershed in ideas about the nature of agreed syllabuses and their development. It is therefore this syllabus that I draw on as a case study here; its supporting handbook is further reason for doing so in view of the attention it gives to Christianity. An agreed syllabus is shaped in the first instance by the statutory conference convened to consider the revision of a syllabus. Birmingham City Council necessarily followed the legal requirements set out in the 1944 legislation when convening its conference and set up the four required committees.[52] Committee 1 of its conference included a representative for each of the following communities – Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu – and nine Free Church representatives and one Roman Catholic; completing this substantial Christian representation, committee 2 comprised six representatives of the Church of England. Teachers were also very fully represented with a total of sixteen members of committee 3. Conference was also through its committees able to draw on the expertise of a number of people whose names were becoming known through their involvement in RE (Hick, Hull, Rolls, Lefroy Owen). The establishing of Working Parties to develop the syllabus also allowed for the co-option of others to engage with the work; it was thus possible to secure a Humanist contribution through the presence of Harry Stopes Roe, and amongst others who contributed to the work are found the names of Rex Ambler, Michael Goulder, Hollenweger, Parrinder, Robson, Woodward, Yogeshananda, Hammer, Horder, Mumford and others – significant figures in academia and in the developing world of RE.

The new syllabus of 1975 recognised three major factors which marked a break with the world which had produced Birmingham's previous syllabus some 25 years earlier: a 'revolution' in thinking about the nature and purpose of RE; 'profound social changes' which meant pupils had to be prepared for 'the realities of life in the twentieth century 'global

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[52] Committee 1 then comprised representatives of religious denominations other than the Church of England; committee 2, representatives of the Church of England; committee 3, representatives of teachers' organisations and committee 4, the Local Education Authority.

village' ' and that Birmingham itself had 'sizable groups of people each loyal to their own particular religious or non-religious commitment' as well as many who had no 'deep commitment of any kind' (4). The syllabus goes on to establish the principles underpinning the syllabus. First it breaks with RE's past purpose which was 'to nurture pupils into the Christian faith'; instead its approach is 'directed to critical understanding of the religious and moral dimensions of human experience' (ibid.). This is then spelt out more fully, further establishing both principles and intent:

> The syllabus should be used to enlarge and deepen the pupils' understanding by studying world religions, and by exploring all those elements in human experience which raise questions about life's ultimate meaning and value. This involves pupils in a descriptive, critical and experiential manner about what religion is, and increasing their sensitivity to the areas of experience from which a religious view of life may arise. It should stimulate within the pupils, and assist them in the search for, a personal sense of meaning in life, whilst enabling them to understand the beliefs and commitments others. (City of Birmingham, 1975: 4)

Reading this statement with hindsight over thirty years later, it endorses the picture of this syllabus as a watershed in the history of RE. The statement carries forward experience from the past – the experiential focus of the 1960s, for example, and the 'religious view of life' of the Spens Report (1938); it is 'of the moment' in advocating 'understanding' and the study of 'world religions', and a phenomenological stance; it also anticipates future discussions – 'religion' as opposed to 'individual religions', *critical* study, existential approaches to RE. Overall it supports what has become a characteristic mark of RE, the balancing of religion(s) and the students' personal development and concerns in RE.

The syllabus recognised a shift from doctrine in the study of religion – doctrine had tended to be emphasised in the past – and identified other aspects which needed to 'be given their proper weight'. These included 'history, mythology, doctrine, ethical outlook, liturgical life, inner experience and social expression', dimensions which were discernible also in non – religious 'stances for living' the syllabus included. The syllabus aimed to be inclusive of those who would use it and appropriate to local circumstance, and appealed to the 'principle of religious freedom to which this country is committed' to support its open stance. It was careful also to add 'education for life in Britain today must include an adequate treatment of Christianity as the faith which has, historically, moulded British life and culture and is still doing so' (5).

The Birmingham syllabus signalled change for RE, and consequently for the representation of Christianity. The social changes it highlights, its willingness to pay attention to non-

religious commitments, its even handed approach to other religious traditions and the move from Christian nurture towards pupils' own search for meaning all are factors in the shaping of RE itself, but arguably impacted more forcibly on Christianity in view of its past status in the curriculum.

The pages outlining the 'Agreed Syllabus of Religious Instruction' are brief and a model of clarity, and set out in line with understanding of children's development. For the ages 12-16 (corresponding to KS3 and KS4 in the present), the syllabus is set out under two headings 'The Direct Study of Religion' and the 'Indirect Study of Religion', subtitled 'Religious beliefs, values, attitudes and practices arising from and applied to topics selected from...two sections...'. The two sections focused respectively on 'Problems confronting the individual' and 'Problems confronting the community'. The Handbook accompanying the syllabus (City of Birmingham, 1975; 1982) envisages that these three strands will be developed concurrently (*op.cit.* 1975b:c3). The notion of religion being 'applied' has stayed with RE, although understanding of *how* this is actually interpreted in theory and in practice varies. Whilst the Birmingham syllabus was succinctly expressed, the accompanying supportive Handbook containing non-statutory material was a very substantial undertaking. Other LEAs followed in their footsteps (Hayward, 1994), although not necessarily in such depth.

Christianity in the Birmingham Handbook: Living Together

The detail with which Christianity is addressed for the adolescent years in the Handbook, *Living Together*, which accompanied the syllabus in 1975, is extensive and its details cannot be set out in full here. However the nine suggested units on Christianity suggested can be identified:

- Christianity Today;
- The Historical Jesus;
- Beliefs about Jesus;
- The life and work of Jesus illustrated through the Christian calendar;
- Church buildings –contrasts;
- Christian worship;
- The Christian Ministry;
- Basic Christian beliefs;
- Christian action.

(City of Birmingham, 1975: c 26-52)

The possible aspects of each unit are set out in detail and extensive support materials are listed; they are set out systematically, but it is recognised that this is not the only way of approaching them. There is however a stress on objectivity and description, whilst 'colourful' presentation and treatment in depth is recommended 'so that pupils can enter to some extent into what it means to be a committed Christian'. Attention is also to be paid to diversity of belief and practice, and the course 'should include indications of self criticism by Christians and of protest movements within Christianity' (c26). I suspect (in the light of part 2 of this study) that the tenor of these units as spelt out in *Living Together* would be dismissed in the present as 'too academic' and unrelated to pupils' concerns – and of course the syllabus itself does expect them to be interwoven with its other strands, although it gives little guidance in relation to this. Whilst the 'picture' of Christianity which emerges here does not draw on any explicit model *of Christianity*, as with the Chichester Project certain principles emerge. In addition to those already mentioned above, pupils are to become aware of Christianity's *global and international aspects* – in Birmingham some of these were available at a local level; in the later supplement to the handbook (City of Birmingham, 1982) a substantial section (Gerloff, 1982:31-67) introduced teachers to the life and background of Christians whose roots were in the Caribbean. Materials to follow up this aspect of Christianity as found in Birmingham were subsequently developed, based on interviews with pastors from the different churches (Becher, 1995).

Each of the units on Jesus was clearly informed by the *critical scholarship* of the time, reflected in the distinction drawn between the two units (see previous page). This apart, the units also explore the place of Jesus within Christian faith and practice, examine what 'faith' might mean in this context; and consider *how* Christians came to hold certain beliefs and the reasons they might have for doing so; language – metaphors and images – used by Christians to express the significance of 'the work of Jesus' is examined; 'conservative' and 'liberal' views of Jesus are exemplified; and (well ahead of most RE materials even *in the present*) the suggestion is made that the beliefs and views other faiths may have of Jesus may be examined. A further point to note is that some of the units allow for a *historical dimension* but are careful to place this within a context of gaining understanding of the present. In 'Basic Christian Beliefs', for example, there is recognition of a *dialogue between past and present* and of the *dynamics of change*. This is usefully seen in the unit on *Belief*, which observes

Although their beliefs are... grounded in past events and in present experience, Christians also believe what they hold should 'make sense', a problem which each generation faces for itself. This unit provides the opportunity to study how Christians are currently facing the perennial task of making sense of their faith' (City of Birmingham, 1975a: c.45-46).

Whilst the units are about 'Christianity' , the references within them are frequently to 'Christians', to a *living tradition*, a focus already implied by the handbook's title and supported by one unit's suggestion of engaging with 'What is a Christian'?' and the use of 'Christian' through the 'active' themes of Believing, Feeling, Doing, and Belonging.

I have no way of knowing now how far such units were taken up and developed into schemes of work by schools; clearly material which 'in name' was present in earlier syllabuses was here too – but new syllabuses do not guarantee new approaches or new thinking in the classroom. The Birmingham syllabus of 1975 was not without its critics, its use of 'stances for living', incorporation of non religious stances, and phenomenological perspective were among the features questioned and challenged at the time. Nevertheless, in relation to our interests, it is clear that this syllabus and its Handbooks tried to push for new directions in RE's handling of Christianity; it is these which I have attempted to draw out in this section. That the syllabus is rightly seen as a watershed in RE's development in England is perhaps further borne out in the recent award of funding to promote research on its significance in RE.[53]

In this first part of Chapter 2 I have attempted to illustrate, through a range of selected examples, new thinking which was emerging in RE and its relevance for Christianity in RE, as well as discussing and drawing upon some specific contributions and ventures in relation to the representation of Christianity made during the 1970s in particular.[54] I have suggested that the attention given to Christianity arose from that being paid to other 'world religions' and that this offered the possibility of new horizons for Christianity in RE taking it beyond the Biblicism which had shaped post 1944 RE. At the same time I have also noted that other voices made Christianity's place in the curriculum a cause to be championed, and

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[53] Reported by Rob Freathy and Stephen Parker of the University of Exeter and University of Worcester respectively, at the July 2009 Conference of the Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education (AULRE)
[54] Others were of course to take up the representation of Christianity in RE often in the context of projects with a wider brief and in relation to curriculum materials: e.g. The Westhill Project (see Rudge, 2000; Rudge, Read & Howarth, 1988); The Warwick Religious Education Project (see Jackson, 2000; Robson, 1995).

saw it in other ways in relation to national identity, stressing its heritage credentials. In turning to the 1980s legislation for RE similar sentiments were to be strongly voiced in debate. Chapter 2, part 2, turns to this and to Christianity as it was to emerge in the Model Syllabuses for RE (SCAA, 1994).

Chapter 2: Section 2
Christianity in RE in the context of new legislation

This part of Chapter 2 examines the ways in which Christianity featured in discussions of RE which emerged both during and after the passage of the Education Reform Bill through parliament in 1988. It illustrates the pressures that may be brought to bear on RE, drawing attention to particular views which some protagonists held of Christianity's place in national life, the consequences they believed this had for RE, and their critiques of RE as it had developed during the 1970s. The development of the Model Syllabuses for RE which followed some years after ERA is next discussed with reference to their representation of Christianity; this sets the scene for Chapter 3 which appraises the place and representation of Christianity in a range of locally agreed syllabuses – the legal documents governing RE in maintained community schools, and used also by many Church of England schools.

1. Educational reform

At the beginning of this study I drew attention to the *naming* of Christianity in legislation governing the nature of agreed syllabuses brought in by the Education Reform Act that is that agreed syllabuses were to

> ...reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. (ERA, 1988: 8.3)

What had been seen by some as Christianity's already 'special, traditional and unwritten status', and a status that needed to be removed (Thomas, 1986:10) was now formalised. Much of the discussion surrounding the passage of the Education Reform Bill through parliament, and the repercussions of the Act itself clustered around the place of Christianity in RE. Accounts of and commentary on the passage of the 1988 legislation are well documented (Alves, 1991; Copley, 1997; Jackson, 1997c; Robson, 1996) and Hull's editorials in the *British Journal of Religious Education* sustained a commentary on both the legislation and its repercussions over a number of years (see for example Hull, 1988; 1989b&c;1991b&c;1993b; 1994a&b). A persistent concern was the interpretation of the above clause;[55] such interpretation had both legal and pragmatic dimensions (Harte 1991; Hull, 1991a). Pragmatically the clause prompted a positive and liberal interpretation among many who were

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[55] And also the clauses on Collective worship, but these lie outside the scope of this study.

professionally engaged in RE, since it affirmed in law the 'multifaith' nature of RE already advocated in a majority of syllabuses and a reality in most maintained schools. But the naming of Christianity was nonetheless contentious – despite Section 8:3 of ERA having been considerably 'softened' to achieve a consensual wording during its passage through the House of Lords (Alves, 1991). Additionally the naming of Christianity was to open up the possibility of litigation.

2. Christianity as national heritage and moral guide

The roots of the naming of Christianity within the Act are to be found in the lobbying of those who wanted Christianity to 'predominate' in the RE curriculum. Jackson gives detailed attention to such voices at that time – and more recently – offering a critique of their characterization of RE in schools, as well of their particular perspectives in relation to morality and their 'association of Christianity with a particular view of national culture' (Jackson, 2004:22-38).

Among the dominant voices in 1988 were those of Burn and Hart, whose pamphlet *The Crisis in Religious Education* (1988), with a foreword by Baroness Cox, had been sent to those who were 'likely to debate the Bill in the House of the Lords' (Robson, 1996:15).[56] This appears to have been an effective move.[57] This short polemical pamphlet appears to have an inbuilt 'agenda' underlying its critique of RE:

- to establish the Christian foundations and intentions of the 1944 provision for religious instruction and collective worship (11-12);
- to demonstrate disregard of the 1944 legislation with respect to RE and Christianity (20-22, 27);
- to safeguard Committee A[58] of statutory conferences which drew up agreed syllabuses (13);
- to critique those who promoted teaching about other faiths, had adopted a phenomenological approach and introduced thematic teaching in RE (14-15);
- to affirm those Local Education Authorities whose agreed syllabuses demonstrated 'The Predominantly Christian Approach' (17);
- to assess the place given to Christianity in GCSE syllabuses (19-20);
- to challenge the government's position as represented in the Bill and make demands[59] for:

  - the predominance of Christianity in RE;
  - the preparation of national guidelines for predominantly Christian education;

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[56] Hart and Burn's concerns in part parallel some of the concerns represented almost ten years previously in the Order of Christian Unity's 1977 conference report (Tulloch, 1977).
[57] Many themes of the pamphlet can be traced in Baroness Cox's statements in the House of Lords. See for example her contribution of 3 May 1988 (Hansard, House of Lords, 502-507).
[58] Then representing denominations other than the Church of England.
[59] I include only those related to our immediate concerns here, not those related to collective worship.

- local education authorities to work within such guidelines and for committee A to revert to Christian denominations;
- an adequate system of inspection for RE.

The authors' judgment of RE led them to the overriding conclusion that 'children are being brought up woefully ignorant of Christianity.' Christianity here, and in Burn's later pamphlet, *RE Changing the Agenda*, is seen – as noted above - in terms of 'national heritage' to which pupils' have a right of access; statistics drawn from a variety of sources[60] are employed to support Christianity's dominance, to demonstrate the relatively small membership of other faiths in the UK and the need for children of other faiths to be familiar with Britain's Christian heritage – whilst having separate instruction in their own traditions.

A two page Appendix to the pamphlet offers a summary position under the heading 'Why Christian education?' – is this one wonders a *slip* or *sleight* of the hand, since the points made are meant to summarise the case for 'why Christianity should predominate in RE'. Jackson (*op.cit.*) has carefully deconstructed and challenged the premisses of the authors; but from the perspective of this thesis, what is the emergent picture of Christianity?

First, in its use of 'our' the writing in this appendix seems to oscillate between the exhortatory and the credal – at the same time implicitly defining 'the other'. It seems then to be an exclusivist view of Christianity which is to be conveyed. Its strands become 'Our culture, laws, democratic institutions, architecture, literature art and science' all influenced by Christianity and not understandable without it. The situation is similar with 'many of the great reforms of *our* history', indeed 'To turn *our* back on Christianity is to turn *our* back on *our* heritage and history' (my italics). Whilst not wishing to denigrate Christianity's influence, it has to be said that the reader is offered an idealised view of the past (certainly untainted by 'the reality of sin' which these authors found lacking in non theistic life stances) – and little of the 'living faith' to which the quoted statistics are presumed to point.

A second concern, is for the 'God-given moral absolutes for personal and social conduct'. And here RE is to be an agent for government since 'Our leaders are rightly concerned for a

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[60] This was before the introduction of a religious question in the National census; various sources are cited including Barrett (1982), which estimated a UK Christian population in 1980 of 86.9% and 3.6% belonging to other faiths.

return to firm personal values'; in terms of encounter with Christianity then 'The sure foundation for these [i.e. personal values] is to be found in the eternal values of the Old and New Testaments........'. This strand is stressed as vital for 'all children, in all areas'. A functional view of Christianity, already declared in relation to morality, emerges in relation to two other matters: schools' responsibility for children's understanding that they are 'citizens of one world', and the economic well-being of the country. A Christian 'imperialism' is reflected in relation to the former:

> Christianity is the major world religion which in a unique way transcends all barriers of culture, colour, race, language, class, economic status. It has a prime role to play in the elimination of racism and cultural intolerance. (Burn and Hart, 1988:32). [61]

whilst of the latter, and more parochially:

> The evidence of our history is that economic revival needs to be sustained by a moral and spiritual basis. The Christian faith has always proved to be a generator of entrepreneurial spirit as well as tempering the excesses of greed and selfishness. (*ibid.*)

There is one further feature of this 'case' for Christianity's predominance which I wish to note; I come to it last although it is the first point of the Appendix and its sentiments are also found elsewhere in the pamphlet. The authors see Christianity in two ways:

> The Christian faith is a living faith for a substantial number of people today. Beyond that there are a very substantial number of people who hold the basic beliefs and moral values of orthodox Christianity. (*op.cit.*, 31)

In the light of earlier passages in the pamphlet I suspect that this speaks of a committed 'insider' group and a (larger?) nominally Christian population ('orthodox Christianity' here is undefined). It would seem it is to this latter population that the authors' appeals are made, but the appeal appears not so much to be to join the former group, but rather to make an affirmation of national identity. Taken at the level of a Christian nominalism, this statement highlights one problem of teaching Christianity in schools – a generalised awareness of Christianity and assumed familiarity with Christianity among pupils (see Chapter 9). But the more significant point to be made is that neither this division of Christians (ianity) into two groups, nor the appeal of these two authors to Christianity as the bedrock of English history and culture, brings a critical or observant eye to the evidence. They fail to see Christianity's

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[61] One might add that the ideal of overcoming barriers does not appear to have been part of the immediate agenda of the authors.

divisive role in history alongside its positive contributions, and their view of Christians in Britain, with its generalised 'orthodox Christianity', fails to recognise Christianity's inner diversity within Britain – its own pluralist nature. Such plurality is cultural, ethnic, denominational, theological and generational. I do not want to give undue status to this pamphlet by the space I have allocated to it; it does however represent recurrent positions which surface in discussion at times when RE comes into the public eye. [62]

In terms of the *representation* of Christianity there is little to be gained directly from this pamphlet; it is an example of RE's past living on – Christianity in the curriculum is essentially the Bible and moral teaching; but by its rhetoric (and its use of evidence),[63] as well as its circulation among selected members of the House of Lords, this pamphlet had a powerful voice during the passage of the Education Bill in 1988 and its echoes persisted in events which followed the enactment of the Bill (see below). It does then represent another element in the potential *shaping* of Christianity in the curriculum – and indeed of RE more generally.

3. The aftermath of ERA 1988

Debates about the place of Christianity in syllabuses did not end with the enactment of the Education Reform Bill in 1988; Robson sees the post ERA period as one characterised by the 'politicisation of religious education' (Robson, 1996). The specific naming of Christianity in ERA Section 8 (3) (a specificity carefully avoided in the 1944 legislation lest it should prompt a return to religious controversy) was now further open to debate.[64] Initially a liberal interpretation of the clause about agreed syllabuses prevailed; DFE Circular 3/89 providing guidance on the Act did little more than reiterate the legislation and thus facilitated the adoption of a stance which could confirm positive developments which had occurred in RE over many years.

However aspects of the agenda set out by the pamphlet outlined above were to re-emerge as the new legislation began to be implemented by LEAs, and in the passage of further

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[62] Its authors' apparent access to those with power to raise questions at a parliamentary level tends however to give it an importance not warranted by its assertions.
[63] The pamphlet draws for example on random anecdote from the *Daily Mail* (p.22). Baroness Cox's use of anecdote (Hansard, *op.cit.*) has a similar tendency to sensationalise deficiencies in RE; balanced accounts are conspicuous by their absence.
[64] Robson also observes that in the years immediately preceding the 1988 legislation, HMI reporting on RE there had not commented adversely on either the time or place given to Christianity in RE; moreover the emphasis on Christianity as the Bill progressed through parliament served to obscure some of the key issues which had confronted RE for many years, especially under provision in staffing, training and financial support

legislation through its parliamentary stages. From the perspective of our specific interest in the representation of Christianity, three interconnected matters became recurrent themes:

(a) *The balance and nature of agreed syllabus content*: A further stimulus to action was found in the 'tradition' of syllabuses which had developed since the mid 1970s. Many of these, like Birmingham's, were short documents. They established pupils' basic entitlement in RE, set out a framework for RE and anticipated that teachers, as professionals, would appropriately interpret these requirements; to assist them in this many syllabuses were accompanied by substantial handbooks. This tradition continued beyond ERA 1988, not least as RE sought in many – though not all – instances to model itself on National Curriculum lines[65] (Hayward, 1994). The short(er), syllabus documents were mandatory; handbooks were usually advisory. The questions to emerge became those of agreed syllabuses' adequate attention to Christianity and the sufficient identification of content.

In 1990 test cases brought by parents were made of two syllabuses published post ERA - those of the London Boroughs of Ealing and Newham, it was claimed that neither gave the priority to Christianity which ERA 8.3 demanded. The Secretary of State for Education sought legal advice about this; neither syllabus was found inadequate. This incident did however result in a letter of advice to all Chief Education Officers (CEOs); this subsequently underpinned guidance on the drawing up of new syllabuses issued by the NCC (1991). The NCC advised that agreed syllabuses might build on the model adopted by subjects within the National Curriculum, using attainment targets and identifying a programme of study. In this context the issue of syllabus content was addressed. Drawing on the letter to CEOs, the NCC advised that

> ....an agreed syllabus, if it is to comply with the law, should be sufficiently detailed to give **clear** guidance to teachers as to what is to be taught about Christianity and the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. (NCC, 1991:13) [Original boldfacing.]

The nature of the content was also suggested; still following the letter to CEOs, the NCC indicated that content should:

- be based on the religious traditions and practices and teaching of Christianity and the other major religions;
- extend beyond information about religions and religious traditions, practices and teaching, to wider areas of morality and consideration of how religious beliefs and practices affect people's daily lives;

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[65] Circular 3/89 (para. 20, p.7) was permissive towards the use of Attainment Targets, Programmes of Study in a 'locally determined form' in RE.

- have regard to the national position as well as the local population.
  (NCC, 1991:14)

There are I think some ambiguities in this phrasing; how for example is the reader to 'understand the 'religious traditions.....of Christianity'? Is this a reference to Christianity's diversity, or for example to 'traditions' as those things 'handed down' by a community, or to cultural traditions shaped by Christianity? This is not clear, although 'practices' and 'teachings' are, as is the requirement that RE should serve moral purposes. The last statement, as I understand it, advises that where a local population may not be mainly Christian, nevertheless the locally agreed syllabuses should reflect the national position – that is, where Christianity is the dominant religion.

A subsequent study of agreed syllabuses by the NCC (NCC, 1993), which indicated that there were a significant number which did not give adequate attention to content meant that this matter was not to go away. Quoting ERA 8.3, the NCC (setting its words in boldface) judged on the basis of the earlier DES letter (which did not have a legal status with regard to RE) as follows:

> The DES letter of 18 March 1991 says that AS must "indicate which of these matters (*i.e. those set out in 8.3*) should appropriately be taught at various stages and times". If this means that specific detail of content from individual religions must be mandatory at each key, stage hardly any comply. (NCC, 1993:1, para.2.3.)

Nor did most syllabuses specify the time to be given to Christianity or the balance to be achieved among religions in RE (*op.cit.* para2.4). The way was thus open for Baroness Cox to request that LEAs which were defective in these matters should be asked to indicate the action they intended to take in rectifying this. The question of syllabuses thus continued to achieve a national profile (Robson, 1996; Jackson, 1997c) and the shape they were likely to take was in some measure predetermined.

(b) *The predominance of Christianity*: publication of a government White Paper under the title of 'Diversity and Choice' in 1992, prompted further discussion of RE in relation to arrangements for Grant Maintained schools, such schools were to have freedom to select any agreed syllabus (es) of their choice: RE would not therefore necessarily be determined by the locally agreed syllabus planned in the light of local circumstance. Despite opposition to this, the Bill which followed continued to be permissive in this respect. During its passage through parliament Baroness Cox sought to advance an amendment which would substantially increase the place given to Christianity in RE. Whilst her amendment was

opposed and subsequently withdrawn, many of the concerns we have already noted in Burn and Hart's pamphlet were kept alive. The proposed arrangements regarding RE in Grant Maintained schools prevailed, becoming part of the 1993 Act. The Act necessitated new guidance for RE which was to appear DFE Circular 1/94. In its commentary on RE and on Collective Worship this document attracted criticism from many professionally engaged in RE. As Jackson comments, 'there was widespread dismay at the Department's lack of attention to submissions [i.e. at the draft stage] from professional bodies, teachers unions and faith groups'. (Jackson, 1997c:15). Section 8 (3) of ERA, endorsed by the 1993 legislation, was now given a particular interpretation:

> The legislation governing religious education...is designed ...to ensure that pupils gain both a thorough knowledge of Christianity reflecting the Christian heritage of this country, and knowledge of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain. (DFE, 1994: 10)

Thorough knowledge however is not enough, Christianity must be see in a particular way
> Religious education in schools should seek: to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and awareness of Christianity as the predominant religion in Great Britain, and the other principal religions represented in the country....... (DFE, 1994: 12)

The tone and language of these statements offer a resounding echo of the Burns and Hart pamphlet examined above and of earlier debates in the House of Lords, and eclipsing the earlier achievement of the Bishop of London (then Chair of the Board of Education of the Church of England) in reaching the compromise expressed in ERA Section 8 (3).

But there was more; Circular 1/94 went on to indicate what predominance meant for the RE curriculum: Christianity should predominate in *each* key stage – although a place for the other 'principal religions' in each key stage is not required:

> As a whole and at each key stage, the relative content devoted to Christianity in the syllabus should predominate. The syllabus as a whole must also include all of the principal religions represented in this country. (DFE, 1994: 16)

This was clearly not the only interpretation possible of ERA Section 8 (3) and appeared to go well beyond what the wording - 'reflect'- of that clause might require (Robson, 1996:17). This interpretation had also the effect of opening up a further and rather fruitless debate – that of time.

(c) *The time to be allocated to Christianity in RE*: Robson (*op.cit.*) observes that 'Carefully orchestrated demands for percentages of time to be allocated to Christianity....were promoted by tiny but strident minorities in Parliament and the General Synod of the Church

of England' from 1992 onwards, with as much as eighty per cent of curriculum time being advocated by some; for those who did not like this,

their right of withdrawal could be exercised. Again there are strong echoes of Burn and Hart's pamphlet where they wish to see this particular right 'firmly protected by statute' (Burn and Hart, 1988: 32). The issue of time in Robson's view subsequently detracted from the work of SCAA (formerly NCC) in drafting the model syllabuses for RE, a further outcome of the immediate post ERA period. Even after the production of these syllabuses which give clear prominence to Christianity, Hart remained dissatisfied (Hart, 1994) and it was still felt necessary by some to restate 'Christianity's special role' and present 'A case for the study of Christianity as the largest component in RE' (Wilkins, 1997); whilst Wilkins' booklet covers some of the same ground as Burn and Hart, in fairness it must be noted that Wilkins does this in a more measured and reflective manner.

Against the background of the above pressures brought to bear on legislation and its interpretation, I turn now to the model syllabuses for RE, for which the preceding sections have set the stage.

4. The Model Syllabuses for RE

In August 1993 against the backcloth of debate about the adequate indication of content in agreed syllabuses and the weighting of Christianity's place in RE, the School Curriculum Assessment Agency (SCAA – formerly NCC) began the process of drawing up model syllabuses for RE. Robson comments on the very tight schedule to which the then subject officer for RE, Barbara Wintersgill, and Robson himself (then HMI) were required to work (Robson, 1997:18); their work went on in parallel to that which was to produce Circular 1/94. Robson records the difficulties which emerged around the predominance of Christianity, which resulted (against professional advice) in bar charts in the draft syllabuses of 1993 indicating the percentage of time to be given to Christianity; whilst these were seen by some as a legal requirement, subsequent legal advice assured their removal in the final versions. Resistance to thematic approaches to religion – a further difficulty – was however successful and insistence on separate treatment of each religion prevailed. This last feature was to prove one of the most frequent causes of criticism of the two syllabuses. Whilst those who constructed the syllabuses tried to make some concession to thematic work, as Robson notes, this was 'outweighed by a polemical paragraph attacking them (SCAA, 1994a:5)'. (Robson, 1997:19)

4.1 The syllabuses and the representation of religions

There was widely voiced dissatisfaction with the published syllabuses on a number of grounds: these included their failure to address 'religion'; their viewing of religion as a 'series of religions' (Hull, 1995); presenting each religion as separate and self contained, religions insulated from each other and disconnected from their cultural and social contexts. This separateness failed to recognise that 'the religious history of humanity is indivisible' and did not 'provide for study of the religious dimension of human experience' (*op.cit.*). One result of this was a failure to confront questions of meaning and purpose and, given their heavy focus on content, to by-pass the need to bring about an encounter between pupils' interests and religion. We have seen however that those who compiled the syllabuses were subject to pressures which drove them in particular directions, not least that of content. A further contention has been the part played by members of the six 'principal religions' in the construction of the syllabuses (Grimmitt, 2000:13-15), although this has also stimulated reflection about the collaboration of professional educators and faith members in curriculum development (Everington, 1996).

Ministerial demand that members of the faith communities should be involved in the production of model syllabuses – along with teachers - was however one of the parameters of the model syllabus venture (SCAA, 1994a:3). The participation of the Christian faith representatives in this process, and the resultant representation of Christianity is my key concern in this section.

The Christian working party and the representation of Christianity

The work of syllabus construction was overseen by a monitoring committee convened by SCAA, and with a membership drawn from those bodies represented on the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. The first stage of the process of syllabus construction saw the convening of working parties first for Christianity, and then for the other principal religions. The Christian working party plus the far larger group of people who were on the 'Christianity consultation list' is impressive in its inclusiveness; representatives of many Christian churches and other bodies in England participated. The membership of the working party on Christianity also happened to include many who were also professionally engaged in RE (SCAA, 1994c:35). The initial task allocated to the working party was to agree what knowledge of Christianity a young person leaving school at sixteen years of age should have; this achieved, a further task was to structure this into those matters which were appropriate at each key stage. The material from this working party and those representing

the other 'principal' religions provided a basis for the development of the two model syllabuses (SCAA 1994a; 1994b).

In the report of the Christian working party, Christianity is categorised at each key stage under five areas of study: God; Jesus, The Church; The Bible; The Christian Way of Life. The avoidance of generic terminology by the working parties is well exemplified by the Christian example here and is seen as an advantage in the report of their work (SCAA1994c:3); it may also be interpreted as a further mark of separateness and resistance towards thematic approaches. The named areas for study are in each case those which the faith group considered 'essential to gain an understanding of its religious traditions' (SCAA, 1994c: 3). With respect to Christianity, it is suggested that an agreed syllabus might draw on the content under each of the five areas of study noted above in relation to Christian 'beliefs and practice' [66] and it is also recognised that the columns of content under each area of study are interrelated.

Generally the faith communities working party reports themselves have been viewed positively, with criticism reserved for the subsequent syllabuses, and the *determining role* of these reports; consequently there appears to be little comment on the *substance* of them; they are what they are – the outcome of a particular task assigned to particular groups of faith members. A closer look at the Christianity report does however prompt some concerns about representation. The main problem I suspect arises from the task and its assumption that this mixed group of Christians can agree; the invitation is perhaps already to reify the tradition. The summary statement introducing Christianity, whilst showing some recognition of diversity, already shows this tendency (perhaps unavoidable in the circumstances):

> Historically, there has been a variety of interpretations of the core beliefs of the Christian faith, so that there are now many different denominations and traditions............ Christians come from a wide range of races, nationalities and cultures. (SCAA, 1994c: 5)

The statement of beliefs which precedes this seems to relate to no particular creed,

but to be a generalised statement not quite correct for any church and it is hard to see how diversity is to be approached. The statement about 'core beliefs' above is also problematic: are not core *beliefs* themselves interpretations in the first instance?

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[66] Note that in relation to other faiths there is no overarching reference to 'belief and practice'; the phrase occurs as we have seen in ERA 8.3 – its application only to Christianity here, again raises questions about the interpretation of ERA 8.3.

And isn't the diversity among Christians due to rather more than a 'reinterpretation' – issues of political power and unity of Empire played their part at Nicea. *Context*, where it emerges at all, is in effect subsumed under the areas of study into the faith working party report. The most obvious examples are 'Important aspects of Church History' and 'The Church as a community of believers from all races and nationalities' as listed content under 'Church'. Is the last a theological comment, an ideological comment, or the actuality which is to be encountered in RE? And in relation to RE would not the former be a contextual study, that is (if RE is so inclined) examining Christian communities at particular moments in time, rather than 'doing church history'? This problem passes over into the syllabuses and is not without significance if pupils are to encounter *living* traditions; one answer of course might be that the provision of context(s) is one of the pedagogical tasks of the teacher, and in a sense that is what the model syllabuses try to do in taking this content (in the case of Model 1) and relating it to appropriate learning experiences under the attainment targets of 'learning about' and 'learning from' religions.

How is this agreement of content by Christians to be regarded? SCAA editing describes the reports of the faith working parties as 'innovative' and contrasts their delineation of content with the past when 'choices were often made by educationalists and publishers in *an ad* hoc way' (SCAA 1994c:3);[67] by contrast, the implication here seems to be that there is now a coherent selection of content. Robson draws attention to the status of this content drawn up by the faith working parties. It was

> ....*authorised* by the faith communities themselves.... These, of course, also included Christians, so that the process, for the first time at a national level, was an ecumenical achievement, in itself no small thing considering the pressure from one particular Christian lobby to ensure a fairly narrow definition of the faith. (Robson, 1997:19)

The final comment refers of course to the kind of pressures we have already noted;
and in terms of ecumenical achievement, it is certainly a distant cry from the discordant voices of Christians which brought about the Cowper-Temple clause; it also demonstrates a response to a central government request, a request which could not have been risked in 1944 for fear of a revival of long seated hostilities among churches. It is important to be clear here however that what *is* demonstrated is ecumenical cooperation and achievement, in simply *naming* what might be desirable knowledge – but not expressing ecumenical

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[67] Whilst publishers may be open to criticism for their choice of content, I doubt that such choice was simply *ad hoc;* pupils' interests and capacities at different stages is likely to have be considered at least.

agreement *per se*, since much that is identified is also the ground of Christian division and disagreement. Agreement about disagreement could of course be a helpful advance, and there are occasional hints of this in the report.[68] But overall this is a representation of Christianity out of time and place, except inasmuch as it has *its own* context and significance as an activity among representatives of different churches at a particular moment in time, and in a particular politically charged context.

4.2 Christianity in the Model Syllabuses

Those who subsequently drew up the two model syllabuses for RE (SCAA 1994a; 1994b) had then extensive advice about content from the faith communities working parties. The Models are described as having different emphases:

> Model 1 is structured around the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a member of a faith community
> Model 2 is structured around the knowledge and understanding of the teachings of religions and how these relate to shared human experience.
> (SCAA, 1994a:3)

Although the syllabuses are set out in a different manner, they have not been seen as significantly different in their approach to religions. Each sustains the idea of a closed system of belief and practice and offers a generalised uniformity; this is endorsed by introductory material on distinctiveness (SCAA1994a:6; 1994b:5) which picks up some recurrent themes – the moral component in studying religions, heritage – and, interestingly here, the importance of RE winning 'the trust of parents'. This is interesting, since it is another of those elements in the shaping of RE which we may trace back to the nineteenth century. Then the problem was ensuring that children received RE (RI at the time) which was not an offence to parents' religious of secular sensibilities when delivered in board schools or schools whose allegiance was Christian, but not of parents' persuasion. Here it is caution, it would seem, towards the sensibilities of parents who are of 'other' faiths and who, after all, retain the right of withdrawal of their children from RE, another vestige of RE's history in schools. In general the section on distinctiveness in the model syllabuses appears to walk a tightrope in balancing restrictive voices about the study of religions, and Christianity in particular, and more liberal views wishing to speak of 'religion', and more flexible approaches to RE than the models appear to promote.

Material on Christianity at each key stage offers a section which it is anticipated any agreed syllabus using the models could adopt as a core, and suggests two further blocks of

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[68] In its handling of the Bible, for example.

extension material, thus offering the possibility of a curriculum in which Christianity is very much the dominant tradition. Model 1 draws clearly on the Christian working group's report in its identification of content (under 'knowledge' and 'understanding') and is thus open to the same criticisms made of the working party's model. The terminology of 'Learning about' and 'Learning from' employed by Grimmitt (Grimmitt 1987; 2000) is here used to provide headings for potential learning experiences in relation to the recommended content; the terminology cannot function in the way intended by Grimmitt (op.cit.), since the specified content has been identified on premises other than those which are fundamental to Grimmitt's pedagogical model. Whilst the syllabus refers sometimes to 'Christians' and occasionally to differences, the overall impression is that the syllabus offers a static modelling of Christianity, and one that fails to reflect the complexities or the priorities of and contrasts between Christian churches when studied at first hand (Ashenden, 1995).

Model 2 in its focus on Questions and Teachings, points to 'key ideas and questions arising from human experience', seen as part of the 'pupils' world of experience' (SCAA 1994b:8) these are to provide 'a bridge to understanding' religions, not it would seem to follow a pedagogical path of discovering different ways of 'answering' them, or asking whether religions have anything to say about the questions – but rather as the basis for understanding what are arguably already *particular* interpretations of 'key teachings'. The basis for a focus on teachings is expressed in one sentence:

> Pupils cannot achieve an understanding of religions without a grasp of the teachings which underpin them. (SCAA 1994b, 8)

The same idea is taken up by Cooling (1994; 2000) in introducing his 'concept cracking' approach to Christian concepts

> One of the main aims of RE is to help children understand what it is like to be a religious believer. Time and time again this crops up in the syllabuses as a principal goal for the subject. In the case of Christianity, *it is the beliefs which will give children access to this understanding.* (Cooling, 1994:4) [My italics.]

Cooling is clear that he is talking about beliefs, in the main this is also I would argue the focus of this model syllabus, rather than the more general 'teachings' – possibly a 'catch-all' phrase to facilitate other religions inclusion in the model.[69] I recognise that the belief dimension of Christianity is important, but doubt that its prioritising in the manner of these two quotations is correct. l'Anson, citing Jantzen – wiritng from a feminist perspective –

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[69] Or is this really a reference to *docere and* hence to 'doctrine'?

questions the prioritising of belief found in the Scottish Curriculum Framework; his comments are pertinent also to this model syllabus:

> This foregrounding of beliefs over practice, as Jantzen (1998) has argued, is very much the product of western post-enlightenment approaches to religion. It might therefore be argued with some plausibility that such an approach privileges the map over the terrain. (I'Anson, 2004:50)

In the intention of this second model to address pupils' understanding of Christian 'teachings', I also detect a potential tension for RE between two kinds of approach to 'understanding'. In the syllabus teachings + focus, (e.g. 'Bible' + *revelation* and *authority*), are 'matched' with and may be approached via human experience to ensure pupils' grasp of the respective teachings. In contrast to this, I would argue that what RE might properly be about here is pupils' exploration of *why* Christians claim authority for the Bible and may speak of it as revelation; *how* they came to do this and the *implications* of these perspectives. Or, to take one more example, that of 'salvation' (the focus, with 'incarnation', of key teaching about Jesus at KS3) one might explore what prompted the earliest Christians to speak of Jesus' life and death in terms of 'salvation' and evaluate the kind of images they used to express this. To begin – as in the syllabus – by describing 'salvation' as 'the purpose for which Jesus came', is already to adopt a specific position in Christian theology; whilst its 'matching' 'key ideas and questions arising from human experience' – 'Learning and facing up to the truth about ourselves' , 'Ways of coming to terms with what we are' and 'People who rescue us from despair – being able to start again' (SCAA, 1994b:40) seem not only inappropriate in an open RE in a pluralist society, but also to continue a particular line of interpretation regarding salvation.

Whilst priority is given to the two columns headed 'key ideas and questions arising from human experience' and 'Key teachings/focus' in this model syllabus, a third column alongside them headed 'knowledge and understanding of Christianity' contains much material that parallels Model 1 giving weight to the view that the models are substantially the same. Learning experiences in relation to the two attainments targets which are matched to 'knowledge' throughout Model 1 do not figure here, except in a one page freestanding grid of examples for each key stage. One might then conclude that the prioritising of belief was a key factor in producing a second model; its use of questions and ideas from shared human experience, tends I suggest to be determined by the selected teachings/focus rather than bringing experience and religious material into the kind of dialectical relationship envisaged,

for example, by Grimmitt. Again some of I'Anson's judgments of the Scottish Framework for RE seem pertinent to the Models:

> Christianity and Other World Religions involve a level of generality, detachment and abstraction that presumes a 'view from nowhere' (Nagel, 186). In other words, the framework offers what Giddens (1991) calls a socially disembodied knowledge which has to be interpreted and socially embodied by teachers in a classroom context. While the framework offered initially appears to be neutral, it actually commits subject knowledge to a range of positions that are in fact highly contested within the academy'. (I'Anson, 2004:50)

One such position noted by I'Anson is that already referred to above in relation to belief. But I'Anson's article also alerts readers to a further issue, that of the different approaches taken to religions in the academy and which may run counter to the approach of school curriculum frameworks; his concern is with how students make the transition from one context to the other and mediate between the two. The conflict which students may encounter between approaches to religion in the academy and those common in school, draws attention to a problem which RE, with a few exceptions (for example, Jackson, 1997a) has fully to face, and especially in its construction of syllabuses.

The working party reports, whilst well received, necessarily achieved a consensual picture which needs checking with the realities of the terrain; syllabuses based on them – such as the models – are likely to continue to produce a 'curriculum Christianity' – and its equivalent for other faiths. It is this which is central to the next chapter.

Chapter 3: The representation of Christianity in some recent agreed syllabuses

This chapter focuses on Agreed Syllabuses drawn from the years 1999 – 2003, syllabuses respectively subject to review in the years 2004 - 2008. They also provide the immediate background to the research reported in Part 2 of this thesis. They are examined with reference to the place they give to Christianity and their categorisation of religion(s) and/ or RE; but the main concern is their representation of Christianity. I suggest that lists of content provided by syllabuses continue to prosper a reification of the tradition and mask issues which need to be addressed; most urgent among these are the contextualisation and the 'opening up' of this tradition to an informed critical reflection.

1. Responsibility for curriculum content

My initial analysis of the syllabuses underpinning this chapter paralleled the movement towards and subsequent publication in England of *The non-statutory National Framework for RE* (QCA, 2004). The syllabuses are the immediate forerunners of the framework, part of a generation which demonstrate an inheritance from earlier thinking and trends within RE itself, from its statutory obligations and from their interpretation by 'government' (NCC, 1991; DfES, 1994; SCAA, 1994a, b & c; QCA, 2000a). Their context is marked also by the government's Key Stage Three National Strategy[70] shifting teachers' attention *across the curriculum* to matters of learning and teaching at a crucial stage in students' development. For RE, I believe this initiative presented a challenge concerning the interrelation of learning and content, and *then* of appropriate pedagogies; one syllabus, published shortly before the non-statutory framework, and outside the cut off date for this survey, worked seriously on these interrelations (Erricker, 2005).[71] But for those Local Authorities (LAs) which choose to embrace the framework in their revision or construction of a syllabus, their *local* duty is made clear:

> The *specificity of content* (my italicisation) both in terms of religions studied and themes are the legal responsibility of the agreed syllabus (QCA, 2004:13).

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[70] Extensive documentation relating to the Key Stage 3 National Strategy can be found at http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/keystage3.The following documents relating to the foundation subjects serve as a useful introduction: *Key Messages Pedagogy and practice; Key messages about teaching repertoire; Key messages about structuring learning; Key messages about assessment for learning; Key messages about teaching thinking.*

[71] See *Awareness, Mystery and Value,* The Somerset Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (1998) for an earlier example and related discussion in Cush & Francis (2001).

This focus adds urgency to the matter of the representation of religion at the heart of this study, since despite the *place* accorded to Christianity, there is a lack of material to guide Agreed Syllabus Conferences in their delineation of content *per se*. Hitherto it is clear that the *Faith Communities' Working Group Reports* (SCAA, 1994c) proved a key source of content and continue to be used, to the extent that the Christian report became - almost in its entirety - the required content in one syllabus (West Sussex, 2003). This SCAA document was the outcome of members of *each* of six 'faiths' meeting to decide respectively what *they* believed it was desirable for students to know by the age of 16. The Christian working party represented an impressive range of Christian churches; yet as was observed in the previous chapter this *consensual* picture of the Christian tradition is of matters on which Christians do *not* speak with one voice. There are a number of problems here. Is this consensus that which is the *desirable* Christian content in RE, rather than those matters on which Christians *do* agree? Either way, difference and diversity are obscured and, arguably, both commonality and vitality. Furthermore, there is perhaps a danger here that RE implicitly assumes an apologetic role for religions. Divorced from the contexts which shaped and shape them, from a world in which they are inevitably enmeshed and act, both for good and for ill, religions are rendered simply 'safe', a 'good thing'. Asking questions of one tradition's delineation in recent syllabuses may serve to inform wider discussion of both its representation and of learning in RE.

2. The sample of agreed syllabuses

The absence of a national collection of *all* agreed syllabuses presents a difficulty for researchers (cf. Bausor, J. & Poole, M., 2002:20). For the present analysis it was possible to access 33 agreed syllabuses for Religious Education (RE) drawn from the period 1999 – 2003. In total the 33 syllabuses represent about 45 LEAs (see Table 3, at the end of this chapter). Drawing on QCA (2003) figures updated to the end of March 2004, about 90 LEAs in England had syllabuses dating from 1999 or later; the sample for the period 1999-2003 thus represented approximately 50% of these LEAs.[72]

Of the 33 syllabuses examined, 23 indicated content which either might or should form part of students' study of the Christian tradition; those which did not provide content specific to religions, were usually underpinned or organised according to a generic understanding of

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[72] I am grateful to Annette Hagan for arranging access to the agreed syllabuses held by the QCA. The 33 agreed syllabuses consulted are listed in Table 3; when any of *these* syllabuses are referred to in the text of this chapter they are denoted by LEA and date; they do not appear in the Bibliography.

'religion' or, sometimes, of 'religious education'. Those which indicated content *specific* to Christianity did so with variations in depth, structures and organisation; here a generic framework of 'religion' or RE may also be employed, shaping the way in which Christianity is presented; a few employ concepts specific to the tradition to organize content, whilst others set out specific modules or units of work. There is no one pattern of presenting content. Paradoxically then any agreed syllabus is characterised by consensus (about what is to be taught) *and* by particularity (of expression and organisation), each an outcome of the statutory arrangements for RE to be 'agreed' locally.[73]

3. Method and Focus

The absence of a common format among syllabuses, and the many ways in which Christian material is structured within them, inevitably places constraints on comparison; it also accentuates the need for researchers to work with what is given, what is 'there', and to try not to impose their own categorisation. The approach taken here was to examine each of the 33 syllabuses in relation to three matters: first, the weighting given to the Christian tradition within a syllabus's overall provision for RE; second, the 'organising categories' used, since these inform the way in which religious traditions are perceived – and perhaps taught; this terminology is that used by Ofsted (1997) to highlight the structures underpinning agreed syllabuses. Third, particular attention was given to those syllabuses which identified Christian content considered appropriate for study at KS3 [74] – whether statutory or non-statutory. Thus, the focus of the analysis of syllabuses was on 3 matters: 'predominance', 'organizing categories', and 'Christian content at KS3'. The latter concern also offers a context for the analysis of data in Part 2 of this study.

Method

In relation to each of these concerns, grids were constructed setting out the basic requirements of the syllabuses in order to facilitate identification of commonalities and differences across the syllabuses. Again it should be stressed that as far as possible this first step sought not to interpret or generalize, but to record the relevant data from the syllabuses.

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[73] In England the Local Education Authority (LEA) must convene a Statutory Conference for RE, comprising four committees representative of the LEA; the Church of England; other Christian churches and religions; teachers. The Conference has responsibility for drawing up (or adopting) a syllabus for RE, which must be unanimously 'agreed' by its four committees, each having one vote. The potentially limiting hand of such consensus should be noted as a counterpoint to the critical discussion of agreed syllabuses in this chapter.

[74] The basic curriculum (RE + National Curriculum) in England is structured according to Key Stages, each corresponding to a specific age range. Key Stage 3 is concerned with those students aged 11-14, Key Stage 4 with those aged 14-16.

Syllabuses themselves *shape* the religions they present – I wanted to avoid contributing further to that process. Setting out data in grids in this way is time consuming and the resultant tabulations too extensive to reproduce ; but the process provides an overview not easily gained in other ways, revealing each syllabus's structure(s) and nuancing; this was especially so in relation to content.

Focus on Key Stage 3

Underpinning the decision to focus on KS3 lie three factors: first, the significance of the age range (11-14) KS3 represents in terms of young people's growing capacity for abstract thinking; second, Ofsted's identification of KS3 as that stage where RE may lack continuity and coherence and be insufficiently demanding in its content and task-setting (Ofsted, 1997, 2001, 2002a; Wintersgill, 2000) prompts a question of syllabus expectations; by contrast, more recently Ofsted (2002b) has associated improvement in RE at KS3 with a focus on beliefs and teachings in RE and with 'changes in the content of agreed syllabuses' (2004). Third, KS3 arguably carries the major weight of most students' religious education, it is that stage when a systematic study of a religion, or key facets of it seem most likely to occur and to be undertaken in some depth. KS3 may also be seen as pivotal in another way. Increased examination take up at Key Stage 4 has implications for the handling of Christianity - and other traditions - at KS3, relating both to students' capacities and to the understanding of religious traditions which they may be expected to bring - and *apply* - to increasingly popular Philosophy and Ethics options in GCSE Religious Studies.[75] In the light of all these factors, KS3 offered an appropriate focus for a survey of Christian content in agreed syllabuses.

4. Predominance

The impact of Circular 1/94's insistence on the 'predominance 'of Christianity noted in the previous chapter remains clear in the 33 syllabuses surveyed. The permutations of the faiths to be studied at each key stage emerging from syllabuses' interpretation of ERA 8:3 are startling and defy summary in any simple chart. What *is* clear is the priority agreed syllabuses give to Christianity. In 1993 the indication of a specific time allocation for Christianity in the draft Model Syllabuses for RE proved contentious and was dropped in the final publication in 1994; yet some of these syllabuses, indicated a specific time allowance for Christianity (see e.g. Kent, 2000; Liverpool, 2002; Surrey, 2002; West Sussex, 2003 and Lancashire, undated (but 2001 indicated in QCA, 2003). Of these, Lancashire's permitted up

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[75] In the non-statutory national framework Key Stage 3 is itself 'designed to be the 'application' key stage': see Langtree, G. (2005:29).

to 75% of RE time to be spent on Christianity, Kent a minimum of 40% and maximum of 60%; the others require a 50% minimum time allocation. Resonances of Circular 1/94's words also appear in syllabuses; thus Christianity is the 'predominant religion' and to be taught as such at each key stage (Herefordshire, 2001); or 'should predominate as a whole and at each key stage' (Buckinghamshire, 2001). Even in a syllabus where no key stage recommendations regarding the religions to be studied were made, readers are reminded that 'significantly more time must be given to Christianity' (Ealing, 2001). Where syllabuses indicate units or modules which are required to be taught, they are able to endorse or guarantee a preferential option for Christianity (see for example Surrey, 2002). Whilst then the permutations in syllabus interpretation of ERA 8.3 and its anticipated implementation are more numerous than one might have imagined, to track these is to illustrate a degree of deference to the Circular's *interpretation* of the Act.

5. Organising Categories

In its 1997 study of the impact of new agreed syllabuses on RE teaching, Ofsted commented 'The most confusing terminology is used to classify the content of syllabuses' (Ofsted, 1997:14). They noted some of the 'organising categories – 'areas of study', 'concept clusters', 'strands' – employed to structure knowledge and understanding. The present survey adds to this complexity: 'elements', 'dimensions', 'areas of exploration', 'strands and areas of learning', 'strands, categories and subjects' and so on. One syllabus (Lancashire, 2001) employs three sets of categories: 'Field of enquiry', 'dimensions' (also referred to as 'themes') and 'faith content' comprising religion specific concepts. Ofsted offered no analysis of organising categories, noting only the tendency of schools to focus on those constituents of them which denoted 'factual knowledge about religions', and that the range of material they denoted militated against depth of study. If taken seriously, the 'weight' of content syllabuses continue to carry would still run counter to depth and whilst one may share Ofsted's concern for the varied nomenclature of organising categories, this is probably of less significance than their constituents – the sub-categories they employ. It is these which provide a 'groundplan' of subject content, which may – as Ofsted noted – shape teaching, but *also* the way in which religions and/or religious education are/is perceived. [76]

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[76] This is true also of the framework, where although 'categories' are not *formally* named, they emerge under *Themes*.

From the data gathered from the 33 syllabuses, it is clear that syllabus *roots* in this area of categorisation lie in the 1970s;[77] some syllabuses employ what may loosely be termed phenomenological categories to map religion(s); sometimes these are expressed in broad conceptual terms, thus West Sussex (2003) suggests 5 strands for 'Learning about religion': Worship, Celebration, Believing; Writings; Community and three relating to 'Learning from religion': Mystery; Ultimate Questions; Values and Commitments. Others tend more towards specific phenomena. Thus Cambridgeshire (2001) and Peterborough (2002) identify their strands for KS1-3 as : People; Worship; Places; Writings; Religious Calendar; Rites of Passage; Self and Community; the Natural World. In a similar manner the East Riding of Yorkshire (1999) identifies at KS1-2, Celebrations, People, Places, Rituals and Ceremonies, Writings, adding Festivals to this list at KS 3. Other syllabuses' categorisation is deliberately conceptual; Nottingham (2003) states its concern with questions and answers in four 'major conceptual areas': Beliefs and identity; Authority; Worship, Meditation and celebration; Human lifestyles and the environment. Bedford (2001) sees its 'strands' (Writings; People; Worship; Places; Fasts, Festivals and Celebrations; Rites and Rules; Self and Others; Natural World) as a vehicle for developing key concepts and ideas – Authority and Inspiration; Symbolism; Commitment; Lifestyle; Belonging; Beliefs and Values; Ultimate questions.

It will be clear from the foregoing examples that whilst there are commonalities among syllabuses, their underpinning structures are diverse. This diversity is in part due to whether syllabuses are mapping out religion(s) *or* RE; either way they point to the *shaping* - or intended *use* - of religion(s) by the syllabus; sometimes the two may be in tension. Thus the Essex syllabus makes its structures explicit: giving priority to AT2 'Learning from experience and religion', and appears to give primacy to an essentially humanistic agenda, organised around 'seven aspects of experience'. These are: the self and being human; relationships and community; the natural world and the universe, spiritual experience; morality and ethics; questions and beliefs; language, community and expression. Learning is to be structured to ensure that reflection on the 7 aspects 'leads into or arises from exploration of different religions' (Essex, 2003:3.1). I speak of tension because the required content, listed for each

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[77] Influences on the 'shaping' of agreed syllabuses deserve more exploration than currently exists in the RE literature. I am grateful however to one of the referees of this chapter in its published form for reminding me the useful survey (and critique) of pedagogies which have shaped understanding of RE as a curriculum subject in Grimmitt (2000). It is clear to me that some of these have been more far - reaching in their impact on syllabuses than others – not necessarily for their merits alone, but for reasons also of time (*kairos* rather than *chronos*), place and personnel.

faith under 'Learning about religions' is then presented under a further set of categories: Beliefs, concepts and teachings; practices, lifestyles and commitments; ways of expressing meaning; historical and cultural aspects. Elsewhere this syllabus uses the image of a tree to give shape to its understanding of religion. The tree's roots, 'spirituality', correspond with 'Learning from experience and religion'; 'religion' becomes the trunk of the tree, whilst the branches/leaves become its visible features: food, sacred writings, festivals, clothing, rites of passage, doctrines, holy places, pilgrimage, worship – 'Learning about religions'. Arguably, there is a further tension here, since this mapping out of RE/religion(s) does not wholly cohere with that of the programmes of study outlined above. Through its image of the tree the syllabus does, however, represent *its* understanding of religion (singular); whilst this is open to question and debate, this syllabus at least sets out to articulate and bring together its understanding of religion and RE. I concur with Cush & Francis (2001:58) that this is rare in syllabuses.

The categorisation of religion in agreed syllabuses demands a detailed study in its own right. For the present I draw attention to some of the problems inherent in the 'categorising' they undertake:

- Religious traditions are all forced into one mould; diversity *within* and *across* traditions is obscured as are genuine commonalities.

- Syllabus categories and the organisation of religion specific content under these may obscure fluidity, movement and interconnectedness among named areas, presenting a static picture of religious traditions.

- Religions come to be presented as closed systems, with an inner logic which is not necessarily theirs; syllabuses permit that religions may affect the world and seek to shape it, but this is invariably seen as a one way process. Cultural, social and political contexts are by-passed.

- Religions are presented too often as out of time and place, abstractions. Oddly, a sub-category used by some syllabuses is 'people' – as if in an attempt to root religions somewhere.

- As Ofsted noted, the categories may suggest specific areas for study, to the neglect of others. They obscure the 'raw data' with which students may engage and learn to process. Concepts and categories may just be 'illustrated' or exemplified, rather than discovered through engagement with sources – a fact amply exemplified in generations of RE textbooks.

- Whilst the categories used may have emerged from certain approaches to the study of religions, commonly in syllabuses they have lost their connectedness with these and instead come to be presented as 'this is how things are'. (Only one syllabus examined – Bradford (2000) - drew teachers' attention to the many approaches to the study of religions which may inform understanding).

It is difficult, of course, to imagine any sound syllabus which offered teachers no conceptual framework through which to approach religious traditions, but perhaps the greater urgency is for syllabuses to reflect on the roots of their conceptualisation of religion – and its provisionality; which are attuned to the voices of those within faith traditions, and to approaches to the study of religions, whilst sensitive to how both may inform content, learning and pedagogy in RE. This would involve also a capacity to work at those boundaries where 'study' and 'faith' may sit alongside each other - sometimes with a degree of discomfort! But if RE is to be really serious about young people growing in *understanding* of religions – and indeed about their personal development – syllabuses which by-pass such insights sell them short.

The constraints which categorisation places on the handling of content become apparent when the specific Christian content of the syllabuses is considered. In particular, the absence of context, location and time is further endorsed as a hallmark of 'Curriculum Christianity'.

6. 'Christian' content at Key Stage 3

6.1 Identifying and analysing content

Of the 33 syllabuses examined 23 paid attention to 'religion specific' content – and thus Christian content - to be covered at KS3; additionally, one used Christianity in its exemplification of content in a generic syllabus (East Riding, 1999) and another (Ealing, 2001) provided a list of Christian content (not by key stage) in an appendix. The placing of this 'religion specific' material and the presentation of it varies across syllabuses, as does its statutory status – although many appear to list mandatory content, many placing it in programmes of study and some in specific units of work (e.g. Herefordshire 2001; Surrey 2001); by contrast, Redbridge (2001) looks for a creative response to the question 'What does it mean to live as a Christian today?, pointing to a series of related questions broadly indicative of content – but not prescriptive. Whilst such factors frustrate comparative purposes, syllabus content tabulated in parallel columns, employing syllabuses' own

subheadings or categories (where used) facilitated a clear overview of the KS3 Christian content of the 23 syllabuses.[78]

Most of the syllabuses thus analysed may be described as 'content-heavy'. In this they reflect those of earlier years which were noted in Chapter 1. They are over-laden even with respect to one tradition; moreover, the content suggested, if taken seriously, is itself 'weighty' and demanding at KS3; issues of *how* it may be handled − by which I intend to raise a question about the skills and capacities *which the material itself demands*, as distinct from pedagogical strategies - are rarely entertained.

The tabulation of *Christian content* facilitated identification of broad areas of concern running *across* syllabuses. Among these the following appear of central concern in syllabuses' treatment of Christianity: Belief(s); God; Jesus; Bible; Church (es)/ Denominations; Worship and Ritual; Rites of Passage; Life-style/Ethic/Values; Commitment; Environment; Expression (denoting e.g. symbolism, architecture, arts, music, literature - and sometimes language). Space restricts us here to reflecting on five of these areas.

Belief(s), God - and theological concepts

Christian belief figured prominently in the syllabuses and 'linked with this' a theological vocabulary: for example, incarnation, sin, resurrection, salvation, redemption, virgin birth, revelation. Then there is talk of God and the language which Christians employ is listed: Father, Creator, Son of God, Holy Spirit, Trinity - a term appearing under 'symbol' in some syllabuses. Syllabuses speak also of 'the nature of God', of 'one God', of a God of love and the problem of suffering; of terms used to 'describe' God and of the 'attributes' of God; some refer to revelation and to ways in which God is revealed. The nature of religious language is however given much less prominence by most syllabuses than one might have anticipated − yet this seems fundamental to the concerns teachers might reasonably have for students' developing religious understanding at KS3.

Creation and consequently God as Creator also appear as popular topics under Christian content (sometimes in relation to environmental issues); yet notions of what it is to be human, or the nature of humanity may be hinted at but are articulated in only a small number

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[78] Note that this was *not* an attempt to itemise and quantify every facet of Christianity mentioned in the syllabuses; it is rather *each* syllabus's Christian content which has been carefully summarised and tabulated remaining true to the forms in which it was represented in the respective syllabuses.

of the syllabuses -   only a few speak of humankind made in the image of God - although one would assume this to be fundamental to understanding concepts of salvation, redemption, atonement and sin. Perhaps the key observation to be made here, however, in syllabuses' listing of 'data' about God and belief(s) is that whilst this may seem helpful to those who wish a certain body of content to be covered, mere listing is not ultimately helpful. The demands made by this content, the skills required to 'handle' it and appropriate sources for KS3 go largely unexplored. It may also be asked where teachers and students may 'cut into' this content – it does not simply 'exist' in a vacuum, ready to be 'applied' to student interests.   This kind of material did not figure prominently in the responses to the survey reported in Part 2 of this study (see Chapter 5).

A further aspect of syllabuses' talk of God is their concern with God's 'existence' and the discussion of evidence for God; the evidence may be listed: Jesus, scripture, reason, experience, the natural world for example (Surrey, 2002). Of course one may expect Christians to 'give account' of their belief in/about God; yet talk of 'existence', sometimes interpreted in syllabuses as 'Does God exist?' and talk of 'evidence' moves towards the objectification of God and away from theologies which would find the use of 'exist' and 'existence' unhelpful. 'Evidence' – with its resonance of 'proof', may also be seen to play into a science v. religion paradigm. There is little in syllabuses which is reflective, poetic, or drawing on story and experience – biblical and other - to convey Christian understanding of the nature of God, although references to beliefs about God as expressed in worship (e.g. Cambridgeshire, 2002) and to appropriate biblical passages (e.g. Isle of Wight, 2001) are occasionally made.

Linked with these concerns, syllabuses may also take up issues which one assumes will pose questions about the relation of science and religion – their focus on creation and the environment for example, or in some cases miracles. Together with questions of God's 'existence', these are issues which many students will now go on to consider (again) in both short and full GCSE courses (and maybe again at AS/A2 level given the current popularity of philosophy and ethics). The placing of these matters within a list of 'Christian content' poses a cluster of questions. Are they so placed because of their assumed concern to students at KS3 - for pedagogical reasons? Are they here because there has been (and continues to be?) discussion of such matters within the tradition - and are part of engaging with a living tradition? Or, is there an unspoken apologetic at work here – a desire to argue for the 'reasonableness' of Christian belief in God? There is also the question of what kind of

discourse students are to engage in about these matters[79] - and about the theological concepts identified above. Most syllabuses anticipate that students will 'learn about' and 'learn from' religion(s); presumably mere learning 'about' is not enough here - yet to *really* 'learn from' would surely in this instance imply engaging in the kind of theological discussion found *within* a community of faith - discussion which might then transgress the spirit of 'learning from' (cf. QCA 2000a:18). Further, the presence of these matters in syllabuses does mean that there is an agenda RE needs to address about he relationship of religious studies and theology, the place of theology (if any) in RE in a maintained community school (cf. Cush, 1999:142-145) and the relation of both disciplines to RE, as well as what may be loosely labelled 'philosophy of religion' from KS3 onwards.

How are theological concepts and inherited theological traditions to be studied in school? Within the Christian tradition itself such terms each assume a nexus of meanings and interpretations. Agreed syllabuses however leave their users without guidance here - theological concepts (for many Christians, as well as 'outsiders', perceived as temporally and culturally bound and thus debatable) are somehow listed by syllabuses as factual items to be learnt. Whilst 'Concept Cracking' (Cooling, 1994) tried to address the teaching of theological concepts by advancing a pedagogical strategy relating them to students' experience, its process arguably by-passed the 'life' of the concepts within Christian communities.[80] How may teaching about these matters proceed with due attention to the Christian communities in which they 'live'? seems a relevant question to ask. A further difficulty with 'belief' as expounded in syllabuses is – in most cases - the absence of any references to the kinds of *sources* - as opposed to resources - which teachers may be expected to employ and with which students may engage (exceptions being occasional references to the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Councils of the Church and 'beliefs as found in biblical texts' – all examples carrying their own particular problems). Similarly, syllabuses do not indicate the kinds of question which it might be *appropriate* to ask in relation to any specified belief or formulary. Again, this may be to expect a degree of specificity which syllabuses cannot be expected to deliver; to raise the question however is

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[79] Bausor, J. & Poole, M (2002:24-25) note the failure of syllabuses to address key issues which would facilitate understanding of science-religion debates: use of language, nature of explanation, & social circumstances which fostered science- religion debates.

[80] The publication of Hookway, S.R. (2004) *Questions of Truth Developing Critical Thinking Skills in Secondary Religious Education*, RMEP, occurred whilst this work was in process. This also addresses the problem noted here, offering a practical outworking of 'critical realism' as expounded by Andrew Wright. Whilst this recognises some diversity among Christians – indicated by its use of 'some' and 'many' – one is still concerned by the generalised statements of belief and use of de-contextualised biblical passages.

to point to another issue - whether or not students at this stage (and indeed earlier) should be developing a wide range of interpretive skills appropriate to the study of religions - this is not to re-vitalise debates about Religious *Studies* v. Religious *Education*, but to suggest that if the latter takes leave of, or is not informed by the former, students are sold short.

Linked with the question of sources, are questions concerning the de-contextualisation of belief in most syllabuses as well as their prioritizing of belief at KS3. (Just one syllabus, Devon (2000), is noteworthy for its interweaving of belief with 'Christian Practice'; Cambridge (2001), Peterborough (2002) and Essex (2003) give pointers in this direction). This convergence presses us to think of 'belonging', or 'identifying with'- including all the inevitable complexities and untidiness of these concepts - as primary categories for exploration in RE. The tidy 'orthodoxy' conveyed through the primacy given to Christian belief in syllabuses, fails on the one hand to convey any theological dynamic within Christianity and obscures its diversity - heterodoxy even - present within living communities. It fails too, to cut through to the experiences and circumstances of culture, time and place which gave voice to formulations of belief and 'doctrine' and to do justice to the varied resonances they may have for diverse Christian communities in the present.

Jesus

KS3 students' perceptions of Jesus have been explored by Copley and Walshe (2002) as have syllabus representations of Jesus. They draw attention to KS3 as the period within school when most students will learn most about Jesus; the next part of this study appears to give support to this view. Since the figure of Jesus is clearly central to the Christian tradition, what is it that students are to encounter and what do syllabuses suggest is the nature of that encounter? Certain key points may be made on the basis of the present survey:

- Syllabuses tend to adopt an investigative stance. There is - on the surface at least - recognition that there is a debate to be had about Jesus' identity. This may however be as much sensitivity towards students' questioning, as to any continuing discussion within Christian contexts. Of other faiths' perceptions of Jesus – not least Judaism and Islam - syllabuses are with a few exceptions silent (a point made also by Copley and Walshe, 2002:22-23).
- A number of syllabuses wish to establish that Jesus actually lived – most teachers of this age range will have been asked 'How do you know that Jesus ever existed?' Yet only a few syllabuses made any reference to Jesus' Jewish roots (or even hinted at the insights

which this recognition has brought to understanding of Jesus' teachings and of the Gospels' understanding of him).

- There *is* however a recognition that 'claims' are made for Jesus, and that particular titles ('Son of God', Messiah, Saviour, Emmanuel) are ascribed to him - interestingly, the way in which Jesus most commonly spoke of himself, 'son of man', is very rarely noted. Again, which sources are teachers expected to use? Herefordshire (2001) suggests that students look at 'passages which cast light on Jesus as Son of God', presumably for (some) Christians. But *how* are such texts to be handled in the classroom? Another approach to beliefs about Jesus is through festivals; encouragingly this has the potential to root belief within the celebrating community and recognise the role for many Christians of worship, celebration and calendar in the transmission of belief.

- Syllabuses appear to be concerned that students grasp 'the' framework of Jesus' life - although at KS3 the emphasis may tend towards the last days of Jesus and the passion; few note that Christians possess more than one telling of these events and that it might be appropriate to distinguish among them. That such discrimination might also feed into discussions relating to Jesus' identity and the claims made for him by Christians appears largely to by-pass syllabuses.

- The teaching of Jesus is conspicuous by its slight presence in syllabus indications of what students might understand about him; exceptions here are Hillingdon (2000), Devon (2000) and the Isle of Wight (2001); the latter is distinctive - with Essex (2003) - in drawing attention to the concept of the 'kingdom of God', surely central to any grasp of Jesus' teaching and Christian understanding of it. More commonly 'teaching*s*' tend to appear or are implied under headings other than 'Jesus', especially areas like ethics, values or lifestyle (see e.g. Bedfordshire, 2001). The effect of this can be to divorce them from the figure of Jesus to whom they relate and obscure their relation with his life and death in the Gospels and in Christian understanding, whilst the selective use of a few texts in the context of addressing the present serves neither an understanding of 'the Jesus story', nor understanding of why these texts are authoritative for Christians.

The Bible

Looking across syllabuses, it is clear that understanding of the Bible as the Christian community's book has now been widely taken on board. Focus on the Bible's *use* in the community and on its *authority* is commonplace. Whilst *uses* are not always specified, Devon (2000) points to the Bible as a source/ basis of beliefs and Herefordshire (2001) highlights *how* it is used in decision making. Furthermore, a number of syllabuses indicate

that part of students' learning will comprise recognition of varied use and interpretation of the Bible among Christians. Thus Devon (2000) asks for understanding of 'various interpretations' of Gospel passages *per se* - and indicates also that students should meet the use of symbolic language and metaphor in biblical material; Wiltshire (1999) also asks for this exploration of language alongside authority. One syllabus perpetuates the well worn approach of 'the Bible library'; some speak more generally of different types of writing. It is also interesting to note that two syllabuses placed the Bible under the category of 'Beliefs' and that a few highlight issues of interpretation and their *impact* on belief and practice (see e.g. Cambridgeshire, 2002)

Clearly, some syllabuses intend that students will encounter a little of critical study of the Bible, whilst also meeting its use within the faith community. Whilst these two stances are not necessarily mutually exclusive, there is a *possible* tension between the study and analysis of the Bible in an 'academic' manner and the use of the Bible within Christian communities; this is a *real* question for many Christian communities and one which RE needs to address in its own context – adding perhaps that of the relation of theology with biblical studies, given the theological leanings of agreed syllabuses.[81]

Syllabus expectations also raise pedagogical issues. Learning *that* there are different interpretations held by different groups, is not the same as discovering *how* or *why* this is so. The problem is sharpened here by the apparent fact that syllabuses do not appear to envisage, by and large, that students will handle biblical material. Yet there is arguably a knowing 'how' to handle such material (examining, questioning, analysing, comparing, researching etc) which is important, as well as knowing 'that' or 'about'. Are children to be simply taught *about* different interpretations of miracles and exchange their own views on this - or handle materials themselves, acquiring some of the skills appropriate to such a task? What *is* the job of RE here? Syllabuses are silent on this matter.

They are silent too on questions relating to the relationship, authority and status of sacred writings, surely an important matter in multifaith classrooms, and on the interrelation of content. Some address the relationship of the Old Testament and the New Testament for Christians, but generally syllabuses bring us no closer to the interconnections and divergences of faiths on 'shared' tradition and story.

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[81] For an interesting discussion of these matters see Morgan, R. in Ford, D.F. & Stanton, G. eds. (2003).

Church

'Church' operated as a key category in only three of the syllabuses surveyed; in two of these (West Sussex, 2003; Lancashire 2001) the language of SCAA (1994c) is taken up[82] and the syllabuses speak of the 'Nature of the Church'; others may list 'The Church' under other headings, for example 'Authority' (Coventry, 2002) 'Community' (e.g. Wirral, 1999, Kent 2002); 'church(es)' may be subsumed under various headings – often that of worship. There is of course an ambiguity about the concept 'church'; under 'beliefs/teachings' a few syllabuses point to its theological dimensions: the Church as the 'body of Christ' (e.g. Devon, 2000; Coventry 2002) whilst Surrey (2000) deliberately sets out to discover the meaning of key terms – Body of Christ, Fellowship of Believers, Catholic/universal. Church history or aspects of it feature in only a few. Surrey (2002) offers a unit on 'how did the church develop?' Devon (2000) addresses the 'historical and cultural development of the church'; a few refer to St Paul and the development of the Early Church (cf. Kirklees, 2000; Coventry, 2002; Essex, 2003). More fruitfully, Nottinghamshire (2003) under a heading 'Church' poses a series of questions beginning with 'What is the significance of the Church for Christians? Whilst church buildings (often placed in KS2) continue as a topic in some syllabuses, the focus for many at KS3 is on Christian denominations: again it is Surrey that offers a core unit: 'Why are there different Christian denominations?' Denominational difference may also be approached through other matters: thus Liverpool (2002) in encouraging understanding of key beliefs wants students to be aware of distinctions between Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Non-conformist and Independent churches and of their historical origins.

My own research (see Part 2) suggests that many RE teachers do not find denominational difference the easiest matter to handle; nor is it perceived to be of greatest interest to their KS3 students. Perhaps part of the problem here is the tendency of syllabuses to see 'denominations' as a subset of 'Christianity' (cf. also the way in which 'Christianity as a World Religion' became a subset of 'Christianity' in Model Syllabus1 (1994a:44). A viable alternative is to see particular 'churches' and 'denominations' as *primary* data through which students build their understanding of 'Christianity', living entities which themselves constitute the tradition. Seen in this way, as groups of people - with beliefs, practices, worship, texts, with ways of belonging and 'being' inherited, appropriated, re-appraised and re-interpreted - diverse communities related, some as next of kin, others like a distant relative in a family

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[82]SCAA (1994c:8) lists at Key Stage 3: The nature of the church; Worship; The church's year; Important aspects of church history; and Church structure and organisation under its heading of 'The Church'.

tree[83] and distanced by time, place and culture, is to start with a dynamic sense of 'Christianity' and to be pushed towards contextualising the tradition when teaching. It is also a salutary reminder that students in RE can only have glimpses of what such belonging might be like. To adapt the words of Jackson & Killingley (1988:20) about another religious tradition: it is in individual churches that the tradition lives; not the whole tradition in each church, but each part of the tradition in many churches. The question of what those glimpses might be is a pressing one; syllabuses are at present necessarily silent here, a reified and compartmentalized world is easier to list or tabulate. The teacher's interpretive task in relation to syllabuses becomes vital.

Lifestyle/Ethics/Commitment

Although some syllabuses may place the concept under 'community', 'church' is often 'un-peopled' in the way in which syllabuses 'set out' Christianity. Just two (related) syllabuses placed church under the category of 'People' (Cambridgeshire, 2002; Peterborough, 2002). In the main, people are encountered elsewhere in syllabuses' schema. Under themes of discipleship, lifestyle, values or commitment, space is allocated to individuals, 'contemporary Christians', and sometimes communities motivated by (often unspecified) 'Christian values' – 'Faith in Action'. Like their counterparts from the 1940s and 1950s agreed syllabuses still seem to give preferential treatment to stories of individuals. And of course, life-stories are of interest – not least the complexities of their construction and those which comprise another's life - but a list of names, however well known, tells us little of purposes in teaching about them, and arguably skews the representation of a faith tradition which is essentially community focused and about 'in-corp-oration', even when it may call for personal conversion. Do syllabuses perhaps represent 21st century disenchantment with 'church' in a western context? Individuals - at least in syllabus representation - become dislocated from the very communities which have transmitted and preserved the values which syllabuses hope *their* selected individuals will exemplify. A further problem for RE is the tendency of the 'Faith in action' focus to imply that whilst the Christian tradition impacts on 'the world', this is a one way process. How may RE - at this KS3 stage with its concern for 'application' allow students to encounter something of the complexities of Christian(s') engagement with the present? How may this be represented?

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[83] See Astley, J. (1992:4-12) where - following Wittgenstein - Astley discusses the idea of 'family resemblances'.

6.2 Comment

National initiatives and directives shaping the school curriculum and its implementation have their effects on RE both directly and through agreed syllabuses. At the beginning of this chapter I drew attention to the current concern for process and skills – education in the present looks for the development of students' ability to make informed and skilled judgments. Such ability abhors a vacuum. Critical thinking is always about something; 'children need something to think about and something to think with' [84] noted an earlier exponent of RE. For RE, this 'something' is decided locally whilst regulated by legislation; in future it may 'simply' be the content which the non-statutory national framework leaves with the agreed syllabus conference. While questions remain of what is appropriately studied when and how, questions of content - and thereby of the representation of Christianity - persist.

The non-statutory national framework for RE rightly allots specificity of content to the agreed syllabus, but this examination of syllabuses has pointed up many concerns, among which I have suggested two are of major importance: first, there is the broad question of how one depicts, by categories or concepts, the outline of a faith tradition; a wide array of approaches to this task among the syllabuses examined has been identified and insistent questions persist about how well or poorly these approaches work; clearly, emergent categories are to be preferred to imposed, not least because they are more likely to capture the tradition's sense and vitality. Second, this survey has pointed to Christianity out of time and place - the characterising of KS3 as the 'application stage' only serves to compound this problem. Together, these concerns suggest a 'Christianity' in syllabuses differing in varying degrees from what is 'out there'; there is clearly good reason – urgency even - for discussion of content in syllabuses, of what 'Christianity' (or any other tradition) might reasonably (and realistically) comprise and room to search for a dynamic model which might inform syllabuses. At best this dynamic will engage the life of Christian communities *and* draw on critical scholarship – even where the two may be in tension.

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[84] I believe this is attributable to Ronald Goldman, but I have been unable to find the reference.

Table 3: Agreed Syllabuses analysed in Chapter 3

LEA [Now LA]	Council Type (a)	Date	Agreed Syllabus Title
E.Riding of Yorkshire (b)	DC*	1999	Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education
Oxfordshire	CC	1999	Religious Education in Oxfordshire
Walsall	MBC	1999	Revised Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Wigan	MBC	1999	Wigan Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Wiltshire	CC	1999	Thinking Together - Wiltshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Wirral (c)	MBC	1999	Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Worcestershire	CC	1999	Agreed Syllabus for religious Education
Devon/Plymouth/ Torbay	CC/CC*/ BC*	2000	The Devon, Plymouth, Torbay Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education from 2001
Harrow	LBC	2000	Harrow Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Hertfordshire	CC	2000	Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education 2000-2005
Hillingdon	LBC	2000	Hillingdon Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Kent (d)	CC	2000	Responding to Religion: Engaging with Living Faiths
Kirklees	MBC	2000	Kirklees Agreed Syllabus 2000
Lincolnshire	CC	2000	Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Bedfordshire	CC	2001	The Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Bradford	MBC	2001	Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2001 (in 2 volumes: Primary; Secondary)
Buckinghamshire	CC	2001	The Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus for religious Education 2001-2006
Ealing	LBC	2001	Agreed Syllabus of Religious Education
Herefordshire	CC*	2001	Herefordshire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Lancashire (e)	CC	Nd	Lancashire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education & 'Faith Focus' [i.e. AS comprised of 2 volumes]
Redbridge	LBC	2001	Exploration and Response. The Redbridge Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Wandsworth	LBC	2001	Religious Education Wandsworth Council Agreed Syllabus
Brent	LBC	2002	Living with Beliefs The Brent Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Cambridgeshire (f)	CC	2002	Religious Education in Cambridgeshire 2002
Coventry	City C	2002	The Coventry Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education 2002-2007
Derbyshire	CC	2002	Derbyshire Agreed Syllabus for RE 2002-2007
Isle of Wight	IOW Council*	2002	Isle of Wight Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education
Liverpool, City of	City C	2002	Liverpool's Revised Agreed Syllabus
Peterborough	City C	2002	Religious Education in Peterborough The Agreed Syllabus 2000
Surrey	CC	2002	The Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in Surrey Schools 2002-2007
Essex	CC	2003	Religious Education in Essex
Nottinghamshire	CC	2003	Nottinghamshire Agreed Syllabus for RE
West Sussex	CC	2003	Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education in West Sussex Schools

NOTES:

(a) *Abbreviations:* BC-Borough Council; CC-County Council; City C-City Council; DC-District Council; LBC-London Borough Council; MBC-Metropolitan Borough Council. * indicates a Unitary Authority.

(b) A collaborative venture with Kingston upon Hull (CC*), N.Lincolnshire (DC*) & NE Lincolnshire, but published in individualised formats by the respective LEAs. The East Riding syllabus was adopted by the York City Council*, with a local supplement added (2002).

(c)Adopted by Knowsley MBC (1999)

(d)The Agreed Syllabus (not dated) for Medway Council* shares a common structure and content with that of Kent, but is not formally identified as an adoption or joint venture with Kent.

(e)The syllabus is not dated; it is listed here as 2001 on the basis of information in QCA (2003) *Religious education and collective worship An analysis of 2003 SACRE reports,* Appendix 1. The Lancashire Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education has been adopted by Blackpool BC*and Blackburn & Darwen BC*.

(f)The Agreed Syllabuses of Cambridgeshire and the City of Peterborough (formerly a pert of Cambridgeshire) share a closely related structure, and much common content, but each is sufficiently 'customised' to warrant separate inclusion here.

PART 2: STUDYING CHRISTIANITY IN THE PRESENT

Chapter 4: An introduction to the empirical study: data and methodology

Part 2 of this study draws on evidence gathered in the course of a survey undertaken during the autumn term 2004 as part of a project focusing on Christianity in the RE curriculum at KS3 in secondary schools in England.[85] Its roots lay in the absence in the research literature of empirical data which might provide insight into the *interpretation of the legal requirement to teach Christianity by those carrying* responsibility for RE – agreed syllabus conferences and SACREs[86] (in the case of maintained schools without a religious character), and teachers themselves. In choosing to focus on KS3, the project recognised both ongoing discussion of the quality of learning in RE at this key stage (Wintersgill, 2000; Rudge, 2001; Ofsted, 2002a:159; 2002b:4; 2005:6) and government concern to strengthen pupils' learning during this phase of education.[87]

The absence of *teachers'* voices in the RE research literature and the absence of data about teaching RE coming from teachers themselves determined the course the research took. A decision was made to conduct a survey across England which would invite practising teachers' responses to a questionnaire, drawing on their knowledge, practice and experience of teaching about Christianity. To facilitate contact with teachers throughout England, the survey was carried out by a postal questionnaire. To this end a pilot study was undertaken during the early part of 2004 and a questionnaire developed and piloted within two contrasting local education authorities. In the light of the pilot study the questionnaire was revised and preparations were made for the full survey in the autumn term, 2004.[88]

This chapter consequently describes first the evidence base of the survey, including details of sampling and a short analysis of both responding schools and respondents; second, it addresses the analysis of the data which was collected and third, it examines the provision

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[85] The basic curriculum (RE+National Curriculum) in maintained schools in England is structured in four key stages, corresponding to the age groups: 5 -7; 7-11; 11-14 & 14-16.
[86] Standing Advisory Committee for Religious Education, the statutory body locally convened and having responsibility for the monitoring of RE within a Local Authority area.
[87] The Key Stage 3 Strategy was launched by government in 2001 and remains fundamental to their ongoing concern to improve pupils' learning during this key stage. See http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/aboutKS3/
[88] Whilst the pilot study served primarily as a trialling of the questionnaire, an analysis of its findings was subsequently written and presented to the project's steering committee (Hayward, 2005).

for RE in respondents' schools, since this is also part of the relevant evidence base, providing important background to the major focus of the research that was undertaken.

1. The survey and its evidence base

1.1 The schools selected for the survey

The questionnaire was sent to *all* maintained secondary schools in Local Education Authorities (LEAs – now LAs) known to be using an agreed syllabus for RE dated 2001 or later at the end of the school year 2003-04. This ensured that the majority of those who participated in the survey would be working with a syllabus which had been recently reviewed[89] or produced. In effect this meant that the questionnaire was sent to all schools, including those with a religious character, in each of 54 LEAs across England; each of the 9 Government Office Regions was represented by this coverage. In total the questionnaire was sent to 1291 schools; its distribution by region, number of LEAs and schools is given in detail in Appendix A. In each case the questionnaire was addressed to the Head of Religious Education; an accompanying letter explained the purposes of the project, and guaranteed anonymity to respondents, their schools, and LEAs in any subsequent reporting and publications.

1.2 The questionnaire.

The questionnaire was designed with three objectives in mind. First, to gather information about ways in which 'Christianity' is represented and taught at KS3; second, to ask teachers to identify and reflect on their own experiences of studying *and* teaching the Christian tradition; third, to ask them to share their experience of the possibilities and challenges of teaching about Christianity during KS3. It was recognised from the beginning that accessing this kind of information would require the use of open questions, although the questionnaire also employed single and multiple response, coded and scaled questions. The use of open questions has provided a rich vein of information which would not otherwise have emerged from this study; at the same time responses to these questions demanded the development of a process of analysis which would be appropriate to the nature of the responses and sensitive to their interpretation, and not least because the completed questionnaires would be the only contact with respondents.[90]

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[89] Current legislation requires that agreed syllabuses are reviewed every 5 years.
[90] Initially, it was intended that a cross section of respondents should be contacted after completion of the postal survey to consolidate and take further responses to open questions; regrettably this did not prove possible within the available time frame. It was however encouraging that 77.97% of all those returning questionnaires indicated a willingness to be in further contact.

1.3 Responding schools

A full analysis of returns by region is given in Appendix A2; here I offer a broad profile of the school population from which completed questionnaires were received. First, completed questionnaires were returned from 286 schools, a 22.2% return rate overall; looked at in another way these returns represent 9.1% of all maintained secondary schools in England at the time of the survey.[91] Second, they include responses from schools with and without a religious character and represent all types of maintained school: Table 4 indicates the composition of the data received in relation to these factors. The representativeness of these responses compensates a little for the relatively low return rate of 22.2% from *sample* schools. At the same time, recognising that this still approaches 10% of *all* schools in England, the percentage of returns is arguably adequate for what is at heart a qualitative study, not a statistically based one.

When the figures in Table 4 (on the following page) are set in the wider context of *all* secondary schools at the time of the survey, schools with a religious character are *possibly* slightly over represented in the returns I received.[92] Attention is drawn to their presence here, since in what follows I differentiate, when appropriate, between responses from schools with a religious character and those with no religious character.

The balance of responses received not only reflected the religious character of the wider population of schools, but their age range and gender too. Thus 52.1% of returned questionnaires came from 11-18 schools, 46.5% from 11-16 schools, whilst 1.4% indicated a different age range. All schools included the full KS3 age range.

Respondents also indicated whether or not their school (below the age of 16) was co-educational; of the 280 responses to this question, 88.6% indicated that this was so, whilst responses from girls' schools (8.2%) outnumbered those from boys' schools (3.2%). These figures are included here to indicate that the returns, whilst perhaps fewer than anticipated, remain representative of the school population in England as a whole.

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[91] This is based on DfES statistics (DfES 2004) available at the time the questionnaire was distributed.
[92] 'Possibly' since the statistics relating to the religious character of maintained secondary schools underpinning this judgment (DfES 2004: Table 22b) include middle schools deemed secondary, which my work excluded.

Religious character[93] of respondent schools	% of returns	Comprising the following school types[94]
No religious character [NRC]	80.8%	Community school [177] Foundation School [49] Voluntary Aided [2] Voluntary Controlled [3]
Roman Catholic [RC]	11.2%	Voluntary Aided [32]
Church of England [CE]	7.3%	Voluntary Aided [19] Voluntary Controlled [2]
Other Christian [OC] [Mixed denomination]	0.7%	Voluntary Aided [2]

Table 4: Responding schools by religious character & school type

Age group:	22 - 29	30 – 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	Over 60
Male: As % of male respondents:	6 (6.8%)	32 (36.4%)	26 (29.5%)	24 (27.3%)	0
Female: As % of female respondents:	39 (19.7%)	61 (30.8%)	55 (27.8%)	40 (20.2%)	3 (1.0%)
All As % of all respondents:	45 (15.7%)	93 (32.5%)	81 (28.3%)	64 (22.4%)	3 (1.0%)

Table 5: Age and gender of respondents

1.4 The respondents

Since the questionnaire was addressed to the Head of Religious Education, it is assumed that respondents are those with key responsibility for RE in their school. Of the 286 respondents 88 (30.8%) were male and 198 (69.2%) female. The absence of publicly

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[93] My use of 'religious character', 'no religious character' and 'other Christian' to describe schools is an adoption of current government terminology.

[94] The School Standards and Framework Act, 1998 identifies four main categories of state-maintained school: community (CS), foundation (F), voluntary-controlled (VC) and voluntary-aided (VA). Administratively the key differences among them relate to governance, appointment of staff, and funding. With regard to RE, where schools in these categories have no religious character RE must be taught in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus adopted by the Local Authority which maintains the school. FC and VC schools with a religious character at the request of parents must provide RE in accordance with their trust deed or, where this makes no such provision, in accordance with the religion or denomination specified in the order designating its religious character. Where there is no such request, RE must be in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. In VA schools with a religious character RE is to be provided in accordance with the trust deed or, where this makes no such provision, in accordance with the religion or denomination specified in the order designating its religious character. For full details, see School Standards and Framework Act, 1988: Schedule 19, paras. 3 & 4; and Schedule 60 (5) which relates to staffing in schools with VA status.

available data on the gender of *all* RE teachers in post means it is not possible to state categorically that the ratio of women to men respondents is typical of RE. Nationally available figures for *all* full time qualified teachers in maintained secondary schools for 2004 indicated 54.23% female and 45.77% male (DfES, 2004), contrasting strongly with circumstantial evidence that in RE the ratio of women to men is approximately two to one - a ratio paralleled in the main among respondents to this survey. The exception here is that the gender balance among respondents from Roman Catholic schools, 46.9% male and 53.1% female is closer to the national average for all teachers cited above. Where respondents are further considered in relation to age group and gender [Table 5] it is clear that respondents came from all age groups and consequently represent a wide range of professional experience. It is their experience which constitutes the substance of Part 2 of this study. In subsequent chapters I draw extensively on individual 'voices' illustrative of the themes and issues which emerged from my analysis of the data.

2. The analysis of responses

The questionnaire was generated using a computer programme devised for conducting local surveys across a range of public services; this was the *Compass* programme developed and supported by Leeds Metropolitan University. It offered the facility of pre-prepared questions, but allowed users to set up independent questions, as I did. Once the questionnaire was set up, the entry of *each* respondent's answers proved a straightforward process; this was important given the timescale of the funded project and having sole responsibility for input and analysis of the data.[95]

In the case of the single and multiple response, coded and scaled questions *Compass* also facilitated the generation of numerical data. It is important to note here that where *such data is presented in this report the figures in the main are **valid** percentages*, that is they are based on the **actual** number of respondents to a particular question (the number of *non-respondents* is indicated separately). In the cases where percentages are based on the full number of respondents (286), that is when *all* respondents answered a particular question, this is clearly indicated. More importantly, since I had taken the decision to use a range of open questions (see below), I found *Compass* offered a facility for handling and analysing *short* responses, which allowed me to remain close to the text of these. Since my interests were qualitative, rather than statistical this was important. In relation to Q.19 (a) and Q.19

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[95] Entering c.114,000 responses (286 respondents x 40 questions, since each subsection of a question was entered separately – see questionnaire in Appendix A.3)

(b) (see Appendix A.3) I developed my own process of analysis based on semantic modelling. This is described below (2.2).

2.1 The use and analysis of open questions

Open questions elicited responses which were qualitatively varied. For example those related to curriculum content tended to list particular topics; in the case of such questions, key words were entered for *each* response, as 'dictated' by that response. This made it possible to generate frequency rates for each key word, providing the initial step in the analysis of these responses and facilitating the subsequent identification of key categories. This approach particularly underpins Chapter 5.

Other responses, of a more reflective quality, expressing personal conviction and opinion, demanded a different approach. My underpinning principle was to allow the *'texts'*, which comprised these responses, to 'speak' in their own terms and thus to generate their own categorisation. In the case of the responses which shape Chapter 8 of this study, this process was taken a step further and principles and methods more commonly used in semantic analysis[96] also contributed to my methodology.[97] This requires further comment.

2.2 Semantic analysis as a tool

The process, on which I reflect below, is set out clearly in Table 6; the table is essential to understanding the method, and so I first offer a brief note describing its stages. Fundamental to the process set out in Table 6, is a *repeated*, spiral *engagement* with the 'text' (second column, Table 6). This engagement, moving through thee stages (first column) and comprising nine steps (I.A to III.B), led first to a clustering of *categories*, a process recorded in both the right-hand column of Table 6, and in the arrows that indicate repeated interaction between 'text' and process. The two steps of Stage II (II.A, II.B) then led to a *mapping* and overview of those categories identified at Stage I. This then led naturally to the two steps (III.A, III.B) of Stage III, that is semantic analysis of the categories established at I.D, making possible a final tabulating of domains and sub-domains within the respondents' 'text'.

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[96] That is, a careful analysis of the *usage* of key words and phrases and their consequent meaning(s).
[97] Note that my analysis of responses to open questions was in each case 'data sensitive', that is I did not seek to impose one procedure but sought to develop methods of analysis appropriate to the data, informed but not dictated by research methods literature.

[98]Stage	'Text'	↔	Process
STAGE I **I. A**	Careful reading of and familiarisation with 'text' [i.e. responses]	→ ← →	Working *across* all responses: - identification of 'vague' responses/non-answers - preliminary discernment of themes/categories
I. B	Repeated reading of text	← →	Continue working *across* responses: - list (key) phrases, emphases, recurrent words, 'terms' etc. ↓ - cluster the above, taking care not to lose nuancing ↓ - provisional identification /naming of themes/categories
I. C	Read/re-read text of *each* response	← →	↓ Cluster individual responses (by reference numbers) around 'relevant' theme/ category. *Note: this is a provisional clustering, open to adjustment.*
I. D	Read /work through text again, i.e. for *each* theme/category – again a constant interplay between text and process.	← → ← → ← →	Open page for *each* theme/category ↓ Transcribe text [i.e. response or part response) for each/theme category identified until all have been covered. *Note: revision of allocations made at I. C & of categories still possible here.*
I. E	Re-visit text	← →	Highlight any elements which have *not* come within the now identified themes/categories ↓ Note any matters relating to these elements.
STAGE II **II. A**			'Mapping' & overview of categorisation: Using *Excel* spreadsheet: - row allocated for *each* respondent (using reference number allocated at data input stage) - columns allocated to each theme/category identified in **Stage I**, and code allocated to each e.g. WL:'Way of life'.
II. B	Again, re-visiting of text - in parallel with entries under each theme/category	← → ← →	↓ Using information collated at **I.D** entries made in each column, as appropriate for each respondent. *Note: continued interplay with text; also continuing openness to text & possibility of reviewing categorisation*
STAGE III **III. A**	Reading text again to facilitate clarity re. category domains & boundaries	↔ ↔	Working with *each* of the established categories, 'domains' were identified and boundaries refined. This entailed: - Re visiting *each* response/part response assigned to *each* category - Re-reading *all* responses as one further delineated the category.
III. B			In light of **III. A**, tabulating of domains and their sub-domains.

Table 6: An analytical process developed in relation to open questions

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[98] 'Stage' is used here to indicate the major steps in the analysis I undertook

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Reference has already been made to the nature of the 'text' (2.1 above). The brevity of the responses within it distinguishes it from the longer texts (transcripts of interviews, diaries for example) envisaged in many writings on qualitative methods. While the emergent categories at the end of Stage I were clarified and consolidated at Stage II, this did not subsume all the data within the 'text' (a point to which I shall return); the process had ensured that those categories identified emerged *from* the 'text' and were not imposed. [The engagement of a colleague not hitherto involved with the text offered the possibility of checking out this conviction.] Whilst the next step could have been to move towards the reduction of categories in the interests of a (greater) conceptualisation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) or the identification of sub-categories (Dey, 1993), neither of these approaches was seen as appropriate. First, it seemed that in the process followed categorisation and conceptualisation were two sides of one coin; and, second, that the nature of the data and the resultant categories did not lend themselves to the development of sub-categories. Nevertheless I wished to examine further and track the nature of the categories which had emerged from the text; the cues for categories and, in most cases, their designations were provided by the prevalence of *particular* words within the text e.g. Tolerate, Respect, Understanding. A logical step forward was to ask how the use of these terms and the categories denoted by them might be better understood. A cue was taken both from this identification of particular words and from work with which I was familiar in other disciplines, in particular the semantic analysis undertaken by scholars in relation to New Testament texts. In their *Greek - English Lexicon*, Louw and Nida set out to establish the semantic domains of the 'entire vocabulary' of the New Testament. One of the distinguishing features of their lexicon, marking it out from many dictionaries – is its focus on meanings and its systematic delineation of these in relation to any given word. In this enterprise one of the underpinning procedural principles adopted by Louw and Nida is close attention to the immediate textual context, but also to the extra textual usage of a word [for Louw and Nida historical texts] in establishing the 'constellation' of meanings which gather around any given word. Put another way *meaning* resides in the use of words, and recognition of this calls for more than dictionary definition if we are to understand a text. A further attraction of the approach taken by Louw and Nida lay in the fact that their lexicographical work, necessarily concerned with individual words, takes account even of prepositions and conjunctions: the nature of my text (comprised of individual responses, often in a brief and terse style) clearly demanded a close attention to individual words and this close attention to the text at the categorisation stage had already begun to indicate that the nuancing of particular words was frequently shaped by their association with a linking word – 'of', 'that', or 'towards' for

example. I recognised also that past and current discourse within the field of Religious Education constitutes one of the contexts which would necessarily inform my understanding of the 'text' – a significant 'extra-textual' source.

Recognising that a constellation of meanings may surround a word, Louw and Nida set out to establish the semantic domain of each word in their study, systematically setting out its constituent sub-domains; the delineation of these contributes not only to a clearer understanding of *each* word, but also offers a bigger canvas which enables one to see authentic inter-relationships among words. This dual focus – 'micro' and 'macro' perspectives – also has significance for my analysis.

At this point I return to the question posed above: how might one gain a clearer insight into the categories established in Stages I and II of the process? The answer lay in those features of the work of Louw and Nida to which I have pointed above. At Stage III in the process a decision was taken to re-visit my (hitherto) 'categories' and see whether it was possible to identify and *map* their 'constellations'; in effect, my initial categories were to become domains, each marked out by its constituent sub-domains. Examples of domains and their sub-domains are given in Appendix D.1

It is important to note that the task undertaken here was not in the main lexicographical, although it is the case that some categories relate to the use of one word which has emerged from the text. Others take a phrase, for example 'Living faith', 'Being Christian' and 'Way of life' , which appears in its own right in the text and serves as a category name, but is also used to denote closely related ideas. In a number of cases a group of related ideas have been allocated a name by the researcher, as in the case of 'Status' for example; and had this been a lexicographical study *per se* each concept identified under 'Specific Concepts' or 'Specific Values' would have demanded study in its own right. At Stage III then I proceeded on the basis of the following premises:

- that the conceptualisation of the text represented by my categories was accurate;

- that the insights offered by the work of Louw and Nida, in particular those of domain analysis, provided a way of gaining a closer and more finely tuned understanding of the text;

- that the delineation of domains would necessitate further close engagement with the text;

- that this process in itself might necessitate a review of the already identified domains (i.e. the earlier 'categories'); this however would be entirely consistent with our understanding of the process undertaken [Table 6] as a hermeneutical spiral.

In re-visiting the text and establishing the domain represented by each of the identified categories, the spreadsheet prepared at Stage II proved a practical tool, enabling the quick retrieval of text allocated to each category. In turn this was examined in detail, and in due course it was possible to tabulate sub-domains for the majority of our categories – now 'domains'; those indicative of generalisations in my text – 'teachings', 'beliefs' – could not of course be handled in this way.

The process thus far – as outlined in Table 6 – was followed for *each* type of school in the survey as a whole; handling their 'texts' separately enabled me to see first of all whether and where the two diverge and to view each in its own right. But it also proved possible to indicate convergence, by bringing both together at Stage II – responses mapped on to a shared spreadsheet record both convergence and divergence. At Stage III a careful consideration of the emergent domains and sub-domains for each school type was undertaken; commonalities and differences noted, and domains extended where necessary as findings for the two types of school were brought together.

Further comments relating to my analysis of questions will be made as appropriate in the course of this study. I turn now to the evidence base which underpins the survey, and which I believe establishes it as a key contribution to the picture of RE in England in the present.[99]

3. Provision and guidance for RE in respondents' schools

The questionnaire focused on two aspects of provision: staffing and the syllabuses and guidelines used for RE. Responses to these questions are informative in relation to RE generally, but are pertinent in relation to the central concern of this study – Christianity in RE.

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[99] The only comparable piece of research, based on teachers' responses, and undertaken by a non-government body, appears to be that of the Culham College Institute (1989), whose 'Christianity in RE' programme sought teachers' views on a range of issues relating to RE provision, and the teaching of
Christianity in particular. Whist my own areas of interest are similar, there is not in the main sufficient overlap in our studies to justify comparisons being made. I have referred briefly elsewhere (Ch2 (1)), to their curriculum project materials. I am grateful to the Culham Institute for making their questionnaire and summary of research findings available to me.

3.1 Staffing for RE in respondents' schools

The provision of specialist teachers for RE continues to be a national concern; the questionnaire had three concerns in this respect: a comparison of specialist provision for RE in schools with and without a religious character; the use of 'teachers whose specialism is not in RE',[100] and the proportion of RE lessons delivered during KS3 by such teachers.

It was anticipated that schools with a religious character might make more generous specialist provision for RE; this proved to be the case [Table 7]. It was only among schools with no religious character [NRC] that a total absence of specialist teachers was found. At the other end of the scale, where more than four RE specialists are employed, these schools again compared unfavourably with those having a religious character: only 10.4% had four or more specialists compared with 33.4% [CE] and 68.8% [RC] schools. A small note of caution is necessary here with regard to respondents' understanding of the phrase 'specialist teacher of Religious Education' used in the questionnaire. Some respondents indicated that they had no qualifications in the area of religious studies/RE; others explained they had moved into RE from other curriculum areas. In each case they were the 'specialist' by virtue of teaching and taking responsibility for RE. This needs to be borne in mind when looking at Table 4.

The indications of greater specialist provision for RE in schools with a religious character does not however mean that these schools do not draw on teachers whose specialism is not RE. The evidence gathered suggests that most schools find it necessary to draw in some degree on colleagues from other disciplines [Table 8]. Whilst Church of England schools depend least on such colleagues, Roman Catholic schools, although more favourably staffed for RE [Table 7], depend heavily on them overall. The absence of accessible national figures to provide a context for Table 7's evidence makes it difficult to assess how typical the figures here might be. Overall, however, 80.6% of 284 respondents on this issue indicated use of 'non-specialist' teachers in the delivery of RE in their schools.

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[100] Note that the questionnaire did not use 'non - specialist'; the term is used here for brevity in relation to Tables 8 and 9.

Number of specialists:	All schools % of 286	NRC schools % of 231	CE schools % of 21	RC schools % of 32	OC schools % of 2
One	26.2	29.4	23.8	6.3	----
Two	29.7	32.5	28.6	12.5	----
Three	21.3	23.4	14.3	12.5	----
Four	9.8	6.5	23.8	25.0	----
Five	4.9	2.2	4.8	25.0	----
Six or more	4.5	1.7	4.8	18.8	100.0
NONE	3.5	4.3	----	----	----

Table 7: Respondents' schools by religious character and provision of specialist RE teachers

No. of 'Non-specialists':	All Schools % of 284	NRC schools % of 230	CE Schools % of 21	RC schools % of 31	OC schools % of 2
One	21.8	22.2	9.5	29.0	----
Two	15.5	13.5	9.5	35.5	----
Three	15.1	16.5	19.0	3.2	----
Four	9.5	10.0	9.5	6.5	----
Five	4.9	5.7	4.8	----	----
Six	13.7	15.7	4.8	6.5	----
NONE	19.4	16.5	42.9	19.4	100.0
No response	2 schools	1 school	----	1 school	----

Table 8: Use of teachers whose specialism is not RE

% of lessons taught by 'non-specialists':	All Schools % of 285	NRC schools % of 231	CE schools % of 21	RC schools % of 30	OC schools % of 2
Over 75%	11.9	13.9	----	6.5	----
50%- 74%	11.9	13.4	14.3	----	----
25%- 49%	13.7	15.2	9.5	6.5	----
Up to 25%	39.6	37.7	33.3	61.3	----
NONE	22.8	19.9	42.9	25.8	100.0
No response	1 school	----	---	1 school	----

Table 9: Percentage of RE lessons at KS3 taught by teachers whose specialism is not RE

The figures set out in Tables 7 and 8 do not of course indicate the percentage of RE lessons taught by RE specialists or by those whose specialism is not RE. Respondents were however asked to estimate, within given ranges, the percentage of lessons taught *at KS3* by colleagues whose specialism was not RE. This is summarised in Table 9. The high proportion of lessons taught at KS3 by 'non-specialists' prompts the question of where – at which key stage – subject knowledge and expertise is best employed, but also serves as a reminder that Christianity at a crucial stage in students' education may be substantially addressed by teachers who have made no formal study of the tradition.

3.2 Syllabuses and guidelines in use for RE

All except 4 respondents identified the syllabus (es) they used for RE. Given the prevalence of respondents from community and foundation schools with no religious character, it was not surprising that 96.5% indicated use of an LEA agreed syllabus. 42.9% of Church of England respondents also used an agreed syllabus and 28.6% used a Diocesan scheme – sometimes the two were used in combination. A further 42.9% referred to syllabuses or schemes peculiar to their school, often noting their indebtedness to diocesan or LEA syllabuses/guidance. Among respondents from Roman Catholic schools, only one used an agreed syllabus. Most Roman Catholic respondents named Roman Catholic schemes: *Icons*[101] – recognised as the national scheme at KS3 – was mentioned by 56.3% of respondents; *'The Way, the Truth and the Life'* [102] and the *'Catholic (Curriculum) Directory'*[103] were each used respectively by 12.5% of respondents; others referred to use of diocesan and/or their own syllabuses or schemes. A few mentioned older materials – for example, *Weaving the Web.*[104] A small number of responses (from schools with no religious affiliation) reported use of centrally produced materials – variously described – including the 'QCA agreed syllabus', 'QCA Units', 'DfEE syllabus' and the non-statutory national framework for RE (published during the period of the survey), but this confusion about the status of central documentation was not prevalent. What remains distinctive here is the way in which Anglican schools and Roman Catholic schools interpret their voluntary aided status in relation to RE.

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[101] Martin, M.J., White, A., Brook, A *et al.* (2000) *Icons* 2nd edition. London. HarperCollins.
[102] A series and syllabus published by the Catholic truth Society: see http://www.cts-online.org.uk/way.htm
[103] Bishops' Conference of England & Wales (1996) *Religious Education Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools.*
[104] McClure, M., & Lohan, R., (1988/89) *Weaving the Web.* London. Collins Educational.

3.3 Syllabuses and feeder schools

Identifying the syllabuses used by schools is important in relation to another matter explored in the survey, that of continuity in RE for pupils moving from KS2 to KS3. Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of their feeder schools using the same or a related syllabus at KS2 to that used at KS3 [Table 10].

% of feeder schools using same syllabus	All schools [% of 253]	NRC schools [% of 206]	CE schools [% 0f 18]	RC schools [% of 28]	OC schools [1]
Over 75%	70.0	77.2	22.2	50.0	----
50-74%	12.6	11.7	27.8	10.7	----
25-49%	7.5	5.8	5.6	17.9	100.0
Less than 25%	9.9	5.3	44.4	21.4	----
NO RESPONSE	33	25	3	4	1

Table10: Estimated percentage of feeder schools using same syllabus as that used at KS3

The low response rate on this issue suggests a lack of knowledge – and some who did not respond indicated this. The figures for schools with no religious affiliation reflect agreed syllabus use and point to the *potential* of an agreed syllabus for ensuring continuity. That Church of England schools emerge as the most 'disadvantaged' needs to be seen in relation to the number of feeder schools from which they drew pupils [Table 11]; 66.7% drew their pupils from upwards of 21 schools, compared with 19.2 % of schools with no religious character and 28.1% of Roman Catholic schools.

The figures provided in Tables 10 and 11 provide data relevant to discussion of transition from KS2 to KS3 in RE and reflect two key concerns respondents had about transition – that syllabuses are subject to diverse interpretation and that pupils' experience of RE is consequently very varied. Whilst the theme of transition cannot be explored here, it must be

Number of feeder schools	All schools [% of 279]	NRC schools [% of 224]	CE schools [% 0f 21]	RC schools [% of 32]	OC schools [2]
Up to 5	11.8	12.9	----	12.5	----
6-10	38.0	41.5	19.0	28.1	----
11-15	15.4	16.5	9.5	12.5	----
16-20	10.4	9.8	4.8	18.8	----
21-25	8.6	6.7	23.8	12.5	----
More than 25	15.8	12.5	42.9	15.6	100.0
NO RESPONSE	7	7	---	----	----

Table 11: Responses by schools' religious character to the question: How many feeder schools does your school draw its pupils from?

noted that the quality and nature of pupils' learning at KS2, and hence the picture of Christianity which they begin to acquire, and on which teachers can build during KS3 emerged as very uneven.

Chapter 5: The representation of Christianity at key stage 3

1. Contextual matters

This section covers the central focus of the survey I undertook. It focuses on 3 areas which provide insight into the ways that schools meet the requirement placed on them of teaching about Christianity: the time given to Christianity in RE in KS3; teachers' preferred approaches to teaching Christianity; and the representation of Christianity – the subject at the heart of this study. Time is addressed here since teachers' responses demonstrate the prioritising of Christianity in RE to which I have earlier drawn attention; in turn the time available bears upon what is possible in school.

1.1 Time

The place given to Christianity in RE has been debated and discussed since the specific naming of the tradition in legislation and the interpretation that it should 'predominate' in the RE curriculum (DFE,1994: paragraph 35); the current recommendation is that it should be taught 'throughout each key stage' (QCA, 2004:12). This advice must be seen in the context of the non-statutory framework's further recommendation that by the end of KS3 pupils will also have studied the other five (so called) 'principal religions' 'in sufficient depth'; to this must be added opportunities to study other locally represented religious traditions and a secular worldview. It is against this background that allocation of time to any one tradition needs to be viewed; and from this perspective schools are generous in their time allocation to Christianity. Table 12 sets out the evidence for this from my survey; in total 282 of the 286 respondents answered the question about time.

% of time for Christianity in KS3	All schools % of 282 responses	NRC schools % of 228 responses	CE schools % of 21 responses	RC schools % of 31 responses	OC schools % of 2 responses
Over 50%	29.4	20.2	61.9	71.0	100.0
41%-50%	30.9	36.4	14.3	3.2	----
20%-40%	30.9	34.6	14.3	16.1	----
Less than 20%	8.9	8.8	9.5	9.7	----
No Response	4	3	----	1	

Table 12: Allocation of time to Christianity at KS3

That those schools with a Christian affiliation should allocate most time to Christianity was not of course surprising; that they 'scored' more highly than those with no religious affiliation at the 'less than 20%' level was. In the case of schools with no religious character it is clear that – contrary to public voices which from time to time regret the passing of Christianity in the RE curriculum – 56.6% are giving more than 40% of KS3 time to Christianity; those

giving less time need to be set within the context noted above. The 34.6% giving 20% - 40% of RE time are still likely to be prioritising this tradition.

1. 2 Preferred approaches to teaching Christianity

Discussion surrounding the preparation and publication of Model Syllabuses for RE (SCAA, 1994) focused attention on approaches to the study of religions in RE. The models gave priority to religions as discrete systems; syllabuses adopting a thematic approach, whether by focusing on a cross religion theme, e.g. worship, or a theme exploring an aspect of human experience e.g. suffering, were not developed. The non-statutory framework adopts a permissive stance (QCA, 2004:11) as long as its 'breadth of study' recommendations are observed.[105] The present survey sought to discover teacher preferences in this matter, but with particular reference to approaches to teaching Christianity [Table:13].

Preferred approach to Christianity:	ALL % of 285 responses	NRC schools % of 230 responses	CE schools % of 21 responses	RC schools % of 31 responses	OC schools % of 2 responses
Systematic	38.9	34.3	52.4	59.4	100.0
Thematic: religions	15.8	16.1	9.5	18.8	----
Thematic: human experience	20.7	21.7	19.0	15.6	----
Other approaches	17.2	19.6	9.5	6.3	----
No preference	7.4	8.3	9.5	----	----
No response	1	1	----	----	----

Table 13: Respondents' preferred approaches to teaching Christianity

The preference expressed for a systematic approach to Christianity may reflect the influence of the model syllabuses for RE (SCAA: 1994) on agreed syllabus development for over a decade; it is however more markedly the preferred approach among teachers in schools with a Christian character. Table 13 also indicates that among respondents from schools with no religious character and from Church of England schools, thematic approaches *to religions* are the least popular, possibly reflecting critiques of an RE rooted in phenomenological approaches to religions. In the light of responses elsewhere in this survey, the preference for themes rooted in human experience and questioning points to an RE related to pupil interests, and to the long held position amongst teachers that RE is concerned with *more*

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[105] Keast (2006:25-27) relates the respective positions of the model syllabuses and the framework to differing political agendas, and a weighting of RE professionals' voices which is relative to those of other players; the systematic approach is thus laid squarely at the feet of a government concerned for 'Christian heritage'.

than the study of religions – a stance to which attention was drawn in Part 1 of this study. Respondents indicating a preference for 'other approaches' in the main explained that they preferred a combination of those listed.

2. Questions about the representation of Christianity

A key interest of the survey was to discover something of the 'picture' of Christianity which pupils may encounter in RE during KS3 in school. A questionnaire cannot of course capture the dynamic of learning or teaching about Christianity *in situ*; but it may be used to discover those elements of the tradition which teachers find it important to include in their RE programmes at KS3. The questionnaire therefore asked respondents to

Describe briefly and for each year [i.e. years 7, 8 and 9]
A. Those teaching units which are concerned ONLY with Christianity
and
B. Any thematic units (e.g. Sacred Writings/Worship/ Why is there suffering? etc.) which draw on Christianity AND one or more religions.

The analysis of the subsequent responses to A and B proved demanding on account of the failure of some respondents to distinguish clearly between parts A and B of the above request; a consequence of this is that there is probably an inbuilt degree of overlap in answers at A and B – for example A may in some cases indicate the Christian content of thematic teaching indicated at B. In a small number of cases where this was especially apparent, it was possible to transfer A material to B in the process of analysis, but in the main such adjustments have been avoided. Responses to A and B were treated separately but in the same way; for each individual response its key words, and sometimes phrases, were recorded. The frequency with which the key words were used facilitated the identification of broader categories.[106] These are the lenses – of varying strengths – through which the Christian tradition is refracted in RE. They are set out in the summary Tables 14A and 14B (relating to A), and Tables 15A and 15B (relating to B). This process of analysis was applied to each group of schools (NRC, CE and RC) and to each year within KS3; during this process it became clear that responses from schools with no religious character and those from Church of England schools presented a very similar picture. Those from Roman Catholic schools proved less open to analysis;[107] 56.3% of respondents indicated

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[106] Cf. Note on analysis on p. 112. The full 'content' of each category is indicated in Appendices B.1-B.6
[107] In view of the high incidence of respondents using recognised Roman Catholic schemes, no tabulation of content is included here.

use of *Icons*, some of whom simply referred the researcher to the published programme. The responses received from Roman Catholic schools, indicate that the lens through which they present Christianity is usually that of the schools' own tradition; this is not of course to say that other Christian churches are ignored in RE, but to recognise that the orientation of teaching about Christianity is Roman Catholic.

3. Teaching directly about Christianity

Table 14A provides a composite picture of 'Christianity at KS3' as it emerges from the responses received to part A of the question; it sets out in summary the focal areas and their relative weighting for each year of KS3 in schools with no religious character. Table 14B does the same for Church of England schools. Both tables should be read in conjunction with Appendices B.1 to B.3; the appendices indicate the content and nature of the responses which comprise the focal areas named in Tables 14A and 14B.[108] A number of observations emerge from these summary tables:

- There is no preferred year for teaching a particular aspect of Christianity; any aspect may fall in any year, although there are shifts in weighting and hence emphasis from year to year. For example, 'Faith in action' (Yr.9) ranks more highly than its corresponding categories in other years: 'Key figures' in Year 7 or 'Figures of faith' in Year 8; note that the variation in 'title' here intentionally reflects the wording of responses comprising the named focus. Similarly, 'Social & moral Issues' emerge quite strongly in Year 9, but were a small element in Year 8, and absent in Year 7. Conversely 'Bible' features in Years 7 and 8, but in Year 9 only warranted inclusion under the more amorphous 'Other'. To note these features is to draw attention not only to shifting emphases across the key stage, but is illustrative also of my intention to work closely with the 'texts' constituted by teachers' responses.

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[108] The shaded columns [Tables 14A & 14B and 15A & 15B] giving a rank order of topics taught in any year are intended simply to facilitate comparison between the two types of school represented by the tables and the priority given to particular topics in any year group.

KS3:	YEAR 7	%		YEAR 8	%		YEAR 9	%
1	JESUS	31.86	1	JESUS	24.92	1	JESUS	12.40
2	CHURCH(ES)	10.36	2	CHURCH(ES)/HISTORY	17.13	2	FAITH IN ACTION	10.74
3	BIBLE	7.77	3	BIBLE/SACRED BOOKS	9.66	3	SOCIAL/MORAL ISSUES[Specific]	9.50
4	BELIEF[S]	6.47	4	BELIEF(S)	8.72	4	CHURCH(ES)/CHURCH HISTORY	9.09
5	WORSHIP/PRACTICE	6.21	5	WORSHIP/PRACTICE	8.41	5	WORSHIP/PRACTICE	9.09
6	FESTIVALS/CALENDAR	4.92	6	FESTIVALS/CALENDAR	4.36	6	GOD	7.44
7	GOD	5.44	7	FIGURES OF FAITH	4.05	7	ETHICS/MORAL ISSUES [General]	7.02
8	KEY FIGURES	3.88	8	VALUES	3.74	8	BELIEF(S)	6.20
9	VALUES	3.88	9	GOD	3.74	9	RITES OF PASSAGE	5.78
10	CREATION	2.84	10	BEING CHRISTIAN	2.18	10	QUESTIONS	4.54
11	SIGNS & SYMBOLS	2.07	11	SIGNS/SYMBOLS	1.87	11	BEING CHRISTIAN	4.13
12	BEING CHRISTIAN	2.07	12	MORAL ISSUES	1.56	12	VALUES	2,89
13	OTHER	1.03	13	OTHER	2.49	13	SCIENCE & RELIGION	2.89
14	THEMES	3.62		CHRISTIANITY UNIT	7.16	14	OTHER/THEMES	2.89
	CHRISTIANITY UNIT	7.51					CHRISTIANITY UNIT	5.37

Table 14A: Teaching 'directly' about Christianity: schools with no religious character

KS3:	YEAR 7	%		YEAR 8	%		YEAR 9	%
1	JESUS	24.44	1	CHURCH(ES)/HISTORY	23.25	1	JESUS	19.05
2	BIBLE	17.77	2	JESUS	16.28	2	FAITH IN ACTION	19.05
3	WORSHIP/PRACTICE	8.88	3	WORSHIP/PRACTICE	16.28	3	BIBLE	14.28
4	CHURCH	8.88	4	BIBLE/SACREDBOOKS	9.30	4	WORSHIP/PRACTICE	9.52
5	FESTIVALS	6.66	5	BELIEF[S]/GOD	6.98	5	CHURCH(ES)	9.52
6	GOD	6.66	6	FIGURES OF FAITH	6.98	6	SOCIAL/MORAL ISSUES[Specific]	9.52
7	BELIEF[S]/CREED	4.44	7	MORAL ISSUES	6.98	7	QUESTIONS	9.52
8	VALUES	4.44	8	OTHER	4.65	8	OTHER	9.52
9	OTHER/THEMES	11.11		CHRISTIANITY UNIT	9.30			
	CHRISTIANITY UNIT	6.68						

Table 14B: Teaching 'directly' about Christianity: Church of England schools

- The presence of a key focus *across* the three years should not be taken to indicate continuity of content – or of learning – in that area. For example, 'Jesus' remains the most important focus in each year in schools with no religious affiliation; however, only seven respondents indicated a focus on Jesus in *each* year; six indicated teaching about Jesus in Years 7 *and* 8, four in Years 7 *and* 9 and one in Years 8 *and* 9 only.

- Whilst responses point to a wide range of areas being covered, it is clear that some are only very lightly weighted; that is their place in the overall picture is relatively slight. Conversely, note that in Year 7 (NRC schools) just three of the focal areas – Jesus, Church, Bible – constitute 49.99% of the picture; in Year 8 the same three areas account for 51.71%, whilst five areas account for 50.82% of material about Christianity in Year 9.

- Although the tables present material from Church of England schools separately, it is clear that responses point to curriculum content consistent with that offered by their non-religious counterparts (and with the use by many Church of England schools of locally agreed syllabuses). The table does however indicate that the weight given to some topics may be greater than that given by schools with no religious affiliation: for example attention to 'Worship and practice' emerges as a stronger element in Church of England schools, especially in Year 8. The smaller range of topics emerging from responses from Church of England schools, and therefore of key focal areas may be accounted for by the smaller number of schools.

Beyond these overarching observations about Tables 14A and 14B, some comments may be made about aspects of the representation of Christianity which my analysis has identified. It is not however my intention to comment on all of these, rather to focus on those areas which are most prominent.

Jesus

Copley and Walshe (2002) identified KS3 as the time when pupils are most likely to encounter the figure of Jesus in RE; the present survey found that 23.06% of all discrete teaching about Christianity in KS3 focused on Jesus. (Additionally, analysis of responses to a question in the survey which is not reported on in this study indicates familiarity with the figure of Jesus to be most characteristic of pupils' knowledge of Christianity on entering secondary school.) The responses also show

that whilst the figure of Jesus is prominent in teaching about Christianity at KS3, such prominence gradually diminishes during the key stage [Table 14A]; most attention is given to Jesus in Year 7, least in year 9. This points first to a need to consider the nature of the understanding pupils may acquire at age 11-12, as well as ways of sustaining interest and developing understanding of material familiar to many pupils from key stage 2. Given Jesus' centrality in the Christian tradition, it may also be asked what kind of understanding may be gained about him if the main age at which most pupils' learn about him is 11-13. Copley and Walshe (2002) identified 'deficiencies' in the 'treatment' of Jesus in the curriculum proposed by agreed syllabuses; among these they included neglect of current New Testament scholarship, absence of other religions' views of Jesus and a failure to set Jesus in the context of Christian belief in him as Saviour and Lord. Perhaps one issue in the failure for the curriculum to be informed by these matters is the 'cut off age' for teaching about Jesus. More importantly, it could be argued that RE (and not least its syllabuses) has largely avoided the question of the dynamic *relation* of 'subject knowledge' which we may expect teachers to possess from their own studies (Religious Studies/Theology), 'school knowledge' (school RE) and 'pedagogical knowledge'. The tendency has been, I suggest, for RE to focus on one of these areas to the detriment of the others. [109]

Unfortunately, the frequent use of general phrases − for example 'the life of Jesus', 'the teaching of Jesus' − by respondents to this survey does not provide insight into the *nature of the understanding* teachers hoped their pupils would develop. Only a few responses referred to specific teaching of Jesus or to specific ideas characteristic of his teaching; for example, just two responses from all those received referred to the 'kingdom of God'; and two referred to the beatitudes. A small number of responses indicated concern with the identity of Jesus in Years 7 and 8 − usually by their addressing of the question 'Who is/was Jesus?' whilst a very small number addressed the titles of Jesus or beliefs about him − and thus by implication his significance for Christians. Whilst silence on the part of the majority must not be

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[109] I am indebted to Banks, Leach & Moon 'New understandings of teachers' pedagogic knowledge' in [Moon, Mayes & Hutchinson, eds., 2002:70-79] for these three terms and their discussion of them with reference to the teaching of English. They comment that 'It is the interaction of subject knowledge, school knowledge and pedagogical understanding and experience that brings teacher professional knowledge into being' (75).
They recognise also that at the heart of this dynamic lies also the teacher's personal subject construct (75-77) comprising e.g. their view of (in our case) RE, their personal biography, and their experience of education/past employment.

taken to imply that attention is not given to such matters, the weighting of the evidence I have appears to concur with the findings of Copley & Walshe (2002).

Responses to a later question in the present survey appear to indicate that respondents' aspirations for their pupils are that they will understand Jesus' teachings and the values which arise from these, and perhaps be able to see Jesus as a role model, irrespective of personal faith stances. A similar perspective may underpin the second part of the following response in its reference to work undertaken with Year 8 pupils entitled 'Jesus challenge':

> 'Who is Jesus?' 8 weeks on C20th art from across the world and different perspectives (Hindu, Islam, atheist etc). 'Jesus Challenge' – Commitment, justice, forgiveness, peace.
> [132:NRC]

We may wish to ask what is happening here. Does 'Jesus challenge' simply imply 'learning from' in a loose sense that hopes pupils will find what they learn engaging and thought provoking? Or do some responses about teaching Christianity perhaps suggest there are unvoiced assumptions which underpin teaching about this tradition, and which would not be held in relation to others? This is a point to which I return briefly at the end of this chapter. For the present, I wonder whether teachers would head a unit of work 'Muhammad challenge' or 'Guru Nanak challenge'.

Church

The subject of the church is particularly to the fore in Year 8, whilst also having a relatively high weighting in the presentation of Christianity in Years 7 and 9. As with 'Jesus' the responses rarely give sufficient detail to indicate the scope or objectives of the teaching undertaken. A response may simply be 'The Church', but responses focus also on the church as a building, on denominations and sometimes on the church in the community. In the case of buildings a number refer to the task of designing a church for several denominations, a task some derived from *This is RE* Book 2 - the only textbook series mentioned in responses.[110] Often just one of these aspects of 'Church' is mentioned in isolation from, or in loose association with other items in a list of topics for a year group, as in these outlines for Year 7:

> Significance of Jesus for Christians; Images of Jesus; secularisation of Christmas; Denominations. [078:NRC]

> Creation. Life of Jesus. Easter. The Church. Prayer. [112:NRC]

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[110] Large, C., Ingham, J., Parker, A. (2003) *This is RE!* Book 2. London. John Murray.

In Year 8 and Year 9 responses sometimes make a link with the history of the church or its beginnings:

Christianity: Pentecost; Great schism; Reformation; Denominations; Ecumenism. [024:NRC]

Early church and an individual research project on a local modern Christian community. [262:NRC]

The Church – from the beginning to the present day (diversity/unity & local/ worldwide)........ [204:CE]

'One Church' origins of Christianity, denominations, history and diversity of the church. [020:NRC]

Pentecost/ Birth of the Church deacons and priests. Christian denominations. Overseas missions. [021:NRC]

Reference is sometimes made to particular churches as in these brief accounts of Christianity in Year 8:

Mother Teresa, Salvation Army, prayer & Holy Communion. [106:CE]

RC & Baptist Church. [176:CE]

Perhaps the few who indicated that they focused on the 'church in the community' may come closest to addressing 'church' as a concept:

.........The Church in the community – looking at how and what the different denominations offer the community, how church design reflects key Christian beliefs. [253:NRC]

Community – examples of Christian communities (Salvation Army) Church structure, denominations........ [038:NRC]

Just one response, outlining Year 7 work, appeared to pick up theological language Christians may use of the church – although the placing of 'Body of Christ' within the list of topics does carry some ambiguity:

Christian Beliefs & practice – Creed/Trinity/Baptism/ 'Body of Christ'/Eucharist. Denominations. Traditional/Various church buildings. [281:NRC] [My italics.]

Against the weighting given to church related topics across KS3, must be set responses to other questions where 'Denominations' emerged as the second most difficult area for students to understand and also figured highly among those aspects of Christianity which respondents identified as difficult to teach . I suggested earlier that churches and denominations potentially provide the primary data for studying Christianity in the present; they offer raw materials out of which an understanding of 'church' may emerge, they may contribute both to pupils' developing 'picture of Christianity', and offer 'cases' against which perceptions of 'Christianity' either personally held or derived from other sources may be tested. But this requires an immediacy of contact with communities and their members which did not seem to be

readily open to respondents, either in terms of direct contact or the use of internet sources. Whilst it is important not to argue from 'silence' on these matters, only one respondent referred to such contact in describing Year 8 teaching about Christianity, but responsibility for this appeared to lie with students themselves:

> 'Can you build a church for five denominations?' Use This is RE! Book 2 as the basis for unit on churches. The unit also includes pupils visiting a church by themselves and having local ministers visit. [237:NRC]

Whilst a few respondents did identify the use of visits and visitors at other points in their responses to the questionnaire, the numbers were relatively few. This evidence may be compared with the findings of the survey of RE undertaken by QCA's Monitoring Curriculum and Assessment Team in 2004-2005 and which overlapped in time with mine.[111] Whilst 56.3% of 332 responding schools indicated that their RE curriculum made provision for pupils to visit places of worship, it was also clear that by no means all pupils in a given year group made such visits and that the number of pupils participating in visits steadily decreased after Year 7. QCA evidence also indicated that 63.9% of 332 respondents included visits from members of faith communities in the RE curriculum, and that 'the vast majority of visits from members of faith communities within schools are from the Christian faith' (QCA, 2005:36). But their respondents also identified problems encountered in arranging visits and in inviting visitors into school: 'The majority of responding RE departments experience problems arranging or receiving faith community visits. The most common problem experienced is lack of curriculum time. Budget constraints, availability of staff, knowledge of how to find visitors and the location of the school were also mentioned by over a third of schools.' (ibid.)

Such difficulties may well militate against the use of visits and speakers as part of the 'primary' evidence for the exploration of 'churches and denominations'. It may also be the case that other aspects of Christianity – or indeed teaching about other religions - command this kind of 'direct' access. On the other hand it may be that this particular topic could be seen in new ways which might fully utilise local resources.

One response to another question in my survey indicated use of the internet in relation to 'Churches and denominations': clearly this offers another avenue which makes it possible to work with evidence which comes from the communities themselves and thus to develop pupils' interpretative and evaluative skills. At heart

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[111] I am grateful to the QCA for access to the statistical evidence collated by the MCA Project Team and presented in *Monitoring Curriculum and Assessment Project 2004-2005 Subject Report: Religious Education* © Qualifications and Curriculum Authority; used with permission.

here is the need to encounter living communities and to engage with those who belong to them and for whom they matter; pedagogically the starting point might be with individual members.[112] Replacing difference with 'distinctiveness' and also recognising similarities among groups might overcome some of the difficulties teachers experience in exploring 'difference'.

Bible

Despite the position held by the Bible in Years 7 and 8 [Table 14A], or that held by Sacred Writings [Table 15A] it is clear that this area constitutes only a small part of the RE curriculum in its own right – though of course texts may be drawn on in many of the other focus areas. Additionally it appears to be an area which is confined to Years 7 & 8. Again, grasping what it is pupils are to understand about the Bible or about Sacred Writings does not come through clearly, although a few emphases may be noted. The clustering of some of these emphases among responses indicates that particular emphases may come as directives from particular agreed syllabuses. For example, a focus on how the Bible is used; on asking 'How do sacred texts inspire & guide?' or, in another case, 'What is the 'Big Story' told in the Bible?' a question expressed by one respondent in relation to Year 7 work as

The Bible and Christian belief. God's great rescue plan. [068:NRC]

and thus pointing to a Christian engagement with and interpretation of the Bible.

A few responses referred to biblical stories and tended to point pupils to figures from the Old Testament (usually Abraham or Moses); attempts to stimulate pupil interest in such stories may lie behind one response's rather graphic description of work in Year 8:

Big Biblical Blokes & Great Godly Girls. [220:NRC]

In Year 7 particularly, pupils may also encounter biblical story(ies) of creation, but these are then serving a different purpose than that of understanding the Bible or sacred writings *per se.* Responses in the main did not offer a picture of what it is pupils might come to understand e.g. about the authority of the Bible, or sacred writings within religious traditions, or why they might hold such authority. Similarly whether pupils have opportunities to handle or use Bibles did not on the whole emerge from the responses. Engaging with such matters is however not without

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[112] The Warwick RE project series 'Interpreting Religions' attempted such an approach, rooted in the lives of young people belonging to different traditions. For example Robson, G [1995] *Christians* drew on specific, 'real', communities: the Church of England, the Religious Society of Friends, the Greek Orthodox Church, and Coventry Christian Fellowship. A book may no longer be the best medium for this kind of focus or approach – but this should not obscure the value of the approach itself.

importance for pupils' developing understanding of Christianity (and of other traditions) – not least for when the RE curriculum becomes sharply focused on ethical and moral issues in Year 9.

Faith in Action

This area achieves greatest prominence in Year 9 but is also present in Years 7 & 8 in schools with no religious character; among responses from Church of England schools it is also a popular focus and has a stronger place in their presentation of Christianity than in the former schools – and especially in Year 9. 'Faith in action' is a focus which has a long pedigree within RE, one which certainly pre-dates the 1944 Education Act and whose popularity is seen in the very long life of the 'Faith in Action' series of short biographies – which must go back over 30 Years.[113] The name most frequently mentioned in responses is that of Martin Luther King, followed by that of Mother Teresa. Others get occasional or single mention – Father Damien, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nicky Cruz, Maria Cristina Gomez, Jackie Pullinger, Bob Geldof, Dave Cooke. Sometimes such figures may be linked with a particular topic, justice or prejudice and discrimination for example; but many responses referred generally to 'modern Christians' or 'Heroes', underpinned by a concern to demonstrate the interrelation of faith or belief and its practical outcomes. This emphasis comes through also in responses to part B of my question [see Tables15A and 15B].

A note on 'Christianity Unit'

In Year 7 it was clearly the practice of some respondents to include an introduction to Christianity. Very few indicated the nature of this. The following are exceptions:

> Unit 3 Christian Belief includes writings/sacred places/concepts/Eucharist/Affect [*sic.*] of faith on lifestyle. [228:NRC]

> Teach only in this year: All aspects: Focus is on issue of truth in Christianity. [206:NRC]

> How does Christianity add to a Christian's identity? A study of Christianity (1 term) focusing on key beliefs and features. [169:NRC]

Each of these examples begins to offer a glimpse of the emphases and ways in which particular schools may choose to construct or to 'slant' their presentation of Christianity – here in Year 7.

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[113] Published by the Religious and Moral Education Press (formerly the Religious Education Press) and now an imprint of the Canterbury Press, Norwich. The scope of the series has been widened in recent years, but for a long time may be said to have represented the face of a white mainly Protestant Christianity to pupils.

It is however important to reiterate what was said above: the picture of Christianity which emerges from the analysis of responses I have undertaken is a composite one, that is it reflects the emphases of all those who responded to part A of the question set out above [2.]; its detail is as set out in Tables 14A and 14B and in Appendices B.1 to B.3. The picture which has so far emerged here juxtaposes popularised phenomenological categories, (frequently the 'themes' or 'topics' typical of agreed syllabuses from the mid 1970s onwards), specific aspects of Christianity (e.g. Jesus; Churches/denominations) and also draws on those areas which in the late 1980s were linked with life experiences and ultimate questions – although in this study the latter are more apparent in responses to part B of the question. Most of us will bring lenses of these kinds to the study of a religious tradition; they can provide a useful checklist, but may also prove a straitjacket. What is missing is the dynamic of the particular, located in time, place and culture. Responses in a questionnaire cannot convey how teachers manage or convey this dynamic; but it is perhaps worth asking whether or not the (here unpopular) 'churches and denominations' might not in fact be the living context and focus of study for many of the other aspects identified in responses. Put in another way, perhaps RE needs to pause and reflect again on the multi-faceted faces of religious traditions; simply to see them as servicing an RE which has its own set parameters – however worthy – may be to avoid both the dynamic and the realities of religions in the present.

4. Teaching thematically drawing on Christianity

In parallel to Tables 14A and 14B which provide a picture of (in the main) discrete teaching about Christianity, Tables 15A and 15B offer an overview of thematic teaching. They set out the key themes indicated by respondents through which pupils may meet Christian practices and beliefs together with those of one or more other religions. A detailed breakdown of responses is provided in Appendices C.1 to C.3. It is worth noting at this point that schools with a religious character appeared to be less likely to undertake thematic teaching which draws on different religious traditions than schools with no religious character; this was especially so in the case of Roman Catholic schools, whilst the small number of themes identified in 15B is also accounted for by the relatively small proportion of respondents from Church of England schools using thematic approaches.

KS3:	YEAR 7	%		YEAR 8	%		YEAR 9	%
1	SIGNS,SYMBOLS,STORY & MYTH	13.84	1	SACRED WRITINGS	13.04	1	MORAL/SOCIAL ISSUES	15.93
2	CREATION	12.15	2	RITES OF PASSAGE	11.59	2	SUFFERING and/or EVIL GOOD and/or EVIL	15.69
3	WORSHIP/PRACTICE	11.86	3	WORSHIP	10.51	3	ETHICS/MORALS(ITY)/ VALUES	11.03
4	FESTIVALS	8.47	4	VALUES/RULES/MORAL ISSUES	10.14	4	RITES OF PASSAGE	9.56
5	SACRED WRITINGS	6.50	5	PILGRIMAGE/SACRED PLACES	7.97	5	GOD	6.62
6	GOD	5.37	6	ENVIRONMENT/CREATION	5.80	6	RELIGIOUS FIGURES/ SIGNIFCANT PEOPLE	4.90
7	FOUNDERS & OTHER FIGURES	5.08	7	'FAITH IN ACTION'/SPECIAL PEOPLE	5.80	7	DEATH/ LIFE AFTER DEATH	4.41
8	PLACES OF WORSHIP	4.24	8	FESTIVALS	5.07	8	PILGRIMAGE/SACRED PLACES	3.68
9	QUESTIONS	3.95	9	SIGNS/SYMBOLS	4.71	9	WORSHIP	3.19
10	COMMUNITY	3.39	10	BELIEF(S)	3.62	10	PHILOSOPHY/QUESTIONS	2.94
11	WHO AM I?/ IDENTITY	3.11	11	GOD	3.26	11	ENVIRONMENT	2.94
12	BELIEF	2.82	12	SUFFERING/EVIL	3.26	12	FESTIVALS/CELEBRATIONS	2.70
13	PEOPLE OF FAITH/VISION	2.82	13	DEATH/AFTERLIFE	2.90	13	CREATION	2.20
14	VALUES	1.41	14	FOUNDERS	2.17	14	SCIENCE/ RELIGION	1.71
15	THE SACRED	1.41	15	OTHER	5.80	15	BELIEF/ACTION	1.71
17	OTHER	2.54				16	OTHER	4.66
	INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION/RE UNIT	11.02		'RELIGION' UNITS	4.35		'RELIGION' UNITS	6.13

Table 15A: Summary of thematic work which includes Christianity: schools with no religious character

KS3:	YEAR 7	%		YEAR 8	%		YEAR 9	%
1	SIGNS,SYMBOLS, STORY & /MYTH	26.31	1	WORSHIP/PRACTICE	22.22	1	ETHICS, VALUES, MORAL/SOCIAL ISSUES	25.81
2	GOD/ULTIMATE QUESTIONS	10.53	2	VALUES/MORAL ISSUES	16.67	2	QUESTIONS	25.81
3	FOUNDERS/PEOPLE OF FAITH	10.53	3	SACRED WRITINGS	16.67	3	RELIGIOUS BELIEF/PRACTICE	25.81
4	OTHER	36.84	4	GOD	11.11	4	ENVIRONMENT	6.45
			5	OTHER	22.22	5	OTHER	16.13
	INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION UNIT	15.79		'RELIGION AND.....'	11.11			

Table 15B: Summary of thematic work which includes Christianity: Church of England schools

The identified themes point to features which religions are frequently perceived to hold in common e.g. worship; rites of passage; signs and symbols; such themes may also represent a continuing phenomenological approach[114] to religions in RE although, as Table 13 shows, respondents indicated a preference for thematic work which focused on 'human experience'. Themes which have the latter focus *are* present here, but apart from the expressed interest in 'Suffering' in Year 9, they do not dominate. Whilst Tables 15A and 15B suggest that thematic work may broaden the range of topics pupils encounter in RE, the emergent picture is one which is fragmented. Before commenting further on thematic teaching, some observations may be made about the relation of Tables14 and 15:

- The themes identified here – which all draw on Christianity *and* one or more other religion – overlap with those which emerged in relation to *discrete* teaching about Christianity [Tables 14A and 14B]. It becomes clear that common subjects tend to shape the KS3 curriculum in RE, whether from the perspectives of one or a number of traditions.

- Some matters emerging under thematic teaching, do however appear more strongly than they did in the context of teaching focusing on Christianity alone; for example: 'Signs and symbols' and 'Creation' in Year 7; 'Sacred Writings' in Year 8 and in Church of England schools, 'Worship' – also in Year 8; and 'Rites of Passage' in Year 9 in schools with no religious character. A topic may also emerge which did not constitute a category in its own right in relation to Christianity alone, e.g. 'Pilgrimage' in Year 8. What is learnt from a close look at such patterns is where – in terms of subject content – teachers' preferences for a thematic approach seem to lie.

- The shifting patterns and emphases of curriculum content *across* the KS3 years has already been noted in relation to Tables 14A and 14B; such shifts are also evident in Tables 15A and 15B. For example 'Values' as a key theme increases in popularity across the three years; 'Rites of Passage' hold a relatively strong

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[114] Since this approach frequently attracts a bad press, as for example in Burns & Hart [1988:15] cited in Jackson [2004:29], Jackson's recognition of the nature of a genuinely phenomenological approach is worth noting: 'Rather than trivializing faiths, phenomenology sets out to grasp the power and meaning of faith within its appropriate religious and cultural context. If any teachers or syllabuses simply require their students to describe the externals of religion then they are not using a phenomenological approach.' [*Ibid.*]

position in Years 8 and 9, but occasional mention in Year 7 meant they were subsumed under 'Worship/ practice' in the process of analysis [Table 15A].

• Subjects of a more philosophical and ethical nature occupy a more prominent position in the context of thematic teaching, and especially in Year 9; the themes identified here also anticipate the most popular examination options in Religious Studies, focusing on philosophy and ethics which many pupils follow in Years 10 and 11 and beyond.

The variety of material represented by each of the themes set out in and Tables15A and 15B can be seen in the associated appendices. Rather than commenting on any specific theme here, in contrast to my consideration of key *aspects* (cf. section 3 above) I should like to offer a cameo of the *experience of themes* a pupil going through the three years of KS3 might have. To this end Fig.1 on the following page provides an example of ten respondents' answers, verbatim, to part B of the request set out under section 2 of this chapter.[115] These examples were selected at random, although any responses which did not include thematic work in each year were set aside; of these ten respondents, all except one [137:NRC] indicated that they also undertook work on some aspect(s) of Christianity separately in one or more of the years.   The ten examples – and there are of course many similar ones – prompt some further observations and comments:

• First, these examples reflect in varying measure the influence of agreed syllabuses on 'content' – especially in references to creation and environment which seems to have been initiated by QCA (2000) and continued more recently (QCA: 2006). [116]

• They also indicate the varied programmes in schools and consequently the varied experience of pupils – the more so when it is recognised that in each case what is represented here is only a part of their studies in RE. Varied experience may

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[115] Note that including this example of material serves also to highlight the *nature* of the material which I received from individual respon*dents*; my analysis is of all respon*ses* to each question – hence my reference elsewhere to the composite picture which the related tables and appendices offer.

[116] The use – I would say over use – of questions to structure RE textbooks also appears to be becoming a common practice.

Year 7: Creation myths and origins. Environmental matters. Prayer & worship. Places of Worship.
Year 8: Signs & Symbols. Rites of Passage.
Year 9: Founders of religion, Moral Issues & Human rights, racism, Predictions & Messiahs, Social harmony in Britain, Conflict.   [123:NRC]

Year 7: Introduction to RE. Identity (drawing on Sikhism), Native American Indians, Islam.
Year 8: Judaism, Conflict, Morality, Buddhism, Responses to persecution
Year 9: We have an accelerated curriculum so pupils begin their GCSEs in year 9.....
[243:NRC]

Year 7: Symbols of faith. Who is God. This thing called religion. Creation – religion versus science. 'Britikid' a comparative religion Web page.
Year 8: Ways of seeing – why so many religions?
The Holocaust – also seen through the eyes of Christians – why do people suffer? Laws for living.
Year 9: Life after death – fear and faith. The question of good and evil. Religion and 'body matters'. Life issues – and the Sanctity of life.   [006:NRC]

Year 7: Mystery, belief and & religion – Christianity & Buddhism. Starts with concept of 'Mystery, belief, faith'; Continues with examination of God; the Buddha in (in art); Christian icons; Mandalas – expressions of faith etc.
Year 8: Message to the world – Sacred writing/teachings (Christianity & Islam)
Year 9: Prejudice & racism (Christianity & Hinduism). Value of a life. (Christianity/Islam). Body matters (All major faiths and Humanism).   [071:NRC]

Year 7: Where do we go? Religious buildings. What do we eat? What do we celebrate? Have I arrived? Rites of Passage.
Year 8: Who do we follow? What do I wear? Where do we go? Pilgrimage. What do we read?
Year 9: Belief in God. Suffering & evil. Experiences of God.   [137:NRC]

Year 7: What are we doing to the environment? Abraham – hero or villain?
Year 8: Special Journeys
Year 9: Suffering; why some people find it difficult to believe in God. Creation Stories vrs [versus] evolution. Peace in Jerusalem. [200:NRC]

Year 7: SACRIFICE (BLOODY RE) – (Christianity, Islam & Sikhism)
Year 8: Old Testament Heroes (Jews/Christians – relevance of)
Year 9: Evil/Suffering & Death (Christian/Hindu) [204:CE]

Year 7: Symbol, myth and ritual. The concept of the sacred.
Year 8: Religion and the environment
Year 9: Responses to the Holocaust   [229:NRC]

Year 7: What is the place of ritual and worship?
Year 8: Is there a right way to live?
Year 9: Religion in the media. Religion and Equality. Religion and Science. What are religious values in a changing world? [257:NRC]

Year 7: Searching for God. How green is God? What do creation stories teach us? Animals.
Year 8: What's the difference between a prayer, a wish, a dream, a hope? What's the difference between a tourist & a pilgrim?
Year 9: Why is it sometimes difficult to believe in God?   Suffering.   How can religious people get on? [097:NRC]

Figure 1: Twelve examples of the content of thematic teaching in KS3

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both stimulate and sustain interest – and thematic work may prosper this too, but there may also be questions to ask concerning the overall coherence of pupils' experience and learning in RE, and in this case their learning about Christianity in particular.

- The emergent picture is of an 'atomised' RE, suggesting there is a need for further research which tracks the progression of pupils' conceptual understanding of religion and religions and their development of skills in RE as they move through a mixed economy of themes.

As one reflects on pupils' varied experience exemplified in the ten cases set out on previous page, and considers Tables15A and 15B, it is worth asking not only what insights *from* the Christian tradition may be brought to bear on the identified themes, but *how* pupils are given the opportunity to engage with the diversity of belief and practice which characterise faith perspectives on many of the themes. Conversely it may be asked what insights *into* the tradition these (and other) themes may offer pupils; this question is perhaps less frequently asked than the former, but deserves positive consideration. As far as I am aware both questions receive scant attention beyond occasional polemic in the RE literature. A further stratum in the concerns of this chapter is the tension of whether RE in its representation of Christianity should take its lead from student interests or from an understanding of the tradition; I shall return this matter at a later stage in this study.

Chapter 6: Teachers' experience of teaching Christianity

The questionnaire did not only seek to identify what material teachers selected for their pupils to study about Christianity, the teachers were also asked to identify any aspects of the tradition which they found difficult to teach. Additionally they were invited to share their awareness of what their pupils enjoyed, disliked or found difficult and, importantly, to write about the aspirations they had for their pupils' with respect to 'learning about' and 'learning from' Christianity. As the responses to these questions were analysed, it became clear that those relating to teachers' aspirations for their students were a rich stratum in the data collected; consequently they are treated separately at a later point (Chapter 8). The remainder of the present chapter focuses on responses to the other issues noted above.

1. Aspects of Christianity which are difficult to teach

Only 219 respondents took up this question; of those who did 77 indicated that there were no aspects which they found difficult. The emergent picture then is of teachers' confidence in handling the Christian tradition; difficulty was rarely related to a personal understanding of Christianity, but frequently related to pupils' attitudes, sometimes to their ability, and also to the problem of Christianity's relevance to pupils' lives. So asked to identify aspects difficult to teach one respondent commented:

> All of it because the students seem 'bored' of it [*sic.*] when they arrive. [279:NRC]

Familiarity may also be a problem, so it is hard to teach

> Why Christianity is important to people: Many pupils hear about it too much elsewhere and see it as irrelevant for them to learn. [222:NRC]

A further problem may be that

> One's own religion/main belief system is often the most difficult to teach – getting the balance right etc... [225:NRC]

Another respondent wrote in a similar vein:

> There is often inbuilt resistance to the religion. I teach in a mainly white middle class area. Pupils reckon they know the subject or are being 'got at'. This does not happen when teaching about religions they are less familiar with! [240:NRC]

Students' negativity may make it hard to teach about particular aspects, about

> Christian beliefs and teachings, churches, students have a negative attitude to Christianity, they feel it is boring. We try to approach it in an innovative way!! [282:NRC]

Fundamentalist views in Christianity – these are the views that many young people
have heard of & have influenced their thinking & often fuelled their prejudices about
Christianity (and religion in general!). [285:NRC]

or

Prayer, worship and religious experiences – the pupils find it difficult to understand
and find it 'uncool'. [201:NRC]

These responses illustrate the problem of an 'assumed' familiarity with Christianity;
the tradition emerges as part of a cultural backcloth, which for these pupils does not
command attention, except in its more extreme forms which may also militate against
openness towards its study. In Chapter 7 attention is drawn to the 'apologetic'
stance some teachers appear to take in relation to student perspectives such as
those noted here; the aspirations teachers have for their pupils' learning both
challenge *and* are challenged by such attitudes.

It is also the case that the presence of young people who identify with traditions other
than Christianity may be challenging for teachers, for example when they are
addressing particular aspects of Christianity:

Beliefs – current initiatives/changes e.g. in RC Mass. Christian love & reconciliation.
KS3 pupils feel they know all about Christianity & observe 'Christians' everyday, so
showing that being a Christian is more than a name is hard – we have a very mixed
community – Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus. [259:NRC]

Trinity – especially to Muslim pupils..... [056:NRC]

Central Christian belief in Jesus' death and resurrection as a way of salvation for
Christians. Being brought up within the Christian tradition this was part of my
understanding of Christian theology. However I am finding it difficult to get across to
pupils of a non - Christian (Islamic) heritage. [009:NRC]

The next response illustrates also the difficulties of working across boundaries which
may be constructed *within* traditions: so it is difficult to teach about

Church of Jesus Christ & Latter Day Saints. Jehovah's Witnesses – many Christians
believe these 2 churches to be outside the Christian fold. How do you approach this
issue sensitively when you know you have pupils who worship at these churches
within your class? [242:NRC]

Whilst contextual comments such as these were not numerous, they offer a reminder
of the understanding, skills and sensitivities required of RE teachers.

The question on which I am focusing here had suggested that respondents wrote
about the aspects of Christianity which *they* found difficult to teach. The above
examples illustrate that some respondents focused on 'to teach'; others identified
aspects of the tradition. The aspects listed were wide ranging, so much so that only
four aspects were cited more than ten times: Denominations and denominational
difference were mentioned in 26 responses; Trinity in 23; Bible related study or

interpretation in 15 and church history in 13. A further seven aspects were mentioned by 5 or more responses: Incarnation [8]; Church [6]; Doctrine [6]; Creeds [5]; Holy Communion/Eucharist [5]; Resurrection [5]; Suffering [5]. Many other aspects were identified, very many by a single respondent.

'Denominations' often figured as a single word in responses; there was only an occasional explanation of 'difficult':

> I find that teaching about denominations is difficult as I am restricted by curriculum time and I have to spend time teaching the basics before looking at the complexities of denominations. [188:NRC]

> The only 'difficult' aspect of Christianity is the break up into denominations, which students find confusing. [232:NRC]

> Denominational difference in religious behaviour/rituals as resources for KS3 tend to generalise rather than offer distinct views etc. [118:NRC]

Given the place which churches and denominations have at KS3 in many agreed syllabuses, this is clearly an aspect which calls for further thought.

It was not surprising that the Trinity appeared as a difficult concept to teach; its rootedness in Christian experience of the early centuries of the tradition and transposition into abstract modes of thinking and language particular to a Hellenistic world is hardly the material for KS3. On the other hand learning something of religious language and its possibilities as well as its limitations – not least in its reference to 'God' – might be part of a syllabus. But the findings of the present survey suggest that attention to God in RE seems to lie mainly in considering arguments for God's 'existence', rather than the exploration of the nature of religious language – an observation already made in relation to syllabuses (Chapter 3).

The third difficult aspect named in responses related to the Bible; here students' attitudes appeared to pose a serious problem for some respondents:

> I find it difficult to make Holy Books grab the pupils' imagination. Mention the Bible to many of them, and they 'turn off' – probably think we're going to try to ram it down their throats! More lively imaginative resources would help. [070:CE]

Similarly, it is difficult to teach

> The Bible – students can see it as remote and outdated. .... [136:NRC]

> Anything related directly to the Bible, it seems 'Bible' is synonymous with 'mind-numbing tedium' – a total turn-off for my pupils: they feel it has little relevance to them; nor are their perceptions of Christianity any better on the whole!' [123:NRC]

> Bible – poor resources, lots of preconceptions. [154:NRC]

Only two respondents identified an issue specific to understanding the Bible and by implication its varied interpretation among Christians. One simply stated the difficulty:

> Biblical interpretations. [239:NRC]

The other noted:

> ...a fundamental question pupils have is understanding how to interpret the Bible, & making sense of the way in which story represents symbolic truth (as distinct from scientific/historical truth). [272:NRC]

Whilst not referring directly to the Bible, another response spoke more generally of 'interpretation' as an area of difficulty in teaching about the Christian tradition:

> Interpretation e.g. The idea that different views of the truth about religions can be different to individuals. Liberal truth/conservative views/ liberal interpretation. [059:CE]

The evidence base about the difficulties in teaching about the Bible is slight, but again highlights the problem of pupils' attitudes towards the Christian tradition; the presence of references to 'interpretation' serves as a pointer to a cluster of questions rarely addressed in RE handbooks or syllabuses – how to handle diverse interpretation and thereby diversity within a tradition; how (in the case of the Bible) to balance the diversity which may emerge from academic study in relation to diverse positions held by Christians; and how to engage pupils in exploring 'interpretation' – a potentially controversial matter in relation to religions. Perhaps there are some lessons RE may learn here from colleagues teaching History and, in relation to language, English.

Responses comprising the fourth main area identified as difficult, church history, also offered little insight into the particular difficulties teachers encounter. Church history was sometimes linked with 'denominations' – indicative perhaps of approaches to the former – but in common with responses referring to the Bible, stimulated insufficient interest, and in the second example here this was also the case for the teacher:

> Church history – boring and seen as irrelevant. [046:RC]

> Church history – because it is so boring, and I can't think why I should! So I give it one lesson – top speed! [013:NRC]

Whilst this aspect of Christianity figured in the top four areas of difficulty here, it is clear from my earlier analysis of KS3 content, that church *history* does not figure highly in the RE curriculum.

2. Teachers' perceptions of their pupils

Three questions invited respondents to identify the areas of Christianity of greatest interest to their pupils, those of least interest and those found most difficult by their

pupils. Overall these questions, like that just examined above, produced widely diverse and individual answers – often expressed in one or two words.

2.1 Aspects of Christianity which are difficult for pupils to understand

In view of the many items listed as 'difficult for pupils to understand' this résumé of the most common areas will draw *only* on those aspects which were mentioned *5 times or more*; in view of this the frequency with which an item is mentioned is given, but no percentage in Table 16. The table indicates the main groupings which emerged from the analysis of responses. It is not perhaps surprising that those areas which respondents felt were most difficult to teach – the Trinity and denominations – reappear, though they are more prominent here. If we look to the overall picture of what was taught at KS3 (as set out in Appendices B1-B6) there are very few references to the Trinity – suggesting perhaps that this is not a matter frequently addressed with pupils. By contrast churches – inclusive of denominations - do appear in each year of KS3. The problem of coping with a diversity of views was noted above in relation to the Bible, here it is slightly more prominent and relates in the main to denominational perspectives; this problem emerges here as a pedagogical matter, but also poses questions about the representation in RE of the Christian tradition's diversity.

Broad Category	Comprising these aspects
1. Matters of belief: 1.1 God including the Trinity and the Holy Spirit	1.1 The Trinity [58] God [12] Holy Spirit [7]
1.2 Relating to Jesus' identity & 'work'	1.2 Resurrection [22] Incarnation [13] Cross/ Salvation/Sacrifice [12] Jesus as Son of God [5]
1.3 General reference to belief, doctrine etc	1.3 'Beliefs' [19] 'Doctrine' [7] Creeds [6] Theology [5]
2. Denominations	Denominations [37] Diversity of views [12] *Most examples here related to denominational perspectives*
3. Aspects with a philosophical focus	Arguments for God [7] Problem of suffering [7] 'Philosophical issues' [5]
4. The Bible	[11]
5. Worship	Eucharist [11] Worship [5]

Table 16: Aspects of Christianity pupils find most difficult to understand

The appearance of the Eucharist as a difficult aspect of Christianity to understand is also of interest here; in respondents' delineation of content, specific references to

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Holy Communion or the Eucharist were few. Whilst fundamental to the experience of the majority of Christians – though not all of course – it often appears to be missing from representations of the tradition. This may reflect the essentially Protestant nature of early agreed syllabuses, a characteristic to which I drew attention in Part 1 and which is in some measure carried forward to the present. It may also be, as the response here suggests, that the topic is felt to be difficult for pupils to understand. I know of only one school text (Rankin, 1985) designed for *all* schools (i.e. without or with a faith attachment) which has focused on the Eucharist[117].

2.2 Matters of greatest and least interest to pupils

The nature of responses to the questions relating to pupils' interests in their study of Christianity again demonstrated few commonalities among respondents' views. Table 4 indicates those aspects named *10 or more* times with respect to pupils' interest. What is striking about those matters of *least* interest is their association with the communal life of Christians and regular practice and belief.

Aspects of least interest:	No. of references		Aspects of greatest interest:	No. of references
Liturgy/worship/ritual	43		Moral issues/ethics	66
Bible/biblical work	42		Life of Jesus/Christ	32
Church origins & history	41		Faith in action	31
Church studies (various)	23		Crucifixion	22
Denominations	20		Rites of passage	20
Beliefs	18		Festivals	19
Doctrine	18		Miracles	19
Creeds	14		Bible stories (OT & NT)	15
Church features	12		Does God exist?	14
Life of Jesus/Christ	12		Resurrection	13
Christian practice/ What Christians 'do'	11		Suffering	13
Sacraments	10			

Table 17: Teacher identification of pupil interests

Whilst respondents made few comments, these two examples sum up the picture which emerges here; there appears to be least interest:

> Where it seems to pupils as if it is to do with Church teaching/doctrine/belief.
> Consider it boring – has to be made relevant. [033:NRC]

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[117] Hammond and Jacobs (1990) gave a key place to the Eucharist – a feature of their book questioned by at least one reviewer (Walker, 1991).

and in
> Any task with the word 'Bible' in it. Worship in contemporary churches – to be honest, pretty much anything to do with what modern Christians 'do' to practice [*sic*] their faith. [123:NRC]

Yet many teachers see a key aim of RE as tolerance and understanding of others. If this is so, ways need to be found of engaging pupils with beliefs and practices which are central to the lives of adherents, or *rather* of engaging with persons to whom these things are important – directly or via lively resources. A few respondents pointed to the importance of offering more than facts, of moving beyond 'externals', of asking 'why?' and giving due attention to 'Learning from' so that students do enjoy lessons. As one respondent put it, using the Bible as an example:

> Most aspects can be brought to life with innovative teaching. Scripture MAY be boring, but brought to life, pupils find Bible stories engrossing. Don't preach at them, let them explore. [272:NRC]

Subjects of greatest interest to pupils reflect some of the most dominant topics at KS3, but focus especially around the life of Jesus (and the related aspects of crucifixion, resurrection and parables and miracles) on the one hand and moral issues and ethics, or the practical outworking of faith on the other. The presence of 'Bible stories' here contrasting with a lack of interest in the Bible, may perhaps be explained by the following observation about what is of least interest:

> Why the Bible is – poor resources and lots of preconceptions. Will happily learn about stories, parables etc within the Bible however. [154:NRC]

In response to these questions about pupils' interests one again glimpses the challenges which teachers may encounter in approaching Christianity:

> Not sure. [*i.e. about which aspects of greatest interest*] Our pupils don't seem to recognise Christianity as Christianity. Most of them are highly secular but are 'cultural' Christians i.e. they identify as Christian because they are white etc. Most don't believe in God but still claim to be Christians. [122:NRC]

> In our catchment area the vast majority of students are not interested in any way & their parents tell them they don't have to be! So it's hard to find. [*i.e. aspect of greatest interest*]. [096:NRC]

But to strike a more positive note, most respondents did identify areas of interest to their pupils, with a few pointing to subject delivery, teacher enthusiasm, and the 'alchemy' of teacher, student and subject as fundamental to such 'interest'.

This chapter has offered a picture of those aspects of Christianity which feature in its representation during KS3 and has offered some insight into teachers' reflections on handling these with their students. Such insight is however limited; the relatively low response rate to the questions prompting these reflections, together with the brevity

and diversity of answers, could perhaps indicate that these are matters on which respondents do not often have occasion or time to reflect. Their concern may rather be with ways and means by which to enliven and deliver syllabus requirements. It has how ever given those who wished to respond an opportunity to 'speak' as they move or mediate between syllabus (here in relation to Christianity) and pupils in relation to Christianity.

Although the responses (77) were low in relation to this question, nevertheless the 'voices' of 77 teachers should be heard; their assessment of aspects of Christianity which do not interest pupils , as well as those that have moderate interest, need to be checked against pupils own' views. This lay outside this survey and this study; but clearly gaining pupil interest and engagement must also play a part in shaping teachers' decisions about the material they will introduce into units on Christianity. The absence of research on teachers' perspectives was one of the determinants of his survey. And in the end it is the RE teacher who facilitates and shapes learning in relation to Christianity and other faiths; a further strand in the survey focused on the teachers' own knowledge and experience of studying Christianity. This is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Teachers' experience of studying Christianity and their professional and personal commitments

So far I have focused on the information respondents to my survey provided about teaching Christianity in KS3; their identification of those aspects of the tradition they find difficult to teach and their perceptions of pupils' responses to the Christian tradition in RE. This section is concerned with teachers' *own study* of the Christian tradition, formal and informal; it also addresses their views on the necessity or otherwise of the teacher having a Christian commitment.

1. Formal study

Respondents were asked to indicate the *highest* level[118] at which they had studied each item in a list of areas of study associated with Christianity. The list was drawn up in the light of a number of considerations: common areas relating to Christianity in first degree courses; emphases in A level specifications for Christianity at the time of the survey and areas which appear in some agreed syllabuses, but do not necessarily feature so prominently at higher levels of study e.g. worship; churches and denominations. Table 18 (below) takes each of the identified areas and indicates the percentage of respondents who had studied it at each level. These are valid percentages and the number of non-respondents is consequently given separately in the shaded column.

A number of observations may be made about Table 18:

- First, it illustrates the continuing centrality of theology as the main approach to the study of Christianity at degree level; among these respondents it holds a more central place than New Testament studies (although of course the two are not necessarily distinct).[119] When first and higher degree studies are taken together Christian theology in the early centuries of the church had been studied by 70.3% of respondents and contemporary theologies by 71.8%.

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[118] A few respondents commented that the question offered no opportunity for response to those whose study had been for a Certificate in Education (i.e. predating the move to teaching as an all graduate profession).

[119] Cf. Cush's comment '... I am concerned we may have left Christianity to the theologians' [Cush 2005:85], pointing to the tendency for Christianity to be encountered in Higher Education in the context of 'Theology'. 'Christian Studies' with its potentially wider connotation is not common.

Highest level studied:	O level /GCSE %	A level %	First Degree %	Higher Degree %	Never Studied %	No response
Area of study:						
New Testament	15.7	9.7	58.8	5.6	10.1	19
Christian theology - early centuries	5.9	5.5	65.2	5.1	18.4	30
Contemporary theologies	4.0	2.8	61.9	9.9	21.4	34
Christian doctrine/ creeds	13.3	7.2	59.8	4.8	14.9	37
Christian ethics	9.1	8.7	58.5	7.1	16.6	33
Christian churches/ denominations	20.2	9.7	39.3	5.7	25.1	39
Christianity in Britain	13.1	7.8	39.8	7.8	31.6	42
Church history	8.8	8.4	53.8	4.0	25.1	39
Christian worship/ liturgy	14.9	10.8	36.9	5.0	32.4	45
Christianity & science	7.9	7.5	30.8	4.6	49.2	46

Table 18: Areas of study and highest qualification

- Second, those areas which have attracted the highest number of 'Never studied' responses are also those which have the highest numbers of non-respondents; this *may* mean that we are looking here at a higher rate of 'Never studied' responses than the figures suggest, though of course this is not necessarily so. The areas which fall into these two categories tend to be those which are prescribed particularly at KS3 in many syllabuses i.e. worship; churches and denominations; religion (usually understood as Christianity) and science. 'Christianity in Britain' is perhaps a less clear area, but taken as signalling locality and the present (since history is indicated as a separate area) it corresponds with an emergent interest in contemporary syllabuses.

- Third, Christian ethics, evident especially in the analysis of Year 9 work earlier in Chapter 5 and central to teachers' concern with the transmission of values at KS3 (see Chapter 7), has been studied (taking degree and higher degree level

responses together) by only 65.6% of those responding; here also the incidence of a high number of non-respondents and a 16.6% indication of never having studied in this area should be noted. In particular, these figures need to be seen in the context not only of KS3 teaching, but also of the popularity of ethics at both GCSE and A level in the present.

• Fourth, 'Christianity and science' proved to be the area least studied by respondents and that which attracted the lowest number of responses; yet again this is a subject which figures in varying ways in syllabuses[120] and also in examination specifications. It is also one which provokes discussion in the public arena. It may be the case that the use of 'Christianity and science' rather than 'Religion and science' affected response rates here; on the other hand, it would seem this area is most commonly explored in RE through questions which arise in Christian contexts.

The analysis of responses according to the religious affiliation *of the schools* from which respondents came (not to be confused with affiliations respondents may or may not hold), showed marked differences in the range of expertise held by respondents at degree level among the respective groups of schools. Tables 19A - C demonstrate this. When this data is examined, it becomes clear for example that a higher percentage of those working in Roman Catholic schools have studied all the named areas at *first degree level* than their counterparts in other schools. Contrasted with those in schools with no religious affiliation, respondents from Church of England schools also 'score' more highly in six areas, but markedly lower in three others – especially Christian ethics and contemporary theologies – at first degree level. A higher percentage of respondents from Church of England schools also appear to have studied at a *higher degree level* in six areas than teachers in other schools; the figures relating to 'Christian churches and denominations' and 'Christianity in Britain' are particularly striking. Where teachers indicated they had *never studied* a particular subject, the figures from those teaching in Roman Catholic schools are lowest in each of the named areas. In the case of respondents from Church of England schools, the percentages for five areas 'never studied' are greater than those from respondents in schools with no religious affiliation. In summary,

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[120]See Bausor, J & Poole, M (2002:18-32).

Tables 19 A – C:

Qualifications of respondents in schools with and without a religious character

Highest level studied: Areas of study:	O level /GCSE %	A level %	First Degree %	Higher Degree %	Never Studied %	No Response
New Testament	17.1	10.2	56.5	5.1	11.1	15
Christian theology - early centuries	6.3	4.3	64.3	4.8	20.3	24
Contemporary theologies	4.0	2.0	62.2	10.0	21.9	30
Christian doctrine/ creeds	13.9	7.4	57.9	4.0	16.8	29
Christian ethics	9.9	7.9	58.1	6.4	17.7	28
Christian churches/ denominations	21.6	10.6	34.7	5.5	27.6	32
Christianity in Britain	13.6	8.1	38.4	6.6	33.3	33
Church history	9.4	9.4	51.0	3.5	26.7	29
Christian worship/ liturgy	14.8	12.8	32.1	4.1	36.2	35
Christianity & science	8.2	7.7	28.2	5.1	50.8	36

Table19 A: Schools with no religious character

Highest level studied: Areas of study:	O level /GCSE %	A level %	First Degree %	Higher Degree %	Never Studied %	No response
New Testament	10.5	15.8	57.9	5.3	10.5	2
Christian theology - early centuries	5.3	10.5	52.6	10.5	21.1	2
Contemporary theologies	10.5	5.3	36.8	5.3	42.1	2
Christian doctrine/ creeds	11.8	11.8	52.9	11.8	11.8	4
Christian ethics	10.5	10.5	36.8	10.5	31.6	2
Christian churches/ denominations	11.1	0.0	55.6	16.7	16.7	3
Christianity in Britain	11.1	0.0	38.9	22.2	27.8	3
Church history	0.0	0.0	61.1	5.6	33.3	3
Christian worship/ liturgy	13.3	0.0	40.0	13.3	33.3	6
Christianity & science	14.3	0.0	28.6	0.0	57.1	7

Table 19 B: Church of England schools

Highest level studied: Areas of study:	O level /GCSE %	A level %	First Degree %	Higher Degree %	Never Studied %	No response
New Testament	10.0	3.3	73.3	10.0	3.3	2
Christian theology - early centuries	3.6	10.7	78.6	3.6	3.6	4
Contemporary theologies	0.0	6.7	73.3	13.3	6.7	2
Christian doctrine/ creeds	10.7	3.6	75.0	7.1	3,6	4
Christian ethics	3.4	13.8	72.4	10.3	0.0	3
Christian churches/ denominations	14.3	10.7	60.7	0.0	14.3	4
Christianity in Britain	10.7	10.7	50.0	7.1	21.4	4
Church history	10.3	6.9	65.5	6.9	10.3	3
Christian worship/ liturgy	17.9	3.6	67.9	7.1	3.6	4
Christianity & science	3.4	10.3	48.3	3.4	34.5	3

Table 19 C: Roman Catholic schools

NB. The two respondents from 'Other Christian' schools indicated that they had each studied to first degree level in 6 of the named areas; in each of the 3 areas of Christian worship & liturgy, Christian Churches and denominations, 1 had also studied to first degree level; neither responded to 'Christianity in Britain'.

what these tables draw attention to is the difference in the levels of qualifications (in the case of studying Christianity) among teachers in different kinds of school. And whilst immediate conclusions should not be drawn from the material which is presented in the three tables, it may tentatively be suggested that Roman Catholic schools appear to appoint teachers who are better qualified in relation to their *study of the Christian tradition* than those appointed in Church of England schools and schools with no religious affiliation.[121]

2. Informal study

Most teachers will find themselves required to address aspects of their subject which are not familiar to them from their initial studies; in RE this applies both to 'specialist' teachers and to those drawn into RE from other curriculum subjects. Following the question about formal study explored above, respondents were asked to '....*write briefly about any aspects of Christianity with which you are familiar as a result of learning or experience in contexts **other than** formal education*; whilst the focus here is on 'any aspects of Christianity', the analysis of the responses proved more complex than anticipated, since they focused not just on 'aspects of Christianity' but also on 'contexts', as well as giving insight into teachers' personal histories. Approximately 53% of the 224 respondents to the question referred to 'aspects', 60% to different contexts in which they had learnt about Christianity and around 27% to a personal religious commitment. Aspects, Contexts, and Commitment thus became the key categories in my analysis.

Responses falling into the third category were unexpected, and had not been asked for; consequently, caution was taken in placing any response here. First, references to 'personal experience' were not taken as an indication of a personal *commitment*, unless the context clearly demanded it; second, whilst the 'context' of informal learning might suggest involvement in a faith community, analysis erred on the side of caution and did not ascribe such responses to 'commitment'. The following examples illustrate my point here; each first lists aspects of Christianity, and in pointing to context uses phrases (my italicisation) which *could* denote commitment:

> Had to learn most basic Christian principles from text books that is things like objects in a church. A lot from *personal experience through going* to Christian baptism, marriages etc. [012:NRC]

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[121] The evidence here does of course only relate to study of the Christian tradition; teachers in schools with no religious character may for example have studied more religious traditions and be better qualified in relation to those than their colleagues in schools with a religious character.

> Diversity of worship *through attending a variety of services* from R.Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Methodist. [068:NRC]

Neither of these responses, nor others which were similar, is included under 'Commitment', but both warranted inclusion under 'Aspects' and 'Contexts'. Third, an indication of having been brought up as a member of a Christian church was not 'counted' as an expression of present commitment. As a consequence of this cautious analysis, it may well be the case that the 27% of responses identified as expressing commitment is too conservative a figure.

2.1 Aspects

Responses relating to 'aspects' appeared in some measure to be shaped by non-responses or by a 'Never studied' response to areas of study in the first part of the question. For example 'Christianity (or religion) and science', 'churches and denominations' and 'worship or liturgy' were frequently mentioned. Other aspects which emerged here included ethics, philosophy of religion, and church history; another area comprised a number of loosely related topics concerned with the interplay of faith or belief and practice and action. Beyond the identification of these aspects, responses were very diverse and included, for example, Celtic Christian spirituality; religious art and literature; architecture and design; women in the church; the life of Mary; miracles and healing. From the perspective of presenting a global picture of Christianity, it was encouraging to find these aspects identified:

> Non 'European' forms of Xtny (for want of a better phrase) e.g. Egypt, Syria, Ethiopia. [131:NRC]

> Christian practices in non-traditional Christian societies – Japan, Korea etc. [183:NRC]

What is not clear however is the extent to which teachers *do* present Christianity in global perspective; this did not emerge from the analysis of content (Chapter 5). Probably the use of visual images of Jesus[122] drawn from different cultures is the most common way in which pupils are brought into contact with the worldwide presence of the tradition.

2.2 Contexts

Responses falling into this category were wide ranging and provide a cameo of the varied experiences RE teachers bring to their work. Taken as a whole, these

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[122] See for example Blaylock, L *Picturing Jesus* packs published by RE today Services [www.retoday.org]

responses fell into a number of broad sub-categories, though these may overlap in *individual* responses:

Courses, conferences and meetings

A small number of respondents drew attention to courses they had followed; these were varied. References to inset courses and to examination related courses for teachers were few; more frequent references were to church related courses and training, for example participating in an *Alpha* course, or undertaking lay reader training in the Anglican church; another respondent had spent two years at a Bible College. Participation in conferences and meetings organised by churches and dioceses, and attending Greenbelt were also cited by respondents. A few mentioned specific RE qualifications they had gained – an Advanced Diploma in RE, or a Certificate in RE:

> I attended......college and completed a one year course on teaching RE in Secondary Schools. I have a certificate in Religious Education. My first degree is in combined studies and my higher degree is in Education Management. Own reading and attending Inset courses provided by examination boards. [025:NRC]

The following example illustrates the potential range of courses which may contribute to a teacher's 'repertoire':

> I am familiar with all the above [*i.e. aspects listed in part (a) of the question*] but not from conventional academic study. I have completed a course on Christian theology (Worship, Foundation of Christian leadership) & read very widely & attended many lectures locally, some through .....university, local Christian diocese (CE and other). [272:NRC]

Neither of these respondents had an initial specialism in Theology or Religious Studies; their evidence highlights the willingness of such teachers to equip themselves to teach RE, and raises a question of the kind of courses which may best serve the needs of teachers who have other specialisms.

Individual learning and research

References to being 'self-taught', to undertaking one's own research in order to deliver a particular aspect of the RE curriculum, and to reading were frequent. For example:

> Sadly I have been self taught although now doing Masters in RE. [130:NRC]

> Personal research on a need to know basis as and when the syllabus has required more knowledge than I already had. Inset courses to 'top up' based on ....Agreed Syllabus. [059:CE]

> ....through private reading/research have explored Christianity throughout
> the world today, esp. the emergence of developing countries' Xianity/ theology.
> [149:RC]

Teach Christian ethics at 'A' level (had to teach myself).............[204:CE]

Examining, working on particular projects, and undertaking teaching e.g. in Higher Education also provided contexts for further learning for a few respondents:

.....Former Chief RE examiner. Adviser to BBC on RE. Adviser to Immersive Ed. on RE software – all have made me research other aspects of RE. [261:RC]

Creation of teaching materials on Science & Religion for the SRS project. Teaching of Christianity in higher education for my PhD at .....university. [019:NRC]

...........Developing resources and other work with USPG – global context. Contact through church & links with Christians from different parts of the world........ [093:NRC]

A few referred to learning from documentaries, newspapers and television – two respondents in each case – and there were single responses indicating the Internet, a Bible study via email, school textbooks, CEM teaching resources and *RE Today* respectively as sources of learning. Various school related experiences were also cited by individual responses – the value of e.g. classroom observation during PGCE; NQT support; of learning from teaching in a denominational school; and in the following examples, the insights brought from teaching another subject:

...teaching of aspects of PSHE. Teaching of history e.g. Reformation! [*This respondent indicated her BA degree in History*] [230:NRC]

As a historian/humanities teacher. My work on Citizenship. [*This respondent assigned 'Never studied' to each aspect of Christianity in part (a) of the question*] [257:NRC]

Respondents also recognised that they themselves learnt from the visitors whom they invited to their RE lessons and from visits which they arranged for their pupils. These occasions for learning are also mirrored in what respondents tell of their personal encounters outside school.

Personal 'experience' of various kinds

Responses falling into this group indicate different facets of respondents' personal lives. This may be a simple observation, for example, about understanding gained whilst on holiday, or of meeting Christians of different denominations, as in this next case where the respondent has learnt about Christianity in Britain from

.....my own personal experience of meeting Christians from many traditions and from visiting different churches, including historical sites. I have also some knowledge of worship and liturgy as a result. 170:NRC]

Other examples include learning about

Christianity in art – have learned from various visits to European art galleries – Discussions with friends/books from personal interest. [253:NRC]

and

Sacraments/worship – [from] attending services. Pilgrimage – [from] visiting sites. Religious experience & values – [from] meeting theists. Mormons – [from] visiting evangelists. [145:NRC]

or may simply indicate

Visits to Christian places of worship e.g. while on holiday. [078:NRC]

But the dominant elements in this group of responses were twofold: those which pointed to experience of different dimensions of the life of churches and denominations, and those which indicated family associations with, or upbringing within the Christian tradition (even though such associations might now be severed). Whilst responses of both types may be indicative of a present Christian commitment, since they did not directly express this, they have *not* been included under 'Commitment' in this analysis.

Examples of informal learning from contact with and experience of churches were common and often related to the inner diversity and practice of the Christian tradition:

Experience of different types of worship/faith communities e.g. Iona [030:CE]

Diversity of worship through attending a variety of services from R.Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Methodist. [068:NRC]

Liturgy of CE due to singing as a chorister at school and university. [081:NRC]

Others pointed to what appeared tentative or former associations with churches:

Some involvement in local study groups associated with community church. [271:NRC]

Personal adherence to Catholic faith for a period in my life.   Contact with other Christians from local churches. [246:NRC]

Over 20 respondents drew attention to their Christian upbringing, often using short phrases: 'Church as a child' [074:NRC], 'Experience of church going when younger...' [078:NRC]; 'Brought up in the Salvation Army" [101]; 'Brought up in the Methodist Church. Mother deacon until retirement'. [097:NRC]; 'Raised as a Roman Catholic, father a Baptist'. [166:NRC], 'CE upbringing.' [219:NRC]. A few pointed to their family:

I was brought up within a church-going family. [035:NRC]

A vaguely Christian family allowed a detached observation upon Christian ideology & patterns of worship in English and Scottish CE churches. [123:NRC]

None of these responses necessarily implies a continuing association with Christian churches, and a few made it clear that they now had a different personal stance, for example:

I am an agnostic now but my upbringing is as a RC as a child of a very committed RC. [157:NRC]

In the context of my question which focused on 'aspects' of Christianity, this openness of respondents with regard to their personal life was surprising; it also raises interesting questions about the relation of teachers' personal biographies and their professional life.

To conclude this section on the *Contexts* of teachers' informal learning, attention may be drawn also to responses which gave personal – as opposed to academic - autobiographical 'sketches'; these suggest rich veins of experience which some may bring to their teaching:

> Growing up in Israel, experienced Catholicism through time spent in a convent, going to church, having many talks with a Little Brothers of Jesus Catholic order, personal interest in Christianity, and most of all learning about Christ and His mission through the Bah'ai writings. [232:NRC]

> Upbringing. Research. Wider situations e.g. Peace work in Israel. Conflict resolution in multi cultural societies. [262:NRC]

> ....Lived in Christian ecumenical community in Israel & used to be very active in Jewish-Christian dialogue. [269:CE]

> 1 year of voluntary work with Jesuits; Catholicism generally (not in depth) & Ignatian spirituality. [190:NRC]

> I worked for 15 years as a parish priest; great experience of pastoral aspects of religion. [229:NRC]

There were also short, individual references to experience of work in counselling, of involvement in the justice and peace movement, of interfaith involvement – all pointing in the direction, in the present context, of Christian commitment.

2.3 Commitment

I have already indicated that care has been taken in deciding which responses most clearly appear to fall into this category. There appeared to be four types of response which merited this: those which simply stated e.g. 'I am a Christian' or indicated belonging to a particular church; statements which indicated personal roles and responsibilities within a Christian community - being an Anglican lay reader, or a Eucharistic minister in the Roman Catholic Church, for example; responses indicating regular, active or ongoing involvement; and those which may be characterised as offering short 'personal testimonies'. For example:

> I learned a great deal from my home, Sunday school & church. After going through a period of atheism, my own experiences have brought me back to Christianity. This

personal experience is the most important aspect to me and helps me to put over topics like worship with more conviction & enthusiasm – the 'wow' factor. [070:CE]

Through personal practice I am familiar with Christianity as practised in the Baptist and Evangelical traditions as well as Brethren and CofE. I also have friends from within the RC tradition and therefore have an understanding of how similar beliefs are practised throughout various Christian traditions. [242:NRC]

I am a Roman Catholic sister, so my training has given me a familiar understanding of religious life. [208:RC]

In each of the above cases it is clear that the expressed commitment is a resource for the respondents. In the following example understanding of particular 'aspects' of Christianity came as the consequence of a life changing experience:

MIRACLES AND HEALING, I was in a car crash in 1976 my passenger was killed and the steering wheel went through my stomach. I was not expected to live, but some Christians prayed over my body and I survived. I then became a missionary to SE Asia for 23 years............ [249:NRC]

Others wrote of a long held Christian commitment:

I have been a committed Christian since I was 11 and have therefore received regular teaching on being a Christian most Sundays and through personal and corporate Bible study. [152:NRC]

Have worked, taught, preached Christianity through Church & allied organisations for 40 years. [114:NRC]

Card carrying born - again Christian & lay preacher. God-channel. [108:NRC]

In contrast, experience of a break with the tradition might also be expressed:

My own experience of baptism and confirmation ended up with me becoming an atheist – the idea of Jesus as Son of God never really made sense to me. [148:NRC]

Again, I want to suggest that the nature of these responses - as with those identified under *Context* – begins to open up the relation of personal biography and teaching religious education as an area for investigation;[123] clearly the kind of responses offered here point to an area of discussion inclusive of, but wider than that which examines the relation of personal and professional commitment - a frequently rehearsed issue in RE.

These responses provided an interesting backcloth to teachers' responses to a question which asked about the necessity of a Christian commitment on the part of those teaching about Christianity. Responses to this question are next considered.

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[123] Existing studies tend to focus on trainee RE teachers and their early professional life: see for example Chater (2005); Sikes & Everington (2001)

3. The place of a Christian commitment in teaching about Christianity

Discussion about the relationship of the RE teacher's professional commitment and (where held) a faith commitment continues to appear in discussion of RE. Moreover we have seen that it was a matter of concern from the moment that RE found a place in publicly funded schools. The survey at no point asked teachers to identify whether or not they had a religious commitment of any kind. Nevertheless, as indicated above, many respondents wrote of their commitment or involvement in the life of a church and a few indicated other personal positions. The survey did however ask

a) Do you think that those who teach about Christianity in RE should themselves have a Christian commitment? Yes/No
b) Please comment on your response.

Both parts of this question elicited a high response rate; Table 20 shows responses at (a) from *all* schools and by the religious character of the schools; non- respondents to the question are here *included* in the percentages given.

Responses from :	All schools [286]	NRC schools [231]	CE schools [21]	RC schools [32]	OC schools [2]
YES	15.7%	5.6%	8.6%	86.3%	--
NO	79%	89.2%	57.1%	18.7%	100%
No response	5.2%	5.2%	14.3%	--	--

Table 20: Christian commitment & teaching about Christianity

It is clear from the above table that those teaching in Roman Catholic schools have a sense of the importance of the teacher's commitment which is not shared to the same extent by those in other schools, including the other faith schools in the sample. Of the 15 who did not respond at (a) some simply found that this was not an important question:

> Not an issue. [129:NRC]

> A person's response is irrelevant to their teaching ability passion etc. [154:NRC]

Others did not wish to answer 'Yes' or 'No' and so made this clear in their responses to the second part of the question:

> Neither. It does not matter if the professional RE teacher is a Christian or not. [093:NRC]
> Yes – in denominational school but not always exclusively. No – in community schools. [269:CE]

> Sorry I can't respond I neither think they should nor shouldn't. I am happy to teach about Islam/Judaism but I am not Jewish or Muslim. It's the same for Christianity. BUT people who are Christian can teach it brilliantly. I can't say they shouldn't –

though sometimes Christian teachers become dogmatic & I don't think that's good. [023:NRC]

It depends more on the attitude that goes with commitment or non-commitment – teachers are there to assist pupils in their own journeys, not to suggest one is correct over others. [214:NRC]

Embedded in these responses are pointers to some of the recurrent themes in responses to part (b) of this question – the professionalism of the teacher; the necessity of approaching faiths of which one is not an adherent; and the hint that commitment *may* be an asset in teaching about Christianity – but also something which may be inappropriately used. I turn now to these and other themes which emerge from the comments respondents made about their response to the initial question: *Do you think that those who teach about Christianity in RE should themselves have a Christian commitment?*

3.1 Analysis of comments

First it must be acknowledged that a small number of respondents thought that the question about commitment was inappropriate; some also assumed- wrongly - that it indicated the viewpoint of the researcher. For example

This is an attitude which really annoys me intensely. To a good teacher it makes no difference either way. [003:NRC]

What an outrageous suggestion. You set back RE teaching by 30 years. Information not indoctrination. [050:NRC]

RE in schools is an academic subject, not a devotional experience. I am disturbed that this question is asked! [277:NRC]

Find this question annoying. Religious Instruction went out with the dark ages!...... [235:NRC]

What is in itself disturbing in such responses is the implication that commitment is *necessarily* associated with something other than education. Equally so – the apparent view here (as in examples 129, 154, & 093 above) that a personal faith commitment is somehow 'neither here nor there' for the professional teacher fails to recognise the integration of perspectives and depth of understanding such teachers may bring to their work.[124]

Second, some respondents pointed to what may be described as 'the logic of the question' – that is they drew from the question a parallel with teaching other religious traditions, or with teaching other subjects in the curriculum. The logic then would be that each faith might require a teacher of that faith:

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[124] Note Hull's now 'classic' discussion of this in Jackson, R. ed. (1982:101-109)

> If you had to be a member of the faith group to teach the religion every school would need many teachers. [286:NRC]

> For those answering 'Yes', by analogy only Muslims should teach re. Islam or Sikhs re. Sikhism (or atheists re. Humanism?). I believe that a teacher's personal faith or lack of it should play no part in RE. [081:NRC]

This idea – especially as applied to Christianity in the question – might also be seen as offensive:

> Should it have to be a Sikh to teach Sikhism?? etc. We are not indoctrinating so this question is actually offensive to other religions which are required to be taught. [281:NRC]

The last two quotations also point to other trends among responses to which I shall return below. The 'logic' thus found in this question perhaps points to a weakness of the question itself, although this has served to highlight teachers' sensitivity towards other traditions. The other side of this 'logic' picked up 'commitment' more generally, drawing analogies with teaching other subjects:

> Should PE teachers be professional footballers? [019:NRC]

> .... No-one would expect an English teacher to be a best selling author etc..[021:NRC]

> You don't have to be old to teach history!!...... [179:NRC]

> Don't expect History teachers to have lived in 17th Century – although most did. [119:NRC]

> ....After all do we question if a science teacher has been to the moon before they teach space travel? [243:NRC]

Analogies pushed to their limits may fall apart – and this is not the place to pursue them. But what these responses demonstrate is perhaps more about 'professionalism' than 'commitment' *per se*, though such professionalism of course carries its own commitment(s). That teachers have a clear sense of these will become apparent later in this analysis.

Moving on from respondents who found the question inappropriate and responses which followed a logic derived from the question, four themes emerged: the advantages and disadvantages of commitment; RE as *education*; the task of the teacher; pupils' understanding and development. The last two themes were often closely related; both are interesting for the insights they provide into respondents' understanding of the role of the RE teacher. A fifth group of responses simply stated individual 'positions' in relation to the question and are not explored separately/ further here. I turn first to Christian commitment, since this was the focus of the question.

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The disadvantages of commitment

Many respondents identified potential problems where religious education might be taught by a teacher with a (Christian) commitment. Such individual faith might be a 'handicap'; it might result in bias, didacticism, hinder objectivity, come with its own agendas, preach, prove a hindrance in the classroom, and cloud a teacher's view of other faiths. Some responses (picking up the question) were directed especially towards Christian teachers – past and present:

> ....I think a lot of committed Christian's [sic] put young people off religion in years gone by due to their zealous teaching strategies.[011:NRC]

> ....teachers who are Christian often find it a challenge to teach non-Christian religions, or are biased, or too defensive, or know only one denominational point of view or have a hidden agenda. It [i.e.teaching about Christianity] should be academic and professional. [132:NRC]

> From my experience (training teachers) those with a committed Xns. Faith really struggle to teach other religions fairly and end up frustrated with a lack of student interest. [161:NRC]

> I feel sometimes confirmed believers cannot be open to questioning – an open outlook allows freedom of thought. I do accept that some Christians can do this but my experience is negative. [034:NRC]

More generally the question's reference to Christian commitment signalled a confessional approach or indoctrination for some respondents: for example

> We are there to educate – about all faiths, not to indoctrinate. If people want religion in that way, go to a place of worship – ask a vicar, rabbi, imam...... [005:NRC]

> Those with strong Christian beliefs tend to preach and try to indoctrinate. [180:NRC]

> I find pupils dislike learning about RE, because they expect the teacher to be Christian, and think you are going to preach to them. They are much more receptive when told the teacher does not follow the Christian faith. [172:NRC]

Several other respondents pointed to the value of *not* having a faith commitment, or to the advantages of having an atheist position; others felt that the matter of a teacher's faith was irrelevant to their professional life, and contrary to the respondent above, a few made it clear that they would never disclose their personal commitments to pupils.

> As an atheist I find it a lot easier to be objective about what I teach and how Christianity is presented. [148:NRC]

A questionnaire can of course only invite short responses and it would be wrong to over emphasise these perspectives; nevertheless their assumptions and generalisations about those who have a Christian commitment do suggest a continuing need to examine the relation of professional and faith commitments. This

would appear to be as important for those who do not have such a commitment and/or discount its relevance, as for those who do.

The advantages of commitment

The response quoted above all came from teachers who had answered 'No' to part (a) of the question –indicating that having a Christian commitment was not in their view important for those who teach about Christianity. But among those who answered 'No' were also those who gave a *qualified* recognition of the contribution *a* commitment – not necessarily Christian - might make to teaching:

> Ideally they [*i.e. those who teach about Christianity*] should have some commitment to some religion as then you understand why religion has such
> a big impact on their everyday lives. I do & it has helped me. [026:NRC]

> It is not necessary from an education point of view, but those teachers with an experience of what it means to be a Christian are bound to have a better grasp of the subject. [152:NRC]

> It possibly helps to have a personal commitment because you might be more enthusiastic and informed but I don't feel it is essential. [209:CE]

It was perhaps surprising that only two respondents (both from Church of England schools) gave expression to the view that commitment might be a 'resource'; thus regarding a Christian commitment it might:

> Good if they [teachers] have [it] – but not essential your own faith is simply another resource. [030:CE]

The idea that commitment might be advantageous – or even necessary – in one's relation with pupils was also expressed, usually by respondents who had also indicated that they thought it important to *have* a (Christian) commitment:

> It is possible to be an atheist and teach Christianity in RE, but pupils do ask 'Are you Christian?' but not usually Are you a Buddhist, Hindu etc?' [099:NRC]

Those who responded from schools with a religious character were more likely to point to faith as necessary in the interests of both pupil and teacher understanding:

> Christianity is about a 'faith' response and a relationship with God – not a set of practices. You must be a Christian to understand this.
> In a church school context it's important as they ask deep questions you need to be able to address to nurture their faith. Non Christian pupils ask out of interest & still need a response. [028:CE]

Among those respondents from Roman Catholic schools 19 of the 26 who considered a personal Christian commitment necessary in teaching about Christianity related this to the role and integrity of the teacher, the nature and purposes of their teaching and its impact on pupils. For example:

It is not possible to be neutral in the classroom – each teacher comes with her own experiences – Catholic teachers have something particular to share with their students – it is their motivation. [053:NRC]

Very difficult to be enthusiastic without personal commitment. Pupils very quick to spot 'fakes'. [031:RC]

A similar sentiment was expressed by a respondent from a school with no religious affiliation:

One can teach anything, however students find commitment – carefully & personally explained gives integrity & credibility to responses. [233:RC]

If you don't practice what your [sic.] preaching how can you really deliver the spiritual emphasis of the content. [192:RC]

I feel it very definitely helps – pupils often have very few positive role models of Christians – they need to see that Christianity is relevant to people's lives. [010:RC]

Underpinning such responses is the view that the task of the teacher is encouraging 'more than' study of Christianity: if commitment is missing teaching Christianity

....becomes an academic ex[ercise] – RE involves trusting relationships & sharing/explanation of belief. [054:RC]

Whilst some respondents to the question about commitment did stress RE's academic credentials, it is also clear (see Chapter 7) that many teachers do see the subject as more than this; what the majority of those in schools with no religious character – and in the case of this survey those in Church of England schools – would insist is that this is not dependent on a teacher's own faith commitment, Christian or other. And whilst the importance of commitment represented the majority viewpoint among respondents from Roman Catholic schools, there were also some who did not subscribe to this perspective, for example:

Teaching about Christianity does not require commitment. Learning from Christianity – a commitment can help but too enthusiastic a commitment can be offputting. [047:RC]

What I had not anticipated from responses to my question was an emergent picture of what teaching about Christianity *does* require. We have seen that a Christian commitment figures highly for only 15.7% of respondents to the question. Respondents saw other matters as more important, and many made comments which contributed to a picture of the 'good teacher':

I consider that a good teacher should have the skills to enable pupils to explore what people believe, why and what impact it has on their lives and the World. This extends across all world views. [260:CE]

The competent teacher

There are many themes and concerns in the responses which cluster under this heading. Perhaps the 'tone' here may be set by one response and its focus on 'professionalism' (the respondent had answered 'No' to the first part of the question):

> While I am a Baptist Minister and a Christian, I believe my teaching of Judaism, Islam etc is sound. Therefore a Muslim, Jew or Sikh who is a subject specialist should be equally trusted to be professional. [183:NRC]

As anticipated by the responses about commitment already noted, many found such professionalism rooted in distinguishing between indoctrination or confessional approaches and education; for example:

> The subject is not Theology! It is a process of educating pupils about religions – not indoctrination into one faith. [042:NRC]

> It is important that pupils foster a spirit of enquiry drawing on their shared experience. I consider myself a deindoctrinator and do not subscribe to the confessional approach to teaching RE! [033:NRC]

> I teach RE because it is fascinating & about a whole range of belief systems & lifestyles – not to indoctrinate but to educate/make aware/understand. [196:CE]

Another way of expressing the educational focus of RE was to draw attention to its academic status:

> I don't feel we are teaching students to be Christians RE is an academic subject like any other. [057:NRC]

> ......RE is an academic subject which should be taught as such. Pupils should know about all major religions & make up their own minds. Every religion should be taught in an unbiased way. Indoctrination should be left to leaders of religion – priests, rabbis, imams. etc. [070:CE]

Leaving aside the view that indoctrination is somehow appropriate if undertaken by religious leaders, these responses begin to point to teachers' understanding of their role and its relation to their pupils learning. Respondents spoke of the approach that was required as 'unbiased', 'non-biased', 'objective' and 'impartial'; of the need for 'detachment' or for an 'open outlook', 'open-mindedness' and a capacity to treat all faiths 'equally and fairly'. It was also necessary to show 'respect' and 'tolerance', to have 'a sensitive and empathetic approach', 'to understand others' and 'teach consideration of others'. Just a few examples of such responses must speak for the many:

> Sometimes it helps to be impartial – providing a genuine sense of respect is evident in teaching. Neutral ground is often a good base for teaching religion. [071:NRC]

> My job is to educate not influence: I expose the pupil to various, equally valid ideologies, both religious and secular – they will develop their own responses. I feel any bias is unhealthy. [123:NRC]

The role of the RE teacher should be strictly impartial and open minded yet recognising the power of faith commitment. [271:NRC]

I think that having an overt religious commitment is irrelevant to the teaching of RE. What is important is a sensitive and empathetic approach and an enthusiasm for the subject. [175:NRC]

Others also wrote of 'enthusiasm for education', 'love of the subject', and 'passion' for it:

Unnecessary to have personal faith at all – most important quality, I feel, is to have passion for the subject of RE as a whole and to teach a balance of what faith is all about. [150:NRC]

Some drew attention to a commitment to the subject *per se*, and to the development of knowledge and expertise:

The teachers of RS should be knowledgble [*sic.*] and enthusiastic about all religions not just their own. [206:NRC]

I believe the teacher should have a genuine interest in the subject and a desire to communicate [223:NRC]

It is commitment to the subject & an interest in developing subject expertise that it is crucial. An understanding of the spiritual is very helpful............ [212:NRC]

A few respondents also focused on their understanding and knowledge of religions in relation to their responsibilities towards their pupils:

As an RE teacher I believe it is my duty to challenge students to examine and evaluate all religions equally. I believe a moral standpoint which relates to all religions important. [006:NRC]

We are required to teach six major world faiths and must respect all six, helping pupils to learn about and from each one. I believe all are extremely important in providing insight into personal and spiritual development as well as moral understanding. I do not believe that Christianity should be marked out as 'special' in a way that could be suggested it holds more truth than others. [009:NRC]

Each of the respondents whose words have been quoted in this sub-section point the reader to *their* understanding of what it is to be an RE teacher; they do not see a Christian commitment as important to teaching about Christianity – but offer instead their professional understanding of their role.

It will be clear that the two questions relating to commitment elicited a wide range of responses; this section has tried to do justice to this variety by identifying the broad categories into which responses fell, whilst permitting individual voices to be heard. It is clear that for the majority of respondents (excepting those from Roman Catholic schools) Christian commitment – and probably no other religious commitment either – is *not* seen as necessary for the teacher of RE; and indeed many have a clear sense of their professional role which is in no way contingent upon religious

commitments or the absence of them. At the same time it would appear that for some there remains an inbuilt suspicion of such commitment; suspicion of bias and indoctrination are never far away.

In terms of the shaping and representation of Christianity this chapter has brought to the foreground those aspects of Christianity with which this group of teachers are most familiar; it has offered [Tables 18 & 19 A-C] a broad brush picture of respondents' qualifications in the ten subsets of 'Christianity' identified in a range of first-degree courses. It is not intended to provide statistical data, but the data does represent the experience of a sizeable group of teachers drawn from across all the government regions (Appendices A1 and A2). The chapter has also pointed to a range of ways in which teachers further their knowledge and understanding. The inclusion of a question related to commitment elicited contrasting opinions, and is perhaps an area for further research in relation to the impact of teachers' own life stances and values on the 'handling' of different faiths in the classroom. The next chapter considers the aspirations for their pupils these teachers had when teaching Christianity, especially in relation to 'learning from' this tradition.

Chapter 8: Understanding about Christianity and learning *from* Christianity: teachers' aspirations for their students

This chapter brings together important material from my survey with respect to what it seems appropriate to describe as teachers' aspirations for their students. Teachers may be constrained by the requirements and structures imposed by syllabuses, as well as by their own study, but they bring to their teaching a vision of their professional task; this includes a sense of their subject's value in its own right, as well as its value for their students' education. In the convention RE has adopted of defining its task in terms of offering all students opportunities to 'Learn about' and Learn from' religion(s) it has provided a framework within which teachers may express their intentions for their students.

1. Ascertaining teachers' aims and aspirations

Teachers' responses to a two part, open question placed close to the end of the questionnaire, comprised some of the richest data gathered by the survey. Whilst the question was specifically related to Christianity, the responses arguably offer insight into how teachers see the role of religious education itself. The question was as follows:

*By the **end of KS3***

*A) What would you most like your pupils to **understand about** Christianity?*

*B) What do you hope your pupils will have **learnt from** Christianity?*

Of the 286 teachers returning the questionnaire, 280 (97.90%) responded to part A, and 273 to part B (95.45%).

A note on the question and its analysis

I have suggested at a number of points in this that in the main RE teachers see their subject as *more than* the study of religions. As long ago as 1991 the then National Curriculum Council (NCC) gave formal expression to this view:

> SACREs and working groups need to remember that religious studies is generally agreed to be only a part of their RE and does not normally require pupils to consider *the application of religious teachings to their own lives.* (NCC, 1991:12) [My italics.]

Its successors, the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), gave formal expression to this view in their use of the aforementioned terms 'Learning about religion(s)' and 'Learning from

religion' in a number of key publications (SCAA1994a; 1994b; QCA 2000a; QCA 2004).[125]   My preferred use of *understand about Christianity* in the above question, was intended to promote a more reflective response than 'Learn about' might have done; my use of 'Christianity' (not 'religion(s)') in the question also happens to reflect the non-statutory national framework's statement that

> '...........learning about religion covers pupils' *knowledge and understanding of individual religions* and how they relate to each other as well as the study of the nature and characteristics of religion. (QCA, 2004:11) [My italics.]

The process of analysis adopted in relation to parts A and B of the question was described earlier in this study in Chapter 4. The nature of the responses led to an analysis of the emergent categories which went beyond that demanded by responses to other open questions in the survey. 'Categories' here became 'domains' and the dimensions of each domain were carefully mapped out. For example, domains focusing on a particular word e.g. 'Tolerance' , or ' Respect' carefully explored the ways in which the word was used; that relating to 'Jesus' tracked the ways in which responses referred to him. This last example and two others are provided in Appendix D.1.   This process was followed in relation to each of the domains identified in Tables 21A and 21B, allowing a very careful and detailed picture to emerge of the aspirations which the respondents *together*, held for their pupils. Whilst this is a composite picture it is exemplified here through individual 'voices'. The 'weighting' of the respective domains which make this picture can be seen in each of the two tables' indication of the percentage of *responses* for each domain; additionally this information is set out in relation to schools' 'character'.

Further to the identified domains, some responses raised the issue of pupils' attitudes towards Christianity; for some teachers bringing about change to these had priority: for example, their hopes might be that pupils will understand

> That it [i.e. Christianity] is much more interesting than their preconceived views have led them to believe and that it is alright to criticise an established religion. [024:NRC]

> That it is a rich and precious and diverse spiritual tradition. They often identify it as being less 'spiritual' or less interesting. [227:NRC]

> That Christians are not god 'Geeks' or 'losers'! [177:NRC]

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[125] Those familiar with Michael Grimmitt's seminal book *Religious Education and Human Development* (1987) will recognise the roots of this usage lie in his work. (Grimmitt 2000:15, 37) indicates that such usage is often partial, and in contexts which reflect a different rationale for RE; his terminology has nonetheless become formulaic in RE in England and is used not only in documentation from central bodies, but also in the majority of locally agreed syllabuses.

Such aspirations to bring about changes in student perceptions of Christianity indicate some of the hurdles to be overcome in engaging students in study of this tradition – negativity towards it, recognition that a critical engagement is possible, and the breaking down of dismissive stereotypes.

Keeping this strand in mind, I should like now to illustrate and comment on the domains which bring responses to each part of the question into focus.

2. Responses (A): What would you most like your pupils to understand about Christianity?

In outlining responses to this question I shall take the identified domains of Table 19 in three groups: Status, Impact and Relevance; Living faith and Way of Life; and Jesus, Beliefs/ teachings, Values and Diversity. The first group appears to be concerned with establishing Christianity's place in the curriculum; the second with establishing its link with 'life'; and the third group points to those aspects of the tradition that seem to have prominence in respondents' handling of Christianity.

Status, Impact and Relevance

Data generative of 'Status' appeared to be concerned with a 'positioning' of Christianity and with its 'standing', e.g. in relation to other faiths. Christianity is to be understood as a *world* religion and as a *global* presence; so 'understanding about Christianity' is to know

> It is a worldwide religion. [055:NRC]

> That it is a major world religion which aims to put teachings from 2000 years ago into practice in our modern society and across the world. [188:NRC]

> That it exists as a world religion that shares many doctrines/philosophies/values with others, namely the principle of love. [149:RC]

'*World* religion', whilst a contested term [126] and potentially ambiguous here - is 'world' to be equated with 'worldwide', or is it expressing Christianity's place with other so called 'world' religions in the curriculum? – appears either way to be indicative of a 'status' which pupils should understand. Giving some weight to this interpretation, is the contrary view expressed by a few respondents who adopted a 'levelling' stance towards Christianity; pupils are to understand

> That it is a comparative [*sic*] religion – no more important than others. [021:NRC]

> That it's just another faith as valid as all the other faiths. [286:NRC]

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[126] Although contested in RE writings (see e.g. Jackson, 1997a: 49-50, 53-5; Geaves, 1998; Chidester in Jackson, ed., 2003:31-50) the term '*World*' religion appears to retain its currency among RE teachers.

A. What would you most like your pupils *to understand about* Christianity?

NRC SCHOOLS	% of 320	CE & OC SCHOOLS	% of 35	RC SCHOOLS	% of 35
DIVERSITY	14.69	BELIEF[General]	17.14	RELATIONAL FAITH	20.00
VALUES	11.25	DIVERSITY	14.28	BELIEF[General]	14.28
WAY OF LIFE	10.62	LIVING FAITH	14.28	JESUS	14.28
'STATUS'	10.31	IMPACT	11.43	VALUES	11.43
BELIEF[General]	10.00	JESUS	8.57	KEY CONCEPTS	8.57
IMPACT	9.69	RELATIONAL FAITH	8.57	BEING CHRISTIAN	8.57
JESUS	9.69	'STATUS'	8.57	LIVING FAITH	5.71
KEY CONCEPTS	8.75	KEY CONCEPTS	5.71	RELEVANCE	5.71
RELEVANCE	5.94	WAY OF LIFE	5.71	DIVERSITY	2.86
BEING XTN.	4.69	BEING XTN	2.86	IMPACT	2.86
LIVNG FAITH	4.37	VALUES	2.86	'STATUS'	2.86
				WAY OF LIFE	2.86
*Number of **responses/ part responses** allocated to above domains = **320***		*Number of **responses/ part responses** allocated to above domains = **35***		*Number of **responses/ part responses** allocated to above domains = **35***	

Table 21A: Understanding about Christianity: Distribution of domains in relation to schools' religious character

and that

> It's not the only religion in Britain.... [182:NRC].

Offering yet a further contrast was a single voice pointing to a different understanding pupils might gain of Christianity's status:

> That it is the only way. 'I am the way....all other ways are considered wrong, especially spiritualism'. [167:NRC]

Closely linked with ideas about Christianity's status is that of the *Impact* of the tradition or of its 'effect' or 'influence': pupils' understanding might be of

> The global impact of the faith on the 21st century world we live in – historical, political, socio-economic, demographic. [039:NRC]

or of its impact on 'people', on 'society'; on 'their (i.e. pupils') lives', or indeed 'everyone's': so pupils may learn

> That it is a multi dimensional world faith which impacts directly on the lives of millions of people........... [006:NRC]

> How Christianity impacts on everyone's life whether they are Christian or not. [083:NRC]

Or, more forcibly,

> The impact it can and should have on people's lives. [031:RC]

Occasionally the influence of Christianity was contextualised geographically and culturally, concerned with an understanding of

> Its profound influence on people's lives, human history and the development of Western philosophy and society. [282:NRC]

> ....the impact of Christianity on British society. [173:NRC]

or, more globally, recognising

> ....most importantly that Christianity is still a massive influence in the world (e.g. in politics/sport. 3rd world aid etc). [081:NRC]

Such emphases go beyond what most syllabuses suggest and school textbooks offer and would demand a re-appraisal of the kind of material generally available to teachers and pupils. In particular they call for contextualised studies of Christianity, sensitive also to history and tradition and how these may shape and inform the present. On the other hand these emphases may be as much about establishing the importance of Christianity in the curriculum as about curriculum intentions.

Whilst less prevalent than *Status* or *Impact*, *Relevance* introduces a new emphasis: an orientation to the present. Christianity is to be understood as relevant 'today', to

'modern society', 'the 21st century', or 'the fabric of the modern world'; linked with this is also its 'people appeal'. Pupils are to understand

> That it is a modern and relevant faith tradition in contemporary society & is meaningful for hundreds of people. [271:NRC]

or that it is a

> Global faith, diverse faith, and for many millions of people a very relevant faith for the 21st century. [168:NRC]

Christianity is also of more than passing relevance and pupils might consequently understand

> That it has firm historical roots but is relevant to today's world. [247:NRC]

Some hoped that their pupils would personally come to understand

> Its relevance for *their lives* – the values and teaching for the modern world. The spiritual and moral guidance. [237:NRC]

> That it is alive. It relates to them and *their lives*.... [215:RC]

> [My italics in each case]

A further strand of thought among responses to part A of the question pointed to Christianity as life enhancing or transformative, or simply as a positive force. Whilst this did not in itself constitute a domain, it contributes to the cumulative picture of teachers' aspirations for their pupils, who may come to understand

> That it [*i.e. Christianity*] can support people's lives & change them. [108:NRC]

> ......*Its* role in creating moral order in society & fulfilling spiritual needs. [267:NRC]

> ......As with other religions it is a positive force in the world – not 'Religions cause wars, miss'. [259:NRC]

These responses give some weight to the view that 'relevance' is to be linked especially with a Christian ethic; they also indicate the positive understanding of Christianity which respondents hoped their pupils might develop. They also serve as a reminder of Christianity as a 'living faith' or 'living religion'.

Living Faith, Being Christian and Way of Life

'Living Faith' emerges first as a descriptive phrase. This is distinct from understanding what it is '*to have* faith' – although of course this may be part of discovering that Christianity *is* a living faith. The use of 'living faith' or 'living religion' is sometimes comparable to the use of 'world religion' and 'world faith'; but a focus on 'living faiths' is also well established in RE,[127] 'living' offering a counterbalance to

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[127] Particularly endorsed by the title of SCAA (1994a): *Living Faiths Today.*

an earlier RE concerned with origins and textual traditions. Here it expresses a hope that this is the way students will see Christianity, understanding

> That it's a LIVING faith – relevant to 21st century.... [080:NRC] [Respondent's capitals]

> That it's a vibrant religion with some 2 billion adherents worldwide... [153:NRC]

Conversely, it may be understanding

> That it is not a dead religion. [015:NRC]

The quality of Christianity as a living religion was indicated in some other responses, so pupils are to understand

> Its place as a living religion which allows followers to flourish and grow as individuals reflecting the message of agape. [263:NRC]

or the freedom to belong:

> That it is a living religion and people choose to follow it. [228:NRC]

Sometimes understanding may be about the experience of faith:

> ...what it is to have a living Christian faith. [109:NRC]

a response close in thought to those which focus on 'Being Christian'.

The experience of *Being Christian* or 'a' Christian was taken up in a number of ways. Respondents wanted their pupils to understand *why* some people are, or become Christian:

> Why there are Christians and what makes them have a faith. [097:NRC]

> .....to understand what causes some people to want to be Christian. [154:NRC]

but more especially, what it *feels* like or *means* to be Christian, so that they understand:

> What it is to be Christian and how it feels and why it is important to them. [130:NRC]

> What it means to be Christian. How [do] followers show their Christianity in their everyday life? [137:NRC]

Or, as one respondent writes:

> I would like them to know what it means to be a Christian and how their religious beliefs effect [*sic*] their everyday life. [026:NRC]

These responses suggest that teachers hope to take their pupils beyond surface impressions; they also point to a significant feature of the three domains I have grouped together here – that being Christian has outcomes in action or in everyday life. Other responses, whilst few, point to individual ideas about being Christian. Thus one respondent hoped pupils might understand:

'...What makes *a good* Christian [190:NRC] [My italics here and below.]

Understanding Christianity may also mean having a grasp of

> How it grew and what it came out of; and *the real not perceived* idea of being a Christian. [238:NRC]

or of

> Personal experience. Being a Christian isn't about going to Church. Everyone has a spiritual side. [099:NRC]

Such responses serve as a reminder that teachers bring their own perceptions of the tradition – of Being *Christian* – to the classroom. But for many respondents, faith or belief in relation to 'living', 'life' or 'action', most characterised the understanding of Christianity they hoped pupils would acquire. This was given expression in the use of *Way of Life and* other closely related ideas falling within this domain.

Way of life is itself used to indicate what Christianity *is*, a counterbalance to what it *is not* - possibly as a corrective to pupils' negative or contrary views like those noted earlier. Understanding means recognising Christianity as a

> 'Way of life' – not just an add on. It is relevant to everyday living. [011:NRC]

> ...Way of life not just a belief system. [014:NRC]

> That it is a Way of life, not just something you claim to be!........ [008:RC]

or, filling out what this life might be, understanding

> The holistic way of life of a true Christian. Living a purposeful, loving and caring lifestyle. [038:NRC]

But it is the interrelationship of [Christian] belief and life which proved dominant in this domain.[128] Understanding about Christianity may, then, be seeing

> That it is a belief that affects every area of your life. [075:NRC]

> That religious belief affects all that a person does, not just that they worship. [001:NRC]

or discovering

> *How* a belief affects people's lives. [126:NRC]

> *Why* it is important as a world-view and how it affects the lives of its adherents.... [229:NRC]

> *How* believers use their beliefs to live as a good citizens. [159:NRC]
> [My italics in each case.]

The interrelation of belief and 'life' also emerges in a more concrete way in a focus on 'key Christian lives', or as one response put it 'Beliefs in real lives' – an element

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[128] Note that 'Belief' is used by respondents mainly in a general way, not as the relating of *specific* beliefs and 'life'.

noted earlier in the analysis of curriculum content and often finding expression in a 'Faith in action' approach. [129]

Underpinning these three domains there seems to be an implicit assumption that pupils do not necessarily see any connection between belief and 'living'; making such a connection requires bringing about a changed view of Christianity and shifting existing perspectives.

Jesus, Belief(s) & Key Concepts, Values, Diversity

The interest in Christianity's impact and its relevance in the first group of domains, and the relating of Christianity and 'life' in the second, is complemented by 'Values' in this third grouping, where Jesus too is often referred to in relation to his teachings, values and example. The place respondents gave to understanding Christian diversity, however, tends to stand somewhat alone in the context of responses to part A of this question.

As with the earlier analysis of curriculum content, responses referring to *Jesus* were often very general; all encompassing references to 'the life and teaching of Jesus' tell little of what pupils are to understand about him. Fuller responses tended to focus on Jesus' teachings, and identified what was to be understood:

> The role of Christ in developing moral teaching and the impact of Christianity on individual lives. [025:NRC]

> The basic teachings about equality love and forgiveness as taught by Jesus..... [136:NRC]

> The real nature of Jesus' teaching - revolutionary & social as well as spiritual. [129:NRC]

> The message that Jesus taught and his challenge to us e.g. help the poor; social justice. [101:NRC]

Teaching is also linked with Jesus as an exemplar; understanding is to be of

> The positive effects it [i.e. Christianity] has on people's lives. The example of Jesus & validity of his teaching. [084:NRC]

> .....Teachings of Jesus and his life as an example to others [092:NRC]

and of its continuing application

> What it means to live in a modern world by Jesus' teachings. [148:NRC]

> The compassion and forgiveness Jesus showed (and to transfer those skills/qualities to themselves) [023:NRC]

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[129] This is frequently handled through biographical material; the approach has a long pedigree in English RE, particularly in teaching about Christianity (cf. earlier comments, p.133).

Among responses referring to Jesus, a small number related to questions of Jesus' identity, and hence to beliefs and theological perspectives; a few were also concerned to establish Jesus as a historical figure. But the evidence points mainly to pupils' understanding of his 'life and teaching', and suggests that 'teachings' may indicate key values exemplified in his life. Whether these are ever contextualised in Jesus' theological or eschatological horizons as perceived within the New Testament does not emerge from the survey; that they are to be related to the present and to pupils' lives does.

Agreed syllabuses commonly specify study of belief(s) during KS3; a focus on belief has also been seen as enhancing pupil learning in RE at this key stage (Ofsted: 2004:3). The emergence of *Belief(s)* is thus consistent with both these factors. Most references were of a general nature, and whilst the general may subsume the particular, where *Key Concepts* were mentioned – incarnation, resurrection, sacrifice, atonement, 'Christ'/ Christology, for example – they can be traced to a very small number of responses. Nor were these concepts central to curriculum content identified elsewhere in this survey, where 'belief' appears to be more frequently concerned with questions about the existence of God and the problem of suffering – topics which may account for pupils' interest and motivation. Whilst these two domains – *Belief(s)* and *Key concepts* – do not include those responses linking 'belief' *and* 'life' noted earlier, in that context too there was no reference for instance, to incarnation, or resurrection, and *how* such beliefs bear upon 'living'. This is not to say that respondents do not make such connections in teaching about Christianity – but they did not emerge from this survey.

The domain headed *Values* also included many general responses: 'values'; responses where 'moral' is used as a descriptor; references to 'ethics', 'ethical principles' and 'ethical issues'. Some responses (as will already have been clear) named specific values. For example, specific values are taken to signal the nature of Christianity, defining it in terms of its values; pupils are to understand

> That it is a world religion based on love, humility and forgiveness and how the various aspects I teach fit into such. [012:NRC]

> ....Its place as a world faith which encourages great acts of compassion and love. [005:NRC]

> That it can be the basis for peace, reconciliation, hope & happiness. [114:NRC]

> That it is a religion of choice with values to understand, adapt and learn from. [102:NRC]

'Moral teachings', 'moral message' 'moral code', 'moral basis', 'moral guidance' emerge as important lenses through which pupils are to see Christianity. Understanding may also be of 'moral issues' or of 'ethical issues' – a long established concern in RE at key stage 4 and in RS in public examinations, but now appearing also in KS3. Among all the responses which gave rise to this domain one stood apart from the others in its recognition both of diversity in ethical matters and of *how* this may be accounted for

> Its diversity of belief regarding ethical issues and how these are rooted in theological understanding and approaches to scripture. [256:NRC]

Diversity - expressed also as 'difference' and 'breadth' - emerged as a strong domain in schools with no religious character, but one which did not rate highly among respondents from Roman Catholic schools. This domain includes responses hoping for pupils' recognition of diversity *per se;* for an understanding of 'Its [Christianity's] rich diversity' [276:NRC] – indicative of a positive attitude to diversity; for recognition of differences among Christians; and understanding of Christian denominations, or 'forms' of Christianity. Diversity was also linked with different aspects of Christianity – worship, practice; belief; ethics; use of the Bible; ways of envisaging Jesus; others spoke of diversity of response, expression and experience. A single – rather different – response brought together diversity with an apparent understanding of Christianity's inclusiveness: so pupils are to understand:

> That Christianity is a diverse religion with people of all colours coming together in worship of God through Jesus Christ. [062:NRC]

This response is echoed by two others which identified common bonds among Christians:

> It's a very broad religion with different denominations, but with the same Christian teachings of love and forgiveness. [165:NRC]

> How diverse Christians can be, yet most still prepared to share with one another....... [225:NRC]

References to diversity in its denominational form were somewhat surprising here, given their earlier identification as a problematic area for some teachers and as the aspect of Christianity most difficult for pupils to understand and holding least interest for them.

An additional domain

No account has yet been given of a further domain which emerged only from responses from schools with a religious affiliation, and especially from Roman

Catholic schools. Responses generative of this domain focus on the personal and relational nature of faith. Pupils are to understand, for example, that Christianity is

.... personal, intimate, relational. [204:CE]

.... a relationship with God not a set of rituals or practices. [209:CE]

.... an encounter, a personal experience of Jesus in his church, in their life and living. [110:RC]

In some responses, this kind of awareness became an affirmation of faith, which called also for a response:

That they are loved by God, that they are invited into a deeper relationship with God. That it is not difficult, that it is happy, and meaningful and worth while – that this is the real meaning of life. [265:RC]

That Jesus Christ came to save us and what our response to this should be. [053:RC]

In these responses one senses the aspiration of teachers that their pupils' understanding will lead them in the direction of faith – of making a response. They contrast sharply with those noted earlier which pointed to an 'apologia' for Christianity.

2.1 Comment on responses (A)

Analysis of responses to the question 'What would you most like your pupils to *understand about* Christianity' suggest a concern among some teachers to establish the importance of Christianity and to challenge misconceptions – an 'apologetic', not for belief or finer points of doctrine, but rather to 'secure' Christianity as a tradition worth consideration by their pupils. To this end its status, impact and relevance are variously expressed; responses focusing on a 'Living Faith', Being Christian' and a 'Way of Life' seek to offer pupils a perspective in which Christianity is not divorced from 'life' and 'living'– as some may imagine. 'Real beliefs in real lives' serves as a summary of this – calling for attention to context and encounter in approaching this tradition; it also largely encapsulates the representation of Christianity in responses to the question. Making a link with 'life' – and indeed with pupils' lives – has commonly been approached through a focus on the ethical and moral dimensions of Christianity, drawing on the values expressed in the life and teaching of Jesus, which along with 'Belief(s)' are key elements here. 'Diversity', also calls for attention to contextual matters as I have suggested earlier, but its position among the domains identified here remains surprising.

3. Responses (B): What would you most like your pupils to learn from Christianity?

As noted earlier there were slightly fewer respondents to this question than to its counterpart; and among these a few declined to address it: 'Children learn from all religions not just from one'; '....I wouldn't wish to dictate'. But beyond such exceptions respondents demonstrated confidence and certainty in their intentions. Table 21B sets out the domains which emerged from the analysis; and it will be quickly apparent that these focus on outcomes in terms of personal development, values, and attitudes and dispositions which have wider societal implications.

Tolerance, Respect and Understanding

The frequent use of these words may reflect their currency in syllabuses and in government agendas.[130] Each word denotes a distinct domain; I bring them together on account of their shared *relational* focus.

Tolerance as understood by respondents is oriented towards believers, towards others' beliefs and views; as one response put it:

> I hope they [*i.e. pupils*] may learn to tolerate other people's views and not to put someone down because of their beliefs. [286:NRC]

Pupils are to learn

> To be tolerant of believers. [126:NRC]

> Tolerance of and for others who may have different belief. To be more responsible. [096:NRC]

> Tolerance and an ability to function successfully in society. [025:NRC]

In these responses tolerance is related both to the personal development of students and to social competence; such responses are close to those concerned with personal development and self understanding (see below).

Echoing responses to part A, *Understanding* may point directly to Christianity or aspects of it, but more generally 'Learning from Christianity' is

> To understand others. [116NRC],

or to

> Have an understanding of others. [278:NRC]

and

> An understanding of *how* people think and the world around them. [123:NRC]

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[130] They are frequently used concepts, but much less frequently analysed in the field of RE. But see e.g. Melchert in Astley & Francis, Eds. (1994: 453-460); Wright in Francis, L., Astley, J., & Robbins, M., eds. (2001:201-219) Ofsted (2002c) considers RE's promotion of 'Tolerance'. 'Respect' figures prominently in current government agendas for education and teacher training (Everington, 2004). The volume from Afdal (2006) in the REDCo (Religious Diversity and Education in Europe) series will clearly contribute significantly to discussion of 'Tolerance'.

An understanding *of* the complexity of life and *of* good people within the world......
[153:NRC]

My italicising here points to a varied usage of 'understand' and to the different intentions which this signals in RE.

Respect focuses particularly on Jesus, irrespective of pupils' own affiliations they will learn from Christianity:

> The importance of the person of Jesus, respect for his teaching, respect for the Bible.
> [223:NRC]

> That Jesus as a role model is one to be respected whether pupils are Christian or not.
> [034:NRC]

and also

> Respect for the richness of the tradition and those who follow it. [177:NRC]

Each word – respect, tolerance, understanding – also emerges from responses as a quality or attitude, as something to be(come). Some responses were of only one or two words: 'Tolerance', 'Respect and tolerance', 'Tolerance and understanding'. In these responses it seems probable that teachers give expression to the ways in which they see the purposes *of RE* – though it must be remembered that all the responses analysed occurred within the context of a specific focus on the Christian tradition. The tradition – Jesus, followers, believers for example – is here the object of both understanding and tolerance; but 'learning from Christianity' seems also to be to *acquire* such attitudes. Acquiring these may be seen as the outcome of the learning process in RE, rather than identifying these qualities as Christian and ones which are necessarily acquired from this tradition. On the other hand the identification of specific values (see later) appears to be understood in the latter way.

Relationships with others

This domain is largely distinguished from the relational concerns noted above by its emphasis on the development of attitudes and skills, indicated respectively by a formulaic – 'To be...' and 'How to....' Respondents hope that their pupils may come

> *To be* more open-minded and to listen to everyone's point of view. [138:NRC]

In learning 'How to....' pupils may acquire socially useful skills:

> *How to* behave with other faith communities .... [194:NRC]

> *How to* treat people sympathetically/empathetically..... [179:NRC]

> *How to* get on with people who may not agree with you – mutual respect and understanding. [225:NRC]

The emphasis here again appears to point to the nature of the learning which is to occur; and whilst the domain also draws attention to the need to show empathy, sympathy, care and compassion towards others and have a willingness to do so, attitudes which may be consistent with a Christian response to others, they too belong with the process and quality of learning developed in the classroom. In this domain we catch a glimpse of the kind of persons respondents hope their pupils will become. Encapsulating this domain and leading to the next is the response that pupils may learn from Christianity

> To value themselves and other people [141:NRC].

Personal development and awareness

This domain focuses on the pupils *themselves,* indicated by frequent use of the pronoun 'their' and by verbal signals: pupils are to think, reflect, develop, consider, express, value, to have understanding: they are

> To reflect on own beliefs, reflect on own treatment of others & what is important to them. [254:NRC]

> To develop their own beliefs and opinions. [214:NRC]

> To reflect on their own values and to consider the importance of certain virtues in the world today. [118:NRC]

Or pupils will have

> Reflected on their own ideas of God and the world. Compared Christian values with their own. [085:NRC]

Learning from Christianity may also involve spiritual awareness and moral acuity:

> Some development of an understanding of their own spirituality and moral awareness. [272:NRC]

The domain embraces 'being' and 'becoming' – trends already noted above; it offers a 'vision' of the aspirations of respondents for their pupils; and this is here coterminous with 'learning from Christianity'. Or is it? Direct references to Christianity in this domain were sparse, although one response offered a helpful metaphor for pupils' engagement with the tradition: Christianity is '*A mirror against which to examine their own worldview...*' [256:NRC]. A few responses saw Christianity as a potential source of inspiration for their pupils – a notion paralleling the theme of transformation found in responses to part A of the question.

B: What would you most like your pupils to *learn from* Christianity?

NRC SCHOOLS	% of 235	CE & OC SCHOOLS	% of 20	RC SCHOOLS	% of 32
SPECIFIC VALUES	27.23	RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS	20.00	RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS	21.87
UNDERSTANDING	12.76	RESPECT	20.00	PERSONAL DVLPMNT & AWARENESS	18.75
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS	12.76	PERSONAL DVLPMNT & AWARENESS	15.00	RESPECT	15.62
PERSONAL DVLPMNT & AWARENESS	11.91	SPECIFIC VALUES	15.00	CRITICAL SKILLS	12.50
ETHICS/VALUES/ MORAL(S)	10.21	TOLERANCE	15.00	ETHICS/ VALUES/ MORAL(S)	12.50
RESPECT	9.79	ETHICS/ VALUES/ MORAL(S)	10.00	SPECIFIC VALUES	12.50
TOLERANCE	8.51	UNDERSTANDING	5.00	TOLERANCE	6.25
CRITICAL SKILLS	6.81				
Number of responses/ part responses allocated to above domains = 235		*Number of responses/ part responses allocated to above domains = 20*		*Number of responses/ part responses allocated to above domains = 32*	

Table 21B: Learning from Christianity: Distribution of domains in relation to schools' religious character

Critical skills

It was interesting in an educational climate which has prioritised skills to discover how slightly critical skills figured in responses to answers to either part of the question. Skills comprising this domain (critical skills) are distinguished from those already noted by a degree of detachment and distance – the personal pronoun is absent. Yet arguably it is the critical skills which *are* mentioned – critical evaluation, comparison, making reasoned judgments, questioning, analysis, and philosophical enquiry - which will enable students to fulfil many of the aspirations expressed by their teachers, and indeed enable them to 'comment maturely' , as one response put it, on religious and ethical matters.

Ethics/values/morals and specific Christian values

General statements in response to *each* part of my question focused on a moral dimension in pupils' understanding about/ learning from Christianity. Responses refer to a 'moral code', to 'values', to 'How to live a good life', or what may constitute such a life; they speak of learning 'How to act in a moral way'; of 'codes for living' and 'guidelines by which to live'. Pupils may also learn from Christianity

> How its values may inform and influence their lives. [285:NRC]

Or – with a little more 'distance' - learn from Christianity

> How to live a good life from a Christian perspective and what inspires this. [238:NRC]
> A moral code and way of life which is available for reflection.... .[153:NRC]

For one respondent, there was also a moral imperative:

> That Christians strive for justice, equality, kindness and fairness – and that they [i.e. pupils] should too. [140:NRC]

Such over-arching statements are however outweighed by the many references to specific Christian values,[131] often as responses listing one or two words: 'Compassion', 'Hope', 'Love', 'Love and friendship', 'Love and forgiveness', 'Equality and fairness'. The overall impact of these responses suggests not *just* understanding, or a process of learning, rather *these* appear to be values it is hoped that pupils will *acquire.* In two cases named values become universalised: pupils will learn from Christianity

> Key attitudes and values that have universal appeal e.g. hope, forgiveness, love. [011:NRC]

> Universal ideas of selflessness and unconditional love. [078:NRC]

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[131] This is not to suggest that Christians have a monopoly on these values, but to recognise that they are in the main among those commonly claimed by Christians, appearing in the New Testament and other writings – hymns and prayers for example.

Other responses point to their contributors' own convictions about Christian values *and* point to their relevance to pupils:

> That it [*Christianity*] contains some excellent rules for living e.g. treat others as you would like to be treated & love your neighbour. Do not get angry etc. [026:NRC]

> How issues such as peace, forgiveness and commitment are relevant to them... [132:NRC]

> The value of key themes such as forgiveness. Challenging injustice etc... [271:NRC]

A small number of responses made it clear that Christianity has no monopoly in these matters; so pupils may learn

> All religions teach us to be good human beings. [115:NRC]

and

> As with any other religion – how to share this planet as best we can. [210:NRC]

3.1 Comment on responses (B)

From my analysis of the question set out in Table 21B it is clear that teachers' aspirations for their pupils as persons are most clearly expressed in their responses to part B of my question. These aspirations share common ground with other personal, social and moral aspects of the school curriculum, and with Citizenship; in their relational and ethical stance – especially as expressed through Christian values - and in their instrumental focus, they demonstrate also a continuity with the aspirations placed on RE by previous generations. But the context of the question was 'teaching Christianity'. How then do these aspirations relate to the understanding of Christianity which teachers hoped their pupils would gain? The analysis (summarised in Tables 21A and 21B) does not suggest a *necessary* relationship; the aspirations expressed in relation to 'learning from Christianity' could be addressed in other ways (and no doubt are) by schools. Among the domains, tolerance, respect and understanding and relational skills may be seen both as necessary to, and outcomes of the learning process in RE; they are relevant also to negotiating life in a plural society. But they are also attitudes to be nurtured in the interpersonal contexts of all classrooms and the wider school community; to this end RE (here in its focus on Christianity) may be a significant contributor, but we may question whether these are its *primary* concerns. And if we think they are, then what kind of RE - what aspects of any particular religion and what processes best further these concerns? And what weight is to be given to them in the representation of a tradition – here Christianity?

Chapter 9: Reflections on the survey findings

This survey set out with three concerns: the representation of the Christian tradition in RE at KS3; teachers' experience of studying and of teaching the tradition; how they saw the opportunities and challenges of teaching about Christianity during KS3. Importantly, it is the voices of teachers which speak out from the survey, frequently individually, but also as contributors to a 'collective' picture – as in Chapters 5 & 7. Whilst what may be said in brief responses to a survey is necessarily limited, and located at a particular moment in time, careful analysis may nonetheless begin to identify important issues for further exploration. Responsibility for such analysis must rest with the researcher; my hope is that it rings true for respondents, but also prompts discussion about the way in which Christianity is perceived and represented in the RE curriculum.

1. The representation of Christianity

The afterthought of one teacher appended to the end of the completed questionnaire ran as follows:

> Often, pupils are most reluctant to learn about Xtny. [*sic.*] because they think they 'know' it. I assume that this predominantly white middle class school is made up of children who consider themselves 'christian' (and I use a small - c deliberately). They often talk of 'our' religion – and then display a marked ignorance about Xn. [*sic.*] beliefs!
> I see my job as helping them to understand their own heritage and I hope it pays off!
> [069:NRC]

This comment picks up the theme of pupil attitudes which I noted earlier and to which I shall return – but here I draw attention to the matters of an assumed 'familiarity'; to the apparent cultural identity expressed by 'christian'; to the teacher's focus on 'heritage' and 'beliefs' - two ways of 'identifying' or 'representing' Christianity which appear to be important for this respondent. One may also ask where 'being christian' figures in the representation of the tradition. But my point here is a simpler one: a first step in reflecting on Christianity's representation is to identify one's own preconceptions, simply *because* of an 'assumed familiarity'. This is important for those who design syllabuses and for teachers and pupils alike - and might be a first step in addressing pupil disaffection.

RE also carries the weight of its synonymity, historically and formatively, with the Christian tradition; this impacts still on content (and hence representation) and,

implicitly, on intention.[132]   Additionally the 'shaping' of the tradition as it emerged in Chapter 5 reflects the varying underpinning frameworks and understanding of RE as it has developed over time.   In the present the non-statutory national framework for RE identifies the knowledge, understanding and skills pupils will acquire – religions and themes becoming the vehicle for these and thus *shaped* by them. But the question of how one may conceptualise the Christian (or any other) tradition itself in the contemporary world is by-passed.

My contention in the light of this survey is that we need to look for a new configuration of Christianity. The aspirations of teachers for their pupils clearly point to a need for this. This would not be to look for common denominators (as in SCAA: 1994c) but to *allow* understanding of religions in education actually *to be informed and shaped* by what is one of the stated concerns (albeit at KS4) of the non - statutory national framework, '.......understanding of the principal methods by which religions and spirituality are studied.' (QCA 2004:30, 1c). If such understanding could be a starting point for RE's 'configuring' of the traditions with which pupils are to engage, then we might work with a larger canvas, one rooted in time(s), place, cultures and communities, and informed by the critical study of religions. One of the striking features of my analysis in Chapter 5 was the apparent de-contextualised 'Christianity' which emerges from descriptions of teaching units – though I recognise of course that in the classroom these may take on a life which cannot be conveyed by short responses in a questionnaire.

I noted in Chapter 8 that teachers wanted pupils to understand Christianity as a 'world' religion, or a global presence; but such matters did not in the main emerge from the survey findings (see Chapter 5). Yet if RE is about understanding religions (as well as learning from them) and has also a contribution to make to intercultural understanding,   then some insight into the shifting patterns of Christianity globally may also be part of pupils' study. And should this be seen as moving away from religious *education*, we may reflect   that media reporting and images confront everyone day by day with contextualised   challenges and questions, for example about God, humankind, values and commitments. Teachers would also be helped by resources which derived from and engaged pupils with this bigger picture. While curriculum time is inevitably limited and a rigorous selection of material is necessary,

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[132] I am particularly struck by the evidence set out in Tables 11A & 11B (and Appendices B1 - B3), in its focus on Jesus, on Values and on 'faith or belief in action' as expressed through biographical material. An examination of key syllabuses which followed the 1944 Education Act covered similar ground as noted in chapter 2:1 – though with detailed attention to biblical text which would not be found now.

thinking beyond what I have elsewhere called 'curriculum Christianity' may result in a more exciting and realistic encounter with the tradition.

Where RE focuses on themes, it is also important to attend to context. Whose *are* the questions and issues which determine the curriculum? One answer may be 'those of the students'; another, 'current societal concerns in a western context'; but then we may ask how these mesh with those things which matter to the traditions – and where? There is a need also to avoid the danger of setting up Christianity and other traditions as a mere repository of 'answers'. A speech of Archbishop Rowan Williams in 2004[133] highlighted the struggle which exists *within* traditions: he comments that his sense of the inadequacy of RE in some schools lies with

> ....the lack of 'thick description', to borrow the language of the anthropologists, the lack of a strategy to see how religious traditions cope with difficulty. The inevitable projects on religious festivals, on rites of passage and on what different religions think about a scattering of moral issues will not on their own deliver much feeling for living with difficulty or of the concrete personal resources of a faith.

In questioning the kind of rational evaluation of belief which Hand had called for, Williams also drew attention to the experiences which people of faith may hold, shaping who they are, their beliefs and the decisions which they may make:

> The sense of fit, the sense of compulsion by a story of authoritative and total transformation of the world's self definition, the sense of personal address or vocation, of personal and corporate liberation – and so on – all these things are habitually involved in retaining or acquiring religious belief, but are significantly different from a process of evaluating evidence.

This is not to downplay the importance of discriminating between good and bad argument – but Williams' words serve as a reminder of the nature and potential strength of personal experience and a related understanding of 'how things are', which may be by-passed or overlooked as themes surrounding human beliefs and questions, and moral themes are addressed in RE.

2. Teachers' experience of studying and teaching Christianity

Although I have commented separately on the representation of Christianity, teaching, and by implication pupils' learning, is the subtext to the survey findings. The presentation of Christianity points to the syllabuses and frameworks with which teachers must work, but also to teachers' decisions about how they will present the Christian tradition and engage pupils with it in RE. Such decisions will also turn on

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[133] The speech, given at Downing Street, was in part a response to the views of Michael Hand, voiced in a paper delivered at the Institute for Public Policy Research event 'What is RE for?' in January 2004.

teachers' own experience of studying the tradition and their understanding of its contribution to pupils' religious education.

This survey shows that for many teachers their formal study of Christianity has been mainly in the area of Theology [Tables 19 A-C]; there is as yet no widespread practice in England of studying Christianity as a living tradition in the present. Theology and New Testament Studies appear to be where the Christian tradition is most frequently encountered in study at degree level. Introductory literature, which teachers might turn to at their own level, that presents Christianity as a global, 'peopled', living tradition is still relatively rare. Such factors tend to separate Christianity out from other traditions which students may study. Any re-thinking of Christianity within the school curriculum would arguably need to be accompanied by a parallel movement in higher education.

This survey also found that some currently key areas of the RE curriculum – for example work on denominations at KS3, and work in the area of values and ethics – were among those which respondents indicated they had had little opportunity to study at degree level. Furthermore, a number of respondents had never had the opportunity to study Christianity beyond school. It was therefore surprising that many respondents did *not* point to aspects of Christianity which they found difficult to teach nor in the main to areas where they would welcome opportunities for further study. Respondents' concern was rather with how pupils' interest might be fostered, discovering an antidote perhaps to the negative attitudes which some respondents reported their students had towards Christianity. This prompts questions about the nature of the *engagement* looked for in RE – and in relation to Christianity? Where is this to lie? What is its nature and what might be its outcomes? These questions relate also to the aspirations respondents had for their pupils.

3. Teachers' aspirations for their pupils: opportunities and challenges

Chapter 8 gave expression not only to respondents' hopes for their pupils, but also conveys their own *sense of purpose* (in teaching Christianity) with a clarity which their descriptions of content (Chapter 5 and related appendices) do not. Responses relating to pupils' 'understanding about' Christianity, whilst concerned with the tradition's status and challenging pupils' misconceptions, also focus priorities within the field of study. That pupils' engagement is to be with a 'living' and 'lived' tradition seems clear. 'Learning from' Christianity moves in another, but complementary direction, pointing to the societal and community benefits of RE – which I have

suggested are not RE's province alone and perhaps secondary to its immediate tasks – but also to a 'learning from Christianity' which focuses on personal development and learning (acquiring?) Christian values. In this context questions about pupils' engagement with the Christian tradition are further sharpened. Is RE, when Christianity is in focus, about engaging with Christian values, or about their transmission? I suspect that most respondents if asked this directly would identify with the former perspective. But the thrust of responses, read together, is suggestive of the latter; here are echoes of present RE's affinity with its earlier Christian identity.

For some respondents the immediacy and fluency with which they wrote arose from what they believed could be 'learnt *from Christianity'*; for most respondents 'Learning from...' pointed also to the opportunities their subject offered to contribute meaningfully to pupils' personal development and life in community. To reflect on these teachers' aspirations with regard both to their pupils' 'understanding about' and 'learning from' Christianity - aspirations where pupils are rightly at the centre of concern – is also to ask where such aspirations lead, or how they may be realised. Put in another way, how do they relate to the curriculum content (Chapter 5) which represents Christianity at KS3? Such content may be seen to represent a transmissional model of education,[134] which in turn necessarily has to find ways and means of actively engaging pupils. But teachers' aspirations appear to point in another direction, to pupils' encounter in RE with a diverse and living tradition, whose personal and communal narratives[135] are all around us. The challenge then is to engage with these; for RE to develop resources which facilitate this, and to develop further pedagogies[136] which by engaging pupils in conversation and dialogue, in interpretation and critical appraisal, may genuinely develop their understanding of Christianity and of other traditions. Where this conviction leads in terms of the representation of the tradition is the subject of Part 3 of this study.

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[134] Consistent with 'the predominantly cognitive view of education' which the National Curriculum may be seen to have promoted' [Jackson, 2004:9]. The impact of this may also be seen in the Model Syllabuses for RE (SCAA:1994a&b)
[135] See Nesbitt (2004: 125-137) which points to the insights 'personal narratives' may bring to understanding of religious traditions.
[136] On pedagogies and RE, see Grimmitt, ed.(2000) and Jackson (2004)

PART 3: 'CHRISTIANITY' - TOWARDS A NEW PARADIGM

Chapter 10: 'Seeing Christianity for the first time'?

At the end of Part 2 of this thesis I suggested that the evidence I had gathered pointed to the need for a new 'configuration' of 'Christianity' which might provide entry to the tradition for teachers and for those charged with producing syllabuses, as well as inform teaching in school. The use of 'configuration' is deliberate, allowing for movement, changing emphases and perspectives in understanding the past and present and envisioning the future. The term frees us from the more restricting and static concept of 'model' and brings a dynamic into play. The concluding chapter of this thesis advances one possible configuration of the 'Christianity' for discussion. Before proceeding to this, I should like to summarise my case for considering a new configuration drawing on the evidence gathered in the earlier sections of this thesis; on aspects of debates concerning RE in the present; and on some observations drawn in the main from studies of 'Christianity'.

1. An emergent case for a new configuration

In undertaking this study one feature which has been present throughout is the relation of past and present within religious education more broadly and within its handling of Christianity in particular. This feature is of course pertinent also to religious traditions *per se* and to our understanding of them as outsiders or, for adherents, their positioning within them. Features of the past which may belong to older paradigms of RE's place – or in this case Christianity's – in children's learning live on into the present. Whilst RE in England lives with a structure for its determination deriving from a settlement between church and state (albeit since extended to include those of other faiths), and which prioritises an established church among its committees, we live in times which are very different from those which led to its formulation; we live in a different world. The point is important in a number of ways.

First, for some commentators on RE today, the shifts which occurred in RE in the late 1960s and 1970s have taken us way from the underpinning ideals of a society based on Christian values, and an RE predicated on the truth of Christianity. This 'move away' may even be perceived as a subversion of the intention of post 1944 legislation. A consequence of such understanding is to seek to establish a religious

education which is essentially Christian *based* in community schools, whilst allowing some concessions to other traditions (Thompson, 2004). Associated with this is the affirmation of the 'truth' of Christianity, and the representation of the tradition through doctrinal/theological lenses or even monocle. Leaving aside the issue of 'truth' for the moment, this position fails to take account of the complexities of theolo*gies* in the present;[137] there is a complex question which needs to be answered about subject content when 'theology' is used in the singular. The word is as problematic as 'Christianity'; it may be neatly *defined* but whose theology is to be inferred and what *kind of* theology is to be studied? In RE it appears to become at best an examination of a propositional faith, albeit one whose statements may be 'tested', perhaps through a reasoned approach to language; RE's use – semantically – and practically in syllabus construction of 'belief', 'doctrine' and 'theology' warrants a study in its own right; I suspect that they are often confused.

Second, at several points in this study there has been occasion to draw attention to existential questions and to the engagement and experience of pupils. I drew attention to the dialogical nature of the aim in Working Paper 36; to Birnie's distaste for a phenomenological approach, and preference for the theological, since it addressed fundamental issues of human existence. The stance is not dissimilar to that adopted in Model Syllabus 2 (SCAA, 1992b), *Questions and Beliefs*. Grimmitt and Read set out on a path which would bring human experience, religious traditions, human experience and pupils' life worlds into a humanising and constructive pedagogy in Grimmitt's later work, and influencing also the work of the Westhill project. Teachers in the survey findings reported in Part 2 appeared more 'comfortable' or 'confident' when they wrote of their aspirations for their pupils 'learning from' Christianity. I find these examples indicative of a discussion and debate which is overdue in RE, but probably impinges on 'Christianity' especially.[138] It pulls in three directions – human experience and questions; theology; religion(s).[139]

Third, whilst recognising the limitations of any survey conducted only by questionnaire, I am struck by the often disparate nature of the many topics through which pupils will in some way encounter 'Christianity'. I recognise that I do not have

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[137] See for example the many varieties set out summarised under the title 'A plethora of theologies' in Jeanrond's article (Jeanrond, 2005:1185-8).
[138] Precisely because of Christianity's investment in 'theology' and its embeddedness in RE's history and the expectations (from many directions) placed upon it.
[139] Rudge (2000: 107) points to overlapping concerns when he asks 'What kind of questions is religious education about? What we need to answer that question is a fresh and shared understanding of religion'.

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access to the dynamics of the classrooms where they were taught; nor to the way in which the topics were explored in relation to the tradition. Nevertheless I want to ask what kind of 'scaffolding' might be constructed so that – ultimately – pupils may begin to understand how faith communit*ies* they study or meet 'work'.[140] This kind of insight is not gained through adding to curriculum content, rather through processes of learning and the honing of skills, and the use of resources which differ from the often packaged tidiness many currently give to religions.

Fourth, the array of topics noted above relates also to the concern raised at a number of points in this study and highlighted in the last chapter, that of contextualised study, versus a 'curriculum Christianity'. This calls for reflection on two fronts at least: that of Christian communities (in time and space) as the primary focus for study; that of appropriate approaches to study, informed by 'conversation' and dialogue with the academic study of religion. And if as Cush (2005) suggests RS might learn from RE to become an 'engaged religious studies' such conversation might be of mutual benefit.

Fifth, this range of topics relates also to agreed syllabuses which are heavy in content, and in some cases a history of revision which carries with it a range of past structures for RE – 'organising categories' may determine the representation of religions. Initiatives to improve learning at KS3 in the last decade shift the focus away from content, and the new secondary school curriculum, marks a further shift – in relation to both subject boundaries and learning. Whilst this opens up new possibilities for RE, it arguably demands and offers the possibility of engagement with religions, here Christianity, less as abstractions and more as living realities in the contemporary world.

2. RE at a point of change

The above concerns ultimately belong to a bigger debate about RE – although I write these concluding chapters at a time when RE has recently addressed its place within the new secondary curriculum. For this the non-statutory national framework for RE was re-shaped, but not revised.[141] The framework continues to provide the foundation for agreed syllabus conferences to follow should they so choose. It is not

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[140] 'Work' is inevitably an inadequate term, but is intended to convey their 'life', their dynamic.
[141] Unlike agreed syllabuses this has no legal standing and is not subject to review every 5 years.

however 'content-heavy' like many syllabuses/handbooks. And like the framework, the new secondary curriculum does not spell out content, beyond naming fundamental requirements under 'breadth of study'. Yet its 'concepts' (formerly the 'themes' of the framework), like the 'organising categories' employed by agreed syllabuses discussed in Chapter 3, run the danger of shaping the representation of Christianity (and other faiths) in a future generation of syllabuses.

I looked with interest at a key RE website which offers a specific 'subject knowledge resource' for teachers.[142] Christianity is presented (as are the other faiths and Humanism) via a 'unit' for each of 24 'subjects' (which proved to be the 'themes' identified in the framework for KS1 through to KS3). The 'units' listed are as follows (the reference to key stages is mine, not the site's, and indicates their placing in the framework): Beliefs & Concepts; Authority; Religion and Science; Interfaith; Ethics; Rights; Global; Spirituality (KS3); Beliefs and Questions; Teachings; Worship; Life and Death; Symbols 2; People; Individual; Family; Belief in action (KS2); Believing, Story, Celebration, Symbols 1, Leaders, Belonging, Myself (KS1) (cf. QCA, 2004:25;27;29). Set out as a list, as here, and on the website, one is immediately struck first of all by the inheritance of the past in what is suggested for KS1 and KS2. There is however a shift of focus in those themes associated with KS3. Each religion on the website is then presented through these themes, one by one. The home page for Christianity informs users that:

> The resources contained in the list of subjects are a basic introduction to the facts and beliefs of Christianity. They are a portal into the world of Christianity and by following the weblinks and bibliographies, an enquirer may discover more about this faith. (Powell & Plater, 2008).

and continues:

> The 24 units......provide not only a comprehensive guide to the factual and belief structures of Christianity, they also address the issues that Christianity encounters as it engages with in the 21st century. (*ibid.*)

Each unit here presents Christianity in two or three pages before listing books and web links. I would not dispute the need for and usefulness of portals to open up 'the world of Christianity', and the selected websites and booklists here will be welcomed by many. But the juxtaposition of these units/ 'subjects' (the 'themes' of the framework) with 'Christianity' in this way is problematic in two directions. First, this list of 'subjects' has in effect provided the organising categories for approaching 'Christianity' (*and* the other faiths) and this juxtaposition also encourages a reification

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[142] It covers the 'principal religions' and also Baha'i, Jain and Zoroastrian traditions and Humanism. See http://subknow.reonline.org.uk

of 'Christianity'. From an RS perspective, one is compelled to ask whether these are the lenses through which to view either 'religion' or 'religion*s*' – in this case 'Christianity'. Second, if I am rather to see these 'concepts' (to use the new secondary curriculum's terminology for them at KS3) as 'about' R*E*, not RS, then in their use here I am confronted again with a form of 'curriculum religion' – 'curriculum Christianity'. But this juxtaposition of each individual religion with each concept is also potentially misleading, since it suggests a fragmented *use* of the concepts, the kind of use which it may be hoped both syllabuses and school schemes will avoid. If they are used as 'organising categories', in the way noted here, then arguably they have rather less merit than 'dimensions' as a way of looking at religions and worldviews; and they also require justification as a conceptual framework for RE. This example whilst contributing to the case for a new configuration of 'Christianity', also serves to highlight the persistent reified use of 'Christianity', as in the quotations above. This too gives weight to the case being made. More importantly, if RE does wish to work with concepts like those for KS3, then its exploration of them has to be integrated into a more dynamic configuration of Christianity (and other traditions), and one which will better serve the interests of a curriculum which places importance on active learning.

3. Christianity as a 'religion'?

My heading here is of course ambiguous. The work of Cantwell Smith (1962/1978), interpreted by Jackson (1977), means that one inevitably uses words like 'religion', 'tradition', 'Hindu*ism*' – and 'Christianity', with hesitancy, qualification and reservation. But the words cannot be avoided – they are *used* – and this is one reason why what I am calling a 'configuration' of Christianity is needed. Reference to Smith's work and Jackson's is also relevant here for another reason; it is indicative of an engagement which cuts across the boundaries of RE and RS. I suggested earlier that the two need to be conversation partners. I would also wish to argue, though space does not permit this here, that this is particularly urgent for RE in the present, given its shift to the faith communities themselves (as we have seen in this study – especially in chapter 2:2) as key partners, but also important in view of the trends noted in the above section.

The other direction in which ambiguity lies is in looking for Christianity represented as a living religion in the present. During the period of this research I have attempted to monitor publications which claim to present or introduce 'Christianity', and in a few cases, Christian 'thought' or 'belief'. Underpinning this lay the question of where

someone – a teacher perhaps, or a student training to teach – might turn to discover 'Christianity' as a living tradition. In his 1979 publication *The Phenomenon of Christianity*, Ninian Smart noted: 'there is surprisingly little on Christianity as a religion' and that it 'is maybe the least understood of the world's religions'. Although at the end of this chapter I identify some trends in recent writing on Christianity which are pertinent to the tradition's future representation in RE, it is difficult to point to particular volumes which would offer an initial insight into Christianity *as a religion*, a living tradition. Smart's words tend to ring true even now.

Additionally, Cush's observation noted earlier (Cush, 2005), that Christianity remains largely under the wing of theology in academic study remains pertinent; this is reflected also in the field of publications about the tradition. The place which theology holds *within* the Christian tradition is of course important, and Part 2 of this study indicates that it is likely to be part of many teachers' own studies. In relation to RE, Jeanrond's succinct statement: 'When Christian women and men reflect upon any aspect of their faith, they are engaged in theology' (Jeanrond, 2005:1174) may be helpful; this places theology in the context of communities, and this is where it could be encountered in RE. Put another way, in RE it constitutes an element in understanding how Christians may engage in interpreting, understanding, and acting in the world in which they find themselves. Pupils may learn from their encounter with this, but this is different from engaging them in a theological process embedded in faith and commitment.

The problem of looking for Christianity as a 'religion' is further exemplified by an article in *Resource,* the publication of NATRE (formerly PCfRE). Representatives of different religious traditions were invited to offer a 'bookshelf' on their respective traditions. The author's choice of books on Christianity appeared under the following headings: Dictionaries and Encylopedias, The Bible, The History of the Church, The History of Christian thought, Introductions to Christianity, especially to Christian belief, Introductions to Christian theology, Mysticism and Spirituality, Biography. (Hartland, 2003:15 -17). Hartland notes that he has not given attention to Liturgy and Worship, Christian ethics or philosophy of religion and he is open about his personal stance within the tradition, a stance '..sympathetic to a more liberal, modern and catholic and Anglican understanding of the tradition' (15). He acknowledges that others' positions within the tradition would result in different selections; he recognizes also the diversity of the tradition, giving some attention is to books from Evangelical and Catholic sources, whilst seeking too 'to identify what other specialists consider to

be major works' (*ibid.*), most of which 'have been written by Christian academics working in institutions of higher education' (*ibid.*).

The categories employed are those which in the main continue to classify books on Christianity in the academic field on this tradition, pointing to a predilection for history, theology and belief; and the orientation of Hartland's list is western (with the exception of a reference to Norris (2002)). Christianity as a lived tradition, at a 'grass roots' level is also largely absent – though his inclusion of the popular Young (2003) and McGrath (1997) ensures some reference to Christian practice and living. The categories draw one back to Smart's observation (*op.cit.*) and point to the difficulties for teachers who may want to approach this tradition 'as a religion'. This observation is itself double edged. On the one hand the primacy given to history, belief and theology highlights the gulf which often appears to exist between such studies and Christian communities; on the other, a lack of studies which attempt to understand and provide insight into the tradition 'on the ground', to communities in the present. And should one want to consider Christian belief, it is not belief as interpreted – experienced and lived – within such communities, or encountered through them.

My monitoring gave particular attention to books offering 'an introduction to ...' or an overview of 'Christianity' and focused on books published relatively recently. Chapter 1 has highlighted some of these already and here I shall briefly point to some trends I noted. There have, for example, been some major reference volumes emerging; they may be focused on Christianity as a whole and as 'a religion' (see for example Bowden, 2005), or be focused on a particular concern – for example Christian thought (Hastings, Mason & Pyper, 2000) or Jesus (Houlden, 2005) – aiming at a very wide ranging coverage of their themes.

Histories of Christianity – variously nuanced and conceived – continue to dominate overviews of the tradition even where titles may not betray this (thus Balling, Chidester, Edwards, Hastings, Küng, Lindberg, McManners, Norris, Wilson, Woodhead and the older but often reprinted Barraclough all provide good examples of the historical overview). It seems also that television programmers anticipate public interest in such history, since at the time of writing MacCulloch is presenting a six part series on this, based on his recent book (MacCulloch, 2009).

Newer publications also include multi-volumed ventures which fall under the 'historical' category but offer new perspectives – as indicated in their titles. Thus Irvin & Sunquist (2001) represented the first step in a collaborative venture to present a *History of the World Christian Movement*; the seven volumes of *A People's History of Christianity Series: The Lived Religion of Christians in the First Two Thousand Years* will be completed this year (2008), a collaborative venture involving over a hundred scholars. *The Christianity Reader*, Moore (2006) approaches Christianity through primary source readings – relating to 'key moments and key thinkers' - providing also relevant contextual information and a historical perspective, but is described as 'focusing on Christianity as a religion' and its editors have (in the publishers' words) selected 'texts that illuminate issues such as theology, mysticism and ritual, while also articulating the stories of previously marginalized groups as well as those in new and growing epicenters of the religion'. History also overlaps with treatments of Christian thought, as for example in Hastings (2002) and Miles (2005); Miles' book is particularly interesting, in that it attempts to root the history of belief in peoples lives, and also to present an inclusive history, inclusive for example of women, and not just rooted in official ecclesial structures. This necessitates a reconsideration of what may constitute primary evidence, and the author draws on art, architecture and music, and takes account of liturgy and devotion. A comment she makes in a 'Postlude' is pertinent to the configuration I shall outline in the next chapter:

> Studying the history of Christian thought reveals that no single historical moment is normative for "Christian thought", neither in its origins nor the present. Christian thought is, rather, an activity conducted within the particular circumstances of Christians' lives. (Miles, 2005:390)

Within the studies noted here there is a move towards seeing Christianity as 'the religion of the 'people'; a move also towards considering the global and inevitably, given their historical nature, recognition of change, contexts and the exigencies of human ambitions, hope and failures which colour and shape the 'story'.

These introductory studies also pose the question of the relation of past and present in relation to the representation of Christianity. Certainly, my examination of syllabuses and survey show little appetite for 'history', and even within communities it is I think rare to carry out reflection on the tradition's past of the kind, for example, invited by Williams (2005) – how much less then should we expect to find this in RE.

Diversity, global presence and global shifts

The new Secondary Curriculum for RE at KS3 indicates that when pupils study Christianity: 'This should include Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Non-conformist and Pentecostal branches of Christianity, both in Britain and globally.' (QCA, 2007:269) This offers quite a different perspective from that noted earlier in the case of the Model Syllabus (SCAA, 1994a) where 'worldwide' had become a subset of Christianity. For teachers who already find teaching Christian diversity (as expressed through church and denominational allegiances) of no interest to their students, this global prospect may appear daunting; moreover it is easy to direct teachers to the global dimensions of Christianity without recognizing the task this places before them – especially if this is to be more than a mere tokenism. Consequently publications concerned with Christianity's global presence constituted another strand in my monitoring. This is reflected in the bibliography, and I shall refer only to two here, Sanneh (2008) and Jenkins (2002).

Sanneh notes how Temple 'spoke 'presciently' in 1944 in the midst of war of the global aspect of Christianity as 'the new fact of our time'; speaking of this in the present Sanneh comments:

> We seem to be in the middle of massive cultural shifts and realignments whose implications are only now beginning to become clear. (Sanneh, 2008: xix)

In *The Next Christendom The Coming of Global Christianity* Jenkins makes such shifts his starting point. There is a change in 'the centre of gravity' which is not merely demographical but has 'countless implications for theology and practice' (Jenkins, 2002:6). By 2025, he suggests, Africa and Latin America together will account for half of a projected world population of 2.6 billion Christians; Europe *as a whole* for some 555 million and Asia for around 460 million (3). Yet as Jenkins points out, in academic contexts in Europe and USA there is little attention to Christianity as a global entity, though to take this seriously would be really to meet and study diversity and would be 'as if we are seeing Christianity again for the first time' (215).[143] He comments that the successful traditions in the South are 'stalwartly traditional', interested in 'personal salvation' rather than 'radical politics' and retain a strong 'supernatural orientation' – indicative of a 'conservatism' which Jenkins suggests 'may go far toward explaining the common neglect of Southern Christianity

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[143] The phrase is cited from: Borg, M.J. (1995/2001) *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. San Francisco. Harper.

in Northern America and Europe' (2002:7). He goes on to draw attention to the growth of Pentecostalist forms of Christianity, and recognises that the demography of this new geographical distribution of Christianity shows it to be in the main the religion of the poor; this may long term carry a possibility of political mobilization and influence, but it will be self determined, unlike liberation theology whose roots are perceived to lie in the studies of western academics. Such mobilization may arise from economic factors of deprivation or through the successive failure of political regimes – Christian forces providing a viable alternative for unity. There are messages here too for the rich North and indeed for any school curriculum which wishes to speak of global responsibilities and economic sustainability, or indeed human rights and justice. If Jenkins' predictions for the next half century are correct then education of young people needs to take account of the religious factor on the political and economic stage. In this one concurs with Gearon, who urges RE to be more aware of the relation of religion to the political sphere (Gearon, 2002). This is further endorsed by Jenkins recognition of the future encounter of religions, among which he sees that of Islam and Christianity, as the two key players on the world stage, to be most significant.

Jenkins focuses especially on South America and Africa; but Christian growth may be noted in less expected places. The economic ascendancy of China is immediately apparent to anyone shopping in Britain at the present. In 1986, after some difficulty in identifying speakers, Shap was pleased to be able to include 'Christianity in China' in a conference for secondary teachers (Hayward, 1986); less than twenty years later Lam (2004) is able to tell of the growing study of Christianity as a religion in secular faculties in mainland China, and the spilling over of this in some measure into theological developments. Sanneh, in a tightly written chapter, looks at the course of Christianity in China finding it experiencing rapid growth, despite the constraints still experienced by Christians there, and in the view of a number of observers poised to contribute significantly on the world stage (Sanneh, 2008:268-270). The structure of Sanneh's book is both informative and has the capacity to shift the reader's perspective. The subtitle of his book 'Pillars of world Christianity' points to the task he has undertaken. Through these 'pillars', he takes trajectories in different geographical regions looking back critically at the Christian presence found there, offering insight into how it came to be, the continuing legacy and its significance and working out in the present – as well as making assessments about its future. The attention given to historical circumstance and cultural context, the resurgence of Christianity in post colonial regions, and in areas where it has been long dormant, its inculturation and

distance from a post Enlightenment West, and its encounters with different faiths and ideologies together constitute a thought provoking text – not least when one reflects on the representation of Christianity in schools.

The future portrayed by Jenkins and other observers of 'world' or 'global' Christianity, may also confront RE with questions about its rationale, content and its responsibilities, *not least in its representation of Christianity* and indeed other traditions. The publication of the World Atlas of Christianity expected before the end of 2009 seems likely also to underline this. The writing of both Sanneh and Jenkins leads me to reflect that the neglect of a global perspective on Christianity in RE can no longer be tenable, and it is good that QCA (2007) have now highlighted this. But to return to my earlier point, RE will need resources and conversation partners in this area for it to develop in new directions with respect to the representation of Christianity.

As a first step new configurations of 'Christianity' might be helpful. My concluding chapter offers one such attempt.

Chapter 11: Configuring 'Christianity'

Throughout this study I have been conscious of my own 'shifting' language as I have written of 'Christianity', but sometimes spoken of it as the 'Christian tradition', or as a 'religion', a 'world religion' and as a 'faith'; and I have noted the possibility of 'Christianities'. My usage undoubtedly reflects usage in the literature, but also in some measure a hesitancy in the use of any of these terms, each of which may be readily challenged. In this concluding chapter I necessarily turn to 'Christianity'; the word cannot be avoided; it is simply too commonly *used*. And herein lie the problems: reification; generalisation; but also the particularity of manifold perceptions, from those who see themselves inside, outside and on its periphery. The thrust of this final section of the study is indicated by its title, 'towards a new paradigm'; I hope its hesitancy is self evident. Its concern requires a little more explanation. First, I want to suggest – in the light of all that has preceded this chapter – that there is a need to reflect on 'Christianity' and the way in which this term is 'filled out' or conceptualised in RE. Second, I want tentatively to offer one way of looking at 'Christianity' in this way – to consider what meaning may be brought to the 'term' 'Christianity' which would help, for example, statutory conferences to plan syllabuses, or RE departments to teach more coherently in relation to 'Christianity'. I am not concerned here with definition; nor with description, rather with a marking of boundaries for the way in which we use the unavoidable 'Christianity' in RE. In relation to my first point, I shall briefly summarise the case this study has been presenting, before turning to he pressing question of 'Christianity'.

1. The shaping and representation of Christianity in RE

The primary focus of this study has been the representation of Christianity in RE and linked with this, an interest in the factors shaping its representation; in this respect here (in Part 2) I have paid particular attention to teachers' responses to questions relating to their own experience of studying and teaching Christianity.

In the first Chapter of Part 1 I attempted to offer a historical perspective on Christianity's place in the RE curriculum and to identify and briefly examine developments which particularly affected the representation of Christianity and whose legacy remains to the present. Key among these is the place occupied by agreed syllabuses and the part they play in establishing what is to be learnt; the model of listing content – sometimes in supplementary handbooks rather than in the syllabus itself – has remained fairly constant.

Chapter 2 (Section 1) discussed a number of selected contributions to what I termed the 'liberation of RE' – and of Christianity – from both a predominantly biblical base and from life themes or issues which sought to introduce (largely biblical) material through engaging in the first instance with pupils' experience and concerns. The examples of changing perspectives which I selected tended to focus on Christianity as a *living tradition*, and were alert to various implications of treating Christianity in this way: its diversity; its global presence; its multi-ethnic nature, already evident in Britain in the 1960s; the interface between Christianity and other faiths, and so on. From the perspective of *studying* Christianity, Whaling (1979) noted the capacity of academic study to lose a sense of 'wholes' and drew attention to the matter of 'belief' and its place in Christianity, distinguishing between the idea of *pistis* and belief perceived in terms of consent to formularies. Grimmitt and Read (1977) wrote of 'stances for living', as well as offering their configuration of Christianity; their definition of a 'stance for living' serves as a signal of inclusivity in RE, and although some have found it an inadequate description of religious faith and commitment, it acts as a balance to the limited frame of reference 'religion' carries for many. These and other matters identified in the body of this study continue to be relevant to discussion of Christianity in RE in the present.

Chapter 2(2) recognised the pressures which may be brought to bear on RE as a subject to which specific legislative arrangements pertain. It also illustrated a particular strain of public thinking about Christianity and national identity, as well as Christianity's relation to other faiths in a democracy. A concern for adequate delineation of content – and especially Christian content – resulted in Model Syllabuses for RE. Their legacy is seen in the syllabuses examined in Chapter 3; content laden, with content arranged according to varied categories and schema, they are weighty documents but not necessarily insightful. Many present a strong case for a policy of 'less is more'. But this demands a fresh look – in this instance – at 'Christianity'.

Since it is ultimately teachers who interpret syllabuses and whose own study and training on the one hand, and knowledge and awareness of their pupils on the other determine that interpretation, teachers' perspectives were central to this study. Part 2 brought together data gathered *from teachers* across England, providing a rich vein of original material about teaching Christianity at KS3. It was this material especially which led in Chapter 9 to my argument that there is a need for a reconfiguration of Christianity in the RE curriculum if at least part of RE is concerned with young

people's understanding of the tradition.   My second concern then in the concluding pages of this thesis is that identified at the beginning of this chapter: a reconfiguration of Christianity – a move towards a new paradigm.

2. *Towards* a new paradigm

I explained earlier that my concern here is with how the everyday word 'Christianity' may be used meaningfully, and in the context of RE; another way of putting this would be to ask 'What are the boundaries which might mark *use* of this word in RE?' This is *not* to ask for a definition; nor is it to take or apply a model of religion offered by Religious Studies (such as Smart's or Whaling's 'dimensions' considered in Chapter 2, (1)). It is rather, in view of the very fragmented picture of what is taught in relation to Christianity, and in the face of a hugely complex tradition, to look for clarity and ultimately for coherence in learning and teaching. Words can be very elusive, slippery even, and my use of 'coherence' in the previous sentence could become one of those words; so it is important to note that the descriptor is applied to learning and teaching; it isn't about a tidy description of Christianity as a 'religion' – these are readily available in syllabuses as we have seen.   It is rather, I think, for an RE department or a SACRE for example, to have a shared concept of 'Christianity', which enables them to 'place' those things they propose pupils will study and learn from, and enables them also to answer the following question in the affirmative – in relation to Christianity and to other faiths: 'Have our pupils left school able to engage with people of faith who they may meet, and with skills on which they can build to understand 'religion(s)' in the modern world? '

2.1 Some preliminary criteria

The configuration of 'Christianity' I shall describe here has arisen (and changed) over many years, emerging out of discussion with students and colleagues. It will doubtlessly change again. The point is to have such a working tool. This particular configuration of 'Christianity' rests on certain criteria, to which Chapter 10 pointed. These may be summarised as follows: it needs to

- represent a living faith in the present;
- take seriously diversities and unities;
- be realist, that is not idealist;
- sensitive to the dynamic of past and present; to change and flux;
- be applicable for diverse cultural contexts, locally and globally.

There is nothing radical or even particularly new among these criteria. They resonate with Cole's writing discussed in Chapter 2, for example; they relate to the trends in some recent writing about Christianity, as listed at the end of Chapter 10; and they also correspond in some measure to teachers' aspirations for their pupils' understanding of Christianity. A further requirement of any configuration is that it should be a useful tool to those who plan RE; this I noted above. To agree the boundary markers of the word, of 'Christianity', to recognise its inner dynamics (which is what the above criteria point to) is, paradoxically, to have a picture of the whole but also to be concerned with particularity. I shall argue also that it offers a liberation of Christianity from the weight of content we have seen placed upon it in syllabuses. The apparent simplicity of what I shall now set out below must not mislead; this is not a case of Cole's 'non existent brand' of Christianity; indeed it is meant to promote quite the opposite, as the criteria convey.

2.2 A tentative configuration of 'Christianity'

The configuration described below is set out in Figure 2. I shall comment first on its shape. As will be clear, this is a four sided pyramid, with a base of four (interrelated) sides and an apex and four faces; it is also to be viewed as a solid. Each side and its corresponding face is named, as is the apex.

Base

The base represents Christianity globally *in the present*, with its diversities, unities, its cultural, social, political variety; its sides are constituent and essential parts of the parallelogram which forms the base; their inter-relations serve as a reminder that this is not a static configuration, as does their naming:

- Communities in process of formation
- Families of traditions
- Evolving spiritualities, beliefs and dispositions
- Faith encountering 'the global world'.

The 'Jesus story'

Families of traditions

Evolving spiritualities, beliefs and dispositions

Faith encountering the global world

Communities in process of formation
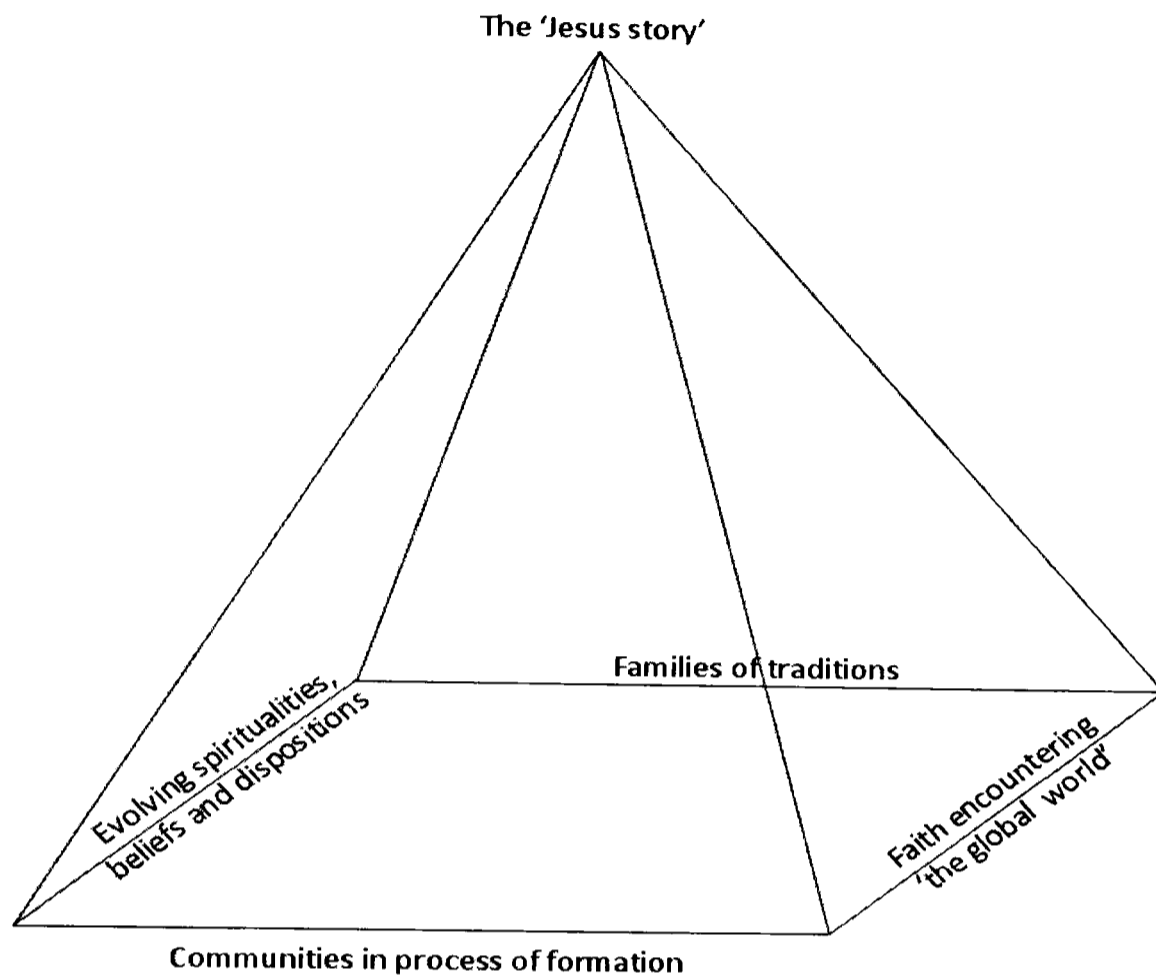
Figure 2

Apex

The apex is identified as 'the Jesus story'; the base is in theory at least, in dialogue with this 'story'; the story' is placed in this position to indicate both its determinative and normative status, but it is recognised also that this 'story' is shaped and influenced by the model's base; there is no 'neutral' story.

Faces and 'solid'

Between the apex and the base are the four triangular faces and a solid; the latter represents the sum total of Christianity's 'cumulative tradition'.[144] Successive horizontal layers of the solid may also represent Christianity's 'present' at any given time, whilst the faces point to how the present comes to be as it is in relation to any of the four sides of the base. Put in another way this configuration allows access to the tradition both synchronically and diachronically; synchronically it places the focus

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[144] The phrase is Smith's, and employed also by Jackson (1997:61-64). Smith explains it as follows: 'I mean the entire mass of overt objective data that constitute the historical deposit, as it were, of the past religious life of the community in question..........that can be and is transmitted from one person, one generation, to another, and that an historian an observe.' (Smith 1962/1978:156-157).

on living community(ies) at a particular moment in time, diachronically it highlights the ongoing dialogue of present with past, which itself may result in new forms.[145]

2.3 Naming the 'parts'

It is of course difficult to present a dynamic 'Christianity' on paper; but it is important to hold it in mind. The 'names' [146] ascribed to the sides and faces of the pyramid, and to its apex; are each intended to point to such a dynamic, as does the interrelation of the parts. This becomes clearer when the 'names' are examined further.

Baseline 1: Communities in process of formation

Local communities provide the public and living face of 'Christianity'; they are situated in place and in time; they constitute the 'cumulative tradition' *now* and shape and become part of its future; they may have a long history, or be recently formed. According to location they have their own cultural clothing, or may reflect the fluidity of cultures. They develop distinctive ways of being a community in the light of their understanding of Jesus and interpretation(s) of his 'story'; these in turn may shape their interactions with 'the world' as it confronts them locally and globally. They conserve, appropriate, develop, reform, renew - and discard - the traditions[147] that have come to them; consequently it is appropriate to speak of a 'process of formation' – though reality demands recognition of the moribund too.

I have spoken deliberately of 'communities' to focus particularity, but also to indicate this as normative from earliest times. As Avis comments

> From the beginning Christianity has been a religion of communities: with Jesus a group of itinerant disciples, then in the cities of the first- century world small groups meeting in the house of a more well to do member, and finally substantial communities with buildings of their own linked together *into an organisation (later organisations)* which spanned and still spans the world. (Avis, 2005:227) [My italics.]

Avis's apparent allusion to an undivided 'organisation', later divided, cannot be explored here; his shift from 'community' to 'organisation', however points to the

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[145] Given western preoccupation with the history of Christianity, it also allows for the periodization of Christianity's history e.g. Latourette's 9 periods of the 'expansion' of Christianity (Latourette, 1975 edn.); Walls' 'serial expansions' (Walls, 1998); Küng's 6 'shifting paradigms (Küng, 1994)
[146] I have not found it possible to decide on *single* 'names' or labels for these facets of the pyramid, which as explained earlier mark 'boundaries', offering a 'framework' or 'scaffolding' to facilitate shared talk of 'Christianity' in RE and aid curriculum planning.
[147] Here I use 'traditions' to denote beliefs (in a formal propositional sense) and practice.

affiliation of local communities to different ecclesial families; for some their roots and traditions lie there; others may have quite different histories.

Baseline 2: Families of Traditions

This baseline is placed at the rear of the pyramid's base, indicative of groupings and affiliations among local communities, of institutional structures to which they relate, and with which they relate. Barrett presents these families of traditions in a flowing diagram with the title 'Fissions and Fusions' (Barrett, 1982: 35), evoking Smart's image of the river delta (Smart, 1978: 11). Barrett identifies the major 'families' (the term is mine, not his) as Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Protestants, non-white (sic.) indigenous Christians and Marginal Protestants (e.g. Unitarians; Mormon; Witnesses); his attention to fission allows for complexity, inclusive of these families' more 'distant relatives'. More recent groupings (O'Brien & Palmer, 2007:22-23; Johnson, 2005) follow Barrett, but the growth of Independent Churches especially in the southern hemisphere, shifts the balance of 1982, these now constituting the largest block (19% of all Christians) after Roman Catholics (49.5%). Independent Churches may be defined as 'groups that develop church lifestyles independent of historic, organized Christianity' (O'Brien & Palmer, op.cit.) Among these Christians 'Chinese house church charismatics' are the largest group; others included are Brazilian/Portuguese Pentecostals, Hindu believers in Christ and African independent Pentecostals. Chapter 10 has already drawn attention to such shifts; they are noted again here to draw attention to their implications for understanding 'Christianity' and to draw attention to change and flux even on this baseline of 'families of traditions'. Yet despite this 'Christianity' in popular usage – and with the help of the media who are likely e.g. to report a statement from the Vatican, or bring in the Archbishop of Canterbury – is often 'simply' seen as 'Roman Catholic', 'Orthodox', 'Protestant', 'Anglican', abstractions as complex as 'Christianity'. This usage tends to highlight 'institution', 'governance', and perhaps 'guardianship' of a particular tradition – not least in areas of doctrine, order and ethics. For some this will constitute a strong argument against speaking of 'Christianities', or even acknowledging complexity.

Baseline 3: Spiritualities, beliefs and dispositions

This baseline has been the most difficult to name; initially it emerged as 'evolving belief systems', recognising that local communities interact with and interpret 'the Jesus story' and that they may be shaped by this – they develop ways of looking at the world in relation to this. Yet system seemed too strong a word, belonging rather

with the formality of 'institution' (as discussed above).[148] Belief understood as *pistis*[149] prompted further thought about this baseline, as well as strengthening this configuration of 'Christianity'. This term has the capacity to be inclusive – applicable to those for whom the more propositionally focused credo has less importance, as well as to those for whom it is paramount.[150] It also has a qualitative nature, it begins to fill out 'Christian' as an adjective; this seemed important as part of this configuration of 'Christianity'. Reflection on this qualitative element also pointed to inward disposition and – as with other baselines – suggested both stability and change. I was cautious about introducing 'spirituality' as a term – it has so many contested interpretations (King, 2009); I had considered the use of 'dispositions' as encapsulating something of 'being Christian', a qualitative understanding.[151] But the following passage helped to clarify this baseline for me:[152]

> Christianity is a many splendored thing. It is both a long-term constellation of existential experiments and a set of contending spiritual dispositions informing to various degrees the lives of about one third of the world's population. By spirituality I mean individual and collective dispositions to judgment and action that have some degree of independence from the formal creeds and beliefs of which they are a part. The relation between creed and spirituality is real but loose. (Connolly, 2008:2).

Its existential thrust was important and its juxtaposition of spirituality and beliefs gave expression to elements which seemed absent from the configuration; it also confirmed my already existing use of 'dispositions'. By the latter I intend to indicate those qualities and values which Astley (1994) explores as constitutive of 'Christian'. The juxtaposition of spiritualities and belief on this baseline can in part be addressed by the examples with which Connolly continues the above passage:

> ...you might confess the trinity and fold either a punitive or generous disposition into that confession. Similarly, you might harbour doubts about the divinity of Jesus and be inspired by the generous spirituality that Jesus advanced in his ministry. The relation between creed and spirituality contains a variety of possible nuances'. (Connolly, *op.cit.*)

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[148] I observe here how my own perception has *apparently* been coloured by the picture of the 'families' which have dominated in Europe.

[149] See earlier references to this term in Chapter 2(1). In NT Greek the emphasis is on a personal disposition of trust in, reliance on, confidence or believing in someone or thing.

[150] It might also be considered inclusive of those who describe themselves as Christian, and in some sense live in relation to 'the Jesus story', but see themselves on the boundaries or outside any local community; to take this step however in relation to this configuration is perhaps to move too far and to open up a debate which deserves treatment beyond this study.

[151] Astley (1994: 111ff) argues for this as a preferred way of approaching Christianity.

[152] I am grateful to Dr Peter Doble for drawing my attention to this passage in Connolly's book.

It may also be argued that this perspective permits the use of *evolving* on this baseline; belief here is engaged, in process, interrelating or interacting with the apex and other baselines. Additionally, this perspective moves in the direction of inclusiveness; it can also allow room for 'spiritualities' which cut across doctrinal boundaries and belief *systems*, but whose roots lie within the tradition.

Baseline 4: Faith encountering 'the global world'

In seeking to establish semantic boundaries for 'Christianity', the danger is that language may lead into further minefields. *Faith* is used here to indicate both *pistis* (discussed earlier) and beliefs – shared understanding(s) among Christians of the significance of the 'Jesus story' – among which pre-eminence has commonly been given to those 'officially' formulated at Nicea and Chalcedon, (and of course such beliefs were formulated in a 'global world', and not unrelated to political needs to sustain its cohesion). The baseline recognises the location of communities and traditions in time and place. That they have been part of a 'global world' from earliest times, at an interface with many cultures, interacting with them – discussing day to day matters such as food, dress, the place of women; communicating their ideas in terms which their neighbour of a different persuasion can understand; borrowing concepts from other cultures to explain themselves; adopting others' scriptures; struggling with what being a citizen means, with conflicting political and faith allegiances – and so on. There is necessarily encounter, and different kinds of engagement – practical and transformative; 'intellectual', prophetic, contemplative in relation to the 'global world' on many fronts - social, political, economic; engaging with ethical questions, working these out in the context of faith; articulating situational theologies – Christians 'explaining themselves' in the context of 'faith.'

Apex: the 'Jesus story'

The sheer diversity and multiplicity of Christian communities within and across different continents often prompts the following kind of question:

> What do the Amish of Pennsylvania have in common with a Zulu Zion? (Smart, 1979: 11)

> What really holds together twenty centuries of Christian history and tradition, which are so tremendously contradictory? (1995:25)

For Küng (1994), 'The message: 'Jesus the Christ' ' is 'the abiding substance of faith' throughout the centuries. In the configuration presented here, Jesus is also central, but the dynamic of 'Christianity' here is expressed through use of 'the 'Jesus *story* ';

Küng's 'Jesus *the Christ*' (my italics) would belong to this configuration's dynamic. Küng's phrase serves as a reminder that the 'Jesus story' as handed down carries also the understanding the earliest communities came to hold of about Jesus, their claims about his identity and significance ultimately leading to a 'parting of the ways' with Jewish tradition where the story's roots lay. At a later date four 'tellings' of the 'story' were officially sanctioned, each with their distinctive understanding of Jesus carried by the 'story' told. The 'story' has crossed cultural boundaries; it has been used and abused by Christian communities in their encounter with the global world; been the focus of scholarly study both within and outside them; the source of theological reflection. Using the 'Jesus *story*' here is intended also to underscore the dynamic of the configuration; 'story' has its own dynamic. *This* story is told, remembered, pictured and portrayed, celebrated, acted out and lived in local communities – it is integral to their formation; a story engages the listener; may linger in the mind and shape thinking and action, motivate and inspire; comfort and challenge. In all these ways the 'Jesus story' 'works' diachronically and synchronically in this configuration.

2.4 Interrelationships

Earlier I stressed the importance of seeing this configuration in terms of the relationship among its baselines and between these and the apex. I have tried to reflect some of these in my brief commentary on the names assigned to the parts; such relationships may be close, or distant – sometimes severed. I noted also the possibility of mapping on to the face of the pyramid the various periodizations (cf. footnote 145) of the tradition, which for example, if we followed Küng's use of Kuhn's notion of 'paradigm shift', would demonstrate critical points in the tradition's life. I also drew attention to the solid base and structure of the pyramid, indicating that if one cut through this, at any selected point the configuration offered by the base and apex offered a tool for 'meeting the tradition'. Grasping the potential interrelationships of the configuration is essential to understanding it, and to its usefulness. It is not a description of 'Christianity'. Nor is it built directly on an external model of 'religion'[153] – although I would argue that dimensional models might be a useful tool in reflecting on the life of local Christian communities; but this configuration does not give priority to these, nor to any one of them. It is intended to be inclusive - in the sense that Smart's Amish and Zulu might find a 'place' here and to be understood *through the interrelated lenses* - prism? I hope also that it meets the criteria set out earlier in this

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[153] Although it probably bears the marks of engagement with Smith (1962/78) and Jackson's application of Smith's work in RE.

chapter (at 2.1). The configuration offered here is simply a step towards a new paradigm of 'Christianity' in RE, and invites discussion, debate and an invitation to others to take such a step.

Use of this kind of configuration I believe, could lead RE away from its content heavy syllabuses, open up new horizons in representing 'Christianity', and prosper new approaches to learning about and from this tradition. Like this first step towards a new configuration, these are matters for further exploration.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.1 Sample figures by region

(1) Government Office Regions	(2) Number of LEAs in region	(3) Secondary Schools in region (less any deemed Middle)	(4) Number of LEAs represented in the sample	(5) No. of Secondary schools in sample	(6)....*of which* VA/CE =	(7)...*of which* VA/RC =
North East	12	155	1	36	0	4
North West	22	476	10	258	17	57
Yorkshire/Humber	15	318	5	117*	3	10
East Midlands	9	291	3	111	3	9
West Midlands	14	372	7	201	3	19
East of England	10	340	5	144	OC 2	OC 9
LONDON: Inner London	14	132	6	62	7	10
Outer London	19	273	9	127*	7	22
South East	19	476	5	177*	5	13
South West	16	297	3	58*	OC 0	OC 2
TOTALS	150	3130	54	1291	[47]	[155]

Notes:

1. Figures in column 3 are based on the total number of secondary schools (Community, VC, VA & Foundation) according to DfES figures at 30.09.04, but exclude schools classified as 'middle deemed secondary'; these schools lie outside the scope of this research.

2. Column 4 indicates the number of Local Education Authorities [LEAs] represented in the sample. Schools in the sample were included on the basis of their LEA having an agreed syllabus for religious education dated **2001 or later** at 31.07.04. Available evidence suggested that there were 60 such LEAs; however, the following were excluded

- 2 LEAs used in Pilot Survey
- 4 LEAs having a secondary school system commencing at 12 or 13 years of age, and not therefore covering the full KS3 age range.

Sample schools were consequently drawn from 54 LEAs. The consequent distribution of the schools reflects that of LEAs with '2001 and after' syllabuses; whilst this proved uneven across England, each of the 10 Government Office regions (**Col.1**) are represented in the sample.

The use of * against a figure in column (5) indicates that a small number of secondary schools (**12**-16/18 or **13/14**-18/19) from that region were excluded because they did not cover the full age range of KS3.

3. Columns 6 & 7 indicate, by region, the number of Voluntary Aided Church of England (CE) and Roman Catholic (RC) schools and two combined denominational schools, 'Other Christian' (OC) – to use government terminology – included in the total sample of 1291 schools. The presence of schools with a religious character in this sample was commensurate with their representation in the wider population at the time of the survey.

Appendix A.2   Response rates by region

Government Office Regions	Secondary Schools in region (less any deemed Middle)	Number of secondary schools in sample	Number of schools returning questionnaires	Returns as % of sample	Returns as % of schools in region (cf. col. 2.)
North East	155	36	8	22.2%	5.2%
North West	476	258	51	19.8%	10.7%
Yorkshire/Humber	318	117	24	20.5%	7.5%
East Midlands	291	111	25	22.5%	8.6%
West Midlands	372	201	49	24.4%	13.2%
East of England	340	144	28	19.4%	8.2%
London [Inner & Outer]	405	189	35	18.5%	8.6%
South East	476	177	49	27.7%	10.3%
South West	297	58	17	29.3%	5.7%
TOTALS	3130	1291	286	22.2%	9.1%
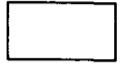
University of Warwick

Warwick Institute of Education

Christianity in Religious Education at Key Stage 3

Questionnaire

Please return your completed questionnaire **by Monday 15 November** to:

Mary Hayward
Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit
Institute of Education
University of Warwick
COVENTRY CV4 7AL

Please answer each question in this section by circling ONE number only

1. Gender

Male	1
Female	2

2. Which age group are you in?

22 - 29	1
30 - 39	2
40 - 49	3
50 - 59	4
Over 60	5

3. (a) Which type of school do you work in?

Community school	1
Foundation school	2
Voluntary controlled school	3
Voluntary aided school	4
Other	5

    (b) What is the religious affiliation, if any, of your school?

Church of England (Anglican)	1
Roman Catholic	2
Joint Anglican/Roman Catholic	3
Other religious affiliation	4
No religious affiliation	5

4. (a) What is the age range of the pupils in your school?

11-16	1
11-18	2
Other	3

    (b) Is your school (*below the age of 16*)

Co-educational?	1
Boys only?	2
Girls only?	3

5   (a) How many pupils are there in your school at present?

Under 500	1
501 - 700	2
701 - 900	3
901 - 1100	4
Over 1100	5

(b) How many pupils are there in Key Stage 3 **in total** at present?

300+	1
400+	2
500+	3
600+	4
700+	5
800+	6
900+	7

(c) How many feeder schools does your school draw its pupils from?

Up to 5	1
6 - 10	2
11 - 15	3
16 - 20	4
21 - 25	5
More than 25	6

Section B: About Religious Education in your school

Please continue to circle ONE number only

6.   (a) How many specialist teachers of Religious Education [RE] are there in your school?

One	1
Two	2
Three	3
Four	4
Five	5
Six or more	6
None	7

(b) How many teachers whose subject specialism is NOT in RE are teaching RE?

One	1
Two	2
Three	3
Four	4
Five	5
Six or more	6
None	7

(c) What is the percentage of RE lessons **at KS3** taught by teachers whose specialism is NOT in RE?

Over 75%	1
50% - 74%	2
25% - 49%	3
1% - 24%	4
0%	5

Please answer each part of the next question as fully as you can:

7.   (a) Please give the title and, if possible, date and publisher (eg LEA, Diocese, or other) of the syllabus(es) you use for RE **at KS3**

_____

_____

_____

_____

(b) What percentage of your feeder schools teach RE at KS2 according to the same or a related syllabus(es)?

Over 75%   1
50 - 74%   2
25 - 49%   3
Less than 25%   4

(c) Please list the aspects of Christianity with which you find most of your pupils are familiar as they enter KS3

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

(d) Please comment briefly on any implications **for your teaching at KS3** of the information you gave in response to (b) and (c) above

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In this section please answer the questions as indicated in each case

8. With reference to your school's RE programme in KS3, please **describe briefly** for EACH year:

    (a) Those teaching units which deal **ONLY** with Christianity

    Year 7 _____

    _____

    _____

    Year 8 _____

    _____

    _____

    Year 9 _____

    _____

    _____

    (b) Any thematic teaching units (eg. Sacred Writings/ Worship/Why is there suffering? etc) which draw on Christianity **AND** one or more religions

    Year 7 _____

    _____

    _____

    Year 8 _____

    _____

    _____

    Year 9 _____

    _____

    _____

9. Approximately what percentage of time is given to Christianity in RE during KS3 in your school? (*Circle only ONE number*)

Less than 20%   1
20% - 40%   2
41% - 50%   3
More than 50%   4

10. Does your syllabus (or materials associated with it) support teaching of Christianity in any of following ways? (*Circle more than one number if appropriate*)

Scheme of work on Christianity   1
Teaching units on Christianity   2
List of required Christian content   3
Suggests appropriate Christian content   4
Lists useful resources   5
Other   6
Offers no support   7

11. Which is your preferred way of organizing **teaching about Christianity at KS3?** (*Circle only ONE number*)

A systematic approach   1
Eg teaching Christianity and other religions separately from
each other

A thematic approach to religion(s)   2
Eg teaching themes such as 'Festivals', Sacred Writings',
Worship' etc across two or more religions

Human experience themes & questions   3
Eg. teaching themes such as 'Who am I?' 'Why is
there suffering? etc across two or more religions

Other approaches   4
Please identify_____

No preference   5

12. How frequently do you use the following kinds of materials when **teaching about Christianity at KS3?**
(*For each type of resource please circle ONE letter according to this coding: A:Use very frequently; B:Use on a regular basis; C:Use occasionally; D:Have used once; E:Never use.*)

Textbooks	A	B	C	D	E
Published worksheets	A	B	C	D	E
Visual materials	A	B	C	D	E
Video	A	B	C	D	E
Interactive CD	A	B	C	D	E
Internet	A	B	C	D	E
BBC/ITV schools programmes	A	B	C	D	E
Artefacts	A	B	C	D	E
Other (*please identify below*)	A	B	C	D	E

13. Please list those aspects of Christianity which you find least well covered by RE resources

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. Please list the teaching and learning strategies you find most successful with **KS3** pupils

_____

_____

_____

_____

D. Your experience of studying and teaching Christianity

In this section please answer the questions as indicated in each case

15. (a) At what level have any of the following areas been part of **your own** academic study of Christianity?

    *(Please circle **ONE** letter for **each** area to indicate the **highest** level at which you studied it, using this coding: **A**: O Level/GCSE; **B**: A Level; **C**: First Degree eg. BA, B.Ed; **D**: Higher degree eg. MA, M.Phil, PhD <u>OR</u> **E**: Never studied.)*

New Testament studies	A	B	C	D	E
Christian theology (early centuries)	A	B	C	D	E
Contemporary theologies/theologians	A	B	C	D	E
Christian doctrine/creeds	A	B	C	D	E
Christian ethics	A	B	C	D	E
Christian churches/denominations	A	B	C	D	E
Christianity in Britain	A	B	C	D	E
Church history	A	B	C	D	E
Christian worship/liturgy	A	B	C	D	E
Christianity & science	A	B	C	D	E

    b) Please write briefly about any aspects of Christianity with which you are familiar as a result of learning or experience in contexts **other than** formal education

    _____

16. Please write briefly about any **aspects of Christianity** which you find it difficult to teach **at KS3**.

_____

_____

_____

_____

17. (a) Do you think that those who teach about Christianity in RE should themselves have a Christian commitment?

Yes	1
No	2

(b) Please comment briefly on your response

_____

_____

_____

18. From your experience of **teaching at KS3**

(a) What **aspects of Christianity** hold greatest interest for your pupils?

_____

_____

_____

(b) Which aspects hold least interest for your pupils?

_____

_____

_____

(c) Which aspects prove the most difficult for pupils to understand?

_____

_____

_____

19. By the **end of KS3**

(a) What would you most like your pupils to **understand about** Christianity?

_____

_____

_____

(b) What do you hope your pupils will have **learnt from** Christianity?

_____

_____

_____

20. Please list any topics or issues relating to teaching Christianity for which you would find an Inset course or training day helpful

_____

_____

_____

21. Would you be willing to discuss your answers to this questionnaire further as the Project progresses?
    Yes   1
    No   2

If 'YES' please give contact details:

_____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR GIVING YOUR TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

If there are any further comments or observations you would like to make about teaching Christianity in RE (especially at KS3), we should be pleased to hear from you. Please write overleaf or enclose a separate page with your completed questionnaire.

Appendix B.1   Christian content in Year 7

Analysis of data from schools with no religious character:

Focus	Comprising
JESUS [123]	Life and/or teaching of Jesus [74] Jesus' birth [5] Jesus' death & resurrection [11] Parables [6] Miracles [2] Beatitudes [1] Prayer [2] Jesus today [1] Who is Jesus [9] Jesus of faith/belief [5]. (*God* -) Jesus (- *Church*) [7]
CHURCH [40]	Churches & denominations [13] Baptist Church [1] Church buildings [12] Study of local church [3] Visit to church/abbey [3] Body of Christ [1] (*God - Jesus -*) Church [7]
BIBLE [30]	'Bible' [19] Old Testament/Old Testament figures [4] Nature of Gospels [1] Acts/Early Church [4] (Day of)Pentecost [2]
BELIEF(S) [25]	Belief(s)/creed [9] Trinity [2] Sin [1] Incarnation [6] Theology of the Cross [1] Salvation [1] Sacrifice [1] Atonement [1] Resurrection (meaning today) [2] Afterlife [1]
WORSHIP/PRACTICE [24]	'Christian worship' [12] Eucharist [1] Baptism [3] Prayer [5] Christian rites of passage including named rites [3]
FESTIVALS/CALENDAR [19]	'Festivals' [6] Advent [1] Christmas [7] Lent [1] Easter [4]
GOD [21]	'God' [14] God (- *Jesus* – *Church*) [7]
KEY FIGURES [15]	'Figures Of Faith' [10] Saints [2] Religious leaders [2] Role of vicar [1]
VALUES [15]	Justice [11] Peace [1] Agape [1] Codes for living [2]
CREATION [11]	Creation [11]
SIGNS & SYMBOLS [8]	Signs and/or symbols [8]
BEING CHRISTIAN [8]	Being a Christian [6] Discipleship [1] Belonging to a Christian community [1]
OTHER [4]	Coming of Christianity to Britain [1] Contemporary Christian issues [1] Liberation theology [1] Christians around the world [1]
THEMES [14]	Community [4] Religion in the community [2] Making sense of religion [2] Making sense of the world [1] What is sacred? [1] Special Places [1] Who am I? [1] Miracles today [1] Mysteries & Miracles [1]
CHRISTIANITY UNIT [29]	'Christianity'/Introduction to Christianity [27] History of Christianity [1] Christianity in the community [1]

Analysis of data from Church of England schools:

Focus	Comprising
JESUS [11]	Jesus life and/or teaching [6] Jesus' death and resurrection [2] Jesus of faith/ belief [1] Parables [1] (*God* -) Jesus (- *Church*) [1]
BIBLE[8]	'Bible' [6] OT/OT figures [1] Mark's Gospel [1]
WORSHIP/PRACTICE [4]	Eucharist [1] Baptism [1] Confirmation [1] Christian funerals/ bereavement [1]
CHURCH [4]	Church buildings [1] Churches/denominations [2] (*God - Jesus -*) Church [1]
FESTIVALS [3]	Festivals [1] Easter [1] Christmas [1]
GOD [3]	God [2] God (- *Jesus* – *Church*) [1]
BELIEF(S)/CREED [2]	[2]
VALUES [2]	Justice [1] Forgiveness [1]
OTHER/THEMES [5]	Signs & symbols [1] Discipleship [1] Spirituality [1] Community [2]
CHRISTIANITY UNIT [3]	Christianity Unit [2] Celtic Christianity [1]

Appendix B.2   Christian content in Year 8

Analysis of data from schools with no religious character:

Focus	Comprising
JESUS [80]	Evidence for Jesus [3] Life of Jesus/Christ [29] Jesus & teaching/or parables [10] Sermon on the Mount [2] Jesus' miracles [1] The passion of Jesus [1] Resurrection of Jesus [2] – Beliefs about Jesus [3] Jesus and salvation [1] Saviour of the world [2] Who is Jesus? [7] Jesus: humanity & divinity [4] Jesus: Messiahship [2] – Jesus impact today [1] 'Jesus challenge' [1] Jesus in art [5]. (*God* -) Jesus (-*Church*) [6]
CHURCH(ES)/CHURCH HISTORY [55]	Church history [14] Early Church [3] How did Church begin? [1} Church(es)/denominations [28] Ecumenism [2] Community – Taize [1] (*God* - *Jesus* -) Church [6]
BIBLE/SACRED BOOKS [31]	'Bible' [17] 'Stories' [1] OT figures/prophets [5]The 10 Commandments [2] 'The Christian Story' [1] Life of the Apostles [1] Sacred Books [4]
BELIEF(S) [28]	'Belief & practice' [3] 'Belief(s)'[6] Creeds [4] Incarnation [7] Resurrection [7] Life after death [1]
WORSHIP/PRACTICE [27]	Places of worship [2] 'Worship' [8] Holy Communion [2] Prayer [2] Pilgrimage [5] Rites of passage including some named rites [8]
FESTIVALS/CALENDAR [14]	'Festivals' , including some named festivals[14]
FIGURES OF FAITH [13]	Figures of faith, including various named individuals [13]
VALUES [12]	Christian values [2] Forgiveness [1] Caring & sharing [2] Love [1] Justice and/or peace [5] 'Morality' [1]
GOD [12]	Beliefs about God [5] God (-*Jesus* - *Church*) [6] Does God exist? [1]
BEING CHRISTIAN [7]	'Being Christian' [5] Commitment (marriage) [1] Vocation [1]
SIGNS/SYMBOLS [6]	Signs and/ or symbols [6]
MORAL ISSUES [5]	Social issues [1] Wealth and poverty [1] Christianity and injustice [2] Life issues [1]
OTHER [8]	Creation [4] What is truth? [1] Problem of evil [1] Miracles today [1] Palestine/Israel [1]
CHRISTIANITY UNIT [23]	Christianity unit [17] Christianity today [2] Christianity as a world religion [2] Christianity and the world [2]

Analysis of data from Church of England schools:

Focus	Comprising
CHURCH(ES)/CHURCH HISTORY [10]	Early Church [1] Church history [2] Churches/denominations [6] (*God* - *Jesus* -) Church [1]
JESUS [7]	Life of Jesus [1] Jesus' teaching/parables [2] Miracles [1] Jesus' Passion [2] (*God* -) Jesus (-*Church*) [1]
WORSHIP/PRACTICE [7]	Worship [1] Holy Communion [1] Prayer [2] - Festivals [1] - Rites of passage [1] – Pilgrimage [1]
BIBLE/SACRED BOOKS [4]	Bible [1] Sacred Books [1] Paul [1] Baptism in the New Testament [1]
BELIEF(S)/ GOD [3]	Creeds [1] Beliefs about God [1] God (-*Jesus* - *Church*) [1]
FIGURES OF FAITH [3]	Various named figures [3]
MORAL ISSUES [3]	Prejudice/discrimination [1] Crime & punishment [1] Social issues [1]
OTHER [2]	Christian Symbols [1] Community [1]
CHRISTIANITY UNIT [4]	Christianity unit [2] Christianity in Britain [1] Being a Christian [1]

Appendix B.3　　Christian content in Year 9

Analysis of data from schools with no religious character:

Focus	Comprising
JESUS [30]	Jesus/life/teachings [16] Jesus' suffering & death [5] Jesus' resurrection [1] Identity of Jesus [2] (God -) Jesus (-Church)[6]
FAITH IN ACTION [26]	Faith in action/named individuals [20] Christian aid/agencies [3] 'Faith and life' [2] Charities [1]
SOCIAL/MORAL ISSUES [Specific] [23]	Animal Rights [1] Conflict [1] Drugs [1] Crime & punishment [2] Environment [4] Homelessness [1] Poverty[1] Medical Ethics [1] Sanctity of life [2] Prejudice and/or discrimination [4] War & peace [3] Racism [2]
CHURCH[ES]/CHURCH HISTORY [22]	History/spread of Christianity [7] Pentecost – birth of church [1] Denominations [6] Deacons/priests [1] Overseas missionaries [1] (God - Jesus -) Church [6]
WORSHIP/PRACTICE [22]	'Worship' [9] Sacraments [2] Eucharist [1] Prayer [2] Christmas [1] Holy Week [3] Easter [1] Pilgrimage [3]
GOD [18]	God [12] God (-Jesus - Church) [6]
ETHICS/MORAL ISSUES [General] [17]	Ethics/Moral issues (in general) [17]
BELIEF(S) [15]	'Belief & practice' [3] Creeds [2] Life after death [2] Incarnation [1] Resurrection [1] Trinity [3] Mary [1] Holy spirit [2]
RITES OF PASSAGE [14]	Rites of passage [6] Birth/Initiation [1] Baptism [2] Confirmation [1] Marriage[1] Family life [1] Growing up in Christianity [1] Death [1]
QUESTIONS [11]	Ultimate questions [2] Puzzling questions [2] Suffering [5] Good v. evil [1] Life after death? [1]
BEING CHRISTIAN [10]	Being Christian – why? [1] Belonging (to Xtn community) [3] What it means to be Xtn. [2] Living a Xtn. Life [1] Xtn. Lifestyle [1] Christian vision of life [1] Vocation [1]
VALUES [7]	Christian values [3] Justice and peace [2] Christian compassion [1] 'Rules & commitment incl. agape' [1]
SCIENCE & RELIGION [7]	Science and religion [6] Cosmology/big bang [1]
OTHER/THEMES [7]	Bible [2] Liberation theology [1] Christian response to the Holocaust [1] Where is truth about religion to be found? [1] Is religion changing? e.g. charismatic movement/Alpha [1] Sacred objects[1]
CHRISTIANITY UNIT [13]	'Christianity ' [7] Christianity through the media [1] Christianity & art [1] Christianity & contemporary society [1] Christianity as a world religion [3]

Analysis of data from Church of England schools:

Focus	Comprising
JESUS [4]	Life & teachings [2] Miracles[1] Beliefs about Jesus [1]
FAITH IN ACTION [4]	Named individuals [2] Christian Aid/relief agencies [1] Famous Christians [1]
BIBLE [3]	The Bible [1] Holy Spirit through OT& NT [1] Pentecost [1]
WORSHIP/PRACTICE [2]	Baptism [1] Rites of Passage [1]
CHURCH(ES) [2]	The Church [1] Churches [1]
SOCIAL/MORAL ISSUES [2]	War & Peace [1] Third World[1]
QUESTIONS [2]	Problem of pain & evil [1] 'Puzzling questions' [1]
OTHER [2]	Introduction to philosophy [1] God[1]

Appendix B.4   Thematic content in Year 7

Analysis of data from schools with no religious character:

Focus	Comprising
SIGNS, SYMBOLS, STORY & MYTH [49]	Symbol(s)/Symbolism [29] Signs & symbols [11] Story(ies)/Myth [9]
CREATION [43]	Creation /creation stories [21] Creation/Environment [18] Creation: religion v. science [1] Where did the universe come from?[1] Origins/beginnings [2]
WORSHIP/PRACTICE [42]	Worship [21] Prayer/meditation [4] Pilgrimage[7] Sacred Places [2] Rites of Passage [8]
FESTIVALS [30]	Festivals [23] Celebrations [6] Meaning of Christmas [1]
SACRED WRITINGS [23]	Holy Books [12] Sacred writings [9] Bible [2]
GOD [19]	Searching/looking for God/Does God exist?(*i.e. Questioning approaches*) [9] Beliefs about God [3] Reasons for belief in God [1] 'Examination of God' [1] Thinking about God[1] Ideas on God [1] Knowing God[1] How do we communicate with God?[1] Images of God [1]
FOUNDERS & OTHER FIGURES [18]	Founders [10] OT figures [4] Special people (Middle Eastern Religions)[1] Leaders of faith [1] Focal figures [1] Religious figures [1]
PLACES OF WORSHIP [15]	Places of worship [8] Religious buildings [4]'..where people worship' [1] Church & mosque [1] Designing a multi-faith place of worship [1]
QUESTIONS [14]	Ultimate questions [4] Suffering [3] Evil/goodness [2] Truth – what is it? [1] Mysteries [1] Miracles [1] 'Big questions' [1] 'Has science got all the answers?' [1}
COMMUNITY [12]	Community [10] What makes a good citizen ?[1] Global citizenship [1]
WHO AM I? /IDENTITY [11]	Who am I? (*variously nuanced*) [5] Identity [4] 'Belonging' [1] Where do I belong?[1]
BELIEF [10]	Belief(s) [5] Belief shown in action [2] How is belief expressed? [2] What is belief? [1]
PEOPLE OF FAITH/ VISION [10]	*(People of)* vision [4] 'Personalities' [1] People of influence [1] 'Fame & faith' [1] Personal visions of life (e.g. Martin Luther King. Mother Teresa) [2] What makes a person inspirational to others? [1]
VALUES [5]	'Values' [1] Peace/justice [3] Fair trade/Justice[1]
THE SACRED [5]	Concept of/sense of the sacred [5]
OTHER [9]	War & Peace [1] Conflict [1] Racism [1] Religion & art(s) [3] Rules [3]
INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION/RE UNIT [39]	Introducing RE [11] 'Religion' [21] RS skills[2] Multicultural education [2] Introduction to world faiths[2] Britain a plural society [1]

Analysis of data from Church of England schools:

Focus	Comprising
SIGNS, SYMBOLS, STORY & MYTH [5]	Signs &/or symbols [3] Stories/myths [2]
GOD/ULTIMATE QUESTIONS [2]	Nature of God [1] Ultimate questions including Trinity, Incarnation [1]
FOUNDERS/PEOPLE OF FAITH [2]	Founders & leaders [1] 'Famous people of faith' [1]
OTHER [7]	Festivals [1] Rites of passage [1] Sacred writings [1] Sacrifice [1] Religion & Lifestyle [1] Behaviour towards others [1] 'Where do I belong?'[1]
INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION UNIT [3]	'Religion' [1] Introduction to religion [2]

Appendix B.5   Thematic content in Year 8

Analysis of data from schools with no religious character:

Focus	Comprising
SACRED WRITINGS [36]	Sacred Writings/texts [18] Holy Books [8] As source of authority [1] 'What can we learn from the scriptures?'[1] Sacred writings/Bible as guidance [2] – Bible [1] OT/NT [3] Parables [1] 10 Commandments [1]
RITES OF PASSAGE[32]	Rites of Passage [27] As expression of belief/behaviour/commitment [2] Initiation [1] Marriage [1] 'Forming a community (rites of passage)' [1]
WORSHIP [29]	Worship [15] Prayer [4] What value can be found in prayer & worship? [1] Places of worship [4] Religious/sacred buildings [5]
VALUES/ RULES/MORAL ISSUES [28]	'Golden rule - looking at rule of love in the world' [1] Justice [2] Caring/sharing [2] Happiness[1] Success/fulfilment[1] 'Charity' [3] – Making moral decisions/moral issues [4] 'Laws for living' [1] 'Making rules' [1] – Rights & responsibilities [1] Prejudice & discrimination [1] Prejudice & equality [1] Prejudice & otherness [1] Relationships [2] Who is my neighbour? [1] War [1] What is peace?[1] Sanctity of life [1] Poverty [1] Animal rights[1]
PILGRIMAGE/SACRED PLACES [22]	Pilgrimage [19] Sacred places [3]
ENVIRONMENT/CREATION [16]	Environment/stewardship [4] Environmental issues [2] Religion & environment [3] Environment & man [1] What are we doing to the environment? [1] – Creation [1] Creation stories [3]'Where do we come from?' [1]
'FAITH IN ACTION'/ SPECIAL PEOPLE' [16]	'Faith in action' [4] …as in lives of named individuals/ organisations [4] 'Special people'/'Holy people' [3] 'Life of religious people' [1] Heroes [1] 'People of commitment' [1] Charity work/organisations [2]
FESTIVALS [14]	Festivals [10] Celebrations [2] Special times/sacred times [2]
SIGNS/SYMBOLS [13]	Signs and symbols [4] Symbols/ Symbolism[6] Stories/truth [1] Food [2]
BELIEF(S) [10]	Belief(s) [4] Belief – God, the Fall, Jesus [1] What is belief? [1] As shown through worship/prayer [1] Belief as guide to life [1] Beliefs & practice[1] Communicating belief(prayer & books) [1]
GOD [9]	God [7] Cosmological argument [1] Argument from design [1]
SUFFERING/EVIL [9]	Suffering/evil [7] Problem of suffering [2]
DEATH/AFTERLIFE [8]	Death [2] Questions re. death/afterlife [3] Ideas/beliefs about afterlife [3]
FOUNDERS [6]	'Founders' [5] Founders and leaders [1]
OTHER [16]	Covenant [2] Life of the Church [1] Protestants & Roman Catholics as part of Middle Ages History Unit [1] Missions [1] Change [1] Authority in religion [1] Commitment [1] Identity/ belonging [2] Community [2] Global citizenship[1] Awe & mystery [1] What is the best kind of guidance? 1] Truth – what is it? [1]
'RELIGION' UNITS [12]	'Religion' [1] Introduction to religions [1] Why are there many religions? [1] Religion in 21st century [2] New religious movements [1] Religion & science [1] Religion & media [1] Religion & art [4]

Analysis of data from Church of England schools:

Focus	Comprising
WORSHIP/PRACTICE [4]	Worship [1] Prayer [1] Pilgrimage [2]
VALUES/MORAL ISSUES [3]	Justice [1] – Moral decisions [1] – Who is my neighbour? [1]
GOD [2]	God [1] Is there a God? [1]
SACRED WRITINGS [3]	Sacred writings [1] Holy Books[1] Old Testament heroes [1]
OTHER [4]	'Why celebrate? Special times – why significant?'[1] Suffering [1] Life of Martin Luther King [1] 'Why am I special? What is important to me?' [1]
'RELIGION AND.....' [2]	Religion and food [1] Religion and light [1]

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Appendix B.6   Thematic content in Year 9

Analysis of data from schools with no religious character:

Focus	Comprising
MORAL/SOCIAL ISSUES [65]	'Moral issues' (*not specified*) [15] *Specific issues:* Relationships [Family/neighbour] [6] Divorce [1] Sanctity of Life [3] Abortion [4] Euthanasia [1] Prejudice/discrimination/racism [18] Social harmony [3] Crime and/or punishment [3] Effective punishment? [1] Wealth/poverty [5] Religious attitudes to war/natural disasters [1] Aid agencies [1] Third World [1] 'People of peace or warriors of power?' [1] Right(s?) and responsibility [1]
SUFFERING and/or EVIL, GOOD and/or EVIL [64]	Suffering and/or evil [53] Suffering & the Holocaust [5] The Holocaust [4] Good and/or evil [2]
ETHICS/MORALS(ITY)/VALUES (including named values) [45]	*General statements about these areas* [13] Moral choices/decisions [3] 'Good life' [1] Right and Wrong [3] Laws/Rules/Guidance/Codes [8] Rules/responsibility [2] Human Rights [5] *Named values*: Truth/justice [4] Forgiveness [1] Hope [1] Reconciliation [1] Freedom [1] Service to others [1] Stewardship [1]
RITES OF PASSAGE [39]	'Rites of passage' [25] Birth/Initiation [3] Marriage/family [8] Death [2] Life events and religions [1]
GOD [27]	Questions about the existence of God and arguments for/against [17]. Looking for/thinking about God[2] Belief *in* God [2] Beliefs *about* God [3] Experiences of God [1] Why belief is sometimes difficult [1] Nature of God [1]
RELIGIOUS FIGURES/ SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE [20]	'Key religious figures' [2] Founders [3] Religious leaders [3] Significant/special people [3] Great religious lives [1] Martin Luther King [4] Pullinger & Romero [1] Gandhi [1] What makes a hero?[1] What can we learn from inspirational figures?[1]
DEATH/LIFE AFTER DEATH [18]	Questions about death[3] Death [2] Beliefs about death [1] Death and the afterlife [2] Life after death [10]
PILGRIMAGE/SACRED PLACES [15]	Pilgrimage [13] Sacred places [2]
WORSHIP [13]	'Worship' [9] Places & forms of worship [1] Visit to a place of worship [1] Responses to belief – worship [1] What would worship be like in the future[1]
PHILOSOPHY/QUESTIONS [12]	Introductions to philosophy [5] Ultimate questions [2] Questions about purpose of life [4] Questions of meaning[1]
ENVIRONMENT [12]	Why respect the planet?[1] Natural world [1] What are we doing to our world?[1] Animals [2] 'Environment'/treatment of it [7]
FESTIVALS/CELEBRATIONS [11]	Festivals [9] Celebrations [2]
CREATION [9]	Creation/creation stories [3] Questions re. origins of universe [3] Creation/creation stories v. evolution[2] How did we get here?[1]
SCIENCE/RELIGION [7]	Science *and* religion [5] Science *v.* religion [1] Has science got all the answers? [1]
BELIEF/ACTION [7]	Belief [2] How belief affects action [1] Differences beliefs make to lifestyle [1] Faith in action [2] Values in action [1]
OTHER [19]	Community [1] Identity and belonging [3] Commitment/faith [2] Monks and nuns [2] Predictions & messiahs [1] Sacred Writings [1] Symbols [2] Miracles [2] Healing [1] Persecution [1] Sacrifice [1] Jerusalem and peace [1] Jerusalem city of conflict and peace [1]
'RELIGION' UNITS [25]	Beginnings of religion [1] Religion in locality [1] New religious movements [2] Sociology of religion [3] Religion in the media [6] Religious authority [2] Religious expression (language/ music/art) [4] Religion *and*...: 'Life' [1]... 'Body matters' [1] ..Conflict [1]..Culture [1] ... Equality [1] ....Travel [1]

B.6   Thematic content in Year 9 *(Continued)*

Analysis of data from Church of England schools:

Focus	Comprising
ETHICS, VALUES, MORAL/ SOCIAL ISSUES [8]	What is the good life? [1] Values[1] Making moral decisions[1] Sex & relationships [1] Love, friendship, sexuality [1] Prejudice [1] Poverty [1] Racism & human rights [1]
QUESTIONS [8]	'Great questions' [1] Existence of God [1] Evil suffering & death [1] Why is there suffering? [1] Dealing with life & death[1] Has science got all the answers? [1] Science & religion [1] What is truth? [1]
RELIGIOUS BELIEF/ PRACTICE [8]	Beliefs[1] Worship [3] Places of worship [1] Festivals[1] Rites of passage [1] Pilgrimage [1]
ENVIRONMENT [2]	Respect for planet/all forms of life [1] Attitudes to material world [1]
OTHER [5]	Symbols [1] Religious role models [1] Creation stories [1] Changes [1] Persecution [1]

Appendix D.1   Data analysis: Stage III   Semantic domains (3 examples)

Example 1: Diversity

Domains	Sub-domains	Comments
[D] DIVERSITY	**D.1** Recognition of diversity *per se* **D.2** Differences among/between Christians **D.3** Denominations/Forms of Christianity **D.4** Related to particular aspects: *Worship/practice; Belief; Ethics; Bible; envisaging Jesus ; interpretation* **D.5** Of Expression/ Response/Experience **D. 6** Globally/ nationally	*Note also idea of 'breadth' here – ' a broad religion', a 'broad church'; this concept is probably adequately met by D.1 and D.3. but it also suggests inclusiveness.* *Note: 'people of many colours' – taken as expression of global diversity here though nuancing noted!*

Example 2: Jesus

Domains	Sub-domains	Comments
[J] JESUS	**J. 1** Life and teaching **J. 2** *Nature* of Jesus' teaching/message **J. 3** Jesus a historical figure/ evidence for this **J. 4** Perceived roles of Jesus: *teacher, leader, healer, exemplar; [sacrifice; fulfils messianic expectation]* **J. 5** Character/qualities of Jesus **J. 6** 'Nature' of Jesus/meaning of including 'reasons for'/claims about Jesus **J. 7** Following Jesus **J. 8** Importance/Impact/influence of Jesus	*J.2 might be further subdivided e.g. by 'form', perceived 'essence' or quality', or specific concepts.* *Ie. As distinct from Christology* " " " " " " " " *Note: 'place of Jesus' included here.*

Example 3: Understanding

Domains	Sub-domains	Comments
[U] UNDERSTANDING [Appreciation, Insight, Awareness] *Religion focus*	**U.1** Understanding **of**.... *a framework of belief; beliefs/practice Xtn. ...ethics... concepts....values;* **why Christians believe.** Awareness **of** *values taught by Jesus*	*NB.* *1. The dual focus here: responses fell into two broad categories, one with a religion(ous) focus, the other with a relational focus.*
	U.2 Understand **how**...*Xtnty is part of culture*	*2. 'Understanding' appeared as a single word response in some cases; its juxtaposition with other 'single' words (eg. tolerance; respect) in a list suggested quality or attitude rather than an 'intellectual' emphasis.*
	U.3 To understand....*basics of Xtnty; fundamental Xtn teachings*	*3. It may be appropriate to add U.9 here relating to students' self understanding. At present this is accounted for under the PDA domain.*
	U.4 'Understanding' as quality/attitude; to **be** [caring &] understanding	
Relational focus	**U.5** Understanding of....*the complexity of life; spiritual dimension of life/spirituality; of others.* Insight.. *into spiritual life*	
	U.6 Understand how/why......*people think; why Xtns. believe*	
	U.7 To understand......*Christians; others' beliefs* Appreciation of..*people's beliefs*	
	U.8 Mutual understanding	

The above are examples of *Stage III* of the process set out in *Table 6*. This process was used in relation to Questions 19(a) and 19 (b) of the questionnaire (Appendix A.3). Examples 1 & 2 are domains identified in responses to Q.19(a) 'understanding about' Christianity; example 3 relates to Q.19 (b) 'learning from' Christianity. For the full list of domains, see Tables 21A & 21B.